

**An Exploration of Gender imbalances in Management Positions in Higher
Education in South Africa: A Case Study of the University of Limpopo**

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that **An Exploration of Gender Imbalances in Management Positions in Higher Education: A Case Study of the University of Limpopo** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and that this work has not been submitted before for any other degree at any other institution.

Declaration by : Itumeleng Maggie Chidi

Date : 19 October 2021

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DEDICATION

In loving memory of my late father, Joas Mahlaseletja Chidi. For His love and support kept me going throughout the years of my academic and social life.

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ABSTRACT

Education is of paramount value to the empowerment of women and also brings about positive change in our societies. Higher Education has since been in existence for so many years. Traditionally, its management structure has always been dominated by males. The government has since put in effort to ensure we have female representation in management positions. However, progress in this endeavour has been somewhat slow, regardless of the efforts made. Accordingly, this study sought to explore why gender imbalances continue to exist in institutions of Higher Education, particularly at the University of Limpopo.

The study was conducted with fifteen women in management positions. The study highlighted the causes of gender imbalances in management positions and further captures the voices of women in management positions. The study also documented the roles women play in this institution and also includes strategies that can be put in place to address the problems raised. This has been captured from the women's perspective as the study used feminist qualitative research methods. This meant that the study was conducted in terms of the participants' perspective as feminist research methods suggests. The analysis has been completed using the Thematic Analysis approach as the themes that emerged were coded and analysed from that point.

The study revealed that there is still gender imbalance in management positions in the University of Limpopo. According to the study, this was due to a number of factors such as the multiple roles women play that delay them to progress academically. Also, this showed that only few women met the requirements for occupying management positions as the criterion for highest qualification was not met by many in order to enable them to apply for these positions. In the category of women that did not meet the requirements, there have been delays in them obtaining their doctoral studies and some showed no interest in applying for the jobs given the number of challenges faced by those women that are in management positions. These, amongst others, included the deep patriarchal culture entrenched by men at the University of Limpopo who feel uncomfortable to be led by women.

Key Words: Higher Education, Leadership, Women, Gender

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LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

CHE	Council of Higher Education
GAD	Gender and Development
HESA	Higher Education South Africa
HET	Higher Education and Training
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HoD	Head of Department
MDG's	Millennium Development Goals
NEPAD	New Partnership of Africa's Development
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAQA	South African Qualification Assurance
UL	University of Limpopo
ULWASA	University of Limpopo Women's Academic Solidarity Association
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WAD	Women and Development
WB	World Bank

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. Introduction

Higher Education in South Africa, as in other parts of the world, has always reflected disparities between men and women (Baker & McKenzie, 2018). These disparities relate to access to education, appointment into permanent positions and promotion to senior positions (Boshoff, 2005; Kim et al., 2010; Lues, 2005; Zulu, 2007). Cohen (2009) argues that education is of paramount value to the empowerment of women. Empowering women entails equipping them with knowledge, skills and self-confidence which is necessary for them to fully participate in development (Cohen, 2009). These attributes are also pre-requisites of sustainable development, which can only be achieved when men and women are granted equal opportunities in order to reach their full potential (Mathipa, 2001).

Not only does education have a significant multiplier effect to the next generation, education also improves and enhances the potential of women for contributing and participating in social, economic and political aspects of national development (De Waal, 2006). Thus, education has potential for bringing about transformation and development, which is essential to redressing the imbalance between men and women, as well as in social groups (Baker & McKenzie, 2018). Despite the relevance of education to the empowerment of women and socio-economic development of women, there are still very few women leaders in academia at this study shows.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The advancement of women as academics and researchers has been somewhat slow despite the Employment Equity Act put in place that promotes the participation of women in South African Higher Education (Booyesen & Nkomo, 2010). The Council on Higher Education (2007) reported that there are more females in institutions of higher learning than males. However, a majority of women are in support services. Those in academia are junior and senior lecturers; few are professors; and very few in senior positions and management. More men than women still occupy top management and academic positions in spite of the availability of progressive legislation and policies on equity and gender mainstreaming (CHE, 2012). This study therefore seeks to examine

why there still exists gender imbalances between men and women in leadership positions despite massive efforts to improve legislation and promote the advancement of women.

Like in many other institutions, challenges such as the participation of women in top management positions still face the University of Limpopo. This was according to the findings of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) Audit Report (CHE, 2011), which noted that the University has done little to address the various challenges that both staff and students face and that “female staff members are seriously underrepresented at senior management level” (CHE, 2011:14).

Women play a significant contribution at the University of Limpopo (Kanjere, 2010). In many departments, women serve in important bodies (Research Committees) and their contribution has been immense. Despite the work that the women do at different levels of the University and society, their roles and contribution have remained at the periphery of existing scholarship on leadership. Accordingly, the problem under investigation is the continued existence of gender imbalance in the recruitment, appointment and promotion to senior (top) management, leadership and academic positions at the University of Limpopo despite the enactment of the Employment Equity Act legislation meant to resolve the imbalance. What the investigation focuses on are the factors that obstruct the intended required change and transformation.

1.2 Significance of the Study

This study is significant for the promotion of knowledge and information about realities of women in Higher Education. Furthermore, the study also reveals the experiences of women in management positions employed in the University of Limpopo. By so doing, the study will contribute to the policies in the institution, which hopefully might lead to an increase in women’s participation in management positions in Higher Education institutions and the University of Limpopo since addresses some of the factors that contribute to the gender imbalances in Higher Education. The study findings may also be used by other researchers and gender activists involved in the emancipation and empowerment of women in the academic, political, social, economic and traditional spheres. Also, the study leads to awareness on the roles of women and the importance of gender equity, as well as the eradication of gender imbalances

in Higher Education. This study also contributes to emancipatory knowledge that assists women in fighting their oppression.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

1.3.1. Aim

The aim of the study is to investigate the degree and extent to which gender imbalances exist in management positions at the University of Limpopo.

1.3.2. Objectives of the Study

- To determine how issues of gender imbalance affect the work and professional aspirations of women in management positions.
- To establish the contributions that women in management positions make within the University of Limpopo.
- To capture women's voices and perspectives on the interface between gender imbalance and leadership in Higher Education.
- To examine ways in which gender imbalances in management positions can be resolved.

1.4. Operational Definitions

1.4.1 Leadership

In the context of this study, the concept of 'leadership' implies the act of exercising authority by women occupying senior positions (both academic and non-academic) within the University of Limpopo.

1.4.2 Management

The concept of 'management' is used in the context of this study to refer to the way one is assigned the responsibility to direct, administer or oversee the functioning of a specific unit, department or faculty.

1.5 Organisation of the Study

Chapter One: Introduction and Background

This chapter opens with the general introduction of this study. It provides the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the motivation for the study, limitations and closes with a chapter breakdown.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This section is based on the review of scholarly literature related to the topic under investigation. It is based on the current discussions and debates on the role of women in academia, factors that impede women's contribution in management positions, as well as efforts women make to address these challenges.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Orientation of the study

This section provides the theoretical orientation of the study in which this study is founded upon. It explains the theory used for this study, as well as the reasons why this theory was chosen.

Chapter Four: Research Methodology

This chapter focuses on the methods of the study and the breakdown of the sample, location of the study and what methods were used to collect data of the study.

Chapter Five: Gender Imbalances and Higher Education: A UL experience

This chapter is a reflection of the results accumulated after the data were collected. It discusses some of the causes of gender imbalances revealed by the participants, such as patriarchy, stereotypes, multiple roles and lack of qualifications. It further discusses the challenges faced by UL women in management at the University of Limpopo.

Chapter Six: Women's Agency, the Academy and Empowerment

This chapter captures women's voices and the contributions they make in the University of Limpopo. Some of the contributions revealed are the committees they serve in and the support programmes available in the University such as ULWASA. It also reflects on the joint article writings and other informal networks women have.

Chapter Seven: Summary and Conclusion

This chapter summarises the study, provides the limitations and also gives a conclusion based on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2. Introduction

This chapter delves into the literature about women in management and Higher Education in South Africa. Furthermore, it engages the literature that reveals the causes of gender imbalances in management positions in Higher Education; the challenges faced by women in South African institutions of Higher Education; the factors that impede on their progression in management positions; as well as the efforts the government has put in place to address challenges women face.

2.1 South African Legislation

Prior to 1994, South Africa was controlled by the National Party government that instituted Apartheid in 1948, which constituted segregation between Whites and other racial groups such as Africans, Coloureds, Indians and other Asians (Maxwell, 2012). Apartheid laws were finally abolished in 1990 with the unbanning of the ANC, PAC and SACP, and the release of Nelson Mandela (Maxwell, 2012). In 1994, South Africa held its first democratic elections, where the African National Congress (ANC) came into power (Merchant, 2012). The ANC-led government attempted to eliminate previous practices by promulgating legislation to support the empowerment of previously disadvantaged groups such as non-Whites, women and people who have disabilities (Maxwell, 2012).

According to the Higher Education Report, prior to 1994, public Higher Education employment policies and practices showed that division of labour was enforced by Apartheid laws. Both academic and Senior Management staff positions were dominantly held by White males. Women and Black people occupied the lower level jobs (Merchant, 2012). In 1994, a total of 45 000 staff members in the Higher Education sector were analysed as follows:

- 34% of professional staff were women and their job titles were lower than those of their male counterparts;
- 47% of non-professional staff were women; and

- 90% of professors, 78% of associate professors and 67% of senior lectures were men.

The foundation of South African democracy is rooted in the Constitution, specifically in the Bill of Rights (1996). In her study, Peterson (2011) sought to understand the extent to which formal regulations regarding gender equality in South African Higher Education has influenced the participation of women in Senior Management positions. She argues that the high number of female vice-chancellors that were appointed in South Africa was a direct result of political pressure in the form of those policies. She also explains that government-funded Higher Education institutions are obliged to have targets, and also to report on progress.

In her study, Peterson (2011) found that it is important to balance the actual increase in numbers with the quality of the persons that are appointed. However, interestingly, people in her study criticised the legislation, as they found that it only influenced mainly senior appointments and, therefore did not take much cognisance of the pipeline. She cautions that the legislation does not change the structural and cultural barriers that are entrenched in institutions. She cites Mayer and Tikka (2008:135) who state that “improved family policies are a necessary but not sufficient condition for continued improvement in the representation of women in academia, and must occur in concert with efforts to advance a broader societal shift towards gender equality”.

2.2 Women in Higher Education in South Africa

South Africa emerged from an apartheid past that did not regard women (Machika, 2015). There has been slow paced on the transformation of gender balance in the Higher Institutions of South Africa. Badat (2010) notes that South African Higher Education was influenced by economic, political and social pressures that led to discrimination and inequity with regard to race, class and gender. The government through the constitution has enacted a number of constitutional reforms for instance, through the South African Constitution of 1996 (South African Government, 1996), the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 (SA Department of Education, 1997b) and the Education White Paper 3 (SA Department of Education, 1997a).

Females have proven through history that regardless of their race they have been underrepresented in leadership and management positions in South African Higher Education institutions (Badat, 2010). “Nevertheless, some institutions are making some significant progress and there is a number of women who are steadily rising to the top structures of executive leadership and management” (Badat, 2010). Priola (2007) commends that while the 26 universities in South Africa have had a small rise in women on executive level, the ratio between men and women remains worrying. The low representation of women in management positions remains a social and political problem in South Africa (Priola, 2007). Moreover, despite their smaller presence in leadership and managerial posts, some research demonstrates high levels of satisfaction among employees where women are organisational leaders (Yanez & Moreno, 2008).

The National Department of Labour (RSA) (2013) shows that, in the 10 years period from 2002 to 2012, South Africa made a significant progress in gender equity in top and Senior Management services positions in which women fairly benefitted. “On top of that, the country is ranked number four in terms of global scale of women parliamentarians” (Mamabolo & Sebola, 2014); performing better than the United Kingdom and the United States of America who are the reference for many countries when it comes to democracy. However, like many other countries, South Africa did not manage to attain Gender Equity Goal set by the Millennium Development Goals (Marina, 2015). “South Africa’s ranking on international indexes fluctuates up and down rather than being stable and progressive towards women empowerment” (Mamabolo & Sebola, 2014).

The study by Badat (2010) reveals that women were denied many opportunities and were treated unfairly. Therefore, the policy initiatives pursued by Higher Education South Africa (HESA) sought to propagate and support the development of the next generation of academics in South African Higher Education (Higher Education South Africa, 2011). Boshoff and Bosch (2012) argue that the implementation of equity initiatives has resulted in the transformation of the post-democratic South Africa. On the contrary, the report by HESA (2011) reveals that South African academic workforce is still dominated by males. This makes it hard for women to succeed in the profession. Ogbogu (2011) notes that, due to lack of support, there are few women

professors and, moreover, fewer women have publications to their name that would otherwise guarantee that they earn promotions in their fields.

Gender and racial alignment as stipulated in the apartheid policy profoundly shaped the South African society and consequently caused widespread inequalities (Ogbogu, 2011). Women and Black men suffered exploitation, but women suffered even more (Marina, 2015). In a democratic South Africa, the stable social inequalities created by the apartheid government provoked an extensive range of transformation-orientated initiatives in order to address the situation (Yanez & Moreno, 2008). Moreover, institutions of Higher Education were included in those badly in need of restructuring (Ogbogu, 2011). Mazibuko (2006), in a study on women in academic leadership, acknowledges governmental policies as well as the commitment of South African universities to adopt gender and equity promotion programmes. However, she also observed that governance and management in Higher Education had to cope with multiple sources of control, decentralised structures and constrained resources.

Mabokela (2003) asserts that practices that control and dominate institutions are traced back to the history of apartheid and the education system that was purely patriarchal. It can be argued that specific organisational cultures are ought to prevail in different institutions as a result of their historical origins. For example, the historical experiences of formally dominant White institutions like the University of Cape Town and Black institutions like the University of Limpopo determines their state of affairs in as far as leadership and management is concerned (Boshoff & Bosch, 2012). The major effect of apartheid on Higher Education was the predominantly unequal system in a number of key areas (Ogbogu, 2011). In almost all institutions, males dominate academic staff and senior administrative bodies (Boshoff & Bosch, 2012). In academic staff bodies, higher ranks of professors and associate professors are usually dominated by male staff members (Ogbogu, 2011). White staff members historically held higher positions in White universities, including those that have experienced rapid changes in the racial composition of their student bodies (Council on Higher Education, 2000).

2.3 Patriarchy and Gender Politics in South African Higher Education

Gender inequality in the South Africa Higher Education system can be seen as highly embedded in the patriarchal systems that have been in existence for many years (Marshall, 2000). “In a patriarchal system men make all the central decisions” (Msimang, 2001). It is believed that patriarchy surpasses all race groups in South Africa such that it is not a domain of African cultures as many have come to believe (Mazibuko, 2006). Rather, it is deeply rooted in Afrocentric and Eurocentric mythologies and civilizations globally (Badat, 2009). In a patriarchal system, men are humanised while women get to be defused across racial lines (Boshoff & Bosch, 2012). The Higher Education sector in South Africa and other parts of the continent has been largely influenced by paternalistic tendencies (Marshall, 2000). Marshall (2000) notes that the formal and informal curricula strengthen and encourage the views of stereotypical masculinity and femininity. Similarly, Labode (1993) and Msimang (2001) contend that the system of exclusion of missionary education during the apartheid era was due to the patriarchal ideology. As a result, gender issues are given less prominence because they are relegated to private spaces where family, emotions and relationships belong.

The quest for gender equity in Higher Education was exacerbated by the exclusionary and sexist apartheid policies that kept Black South Africans and women from meaningfully participating in Higher Education as well as economic activities (Msimang, 2001). Msimang (2001) elucidates that separation during the apartheid system was both formal and informal. Previously, group movements and participation in Higher Education at all levels were controlled through laws endorsed by the apartheid regime (Marshall, 2000). Daily practices and experiences also reflected the informal control mechanisms (Ogbogu, 2011). Besides, education under apartheid was immensely polarized, with the majority of the citizens, who were Black, being relegated to inferior education through Bantu Education (Union of South Africa, 1953; Lindsay, 1997). Fiske and Ladd (2004); and the National Department of Education (1995) are of the view that the apartheid educational system was structured in a way designated to foster the apartheid ideology. This also led to the disproportional representation of races in Higher Education within the country. The presence of Black people in universities was minimal, thus, in 1991, out of every one thousand White South Africans, fifty-one were enrolled in tertiary institutions as opposed to thirty-five,

thirteen and nine out of every one thousand Indian, Coloured and African populations respectively (Herman, 1997).

On the aspect of gender participation in Higher Education, Badat (2009) asserts that, in 1960, women constituted 13.3 per cent of the total Black enrolment; in 1970, 18.9 per cent; and in 1975, 21.6 per cent. Consequently, this led to an unequal representation of gender in Higher Education then. The number of women representation in 'native universities' was greater than the national overall figures (Boshoff & Bosch, 2012). Concurrently, the trend is mirrored in the staff composition too (Badat, 2009). Native universities were dominated by males up until the year 1975, and the 22 per cent Black female participation was largely populated in nursing and paramedic courses and an exception of teaching courses emerged since it had slightly more women than men during the same period (Badat, 2009). The National Department of Education (1995) asserts that White men continue to hold prestigious positions in tertiary institutions after the transition to democracy. This is because women were perceived as either lacking the required qualifications to be in such positions or there still existed institutional structures that were rooted in sexism and patriarchy as well as racism. Since then, a lot has changed though it appears that the trajectory has remained the same (Boshoff & Bosch, 2012).

2.4 Gender and the Social Justice Paradigm

The South African Constitution (1996) acknowledges the injustices of the past and promises to create a just society that is based on democratic values, social justice and human rights. The Social Justice project is premised on equality and justice in terms of provision and allocation of prospects and resources to the society. It is against this background that Badat (2009) argues that procedures only do not always guarantee just outcomes. Badat (2009) suggests that concepts such as 'justice', 'equal opportunity' and 'fairness' are not defined concisely. The situation is worsened by the fact that unopposed institutional cultures, processes and the formal and informal curricula are not part of the justice and equity policies.

Fraser (2001) is of the view that there are two forms of injustices. The first one is the socio-economic injustice rooted in the political and social structures whose remedy is redistribution. Marginalization and exploitation are ways in which this form of injustice

is experienced. The second form of injustice is cultural and symbolic. This one is rooted in social patterns of representation, communication, and interpretation (Fraser, 2001). According to Fraser, the “form of injustice requires recognition so as to redress the harms of disrespect, stereotyping and cultural imperialism” (Fraser, 2001:93). Women’s marginalisation in Higher Education is also located in the two forms of injustices, namely, socio-economic and misrecognition that have been proposed by Fraser.

Nussbaum (1999) is of the view that human beings are entitled to dignity and integrity, irrespective of their natures and conditions. Human dignity is constructed on the collective humanness principle, not on how fortunate humans may be. Rawls (1971) makes the same remarks as Nussbaum on the equality of all human beings and the equal right to the appropriation of equal liberties. However, Rawls calls for additional compensation to the economically and socially challenged masses (Kanjere, 2010). The compensation measures he calls for should be undertaken within the confinements of the institutions in question. Rawls’ views on Social Justice are evidently uttered in the two principles of justice whereby the first one calls attention to each person’s equal rights to the most extensive scheme of basic liberties available for the society to see (Kanjere, 2010). The second one admits that total inequality is impossible, hence it states that inequalities can be accepted if only they are the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, or if they are attached to positions of office that are open for career open to talent (Fraser, 2001).

Nonetheless, the fitting paradigm on which Social Justice should be premised on has proven to be very contentious whereby formal equality plays a crucial role in the conceptualization of Social Justice (Maxwell, 2012). It does not guarantee its attainment because of the fact that human beings are gendered, racialized and classed in political and other affiliations (Maxwell, 2012). To determine this complexity, Alcoff (1988) proposed that it is becoming gradually impossible for feminists to hold onto the claim that they understand what is good for all women. This is because, even though womanhood is the point of departure in feminist theory, there is no such a thing as a unified sisterhood. The argument is that womanhood is like an onion because it has many caveats and layers on it that have to be understood in their own contexts and environments (Maxwell, 2012).

Arguments by Alcoff (1988) on issues pertaining to equal dignity approaches, whose basis is liberty, equality and brotherhood, have been largely questioned and seen as being imperfect due to the fact that, by treating everyone equally, society's existing inequality is not taken into cognisance. Barry (2005) advocates for the allocation of opportunities and rights that is fair and equal, unless there are convincing reasons to prove otherwise. In South Africa, much emphasis was put on people's choices and accountability, which, however, could be plausible since choices are informed by, amongst other factors, social capital and domination (Taiwo, 2010). Consequently, Satz (2007) argues on the intricacies in clarification of what the principle of equal opportunity implies in educational reform and this accentuates the implausibility of the egalitarian approach to justice.

2.5 The Advancement of Women in Leadership and Causes of Gender Imbalances in Managerial Positions in Higher Education

Recent research has shown that women are also emerging as leaders and hold top management positions in their own chosen fields (Cubillo & Brown, 2003). There are now more women who hold leadership positions than in previous years (Burke & Vinnicombe, 2005). This comes after women have endured years of being disadvantaged and seen as an inferior people (Taiwo, 2010). The pace at which women have been assuming academic leadership positions has been slower than anticipated (Cubillo & Brown, 2003). Hoobler, Lemmon and Wayne (2011) assert that there are many impediments to overcome as women are still underrepresented in Senior Management positions. There are a number of challenges that need to be addressed for women to ultimately be as successful as men in attaining promotion at workplace (Taiwo, 2010).

Kim, Hallett, Stover, Gouws, Musinguzi and, Mureithi (2011) note that women still double up their responsibility at workplace as well as at home where they still need to perform duties of a wife, mother and a homemaker. Shriver (2009) postulates that women now work away from home and still contribute to the financial stability of the family. Despite the challenge of women taking the responsibility of a housewife and childbearing, research is now revealing that, due to the rising cost of living, the money earned by women for their families is now proving to be vital (Kim et al., 2011).

Furthermore, the existence of dual career couples is now a common existence. This changes the priorities of families and allow women to pursue their careers (Shriver, 2009).

The metaphor “the glass ceiling” has often been used to describe the barriers that prevent women from ascending to positions of Senior Management (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The phenomenon was introduced in 1986 by writers of the *Wall Street Journal* (Weyer, 2007). The “glass ceiling” represents a hidden difficulty for women and other minority groups which prevent them from moving into Senior Management (Kim et al., 2011). Eagly and Carli (2007) are of the view that even though the “glass ceiling” metaphor exists, there are many barriers that women face even before they get to a position of having to deal with the glass ceiling. The argument is that women and men do not have equal access to entry and midlevel positions, and that they face a variety of challenges in their journey to management positions (Kim et al., 2011). As a result, they suggest that a “labyrinth” metaphor should be used to show that it prevents women from progressing to Senior Management positions. “Labyrinth” can be described as a difficult irregular network of passages where it is difficult to find one's way (Kim et al., 2011).

Apart from barriers to women progression, there are also organisational barriers. Brandly, Mayrhofer and Reichel (2008) argue that different countries have different cultures that play a role in the division of work within certain professions. Society has specific views of what women's roles should be and their role in the wider society (Chung & Sahgal, 2007). These assumptions involve the extent to which women differ from men such as their capabilities, skills and preferences.

Another leading hindrance to the development of women is accredited to gender stereotypes even though there are promising indications that among the top managers, women are doing extremely well as leaders and managers (Thanacody et al., 2006). Jonsen, Maznevski and Schneider (2010) argue that stereotypes are used by individuals as a shortcut to predict how people behave, as well as their abilities. It is also argued that stereotypes are enforced by society, which results in different expectations for men and women (Brandly, Mayrhofer & Reichel, 2008). Chung and Sahgal (2007) explain how ‘sex role’ orientation influences gender stereotypes.

Chung and Sahgal (2007) define 'sex role' stereotypes as men and women who possess different sets of traits and abilities that are informed by their sex. They go on to explain that, because of those different traits and abilities, these inform the sex-appropriate preferences, behaviours and personality characteristics. This then puts women at a disadvantaged position. Von Hippel, Wiryakusuma, Bowden and Shochet (2011) argue that a stereotype threat on individuals can influence their work performance negatively and result in reduced working memory, as well as increased stress and anxiety. As a result, those that are stereotyped will manoeuvre to counter their stereotypes. A constructive way to deal with Von Hippel's argument is to focus on the fact that women are more than merely their gender and more than the stereotypes that they are identified with (Tearle, 2004).

Bergeron, Block and Echtenkamp (2006) argue that it is widely believed that when people think of a manager, they immediately think that it is a male due to the way in which they are socialised. This is especially true for Senior Management positions. Bergeron, Block and Echtenkamp (2006) further suggest that, because of this conventional analysis or thinking among people, there is an apparent lack of fit when women are in these positions. Women's level of competency in these positions is subject to questioning and they are viewed as less effective managers than men (Von Hippel et al., 2011). As such, Els (2008) concludes that women in positions of management and leadership are expected to have dual mind-sets. They are also expected to be masculine, that is, they should be in control, strong and powerful. They also need to have traditional feminine features of women, which include nurturing, cooperating and sharing (Von Hippel et al., 2011). As a result, this expectation will often leave women with conflicting and confusing ideas. Often, there are double standards when it comes to evaluating women who occupy Senior Management (Bergeron et al., 2006).

2.6 Addressing the Gender Gap: Towards Mainstreaming

De Waal (2006), in her study on assessing 'gender mainstreaming' in development projects, posits that 'gender mainstreaming' is a strategy developed and adopted by the 4th World Conference in Beijing. The strategy touches on the mainstreaming of gender standpoints in all development related aspects. According to De Waal (2006:88) "this means going beyond a focus on increasing the number of women in

development projects to bringing gender perspectives to the fore in all aspects of development". Similarly, in South Africa, the South African National Gender Machinery approved and developed the Commonwealth Secretariat's system-wide approach to 'gender mainstreaming' to be employed by the government in partnership with other stakeholders, which include civil society and the private sector (De Waal, 2006). Their aim was to develop guidelines for South Africa to take action to remedy the country's legacy of apartheid. The framework also seeks to ensure that the course of achieving gender equality is at the core of the reconstruction process in South Africa and that it is founded in all structures, institutions, procedures, practices and all programmes of the government (De Waal, 2006).

Over the past decade, universities in South Africa have been highly involved with the mainstreaming of gender into their central function of teaching, research, and administration (Development of Education in Africa, 2006). This is mainly due to the fear and anxiety experienced by many African institutions of Higher Education in as far as gender issues are concerned (De Waal, 2006). To date, there is still the demonization of gender activists and dismissal of gender issues mainly because these actions are perceived as western, donor inspired as well as un-African (Von Hippel et al., 2011). This type of thinking, notions, and attitudes "often serve to mask ignorance, about gender issues as well as the fear of exposure of this ignorance" (Development of Education in Africa, 2006). Gender preconceptions existing in the wider society are internalised and acted out in Higher Education institutions (De Waal, 2006). This results in backlogs in Higher Education in achieving gender equality (Von Hippel et al., 2011).

According to UNESCO (2003), many institutions in South Africa have encountered donors and partners who partake in gender speeches. They also make gestures and statements that encourage donor funding whereby they continue with business in their daily operations. In other words, the amount of words and gestures do not equal the necessary action required for the success for 'gender mainstreaming' in Higher Education. UNESCO (2003) supports these allegations by stating that due to these types of behaviours and actions, the result is token 'gender-gestures' like appointing at least one or two female deans, managers and administrators while the day to day business of the institution continues in its gender-blind or gender biased manner.

Consequently, one may find that institutions of Higher Education are characterised by gender violence as well as hostility towards women (Von Hippel et al., 2011).

2.7. Re-visiting the Idea of Gender Mainstreaming

“Gender mainstreaming is the process whereby gender concerns are raised routinely within the everyday operations of an institution or organization and resolved in a gender just manner in normal operations” (Mathabe, 2002:177). Through gender mainstreaming, gender perceptions will be part of the normal perspective of an organisation without resorting to special vehicles of offices that isolate issues (Haugstads, 2013). It begins by directing empowerment initiatives on women because of previous disadvantage, which is a difficult if not an inconvenient part for many institutions as they now have to negotiate power and resources with women (Von Hippel et al., 2011). Gender mainstreaming is the “process of making women’s presence together with men on equitable bases to wield power, control resources and setting priorities in universities normal” (Mathabe, 2002). In most cases, these initiatives are often resisted and contested because of the inability and/or reluctance to abandon sectional projects for women and create space for them in the everyday operations, positions and situations where policies and executive decisions are made (Haugstads, 2013).

The success of ‘gender mainstreaming’ is mainly embedded within the culture of the organisation, which duplicates the values of those who set it up and developed it (African Gender Institute, 1997). In South African institutions, many leadership and management positions are held by men which is a clear indication of the need to examine if not evaluate gender aspects within tertiary institutions (Haugstads, 2013). According to Mama (2004), an evaluation of ‘gender mainstreaming’ may require that structures such as divisions, allocations of tasks, and positions of authority and responsibilities as well as the relationship between its members be revisited. Furthermore, a close look at the strategies which include the organisations, visions and missions, goals and how it ends to achieve them is necessary (Mama, 2004).

Lastly, the systems, that is, rules, regulations and policies, which govern the operations of institutions and organisational cultures may also need to be scrutinised with care since they determine the unwritten rules of the organisation, its norms of

cooperation, conflict and its channels for exerting influence (Salo & Lewis, 2002). Therefore, 'gender mainstreaming' means engendering each of these organisational aspects at every level of the University (Haugstads, 2013).

2.8 Addressing Gender Inequalities in Education: Ongoing Campaign and Efforts

The HeForShe (often referred to as He for She) which is a solidarity campaign for the development of women initiated by UN Women was launched in 2015 (Machika, 2015). Its goal is to involve men and boys as change agents by encouraging them to take action against undesirable inequalities experienced by women and girls (Haugstads, 2013). Gender equality affects all people socially, politically and economically. It seeks to vigorously involve men and boys in a drive that was originally considered as "a struggle for women by women" (Machika, 2015). This campaign aims at some of the communities that should address women's empowerment as well as gender equality concerns without putting aside those that have the utmost capacity to influence those changes (Haugstads, 2013). UN Women Executive Director and Under-Secretary-General Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka said:

HeForShe exemplifies UN Women's ground breaking leadership on gender equality. The HeForShe IMPACT initiative positions responsibility for change where it matters and spotlights leaders who can make it happen. The campaign targets men in world Universities to be involved in matters that affect women. It is premised on the idea that the best way for addressing the inequities between men and women is to get men to be actively involved and campaigning against gender discrimination, the abuse of women and women subordination in management positions in Higher Education.

2.9. Barriers for Women's Progression in HE

There are barriers that hinder women's progression in management positions and some of them are discussed below.

2.9.1 Gender Stereotypes

One of the chief hindrances to the development of women is accredited to gender stereotypes, and this is despite the existing promising indications that, among the top managers, women are doing extremely well as leaders and managers (Thanacody et al., 2006). Jonsen, Maznevski, and Schneider (2010) argue that people use stereotypes as a shortcut to predict how people will behave, and their abilities. They

also argue that stereotypes are enforced by the society, which results in different expectations for men and women.

Chung and Sahgal (2007) explain how 'sex role' orientation influences gender stereotypes. They define 'sex role' stereotypes as men and women who possess different sets of traits and abilities, which are informed by their sex. They go on to explain that because of those different traits and abilities, these inform the sex-appropriate preferences, behaviours and personality characteristics. It is also argued that gender roles and identity are taught, and these are informed by the family, relationships and societal values and culture (Jonsen et al., 2010). It is because of the 'sex role' orientation that men are viewed as being dominant and aggressive, while women are viewed as passive and dependent (Thanacody et al., 2006). Therefore, when those traditional views are broken, and women seek roles that are traditionally reserved for men, then gender stereotyping occurs (Jonsen et al., 2010). Von Hippel, Wiryakusuma, Bowden and Shochet (2011) argue that, when individuals experience a stereotype threat, it can influence their work performance negatively. They also argue that, not only does stereotype threat influence performance negatively, it can also result in decreased working memory, increased stress and anxiety. This also means that those that are stereotyped will often find ways to counter those stereotypes (Jonsen et al., 2010).

Tearle (2004) suggests that a constructive way to deal with arguments on stereotypes that have a negative effect on women, is to focus on the fact that women are more than merely their gender, and also more than the stereotypes that are placed on them. She argues that women should focus on the following instead:

- Discovering their true power from within;
- Finding ways to use this power to help organisations achieve greatness;
- Helping others within organisations, both male and female, to discover the power that they have within them; and
- Encouraging others to channel their incredible power for the good of organisations and for the good of South Africa (Tearle, 2004).

The above suggests that even though there are other external factors, there are issues that individuals must also battle with themselves in order to move forward and tackle the stereotypes. It is important for this study to investigate the different stereotypes that women face, and how those can influence their progression to Senior Management positions in Higher Education.

2.9.2 Organisational Culture

Williamson (2007), who is viewed as the father of anthropology, and defines culture first as, “that complex whole, which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”. This means that society influences culture, while institutional or organisational culture are influenced by societies. It is, therefore, important to look at how organisational cultures can influence the progression of women to Senior Management positions at a Higher Education institution.

Higgins (2007) considers the concept of institutional culture within the South African context as looking at what is described as “whiteness” of institutions. This focuses only on the fact that many institutions in South Africa were dominated by Whites and, therefore, their culture focused on White peoples’ behaviour. What is not highlighted is the issue of gender and Higher Education. This is interesting because Higgins (2007) considered institutional culture, as a whole, and the role that the institutional culture plays in terms of transformation. This could be translated as it implies that race enjoys a higher priority than gender. He argues that, if organisational culture is properly understood, it can help with the change management process that many South African institutions are currently facing.

Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) argue that every person carries within him/herself patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting that were learned throughout their lifetime. This suggests that organisations will have different cultures with regard to how they do things. This statement is supported by research, which was conducted in two different countries, namely, Australia and Turkey, which clearly show the differences in thinking, and this influences how universities from different countries operate (White & Özkanli, 2011).

According to a study focusing on gender imbalances in Turkish universities, Senior Managers did not admit to organisational barriers that prevented women from progressing to Senior Management positions (White & Özkanli, 2011). Such managers acknowledged that there is conflict among the traditional roles of women, namely, motherhood, marriage and professional life (White & Özkanli, 2011). In the same study, interviewees from Australia admitted that there were barriers that influenced the progression of women to Senior Management positions. This includes promotion processes, difficulties for working mothers and women having interrupted periods of employment owing to taking a break for motherhood. White and Özkanli (2011) concluded that different economic and social contexts play a role in the participation of women in Senior Management and, in turn, this influences the organisational cultures of universities.

2.10 Sociological Debates on Gender and Gender and Masculinity

The dominance of specific forms of masculinities in society and organisations is a complex, long-standing phenomenon and these forms of masculinities must be analysed and understood in order to be overcome (Machika, 2015). Across the globe, the performance of masculinities has been associated with the exercise of power (Westwood, 2008). Gender refers to the ways in which men and women are socialised into the male and female roles that are commonly attributed to them (Westwood, 2008). These roles are continuously (re)constructed within and through our daily activities (Morley, 2006). People live and act according to the expectations of these roles and how society perceives them (Westwood, 2008).

McCormick, Tanguma, and Lopez-Forment, (2002) suggest a need for more research in investigating how men and women construct their identity in various exchange situations and in various cultural settings. This is because there is still an increasing debate on how men and women construct their identities. These are broad concepts and issues in which researchers are continuously researching on (McCormick et al., 2002). Gender inequality has become one of the broad issues of the international agenda and there is no agreed general definition of the term (McCormick et al., 2002). It is a broad term, understood within the wider context of societal exclusion, that is, the systematic discrimination of individuals based on characteristics such as sex, economics, status, status, ethnicity, race, language and even health status (Morley,

2006). How one sees and understands gender inequality is dependent on quite a number of variables such as the culture and the context in which men and women find themselves (Kamau, 2010).

2.11 Gender, Masculine Identity and Socialisation

Social conditioning takes place in all educational and socialisation processes that define masculinity and femininity (Moazzam, 2013). Feminism asserts that patriarchy is used worldwide to describe the situation of male dominance over women and children within the family, and the extension of the workplace into all other areas of society (Mugweni et al., 2011). The ideology subsumes women's oppression under a system of patriarchy. Under patriarchal practice, any man, regardless of his status, age and achievement, is considered superior to any woman no matter how she may surpass the men in status, age and achievement (Moazzam, 2013). Patriarchy is dominated by male privilege and dominance, whereby women play the subordinate role in public as well as in private (Chabaya et al., 2009). Nowadays, women may be subjugated and underprivileged in areas such as the attainment of Higher Education qualification, participation in positions of authority, decision making and occupational structure (Mugweni et al., 2011). In these critical areas, women are mostly found at the lower levels of management structures and operations (Chabaya et al., 2009).

The discourse on gender is an ongoing debate that has grasped the attention of many researchers and scholars (Marina, 2015). Those who propagate gender differentiation rely on ideologies such as 'gender essentialism' that positions men and women as being fundamentally and inherently different by nature (Eagly & Carli, 2011). This outlook produces domination, differentiation in role assignment and allocation of privileges (Marumo, 2012). The reproduction and sustainability of gender inequality is further perpetuated through patriarchy; notions of femininity; masculinity and rigidity of the religious; and cultural systems to accommodate change. The role that social establishments play in accelerating gender inequalities cannot be understood either, because it is in these social establishments that the reality of being gendered is played out and felt (Assman, 2014). Machika's (2015) contention that one is not born but rather becomes a woman is seen to be very profound. The inseparable questions of

whether gender is a product of nurture or nature is still less clarified as much as they have been in the public arena for a long time.

However, gender is sociologically referred to as a social construct. The generationally and culturally entrenched images, laws, values and practices prescribe the appropriateness of certain behaviours and roles for girls and boys within designated private and public spaces. At an early age, girls are socialised into motherhood and wifehood roles, whereas boys are taught to be tough like men and not to be “soft like women” (Afonja, 2005). Gender relations are made complex through nurture and the social constructionists’ attempts. From a social constructionist and sociological standpoint, gender is a matter of culture: it refers to the social classification into “masculine” and “feminine” (Oakley, 1985).

2.12. Summary of the Chapter and Conclusion

This chapter covered wide aspects facing women in management positions in Higher Education around the world. The areas covered are, namely: South African legislation, History of the South African Higher Education Sector, Barriers of women progression in Higher Education, Organisational barriers, Gender stereotypes, Organisational culture, Gender mainstreaming, Gender disparities in Higher Education and Barriers for women’s progression in HE. Lastly, the chapter also presented a discussion on the sociological debates on feminism and masculinity.

2.13. Conclusion

Gender imbalance in Higher Education is still one of the issues that attract international agenda. The quest to find out the causes of such imbalances is ongoing. The foregoing literature review reveals that factors such as patriarchy, masculinity and prejudice still affect women in the workplace. This chapter looked at various literature that assisted in finding some of the causes of these imbalances, as well as the challenges women in management positions face.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3. Introduction

This chapter looks at the theoretical orientation that guides this study. It looks at what the theory is about; some key tenets of the theory; and why this theory was chosen to be used to guide this study.

3.1. Critical Feminist theory

The study is guided by the Critical Feminist theory (Critical Feminism) as a theoretical framework. In particular, the study uses the body line thinking of Nancy Fraser, who happens to be one of the famous Critical Feminist theorists. “The theory was developed in the 1960’s during the civil rights movement” (Fraser, 2001). The theory argues that “the origin for women’s oppression is in the lack of equal civil rights and equal opportunities as well as in past tradition and learned psychology associated with the sex role socialization process” (Freeman, 2000:136). The theory, according to Wollstonecraft (1998), emphasises equal individual rights and liberties for women. Critical Feminists are mostly concerned with the equal rationality of the sexes and emphasize the importance of structuring social, familial and sexual roles in a way that promotes women’s freedom to self-fulfilment (Fraser, 2001). The theory is used to explain and challenge as well as to extend on the existing knowledge.

Critical Feminism advocates for equal opportunities for both men and women (Fraser, 2001). For Fraser (2001), feminism is not simply a matter of getting a smattering of individual women into positions of power and privilege within existing social hierarchies. It is rather about overcoming those hierarchies. This requires challenging the structural sources of gender domination in a capitalist society. Fraser (2001) postulates that this gendered, hierarchical division between “production” and “reproduction” is a defining structure of capitalist society and a deep source of the gender asymmetries hard-wired in it. There can be no “emancipation of women” so long as this structure remains intact (Sanderg, 2013:88).

Critical Feminists believe that men and women should be compared according to their similarities instead of their differences (Fraser, 2001). By so doing, notions that tend to argue that women are weaker physically, intellectually and emotionally than men can be debunked (Fraser, 2001). In Wollstonecraft's (1759-1779) work on vindication of rights of women, Wollstonecraft argues that often the differences between men and women are often exaggerated in every sphere of life. To some extent, women would be perceived as irrational while men are perceived as rational beings. It was at this point that philosophers and Critical Feminist scholars made it clear that both sexes have the capacity to reason and therefore they should both be educated to act as fully responsible moral agents (Fraser, 2001).

This theory is therefore used as a structure that holds and supports the current study as it gives us an insight to the causes of gender imbalances. The theory is relevant to the study as the theory offers suggestions towards redressing gender inequality in Higher Education, which also trickles down also to educational development for the empowerment of women. The theory captures the very core necessities or preconditions for a just and equitable gender representation in any institution. The theory is used to explain the current developments in Higher Education as far as gender imbalances are concerned. The theory is also used to evaluate progress in education, personal autonomy involved in decision making processes, as well as participation at all levels of structure within the University of Limpopo.

Gender equality, according to Critical Feminist, is achievable through allowing women to choose their own lives (Fraser, 2001). In other words, women should be allowed personal autonomy just as men are (Ritzer, 2000). This, according to Critical Feminism, can be achieved through ensuring that women are the co-authors of the conditions under which they live (Fraser, 2001). For example, women should have equal rights in decision making processes as far as development is concerned. For this to take place, it is therefore necessary to create conditions that enable women to be adequately and sufficiently represented, if not incorporated in the developments for Higher Education. A change in social arrangements, policy design and implementation is also a pre-condition for change in the lives of women.

Freeman (2000) states that the Critical Feminist perspective emphasizes social and legal reform through policies designed to create equal opportunities for women and to establish individual rights so that no one is denied access to the existing social-economic system because of race, class and sex. The theory posits that women's liberation could be achieved through the removal of sexist discrimination so that women have the opportunity to pursue their potential for individual development just as fully as men do (Fraser, 2001). It also advocates for further re-education of the public concerning the 'sex role' socialization process as a means towards achieving more liberated and egalitarian gender relations (Fraser, 2001). One of the major tenets of Fraser's Critical Feminist theory lies in the way it puts emphasis on the pursuit of Social Justice (Freeman, 2000). In the following sub-section, the idea of 'social justice' and its interconnectedness with issues of emancipation, liberation and equal opportunities are briefly discussed.

It is also important to state that the theory (i.e., Critical Feminism) informed the selection of the research approach that the study uses. In this study, it is assumed that the exercise of uncovering gender imbalances in institutions of Higher Education in South Africa as they are experienced by women can best be achieved through deploying gender-sensitive methodologies and theories.

3.2. Key Tenets of Critical Feminism: Social Justice, Emancipation and the Creation of Equal Opportunities

While there appears to be no single definition of Social Justice, literature suggests that the notion of Social Justice co-exists with expressions of human rights, fairness, and equity (Bates, 2007; and Sturman, 1997). Social Justice mirrors ideas of equity, which is deemed as a necessary condition of democratic life (Freeman, 2000). The pursuit of Social Justice is therefore seen as a search for a fair distribution of what is "beneficial and valued" (Singh, 2011). Social Justice is concerned not in the narrow focus on what is just for the individual alone, but what is just for the social whole. Social Justice includes an understanding of the interactions within and between a multiple of peoples.

Fraser (2001) looks at how resources and opportunities should be distributed equitably between men and women in line with the ideals of a democratic society. From this

perspective, the situation of women (as in underrepresentation in managerial positions) in South African universities can be considered as a 'social justice issue'. Attending to the everyday challenges or injustices that women face becomes critical. Ideas on 'liberation', 'emancipation' and 'equal opportunities' are all constitutive of what Social Justice entails as it is understood from a Critical Feminist perspective (Fraser, 2001).

To understand the conditions of women at the University of Limpopo, Fraser's (2008) three dimensions of Social Justice Approach is useful. For Fraser (2008), any attempt to attend or understand matters of Social Justice must address three imperatives, which are, namely:

- (i) Economic redistribution;
- (ii) Cultural recognition; and
- (iii) Political representation.

The focus on the above imperative has resulted into what some refer to as Fraser's "Three-Dimensional Model" (Keddie, 2012). In the context of women in academia at the University of Limpopo and in South Africa in general, applying such a model can assist in examining challenges faced by women in those three crucial areas.

Broadly, Critical Feminism as a theoretical framework helps in illuminating on the experiences of women holding academic positions in South Africa's universities and how such experiences call for the need for liberation and emancipation. Achieving conditions of liberation, emancipation and the creation of equal opportunities are all key tenets of Critical Feminism.

3.3. Relevance of the Theory to the Study

Nancy Fraser's Critical Feminist theory is relevant in the current study given the way it puts the idea of 'social justice' at the centre of social enquiry. Therefore, it is used as a philosophical base for which this study is founded upon. The theory illuminates on how the various factors that affect the rise of women in senior positions within universities and also their participation in key decision-making forums. As such, the theory sheds light on how gender equity (or what Fraser would call 'participatory parity') can be achieved within universities in South Africa.

In this study, we see how this theory is relevant as the University of Limpopo women also seek social justice and liberation. Social justice and liberation of women is seen through how women organise themselves to seek equal representation and voice in the University. For many years, women in the University have struggled against misrecognition, and the subsequent development of a women's support group has ensured that women advocate for their rights as well as voice their concerns. This has seen women strive to challenge the status quo as well as lobby for the enhancement of the status of women in the institution. Women continue to challenge male dominance throughout the University.

3.4. Summary and Conclusion of the Chapter

This chapter looked at the theoretical framework of the study and its relevancy to the study. Important contributions of the theory relate to how the theory was able to explain and articulate the causes of gender imbalances in management positions. The researcher was able to align the Critical Feminist viewpoints to the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4. Introduction

This chapter covers the research methods used, the study area and also the way in which feminist methodologies are used to understand women's position in Higher Education. The chapter provides an in-depth presentation of the processes of the research undertaken for this study. It further engages with different research approaches and the data collection methods used. Moreover, it highlights reasons why this approach for this study was used.

4.1. Feminist Research

In this study, Critical Theory is used in relation to feminist research methodology. This is because this study aims to understand the experiences of women in management positions and the causes of gender imbalances in management positions. This research approach was drawn from the Critical Feminist theory because this model seeks to address inequality, perceived reality, science and research within a particular social or cultural context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Through the use of the feminist research, this study hopes to emancipate women by allowing them to have control over the way research is practised. In this way, the researcher plays the role of the interviewer and facilitator during the in-depth interviews. Participants were allowed to identify their own challenges and identify ways in which these can be addressed. The respondents were given total autonomy to explain their perspectives on areas that needed their analysis and participation. Throughout the study, we observe the emancipation of women by having given them a platform to express their opinions on gender imbalances in management positions, the challenges they encounter, as well as their general experiences and contributions in the various management roles they play. This is because feminist research methodology is women research by women for women (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Likewise, this research was conducted by a woman, interviewing women in order to gain insight on their perspective on the phenomenon chosen. Furthermore, the aim of the study is to ensure that women's issues in Higher Education are documented in

order to improve their experiences. Like Fraser (2008:122) would say; “One way through which change could be brought is by looking deeper into the issues faced by women”. Feminist research methods and research focuses on research questions that are rooted in women’s lives and women’s everyday existence (Fitzgerald, 2011). This has been realised through thoroughly documenting all narratives from the participants.

Feminist ideology argues that women are subjected to male domination and oppression on a daily basis, and this is evident in their relations to males in and outside of the household (Logan, 2017). Critical Theory, which emerged from Marxism, “seeks to explore a wide range of power relationships such as gender, race and ethnicity. Critical research thus assumes necessity of critique of current ideology seeking to expose dominating or oppressive structures in society” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Critical research is essential to feminist research as it emphasises on the relationship that involves inequalities and power. Hence critical research is a significance tool to empowerment of women because it helps those without power to be empowered (Fraser, 2008). We see this emerge in the current study as women were actively participating in the collection of data so that we have an informed perspective on the causes of gender imbalances in management positions of Higher education. The framework managed to give us some understanding of what are some of the causes emanating and also providing insight on possible solutions as well as recommendations on how such can be addressed.

Doherty (2010) argues that critical research should always begin with identifying an organisation of people whose needs are not adequately met within the current system and who are willing to put research findings into practice. Based on this, the researcher noted that the women of the University of Limpopo were eager to voice out their thoughts on the possible causes of gender imbalances in management positions, as well as the solutions and way forward that could be done on this arena. The active participation of women and responses alluded to what Lawson (2011) states when saying that women should be eager and ready to identify causes of the problems they face. The researcher’s role was thus to enter the participants’ world to gain an interpretative understanding of their intersubjective meanings, which is the product of the culture that had been created by all groups of actors in their world.

4.2. Feminist Methods

Feminist research methods, like qualitative methods, use case studies, observations, life diaries, different interviews, as well as ethnographic methods such as visual and audio aids in order to encourage participation from women being studied (Merchant, 2012). These methods are often used by feminists because these methods give room for critical reflection and engagement on issues and concerns raised by participants (Maxwell, 2012). Also, these methods complement feminist's methodologies to a large extent that they are founded on interpretative epistemology using sensitive, flexible and open-ended approach to gather data (Beck, 2000). As Beck (2000) puts it, such feminist research methods are more in touch with feminists' principles on account of their ability to promote equality and to steer clear of objectification. Additionally, there is a stronger focus on the meanings and interpretations of people participating in the research, which enables the researcher to see the social world through their eyes (Becker, 2000).

4.3. Feminist Ontology and Epistemology

Campbell and Waso (2000) state that many researchers and philosophers in the Social Sciences understand ontology as a term concerned with the nature of being as well as the nature of reality. The debates on ontology in feminist research are ongoing (Pillay, 2007). This is largely so because researchers and theorists find it challenging to determine how to arrive at any truth in feminist research (Campbell & Wasco, 2000). Campbell and Wasco (2000) further state that, in terms of epistemology and ontology, the feminist qualitative methodology does not differ in any way with the conventional qualitative post-positivistic methodologies. However, where the feminist (qualitative) methodology distinguishes itself from other qualitative methodologies is in its sensitivity to the needs and priorities of women and other marginalised groups of society (Pillay, 2007). Putting the needs of women at the centre of scholarly scrutiny remains a key thrust of feminist research (Campbell & Wasco, 2000).

Marina (2015) stipulates that epistemology is concerned with questions about who knows what, and about whom, and how this knowledge is legitimised. This concern is apparent in the writings of early feminists such as Sandra Harding who were critical of those researchers who simply conducted their studies of women within already existing frameworks (Marina, 2015). A feminist epistemology prioritises the needs of

women and brings up women's lives into higher visibility by studying their lives from their own point of view (Hartsock, 1998). Such an epistemology offers the possibility of new and more reliable insights into women's experiences, including emotions and embodiments (Hartsock, 1998).

In this study, the focus is largely on capturing the lived experiences or worldviews of women who are in management positions at the University of Limpopo. Views from identified participants are used to construct sociological explanations that offer an understanding on the nature and extent of gender imbalances in institutions of Higher Education in South Africa.

4.4 The Study Area

At this point of research, it is important to contextualise the location of the research. The area of the study is explained below, and this includes the province, the population structure, the living conditions, as well the institution in which the study was conducted.

4.4.1 Limpopo Province

Limpopo Province is located on the Northern part of South Africa. The province was formed from the then Transvaal province and the White colonial government named it Northern Transvaal Province (Development of Education in Africa, 2006). However, the name lasted only for one year, it was renamed Northern Province (Development of Education in Africa, 2006). The name was later changed to Limpopo Province in 2003 as a tribute to the Limpopo River. The river separates South Africa from Zimbabwe and Botswana (Development of Education in Africa, 2006). The name Limpopo is derived from the Nguni word *iLimpopo*, which means the rapids or waterfalls. The province is often referred to as the South African gateway to the rest of Africa (Development of Education in Africa, 2006). It shares border with three countries Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Furthermore, the province is a neighbour to Gauteng, Mpumalanga and North West Provinces. Igumbor, Bradshaw, Laubscher (2003) note that the province encloses 123 910 km², constituting 10.2 % of the country's total land area (Stats SA, 2003).

4.4.2 Population Structure

Limpopo Province has a population of approximately 5.3 million people (Development of Education in Africa, 2006). The Northern Sotho speakers (i.e., Bapedi) form the largest ethnic group in the province (Stats SA, 2003). They are followed by the VaTsonga, the VhaVenda and Afrikaans speakers (Development of Education in Africa, 2006). The Limpopo Province, in terms of language, it has four predominant languages, namely, Sesotho sa Leboa (Sepedi) at 52.1%, Xitsonga at 22.4%, Tshivenda and Afrikaans (Marina, 2015). The 2011 Census found that a higher proportion of the population was female (at 54.6%). Just over 40% of the population was younger than 15 years, 56% was in its 'economically active' years (15-64), and 6% was aged 60 years or older. In terms of the race distribution, Blacks constitutes 97% followed by Whites at 2.4%, Coloureds at 0.2% and the Asians make up 0.5% of the total population (Limpopo Provincial Government, 2002).

4.4.3 Living Conditions

According to the 2011 Census, 17.3% of the population aged 20 years or more had no formal school education; 49% of those in the age group 15-64 years was unemployed, and 33% of those who were employed was in elementary occupations (Stats SA, 2012). Over 6 in 10 persons (i.e., 61%) lived below the national poverty line in 2002 (UNDP, 2004). Just over 70% of all households lived in formal dwellings, and 7% and 20% respectively in informal and traditional structures. On average, 4.3 persons shared a household. Piped water, either in the dwelling, on site, or from a communal tap, was available in 78% of households (Stats SA, 2003). Almost one-quarter of households did not have access to a toilet facility, and a mere 14% had a refuse-removal service once a week or more (Stats SA, 2003). In 25% of the households, electricity was used as the main source of energy for cooking; wood in 60%; and paraffin in 11% (Development of Education in Africa, 2006). Almost 70% of the households had a radio, 40% a television, 39% a refrigerator, 8% a telephone and 25% a cell phone (Stats SA, 2003).

4.4.4. University of Limpopo

In 1960, the University College of the North (Turfloop) was founded as one of the University Colleges for Blacks (Development of Education in Africa, 2006). In terms of the apartheid policy, this State-controlled university, which was situated within the

Lebowa Homeland, was intended to serve as an instrument for the entrenchment of the apartheid system (Development of Education in Africa, 2006). “Sovenga became the unofficial title given to the University College, a name originally given to the University Post Office and coined from the languages of the ethnic groups which the institution was intended to serve: Sotho, Venda, and Tsonga: SOVENGA” (White, 1997:75). It was a symbol of the ethnic nature of the University College since it was created to serve the above-mentioned ethnic groups (Development of Education in Africa, 2006). The University College was situated on a farm originally known to the local inhabitants as “Turfloop” (White, 1997). The University College became known as “Turfloop” (Development of Education in Africa, 2006).

In 1969, the apartheid government granted the University College of the North autonomy from the University of South Africa (Act No. 47 of 1969) which brought an end to the College status as of 1 January 1970 (Ndebele, 1994). The University became a centre of resistance to apartheid in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, with the South African Defence Force (SADF) occupying its grounds often during those years (Okoji, 2014). After the end of apartheid, the University struggled through various re-organisation and rationalisation schemes, yet always managed to survive. Enrolment fluctuated wildly in the years after liberation and, while some faculties did not transit very easily, others were able to seize upon the new opportunities (Okoji, 2014).

The University of the North was later renamed the University of Limpopo (UL) in 2005. UL came into existence as a result of the merger between the former Medical University of Southern Africa (MEDUNSA) and the University of the North, which occurred on 01 January 2005 (Batool, 2013). The merger did not last long because in 2014, the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, announced the demerger of UL and MEDUNSA, which was effective on the 01 January 2015 (Okoji, 2014).

4.5 Research Design

The researcher used an exploratory Research Design that gathered full in-depth data from participants (Neuman, 2011). The Research Design is most appropriate for “projects that seek to address, subjects that have high levels of uncertainty and ignorance, as well as when the subject is not very well understood” (Wyk, 1998:38).

An exploratory qualitative Research Design helps the researcher to explain the various factors that are responsible for the underrepresentation of women in management positions at the University of Limpopo and how such a scenario is explained from the perspective of the research participants. Such an endeavour can be achieved through capturing women's voices and perspectives regarding this phenomenon.

4.6 Sampling Methods

This research used Purposive Sampling to select participants. This technique to sampling is usually undertaken on the basis that the researcher has knowledge of the population, its elements, as well as the nature of the research aims (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). This method was used according to Palys' (2000) postulation that Purposive Sampling can be very useful for situations where there is need to reach a targeted sample quickly and where sampling for proportionality is not the main concern. This was the case of this study since the aim was to seek, explore and investigate causes of gender imbalance in management positions at the University of Limpopo. Also that the purpose of the study was to capture the voices of women in management in the University of Limpopo.

4.6.1 Sampling Size

A total of fifteen (15) women in management participated in the study of the causes of gender imbalances in management positions at the University of Limpopo. However, the available number of participants for the interviews was fourteen (14) females, as one (1) participant did not partake in as scheduled due to her being on study leave. This information (names and contacts) was requested from the University of Limpopo's Human Resource Information Systems office to enable the researcher to collect data to later also analyse the causes of gender imbalances in Higher Education.

4.6.2 Interview Methods

(a) In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews are defined as a qualitative method of analysis that proceed as a confidential and secure conversation between interviewer and respondent (Silverman, 2000). According to Silverman (2000), the method is appropriate if the researcher seeks to gain information into individual evaluations of a specific phenomenon. It is also a necessary tool if the researcher's primary objective is to evaluate controversial,

sensitive and tabooed issues. The method, when used correctly, can produce precise and specific answers as well as exhaustive and varied knowledge about individually determined experiences, opinions and motives that Focus Groups cannot cover (Silverman, 2000). Additionally, Babbie and Mutton (2011) allude that in-depth interviews also provide respondents with the time to further develop reason for the points of view without being influenced by the opinions of other respondents.

In this study, in-depth interviews were used for the same reasons stated above. The researcher held face-to-face interviews with all the participants. All the interviews were tape recorded except for one participant who requested not to. However, note taking was used. The tape recordings were stored safely to protect the participants from any harm. An Interview Schedule (Annexure A) was developed and the researcher put questions across to the respondents using questions that are related to the study. The respondents were allowed to talk freely about various aspects of the topic.

(b) Documents

As an ancillary to interview data, the study also makes use of existing documents that address issues of gender imbalances and women's experiences at the University of Limpopo. This information was sourced from different offices and organisations within the University. The following documents are referred to:

- (i) The University of Limpopo's Women's Academic Solidarity Annual reports;
and
- (ii) The Human Resources Employment Equity reports.

4.7 About the Participants

4.7.1 Participants' Positions

The study sample comprises 14 females who occupy managerial positions at the University of Limpopo. Out of these fourteen females, one (1) is the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University, one (1) Executive Dean, one (1) Director of School, seven (7) Heads of Departments and four (4) managers in non-academic Departments. This sample assisted the researcher to get opinions and experiences of women in their various positions. The foregoing and corresponding coding are represented in the tabular form below.

Participant	Position Held
Participant 1	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Participant 2	Dean
Participant 3	Director of School
Participant 4	Head of Department
Participant 5	Head of Department
Participant 6	Head of Department
Participant 7	Head of Department
Participant 8	Head of Department
Participant 9	Head of Department
Participant 10	Head of Department
Participant 11	Manager in non-academic position
Participant 12	Manager in non-academic position
Participant 13	Manager in non-academic position
Participant 14	Manager in non-academic position

4.7.2 Participants' Work Duration

The period when the respondents started working for the University was of paramount importance in verifying the respondents' understanding of the changes that were taking place in the managerial positions of the University and in terms of gender balance. The assumption is, the earlier the commencement of work at the University, the better the understanding of the changes that took place to address inequality between women and men in the managerial position in Higher and tertiary institutions (Sigh, 2011). Of the respondents, six (6) of them have been appointed at the University since the then University of the North and eight (8) were appointed as University of Limpopo employees in the newly renamed University of Limpopo since 2005. This represented in the table below.

Years Employed at the University	Number of Women
20 years and more	6
10 years and more	8
Less than 10 years	0

4.7.3 Participants' Appointment in Management Position

Appointment of females in management positions was higher in terms of its rate in the past five years as shown by the years in which women were appointed in the managerial positions. Of all the participants from the then University of the North, only one (1), out of the four (4) women, was appointed in the management position of the

University, whilst the remaining ten (10) were all appointed in the now University of Limpopo. A total of 9 out of 14 were appointed into managerial post since 2015, whilst the remaining 5 were also promoted to Senior Managerial posts such as the Director, Deputy Vice-chancellor and Executive Dean. This shows that, indeed, there is an increase in women's appointment into managerial positions as compared to the past years whereby women's appointment was very rare.

4.8. Data Analysis

The researcher employed inductive Thematic Analysis. The researcher chose this method because it is applicable to the theoretical framework chosen for the study. This method is applicable to the study as it is able to capture the causes of these gender imbalances from the women in management. By contrast, other methods of analysis are closely tied to specific theories, but Thematic Analysis can be used with any theory a researcher chooses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through its flexibility, Thematic Analysis allows for rich, detailed and complex description of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The researcher used inductive Thematic Analysis that generated themes from participants' responses (and also documents) after data transcription. Thematic Analysis moves beyond counting explicit words or phrases to focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes. Codes were then developed to represent the identified themes and applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis.

4.9. Ethical Considerations

4.9.1. Permission to Conduct Research

Earlier on before the commencement of the study, a study proposal was submitted to the University of Limpopo Research Ethics Committee to ensure that the study adheres to the standards of the research community. Permission was also sought from the Human Resource Department of the University of Limpopo prior to the beginning of fieldwork. Any records or information of the respondents' details were obtained from the Human Resource Department and were treated as confidential and discrete. Furthermore, ethical clearance was sought from the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee prior to the commencement of the study.

4.9.2. Autonomy

Since participants in the study are perceived as vulnerable members of society due to the economic, political and social positions; autonomy and respect were practised. The researcher ensured that participants are granted freedom of expression during interviews, without putting them at harm or risk of being intimidated or unfree to share their opinions.

4.9.3. Anonymity

The names and details of participants are not mentioned in the research or used during data analysis and reporting; neither does the researcher disclose the information given by participants against their permission. To preserve the anonymity of research participants, all identifying details were removed and only generated labels (e.g., Participants 1, 2, 3) are used. The information shared by each participant was not shared with any other person except the research supervisor. Such information was discarded upon the completion of the study.

4.9.4. Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study was voluntary. Participants were not coerced into participating – this was ensured by allowing participants to withdraw from the study anytime for whatever reasons.

4.9.5. Informed Consent

Participants were issued with a Consent Form (Annexure C) that explained and described the aims, purpose and benefits of the study. Furthermore, details of the researcher's supervisor were given to participants, in case should they have further queries on the study. All participants signed the Consent Form.

4.9.6. Confidentiality

Since a tape recorder was used during interviews, recorded sessions were saved and filed, and such were never shared with anyone. Information solicited from participants was not used against them for any personal or academic gains. A tape recorder was used so that the researcher could get full in-depth details of the study from the participants to enable possible subsequent revisits in the course of the study.

4.10. Summary of the Chapter and Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the methodology of the study. The researcher outlined the feminist research methods, the sampling method used, the process of data collection, data analysis, as well as the research ethics abided by the researcher in conducting this research.

CHAPTER FIVE

GENDER IMBALANCES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO EXPERIENCE

5. Introduction

This chapter presents the results of data collected, with the objective of exploring the causes of gender imbalances in management positions at the University of Limpopo. It presents analysis of qualitative data collected through interviews as well as secondary data from documents. This chapter looks at the causes of gender imbalances in management positions at the University of Limpopo as analysed from information divulged during the participants' interviews.

5.1 Factors Contributing to Gender Imbalances in Management Positions

All women interviewed for the purpose of this study concurred that there are noticeable reasons for gender imbalances in the managerial positions from the time they were appointed and now. According to the findings, in the context of University of Limpopo, gender imbalance in management position is mainly due to the issue of patriarchy, lack of adequate qualifications, the multiple roles women play and other socio-cultural factors. All this are captured below.

5.1.1. History and Patriarchy

History and patriarchy contribute as one of the causes of gender imbalances in management positions. The participants have shown this as a factor that causes these imbalances. According to them, where one comes from informs how they behave today as well as how they think about other phenomena in Higher Education institutions. Below are some of the participants' responses relating to this:

Participant 2: *"I think we have to look at our history here, where we are coming from in terms of staffing. Previously, we had large male staff, so it has been a step-by-step programme to move away from that so that we move to female domination. So, it has been a patriarchy issue where along the way it has been male dominance."*

In support of the above, **Participant 12** also revealed that, indeed, gender imbalance is rooted in patriarchy and has become part and parcel of the institutional culture of the University:

My experience is that, especially Blacks, the aspect of patriarchy is difficult, you know it's difficult for them to move away from their tradition. The issue of patriarchy is still dominating in academia. The way my male academics relate with me, it's an indication that African men are not comfortable to have female managers as their bosses. Seriously, I have a serious problem with my male counterparts.

The views above show that women at this institution still feel that there is male domination characterised by patriarchal ideologies such as the belief that women cannot lead men. The experience of having had males predominantly leading from past years somehow informs and encourages the norm. As a result, people find it hard to adapt to change. The views expressed by the participants show that it is because of the University's institutional culture and the men's cultural beliefs on management and leadership that there is still a majority of male managers within the institution. The University of Limpopo is located in a traditional setting whereby traditional cultures still influence people's thoughts and ways of living. Based on the respondents' views, it can be argued that how men treat women leaders in this institution is informed by where they come from and the history of the institution.

Participants in this study alluded to how history and patriarchy still contribute to the imbalances that still favour men to be at the top managerial positions, which in turn leave women at the periphery. One's history and tradition can indeed impact how one thinks and sees things. If such thoughts still pervade even in Higher Education, the likelihood of having women reach the top elsewhere will not be addressed.

Kamau (2010) posits that societies in general view women as being weak, hence few women are in management positions. Based on the participants' responses, such stereotypical thinking can influence how women are viewed in society as well as at a workplace. If women continue to be viewed in through that lens, therefore, even behaviours and attitudes towards them will be subjected to such. This therefore means that how women are viewed has far reaching implications on how they are treated at the University of Limpopo. The retrogressive view towards women should change so that emancipation of women in the workplace, particularly in management positions of Higher Education, could manifest. Seeing a person as weak can indeed hinder one's confidence and esteem, which in turn impacts on their leadership roles (Kamau, 2010). Therefore, doing away with patriarchy can be one of the fundamental

dimensions that should be cherished in order for women to freely be in managerial positions as well as effectively contribute in them (Rubagiza, 2015).

Kamau (2010) alludes that feminist research has proved that the misrepresentation of women in management positions is largely influenced by cultural and social discourses in society in which a woman belongs. How women are treated is a reflection of the societies in which people find themselves. Historically, women were not allowed to go to school but men were allowed to. This led many institutions to eventually be very patriarchal as tradition and culture confined women to perform only household duties (Rubagiza, 2015). These beliefs have left women in compromised situations whereby, even without proof, they are judged and labelled according to societies' cultures and norms (Rubagiza, 2015). The quest to empower women academically is still not by far adequate as there are still many women that are undedicated, thus leaving them to not occupy management positions of Higher Education. This means that women, even in the Higher Education sector, are still seen to be good in supportive roles and not necessary leadership roles. This has a vast implication for women to occupy the management space (Silverman, 2011). Perceptions and negative attitudes towards them still exist (Booyesen & Nkomo, 2010).

The participants did show that how they are treated and labelled in their roles has far implications in terms of their interest to serve in these positions. They allude to how such positions can create stressful environments for them, ultimately leaving them stretched thin.

Accordingly, **Participant 7** puts it thus:

“Eeh from what I observed, these managerial positions, you know, they have a lot of challenges. Most female colleagues are scared to occupy such positions for fear of stress you know, always resolving problems, having unresolved problems everyday it's a problem. Everyday it's a challenge. I think that's what makes the female colleagues not to want to be less interested in occupying managerial positions.”

In line with arguments against patriarchy and sexism, Pini (2005) observes that discursive representation of the bodies of women and men in the Higher Education context maintains and legitimizes women to subordinate positions vis-à-vis their male managers. This means that if men continue to dominate, women are more likely to

conform to the subordination as there is little improvement in ensuring that there is equal representation or female domination in management positions. This has been observed by how women also do not show interest in these positions based on how the current women managers are treated and labelled.

Piterman (2008) mentions that many women are misrepresented in management positions due to lack of cultural accommodation for their gender. This is largely emanating from the view that women have no capabilities when it comes to leadership and management. Just like the participants' reflections on this, the women's gender is not accommodated in the workplace. People still feel and think that a manager or leader should be a male gender and not female. This has contributed to the imbalances that exist in management positions of Higher Education. The women participants felt that the UL men still hold such ideologies that maintain the dominance of males in management positions. Such ideologies are rigid and are based on the myth that women are not capable of leading.

Based on this, one can suggest that any work environment should be stress free so that it becomes easier and fulfilling to work at. When women work in environments that are not conducive, it becomes challenging for them to effectively and efficiently participate in management positions. This means that, how the environment is in the women's perspective, can be one of the causes of gender imbalances in management positions. This can cause women to not apply for management positions and will leave this as a gap in that area. It influences women to end by accepting and getting used to the male dominated environment. With the passage of time, this causes women to accept and not challenge the status quo, arguing that things have always been like this. It ends up wrongly appearing as though the situation is "normal and accepted" by the women in academia.

The above responses from the participants suggest that, for the situation to change, it may require exerted change in the structures, policies and governance of the institution. Women and men will have to unite to end this injustice. The institution's history of not having women managers also contributes to the causes of misrepresentation of women in management positions. This too is largely affected by culture, values and beliefs. According to some of the respondents like Participant 7,

when the interviews are held, this is hard to change as this was inherent from their traditions and cultures in which they live and come from.

Based on the results of this research, one can argue that gender is thus related to culture because gender roles and definitions are culturally defined. If men in the University of Limpopo still believe that women's roles in the University is not to be managers, then this has negative implications on the phenomenon of women leadership. Therefore, observing from the participants' responses, one can argue that, how gender roles are defined should be dependent on one's preference of doing things and not from the societies' expectations that define gender roles.

Taylor (2003) sees identity as shaped by the recognition or misrecognition of others. From the participants' point of view, we can see how the women of the University of Limpopo also attest to this. The finding of the study also shows that, how women get perceived in management positions, is a result of their misrecognition. Drawing from Taylor's arguments, it can be said that issues facing women in Higher Education are largely a result of their misrecognition, which automatically puts women in an inferior position to men.

5.1.2 Gender Stereotypes and Prejudice

Stereotypes and prejudice can also contribute to how gender imbalances in management positions still arise. This causes gender imbalances in management positions as how women in management are viewed determines immensely as to whether women can be managers or leaders in the workplaces. Accordingly, the following is what was revealed by the participants.

Participant 1:

"...yes sometimes we are treated differently but it depends with the people who are treating you differently. Some, especially males, have their own issues with women and gender issues, so it's not about you but the beliefs those men hold about you."

Similarly, **Participant 02** stated that:

".....when coming to males, 2% will be supportive, isn't it we are Africans? Males have a tendency to say 'I can't be led by a female'. I even have an example of those who left the department saying 'I can't be led by a lady'. You face those challenges. Like because you are a woman, that is why

maybe they won't comply with other things ...not because you are not capable, but because they are coming mainly from cultures whereby they're used to female leaders. So, being a female leader sometimes you feel like they undermine you."

Some women managers felt that culture also contributed to these prejudiced ideologies against them. Accordingly, **Participant 6** stated:

"The Black culture sees women as assistants to males and that is how our Black brothers treat us females here; even if you are at the same level".

Participant 4 shared same views that are associated with prejudice and stereotypical thinking associated with women, age and level of education. Some respondents felt some of these factors make their male counterparts to have prejudice against them:

If you are taking a senior position, you have to be educated. For example, when you are making your contribution while you are still at the junior level, or when you still have a Master's degree, people with PhDs don't take your opinion that serious. So, those are some of the factors that I felt like when you are taking a senior position. Also, the level of education also need to be improved so that people can recognise your ideas.

From the above, it reveals that one of the causes of gender imbalances in management positions is the issue of gender stereotype. The data collected reveal that women are still viewed and treated differently by their male counterparts. For the fact that you are a woman, already there is a stereotype towards you, namely, that you cannot lead or make a valid point where leadership is concerned. This corresponded with the Global Gender Gap Report (2013) that pointed out that those general norms and cultural practices are a barrier to women's access to management positions. The belief that men make better leaders than women is still common in the University of Limpopo today. Women face challenges such as cultural practices and social stratification. It becomes harder for one to move up to the top if already how you have been made is judged against. Women continue to be prejudiced and judged according to their gender and not capability.

Piterman (2008) further alludes that gender stereotypes and sexual tensions are the biggest tensions of some of the barriers for many women on career paths to top management positions. "The issue of women playing second fiddle to men still exist in Higher Education as many men still occupy top management positions" (Taylor, 2003). Having few women in management makes women feel unfairly treated by their

male counterparts and men developing prejudiced ideologies and stereotypical thinking towards them.

Socio-cultural norms also form part of societal structure and social behaviour that perpetuate these gender stereotypes, thus perpetuating limitations and constraints to women acquiring better positions in the workplace (Piterman, 2008). This can be evident in how these women continue to be prejudiced against in the workplace based on who they are (Envick, 2008). Societal structures indeed perpetuate and influence this stereotypical thinking that still portrays male as strong and as leaders (Taylor, 2003). Based on the women's responses to how men perceive them, it is evident that, if gender stereotypes can be changed, women can better themselves in their respective societies as well as in their place of Higher Education. The Global Gender Gap Report (2013) alluded that stereotype can be a barrier to women's career path.

The reality is that women are just as qualified as men are. However, due to cultural beliefs and stereotypes associated with gender roles, it is hard for women to not be prejudiced against. Women are still believed to not be better leaders and that they should continue to play the nurturing and emotional support roles in families and the workplace. Therefore, changing or breaking this belief system in all spheres can impact greatly in changing the system of how these women are viewed (Petersen & Gravett, 2000).

5.1.3 Multiple Roles and Work Life Balance

Multiple conflicting roles can be a major influencer in gender imbalances in management positions of Higher Education as indicated by the below responses. During the interviews with the women participants of this study, this emerged as one of the causes of gender imbalances as reflected in some of the following participants' responses regarding this phenomenon.

Participant 11:

"I am a mother, wife and Professional. You know a mother is someone who plays the most important role at home, most of the tasks are done by the mother at home. So, I have many responsibilities".

Participant 07 also had this to say:

“You know family/work life balance is another thing. You go to work and when you get home you are a mother, you are supposed to help children with homeworks, assignments and all these projects, and you have to cook for the husband as well, so it can be quite tiring”.

Participant 8:

“I did have two children and it did sort of delay me in getting a PhD because I had multiple roles. When you take a break of that length, and you come back in again, you almost have to regroup and restart”.

The above is evidence that women at the University of Limpopo still must strike a balance between work and family. The multiple roles leave them stretched thin, as a result compromising their contributions at work, which in turn will then delay them into getting promotions. Some women mentioned that they are mothers, community members, professionals and researchers. While each role has its duties and responsibilities, they equally still need to also find time to be effective in their leadership or management roles that also require attention and have their own responsibilities.

According to the participants, having multiple roles causes gender imbalances as most women have to think hard before accepting a management position. Being a mother, for example, requires one to be emotional, socially, and financially present in family life. Also, at the workplace, one is required to function effectively and be there full time. If you are a wife and community member, there are also gender roles that are associated with your role. According to the participants, all this requires much from them and, as a result, they contemplate leaving a management position to focus more on family life.

The participants revealed that they face problems due to a paucity of time for having dual responsibilities at home and work. Family responsibilities of women are frequently found to be the reasons for gender disparity in management positions. If you are a woman, you are expected to be there for the children, that is, start family life where mostly an individual would have more than one child. Bearing and raising children is also a factor on its own as most times the women will have to take maternity leave and, when they come back, must adjust back to their work life. Women

everywhere, like in every profession, are expected to continue to manage both their careers and families.

Datta (2010) confirms that, when the focus of attention is constantly shifted, much higher in the context of women, it becomes demotivating to pursue an effective career in leadership due to the many roles. More often, women have been seen to choose family life over management roles as they see management roles as being more demanding than family life. Women are bound to pay equal commitment to family and job; those that are considered successful are those who can handle both in a proficient manner. Consequently, there are greater chances of a career rather than the family getting compromised in this process of balancing (Scandura & Lankau, 1997). Shanyanana (2013) continues to argue that, even when women are educated, they continue to remain in the periphery of the system due to multiple roles. This picture indicates that the voices of women continue to remain unheard, and their multiple experiences as a scholar, a mother, an aunt, a wife and so on, continue to leave them stretched thin.

It is in view of the above that the researcher finds this as one of the apparent contributing factors to the causes of gender imbalances in management positions of the Higher Education. Kamau (2010:38) confirms these ideas by arguing that “higher education policies and programmes have remained gender neutral, gender blind or gender insensitive, thus failing to change the gendered structural status quo in the African higher education context.” If policies and workloads were gender sensitive, women would have lesser roles or balanced roles that will enable them to balance their work, thus, reducing the workload for women in management positions.

The reduction of roles for women in the workplace should be considered if equity in management positions is to be achieved (Kamau, 2010). The indication of the fact that, even outside the workplace, women still have many works, should necessitate that women be given lesser workloads in the workplace to allow them to balance work and family life (Kamau, 2010). Also, chores of women in the households should be looked into, not only by families, but by also society. Thus, education and women empowerment programmes become a necessity of development for equity to be achieved. Community members, parents and all other institutions of social life should

review the roles associated with women as they continue to cause gender imbalances in management positions.

5.1.4 Lack of Adequate Qualifications and Support: Heavy Teaching Loads

There are various requirements and expectations regarding any leadership or management position. This is also the same as requirements and expectations that are associated with getting into a management position. According to the University of Limpopo women in management, the University requires a PhD for one to be in a managerial position, and when checking the University's records in comparison with men, there are few women that hold PhD qualifications in the University. Therefore, lack of adequate qualifications and heavy teaching loads are also causes of gender imbalances in management positions. Some of the respondents indicated that they would wish that, if you are an HoD for example, you should not be given any teaching load as the role has many responsibilities. Teaching becomes an extra burden for them. Below are some of what the participants disclosed.

Participant 5:

"I think in this University it's quite obvious. Males sort of progress quicker. I think females do have to work harder to get to where they are in directorships, deanships, in anything going up, due to heavy loads".

Participant 1:

"Before you can apply for these positions, you have to be suitably qualified. Getting a PhD is one of the things which could make you suitably qualified for a management position and I find a pool of women who are qualified to take on the leadership positions being very small."

Participant 6:

"I think one of the factors is that most women don't allow themselves to go further in their studies. Most women they end like, for instance, you find that they think that having junior degrees is sufficient enough. So you find out that even in my department nationally, few women are there. You can only find men. So the University sometimes, even if it recruits, it can't find these people. I mean people who are competent to be in management are few. Like, for instance, having a PhD is scarce on women, it's not this University only, nationally".

Participant 3:

“...because of work load, we are not progressing. The University is giving women time but disregarding the fact that they are heavily loaded. They don't have time to pursue their studies so that they will qualify if they want management positions”.

Some participants indicated challenges impeding them from acquiring PhD degrees or studying further. The women showed awareness of the fact that them having the highest qualification, that is, a PhD, such will put them at an advantageous position of being in a management position. However, most participants alluded to the fact that obtaining a PhD took much longer for them due to the workloads and multiple roles they play as being mothers, scholars and professionals in their workplace. A managerial position does require a skilled professional and skilled personnel to execute a job. Therefore, having a PhD is important and will show the extent of knowledgeability for the women in the position. However, given that many women do not have this qualification, this therefore becomes one of the major causes of these gender imbalances in the management positions.

Many respondents indicated that their delay in completing their PhDs is due to the many roles women play that afford them little time to focus on their research. Heavy teaching loads and family life make them take more time to complete their PhDs. Also, many indicated that, if women were given more opportunities, that would attract them to accept managerial responsibility, which can be in a form of support, incentives and rewards, that would be ideal. According to the participants, a requirement of a PhD with lack of supportive programmes to achieve it becomes a hindrance.

In order to achieve this, this must be supported by adequate programmes that encourage women to register and acquire their PhDs in record time. This means that the institution should put more mechanism for women to register and complete their PhDs, which will in turn encourage them to be in management positions. Most women tend to register for their undergraduate degrees, Honours and Master's and then most take a break before they register for that PhD. Factors such as starting family life, childbearing, and starting early careers also contribute to delays in completing higher degrees. When women acquire junior qualifications and start working, most get

married and start families, which require more attention from them and, as a result, it becomes less motivating for them to enrol for a PhD.

The above also corroborates Sen's (2009:117) argument that "an educated woman has higher chances of living a meaningful life and her well-being is guaranteed because she can participate in decision making both in and out of her home precincts". If this is the case, this means that the stakes of obtaining a higher qualification are even higher. When the women are aware of the benefits of being educated, this increases their chances of having a voice, opinion on decisions or matters that affect them at the workplace; as it is in management positions where decisions are made that affect work conditions and environments. Therefore, when women have these qualifications and are in these positions, they will have a meaningful life and voice in decision making as they would be part of these platforms. Women having PhDs will fully participate at this management level, they will have a voice and also serve in important bodies of the University, such as senate.

Sen's (2009) thinking resonates with Obers' (2014) Capability Approach that, among many things, argues that, if men and women are to do the same work, they must receive the same education. However, women still find themselves with fewer qualifications that can lead them to management positions. In the University of Limpopo, there are few women professors and also few women with PhDs, whereas it is a requirement that in order to be in a management position, you need to acquire a PhD. This was in line with what the participants alluded to. Serving in the Senate Committee requires one to be in a management position, or be a professor. Therefore, having few women in such deprives them of being a part of those making decisions as Senate is one of the important committees of the University that make decisions about the operations of the University.

Daston (2003) states that woman are much higher in terms of enrolling for Higher Education qualifications. However, they drop out of academic career path shortly afterwards. Women are unable to get Higher Education or complete in record time due to the workloads and multiple roles they play. Women are late starters and as a result get hindered by all household chores that give them little time to study and publish. The responses from participants in the study indicated that they do register

for PhDs but, as compared to men, they do not finish on time; as a result, this puts men at a more added advantage when they have PhDs as they will be able to apply for these management positions. The observation is that there is a gender gap in terms of women in professorships and PhD holders. This then contributes to the misrepresentation of women in management positions as many do not qualify. In this case, the heavy teaching loads for women do not also make it easy for them to study further and attain their PhDs that will lend them in management positions.

5.1.5. A Lack of Aggressive Policies on Gender Equity within the University

According to the participants in this study, at the University of Limpopo, there are no aggressive clear policies and procedures to ensure full participation of women in management positions. These were some of the participants' views:

Participant 3:

“What I know is that, we have this lady who is always present during the interviews. She is the one talking about which positions prefer a lady or a man, but I don't think this is the University policy.

The University needs to work on change so that the policy should be put in place. For example, we should say, it's 50/50 in management so we know that if we [are] not there, few positions have to be female. So, it has to be an aggressive gender transformation in terms of Senior Management”.

Similarly, **Participant 7** also stated:

“No, there is no policy on gender in the University, but management encourages women to apply.”

From the above responses, it is evident that policies and procedures were important and needed to ensure women are in management positions. A lack of such remains one of the causes of these gender imbalances in management positions. The participants indicated how the University was not doing much to ensure equity in management positions. The women indicated that there should be clear documents that indicate, in Black and White, that there should be a balance between men and women in management positions.

Some participants felt they are excluded from making decisions and also from participating in important programmes that contribute to the development of their work. This was due to the lack of policy or representation of women in decision making

bodies, which leaves the women's voices unheard. Shanyanana (2013) states that, when it comes to issues concerning women's active role in decision making in management and administration of Higher Education, African universities do discard this expectation to promote the social interest of groups such as women. As a consequence of this, marginalised groups such as women remain in the periphery of the system (Ritzer, 2000).

It is in view of the above that the women of the University of Limpopo management felt a way of them to be heard is to "equalize the voices" of its different actors, female and male academics, but more so to make sure that voices of the marginalised are heard (Shangase & Proches, 2014:78). For them, this meant putting in place policies that equalise gender representation in management positions and higher structures such as Senate and Council. This corresponds well with what Shanyanana (2013) stipulates, namely, that:

the idea of equalising voice is dependent on such actions as increasing modes of inclusion for women through increased access, representation, participation and so on. Such a position calls for a genuine development of human capabilities across sectors of the higher education system, which would engender substantive internal inclusion in which the voices of the women within the system are recognised and taken into account.

(Shanyanana, 2013:38)

This research reveals that concerted efforts are needed to come up with gender equity. Chauraya (2012:21) confirms these ideas by arguing that "higher education policies and programmes in Africa have remained gender blind or insensitive". Higher Education institutions need to be made aware of the importance of having such so that they do not become gender blind. Though some expressed that the institution encouraged women to take on management positions, there was however no written document or policy that could legitimize that. Taylor (1994) opines that those policies should focus more on recognition of the uniqueness and individual identities of groups and people that distinguish them from each other because of historical backgrounds. This would contribute immensely to the representation of women in management positions, that is, when organisations and institutions are made aware of gender balances in appointment and promotions of women into management positions.

According to Sanders et al. (2011), structural factors such as policies and work practices also create barriers for women. Sanders (2011) postulates that there should be clear policies that encourage women to apply for management positions. Based on this, women in the University were not sure as to whether there is a policy that encourages them to apply or be appointed, however, most of them know that management encourages it.

Also, the more men are in management positions, the lesser the voices of women in decision making. From the respondents' view, decision makers are those that sit in important committees and structures, and you have to be in management to sit in those committees and structures. The participants' responses alluded to the fact that women play very little role in decision making as few of them are in management positions and that is where decisions are made. Indeed, the University needs to put exerted efforts in ensuring that there is equal representation in management positions. That way, women will feel their voices and opinions are heard.

The different respondents showed that women still face challenges in management positions. Men dominate management positions as compared to women and this is one of the challenges faced by women and, as a result, prejudice, discrimination, stereotypes and the manner in which they are appointed into these positions still confront them today. There is still a rich traditional way of thinking that still makes people believe in male domination and leadership. In support of this finding, De Waal (2006) argued that we need to bring gender perspectives to the fore in all aspects of development. Lack of training and support for women in these positions is not enough and more can still be done. Prejudice still continues to challenge them in the workplace today.

5.2 Challenges Faced by Women in Management Positions

Global issues confronting women have been and continue to be important in academia. Women face many challenges as they approach the management positions and when they are in the said positions. This section looks at various challenges faced by women of the University of Limpopo in management. This includes their appointments, skills development and training; and also some psychological factors they experience in their positions.

5.2.1. How Women are Appointed into Management Positions

The manner in which these appointments are done poses various challenges to women in management positions. Some of the women indicated that the manner in which they are appointed did not prepare them in advance for these positions, thus setting them up for failure. Also, the gap of not having enough people in management also made women to occupy those positions speedily, and many felt they were not ready. This was revealed by the participants below thus:

Participant 5:

“Isn’t it sometimes we are appointed based on the retirement of the one who was the Head of Department. And then most of the times you find that you are not even inducted or trained in some of the issues, you just have to learn as you move on.”

Participant 7 also shared similar views:

“There was no induction or training. I was a lecturer when I was appointed, and I had to accept double responsibility to honour my lecturing responsibilities and managing my department. You know lecturing it’s not just lecturing, you have to prepare yourself, you go to give lectures, attend to student consultations, assess, mark assignments and like so, and at the same time, I was supposed to manage the department and it came with a whole lot of challenges. At first, I couldn’t cope, I could not manage my time well, because, in most instances, I will find myself coming to work in the morning, not knowing that there is a meeting that I should attend with the Director. So it was a challenge in terms of time management. But as time went by, I managed, I learned to administer my time quite well. Then, I cope with the responsibilities.”

Participant 10:

“When I joined UL, I came as a Senior Lecturer. I arrived somewhere in September, and then, by March [of] the following year, professor...was leaving and he was joining the University of Mpumalanga so he recommended to the Dean of the faculty that I take over. This was a position I was never really prepared for. The Executive Management is dominated by Black males who are traditional; for you to put something down, it is a challenge, especially when you are the youngest and a woman because you are undermined.”

The implementation of ensuring women are appointed in management positions can be a challenging one. Based on the responses from the women of the University of Limpopo, lack of induction, prior preparedness, and proper handing over challenged them. With the way most of the women in management positions were appointed,

many did not have the time for introspection to assess if they will be able to take up the positions. The implication of this is that they would sometimes seem confused and incapable as many were never inducted into the positions. The “learn as you go” system seems to be a norm and can be concerning, hence it poses challenges to the women. For women not to be ready and prepared in advance can be disadvantageous for them and many may not cope. A lack of preparedness and speedy appointments may not make it easy for women to surmount organisational problems and difficulties. Maybe that is what makes attaining key positions very difficult for women and involves many challenges (Chung & Sahgal, 2007). Identification and recognition of their capabilities play a paramount importance too. Chugh and Sahgal (2007) believe that women leadership abilities are formed under the influence of individual characteristics, internal and external environment, support and mentoring.

5.2.3. Inadequate Support, Career Planning and Dual Careers

When interviewing the women, it was found that there are initiatives arranged to ensure women receive training and skills that will enhance their management skills. However, some women from the sample felt it was not enough and more could be done. They had this to say:

Participant 8:

“We can create more support structures, especially for young women, especially undergraduate students and post graduate students. We must provide them with mentoring skills. This will help them later in their lives when they ascend [to] management positions”.

Participant 13:

“I wish there could be more leadership and management programmes for women in management at universities; and systems that can also help them to progress, not only academically, but also in executive positions”.

Participant 5:

“There are so many women managers that really struggled. There just seems to be no support because I think, in fact, I don’t know any men that really have left their position and/or have fallen ill or being so stressed that they felt they have to [pack] up and leave their jobs. So, no, I don’t think there is any support. In fact, they get a lot of pressure and they have to work harder.”

The responses above showed the hunger for more development opportunities that can help women climb higher and deal with the “glass ceiling” effect.

In the context of University of Limpopo, the women did acknowledge the other support programmes available for academic development, however, the researcher sensed the need for more other social support as it also affects their roles and responsibilities. Many women who do not have time available outside working hours to invest in training get excluded from job promotions. Similarly, it is usually women who interrupt their professional careers or work part time in order to take care of their families, which means they have fewer years of work experience and more interruptions, which in turn slows down their professional progress (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Furthermore, the above responses meant that women were not mentored earlier in their junior positions and, as a result, this affected their career planning. Women of the University find themselves in management positions, however, they would still be doing some other teaching and administrative duties. This reflection from women in the University also meant that women are eager to learn and excel in their positions, as long as they are given adequate training and support that will enable them to execute their duties well. Just like De Waal (2016:18) stated, “training and empowering programmes are a necessity for excellent management skills”. Therefore, if this challenge is addressed, women feel they can excel more. In concluding this, this will also not make women to leave their work, be afraid of getting ill and also have fear of the unknown as revealed by some of the participants. Lastly, more support will help them in the dual careers they have such as family work, professional work and others.

5.2.4. Dealing with Gender Stereotypes and the Glass Ceiling Effect

Part of the other challenges women have to face in management positions is dealing with gender stereotypes. Some of the responses revealed how women have to work harder and put in more effort to prove their efficiency and capabilities. There has also been a slight observation of how women are compared to men, whereas each person has their own capabilities.

Participant 6:

“When you go to the males, it’s different; it’s either you are told you are not doing enough, you should try harder. Basically, it is never enough for them, it’s never enough until you deliver. When you deliver, they say very good, very good, but you can do more. So, they push you way far. Some of them don’t even listen to you; it’s their word or nothing else. It’s just because they are our bosses, you just respect and implement. And if it doesn’t work, they will tell you to do something else, you just do it and implement”.

Participant 8:

“Most men when they look at us they look at us as sexual objects. I was refused to be supervised for a PhD. I was taken from pillar to post by male supervisors. I was thinking that maybe people are expecting sexual favours in order for me to register.”

Gender stereotypes contribute to women being unable to fully participate as themselves due to the stereotypes that are harboured by men as the above information shared by Participant 8 indicates. This affects how women think and see themselves, thus having an effect on their ability to also see themselves as managers.

5.3. Summary and Conclusion of the Chapter

This chapter looked at the causes of gender imbalances in Higher Education. The women who are in management at the University revealed challenges such as how they are appointed in these positions. The lack of training and induction into these positions makes it difficult for them to execute their duties to their full capacity as some came into the positions when the previous managers resigned. Therefore, they had little time to prepare themselves for these positions. Also, these women still had to deal with the ‘glass ceiling effect’ that also challenges them, as well as the lack of career planning that challenges their performance in their positions.

CHAPTER SIX

WOMEN'S AGENCY, THE ACADEMY AND EMPOWERMENT

6. Introduction

This chapter looks at how women at the University of Limpopo are willing to change the status quo and the contributions they have made thereof. These contributions range from women forming associations, collaborative writing, creating informal support networks for women in management positions and how they celebrate each other's successes and/or console each other. It further looks at how some of these women in management positions have benefited from such associations.

6.1. Women's Agency and the Willingness to Change the Status Quo

Women at the University of Limpopo demonstrated the agency and willingness to change the culture of the male domination at the institution. In my conversations with some of these women, they revealed to me that they have come up with a number of initiatives that assist in changing the culture. One such is the creation of the University of Limpopo Women's Academic Solidarity Association (ULWASA), which is an association that seeks to promote women excellence in academia, research and leadership.

Participant 1:

"We also have ULWASA at the University of Limpopo. It's a women academic solidarity association which, if struggle arose, there are people to talk to and you know, like mentors, will guide you through the experience".

Additionally, **Participant 5** also stipulated:

"There is ULWASA that really helps women a lot. They have meetings, help each other with research and empower one another".

The creation of this association assisted many women to be in management as various support systems are put in place to support the women. In the conversations I had with the women in management, almost all of them seemed to be members of this association and all somewhat indicated that they benefited greatly from it. Their responses revealed that being a part of the organisation ended a sense of isolation;

they found motivation, solidarity and support. These are all seen as benefits of being a member of the association. According to the women, ULWASA is one of those support associations that help women to complete their studies and encourages them to take on management positions. When this is achieved, then this will challenge the domination of men in management positions.

Forsyth (2010) suggests that variety of experiences, knowledge, perspectives and ideas brought together by groups (women) can provide greater capacity and to identify new strategies and solutions for marginalised groups. It is against that background that the women of the University saw it fit to unite and form such an association that can benefit all of them and change the status quo. Mokone et al., (2013) stipulate that approaches such as this help women to speak to themselves, about themselves and about personal and professional stages of their lives. This has been evident to the women of the University of Limpopo in management as they alluded to the fact that this association offers them support. Most of the women that are in these management positions all come from the said association. These ULWASA women believe, as Burke does (in Cole & Gunter, 2010), that “personal stories help to uncover complex struggles for recognition in higher education”. This then has positive implications on the lives of women in management.

According to Mokone et al. (2013), a key promotion of ULWASA is the promotion of collaboration amongst its members, though the women all come from different disciplines and occupy different rungs on the academic ladder. What unites these women of ULWASA is the need for the support system with other women who face common challenges. The women work together not against each other, by creating an environment in which dialogue is promoted and differences are acknowledged and resolved (Mokone et al., 2013).

The section below looks at how women jointly work together to collaboratively support each other on the various issues they face.

6.2.1 ULWASA and Writing Retreats

Some of the participants revealed that the Writing Retreats organised by ULWASA and the Research Office for women contribute to the success of some of these women.

Participant 11:

“We do have women managers Writing Retreats that encourage women to go and write and finish the studies and scholarly publications. I think ULWASA also organises these Writing Retreats.”

Similarly, **Participant 3** also stated that:

“We usually go away for three days to just go and focus on our papers so that we publish. There we find many other women who are far and we help each other.”

The women of the University of Limpopo indicated that the Writing Retreats of at least three days' duration have been running since its establishment in 2007. These events are held at a comfortable, quiet and private place, in most cases, lodges or hotels with a large conference room where individual writing stations are setup. Participants needing supervision, mentoring or feedback make use of small space venues where they can discuss. This was seen to be very useful for the women in management of the University of Limpopo and this can be seen as one of the important factors of women's agency.

This therefore means that when women attend these retreats, write papers and publish, they stand better chances of getting promotions as they shall meet the requirements of promotion to management positions. According to ULWASA's constitution, one of its key goals is to facilitate the writing of proposals, dissertations, thesis and scholarly articles that women need. This helps them with finding time and space to write; getting feedback to improve their writing; and guidance on publishing (Mokone et al., 2013).

The above echoed with what the participants revealed in response to the questions of challenges they face in acquiring their higher degree qualification and writing for publication. ULWASA's answer to these challenges has been holding of Writing Retreats from time to time to enable women to focus exclusively on their writing. The Writing Retreats serve as an innovative approach to skills development and to the generation of writing output by women. This is an event in which women actually write. It is designed to create time and space for writing in ways that are different from activities in normal academic environments (Mokone et al., 2013). Previous studies

have shown that scholarly writing can be supported by a wide range of methods, including support groups (Boice, 1987; and Morss & Murray, 2001).

6.2.2. Women and Co-Publishing

From the interview responses, it emerged that woman worked well together and encouraged each other to write together. The following are some of the responses they gave:

Participant 10:

“I teamed up with fellow women so that we could work together. I delegate responsibilities to them and encourage that we publish.”

Participant 11:

“A positive factor is that I have a full support of women in our department, we are of one voice and sometimes publish together.”

Earlier, it has been argued that women experience a strong gender bias when being elevated for promotions on both their level of performance as well as their potential impact. This saw them having a need to unite and collaborate and give each other peer assistance and have one voice. According to the women who participated in this study, co-publishing arrangements are effective as they enable them to form partnerships and publish together. These women see the need to still strive and achieve academically despite the challenges they face.

Sandura and Lankau (1997) posit that women in general face problems in research and publications due to a paucity of time for having dual responsibilities at work and home. Family responsibilities of women are frequently found to be the reasons for gender disparity in publication rates. As a result, women made personal adjustments within relationships that help them in collaborative ways of working (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Since these women had common challenges, they see themselves working better together as they have common grounds.

6.2.3. The Role of Family Support and Other Support Systems

As part of women thriving to excel and deal with challenges they face in their positions, the need for family support emerged from the interviewees.

Participant 5:

“I am just fortunate in my marriage that I haven’t had to worry too much. If I work late, my husband will do whatever and vice versa, so I think I’ve had support in my career from the home side.”

Participant 9:

“I am supported from family, and I have a strong family support and at the University. One other reasons why I think it makes it easy for me not to experience that vast challenge is to have a proper professional partner and I am having a male professional partner that supports me.”

The above responses reveal that the support women receive from each other as women, as well as support from friends and families, increase morale, motivation and performance. This can contribute positively to the various management positions they hold. The women in management at the University also benefit greatly from this type of support. Being prepared emotionally, socially and financially has made the women work much easier and more effectively. These are important elements that are required for achieving quality of life. Family support and any kind of informal network have seen to be contributing immensely to the development of women (Marumo, 2012). Odejide (2003) and Lindberg et al., (2011) allude to that when stating that, when one is surrounded by an appealing environment, participation and opportunities become attainable.

6.2.4. How Women Celebrate Each Other’s Successes and Console Each Other

From the previous chapter, it was shown how women are challenged in their positions and how that hinders their progress in academia. However, I picked up that women do console each other and celebrate each other’s successes, and this boosts their morale, confidence and impacts positively on their academic development. The responses below allude to that:

Participant 13:

“There are quite a number of challenges. Academic jealousy. I would site one and as a woman you have to work extra hard and then some male colleagues, you know men, think that they can take advantage and undermine your authority as a woman. But I have learnt to be firm and also to be who I am. I don’t allow other people dictate who I should be. I am quite principled in terms of my work ethics, so I guess that’s what helps me survive through all this challenges. What helps me again to deal with

stress is physical fitness. I start at the gym every morning before going to work. Even my spiritual life helps me to be well balanced in the sense that I am a very spiritual born-again Christian. I read my Bible every morning before I start work and also pray. Casting all my burdens unto the Lord has helped me quite a lot and also maintain good relations with people because you cannot be a leader if you don't influence other people in a positive way and inspire them to do what they are supposed to do. So that has helped me a lot. I also read motivational books; they keep me sane”.

From the above responses, it was evident that the support women give each other keeps them going and encourages them to work harder and still keep their positions. Women have shown the need to be strong, to unite and stand their ground no matter what challenges they face. Some reflected that they depend on their cultural values that necessitate women to be strong. Whereas others indicated how their belief system (mainly Christianity) and physical fitness also help them keep sane and cope with their work. Also that, when other women in their positions do well, that also encourages them to do well too.

Celebrating each other's successes somewhat encourages the women to work harder too because they believe that if one of them achieves, it means they are all achievers. Knowledge dissemination coupled with appropriate support are significant tools to growth and empowerment. Studies have not only revealed the significance of such support but also the institutional loopholes that are often ignored by those responsible for providing services.

6.3. Women's Contributions in Research and Scholarship: Success Stories from UL

During the interviews, it was found that some women play a significant role in research and teaching. Some women supervised postgraduate students, served in important bodies such as Research Committees, Teaching and Learning Committees and also Faculty Boards. These women have also shown to have made massive contributions in terms of research and scholarship:

Participant 7:

“I am the first female lecturer to join the Department. When I joined the University, the staff in the department was male dominated, so when I got in, at least I naturalised the gender issues in the department and when I

became the HOD, still then, I learned that I was still the first Black female staff member to become the HOD. I want to believe that is a success story. The department has not been doing well in research. You know in supervision, post graduate admission and postgraduate throughput, I improved the department as I managed to graduate many postgraduate students in my department. Something that was never done before. It now became a trend, every year in every graduation session, there are Master's students graduating”.

Participant 12:

“I feel like I am part of transformation in the department, especially in research. Because my department was lacking a lot in research, and I think I have a lot of input now. I am the HOD here and I am working very hard, so people are also seeing examples from that and also my teaching. I think I also excel in teaching and the skills I am using there I am also sharing it with colleagues and I am also exemplary on that. I think those two are the strongest points and also my colleagues are also commenting that my leadership is good”.

Participant 6:

“I proudly contributed to promote more than 11 people in my department. One other thing that I am proud of, I started a Writing Retreat for managers. Managers were failing to attend the ones that are organised by the Research Office. I negotiated that managers should also be given an opportunity over the weekends and, get it from me, they were not going alone, I was there with them. That is an achievement. When I see people happy and achieving, for me, that's the greatest contribution that I must get, not for me but other people benefiting from my mentorship and support”.

Participant 10:

“We have our new programme in Bachelor of Science, Water and Sanitation which has started this year. I am proud of having started that programme. Again, I signed the memorandum of understanding with the national Department of Public Works, so that our students can be enrolled for internships after graduating.”

The respondents concurred that there are numerous contributions women make in the management positions if they are given the chance to be in those positions. This is clear testimony that indeed women can bring best results just like men if they are given same opportunities as those given to men.

6.4. Summary and Conclusion of the Chapter

The chapter findings revealed that women have the agency to shape their own careers despite the various challenges they face at the University of Limpopo. Such agency can be seen in the creation of ULWASA, the organisation of writing networks (retreats), and other research/co-publishing arrangements.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

7. Introduction

This chapter looks at the summary and conclusion of the study. It further explains the limitations that were observed.

7.1. Conclusion of the Study

The study results have revealed that there is underrepresentation of women in management positions and that the existing women in these positions still face some challenges. Some of the causes of this gender imbalances in management positions can be alluded to the fact that women in Limpopo face challenges such as multiple roles that leave them stretched thin and unable to take on management positions due to the workload. Furthermore, some cultural norms do challenge women as most of the men in the University are still patriarchal and believe they cannot be led by women. Some gender roles associated with women cause women to not cope in their management positions and, as a result, some leave their positions or do not even apply at all. These roles define the ways in which they see themselves and how they function in their positions. These cultural roles also determine the ways in which they acquire necessary knowledge to develop themselves. Like many feminists would argue, patriarchal discourses and prescriptions form a significant component of social relations, which in turn affects the ability of women to acquire goods and control resources as well as participate in everyday activities in the community. This is why the theory selected for this study is one that argues that empowering women through equal distribution of opportunities and resources helps in ensure that women in management in Higher Education participate in their development.

The current study has revealed that gender imbalances still exist in management positions in Higher Education, particularly at the University of Limpopo, which was the Case Study. The majority of the respondents admitted that there are remarkable shifts in addressing gender imbalances in management position as well as inequality between men and women. They acknowledged that, regardless of the adoption of governmental policies on gender equity, the institution still needs to strengthen its policies and programmes that advance women to be at par with their male

counterparts in terms of acquiring, possessing and implementing all need for equality and balance in occupying managerial positions.

The study discovered that gender imbalance is not only caused by male dominance as the only factor, but rather a combination of various factors. Such factors include lack of required qualifications among women; fear of the unknown among women themselves; and lack of proper implementation of policies and programmes that both advance women and men to occupy managerial positions regardless of gender. Therefore, the issue of gender imbalances in managerial positions cannot be blamed on male dominance alone but it is rather a combination of many factors.

7.2 Limitations of the Study

The study had limitations. Members of the target population are women in management positions with very tight and hectic schedules. Some of the participants kept postponing the interview dates, but eventually the researcher interviewed all of them, except one who was on study leave. Furthermore, some members did not feel comfortable with being tape-recorded. In order to reach a compromise, tape recording was not used on one participant and this was substituted with note taking. In spite of the researcher's attempt to assure the participants of confidentiality, some participants were not free to answer all questions freely as one could notice they had reservations. This could have been due to the fact that they are in management positions and they are few. Casual conversations were also held with Human Resource officials regarding policies and implementation of gender equity in management positions. Some were not prepared to divulge, in an official capacity, information pertaining to gender policies. In addition, some of those officials who had agreed to the interviews sometimes defaulted on their appointments due to leaves and/or other commitments, without delegating other officials to participate on their behalf. This defaulting on the part of Human Resource officials, coupled with their anxiety to reveal information, in turn limited the amount of data that would be collected concerning policy planning and implementation in the area of gender imbalances in management positions.

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ANNEXURES

Annexure A: Interview Schedule

The respondents' biographical data

- a) What position do you hold in the University?
- b) When did you start working in the University?
- c) When have you been appointed in a management position?

Causes of gender imbalances in management positions.

What personal challenges have you had to face in your journey in becoming a Professional?

- a) Did you face any challenges during your appointment as a Director/ HoD/Dean/DVC? Explain
- b) Do you feel men and women are treated equally in this University? Justify your answer
- c) According to you, what are the causes of gender imbalances in leadership positions in this University?

Issues of gender imbalance effect on women in management positions.

- a) Women generally have to juggle multiple roles, what has been your experience in relation to this?
- b) What influence does your gender have in your position?
- c) Do you feel your gender has an influence in the way other colleagues relate to you? How?

Contributions of women in management positions to the University.

- a) What factors affect your contribution in your position?
- b) Are there any institutional factors that hinder your progress in academia? How so?
- c) Describe in detail your successes as a Director/HoD/Dean/DVC? What are you most proud of?
- d) What opportunities are available for other women in this institution?
- e) What contributions do you make in general at the University?

Woman's voices and perspectives on gender imbalance in leadership.

- a) Do you feel you are being consulted on decisions that affect your work? How?
- b) Do you think women are given equal chances to compete for leadership positions in this institution?
- c) What has been your relation with men and women in this institution?

Ways to resolve gender imbalances in management positions.

- a) What support structures are available for women academics in the University of Limpopo?
- b) What policies are put in place to ensure there is equality of gender in management positions?
- c) In your opinion, what do you think should be done to maximise women's participation in management positions?

Annexure B: Letter to Participants

REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY TITLED: AN EXPLORATION OF GENDER IMBALANCE IN MANAGEMENT POSITIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA: A CASE STUDY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO

Dear Madam,

My name is Itumeleng Kganakga, a student in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Limpopo. I am currently, undertaking a research project for my Master's degree. My interests lie in exploring women in leadership in Higher Education; particularly in the University of Limpopo Turfloop campus. To this end, I kindly request that you assist me in gathering information that might be useful to the study and the University at large, through your participation in the study as an interviewee. Please note that your participation in study is voluntary, this means you are free to withdraw from the study for whatever reasons you might have. The interview will only take 15 minutes of your time. Also note that due to your willingness to participate in the study, your views will be respected and treated as your own, therefore, they will not be used against you at any given time.

Should you have any queries or comments regarding this survey, you are welcome to contact my supervisor at 015 268 3003 / tawanda.nyawasha@ul.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

Ms Itumeleng M. Kganakga

Annexure C: Consent Form

ID: _____

Dear Participant,

My name is Itumeleng Kganakga, a student in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Limpopo. I am currently, undertaking a research project for my Master's degree. My interests lie in exploring women in leadership at Higher Education; particularly in the University of Limpopo. To this end, I kindly request that you assist me in gathering information that might be useful to the study and the University at large, through your participation in the study as an interviewee. Please note that your participation in study is voluntary, this means you are free to withdraw from the study for whatever reasons you might have. The interview will only take 15 minutes of your time. Also note that due to your willingness to participate in the study, your views will be respected and treated as your own, therefore, they will not be used against you at any given time.

Please do not enter your name or contact details on this Consent Form. It remains anonymous.

Please sign on the space provide below

.....
Should you have any queries or comments regarding this survey, you are welcome to contact my supervisor at 015 268 3003 / tawanda.nyawasha@ul.ac.za

Annexure D: Request to Human Resources

**P O Box 1611
LEBOWAKGOMO
0737**

21 February 2017

**Human Resource Information Systems
University of Limpopo
Private Bag X1106
Sovenga
0727**

Dear Ms B Mehlape / Mr Moloto

REQUEST FOR THE NUMBER, NAMES AND CONTACTS OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO

My name is Itumeleng Kganakga, a student in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Limpopo. I am currently, undertaking a research project for my Master's degree. My interests lie in exploring women in leadership and Higher Education; particularly in the University of Limpopo. To this end, I kindly request that you assist me in gathering information that might be useful to the study and the University at large. I hereby kindly request the number of females in leadership positions and their contacts so that I elaborate that in my sampling on my research proposal as suggested by my supervisor. This is information on all female HoD's, Directors and Deans. Please note that your participation in this study is voluntary, this means you are free to withdraw from the study for whatever reasons you might have. Please note that the information provided will be only used for the purposes of this study only.

Should you have any queries or comments regarding this survey, you are welcome to contact my supervisor at 015 268 3003 / tawanda.nyawasha@ul.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

Ms Itumeleng M. Kganakga

Annexure E: UL Human Resource Approval Letter



University of Limpopo
Human Resources
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 2409/3510, Email: joseph.moloto@ul.ac.za

27 February 2018

The Chairperson of Turfloop Research Ethics Committee: Professor TAB Mashego
University of Limpopo
Private Bag X1106
SOVENGA
0727

Dear Professor TAB Mashego

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: KGANAKGA IM (200519626)

1. The above matter bears reference.
2. The University of Limpopo Human Resource Management hereby grants Ms. IM Kganakga (200519626) permission to conduct her Masters research on "An exploration of gender imbalance in management positions in Higher Education in South Africa: A case study of the University of Limpopo" here on campus.
3. Based on the above, kindly give her the necessary support she requires.

Your sincerely,

Chief Human Resource Officer

Mr JK Moloto

Annexure F: Research Ethics Committee Approval Letter



University of Limpopo
Department of Research Administration and Development
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 3935, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email:Anastasia.Ngobe@ul.ac.za

TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING: 07 February 2018

PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/18/2018: PG

PROJECT:

Title: An exploration of gender imbalance in management positions in Higher Education in South Africa: A case study of the University of Limpopo.

Researcher: IM Kganakga
Supervisor: Mr T Nyawasha
Co-Supervisors: N/A
School: School of Social Sciences
Degree: Masters in Sociology



PROF TAB MASHEGO
CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031.

Note:

- i) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee.
- ii) The budget for the research will be considered separately from the protocol.
PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

Annexure G: Language Editor's Letter

MM Mohlake
Centre for Academic Excellence
University of Limpopo
Turfloop Campus
Private Bag x 1106
Sovenga
0727

15 July 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

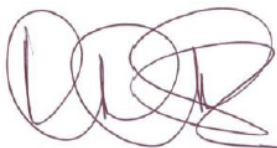
EDITING CONFIRMATION: IM KGANAGA's DISSERTATION

This letter is meant to acknowledge that I, MM Mohlake, as a professional editor, have meticulously edited the dissertation of Ms Itumeleng Maggie Kganakga (Student # 200519626), entitled "An Exploration of Gender imbalances in Management Positions in Higher Education in South Africa: A case study of the University of Limpopo".

Thus I confirm that the readability of the work in question is of a high standard.

For any queries please contact me.

Regards



Mosimaneotsile M. Mohlake

Professional Freelance Editor

0839518828

mosimaneotsilemohlake@gmail.com

Disclaimer: Subsequent alterations are the sole responsibility of the author.