THE CHANGING WORLD OF WORK: WORK-LIFE BALANCE AMONGST WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP AT SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING

by

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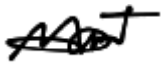
DEDICATION

I, **Thakgatso Theresa Maribe**, dedicate this dissertation to my mother, **Mrs Ramadimetja Dulcie Hlabela**; my late grandmothers, **Mrs Ramakgahlela Dulia Maribe** and **Ms Hunadi Rose Chuene**, and my daughter, **Thatego Abigail Maribe**– without them, this project would not have succeeded. Lastly, my friend **Katlego Rantho** who has been my pillar of support and strength though out my academic years.

Thank you!

DECLARATION

I, Thakgatso Theresa Maribe, declare that this dissertation is my own work and that all sources that I have quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references.



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Signature **Date**

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ABSTRACT

In the African culture, women's roles involved raising children, cooking, and cleaning, but today women have changed this and made a mark in the corporate world by occupying leadership positions. However, the world of work is changing, which has brought too many challenges to women in leadership at institutions of higher learning, requiring them to balance their personal and professional lives. This study aimed to explore work-life balance challenges brought about by the changing nature of the world of work among women in leadership at selected institutions of higher learning. The study used an exploratory research design, following a phenomenology research method which falls under a qualitative research approach. Sixteen participants were sampled using the purposive sampling technique, which falls under the non-probability sampling methods. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data from research participants and thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. Six themes emerged from the research findings, namely: Work Interfering with personal life as the main challenge of work-life balance; high expectations from management level; workload from leadership responsibility and supporting structure as the causes of work-life balance challenges; health and wellness issues as the consequences of work-life balance challenges; and lastly work-life integration pathways used by women in leadership as probable solutions to work-life balance challenges. The study recommends that top management to come up with alternatives such as amending policies to accommodate a balanced work-life; attending wellness programs; hiring more assistants; reducing NQF level requirements for leadership positions; having software where employees express their work-life balance; and women in leadership taking ownership of their work-life imbalance by setting boundaries and limitation to time spent on their work.

Keywords: Institutions of Higher Learning, Leadership, Women in Leadership, Work-Life Balance.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

South Africa has experienced dramatic changes in the world of work, which are driven by several variables, such as remote work, the emphasis on soft skills, and the focus on employee well-being (Bharadwaj & Shanker, 2019). These changes resulted in a significant shift in the role of women in higher positions, especially in institutions of higher learning (Yaldiz et al., 2017). This shift has been accompanied by increased responsibilities for women, resulting in work-life balance issues. It has been historically shown that a poorly balanced work life leads to physiological and psychological challenges, which negatively affect both the performance and the employee's attitude (Shava & Chinyamurindi, 2022). Thus, work-life imbalance may result in mental stress for many women (Das, 2019). As a result, work-life balance has become a centre of interest politically, professionally, and in academic discourse globally and locally (Bharadwaj & Shanker, 2019).

Research has established that the world of work is gradually changing to accommodate women as they pursue careers successfully and manage miscellaneous roles and responsibilities, irrespective of barriers to progress faced in the workplace (Shava & Chinyamurindi, 2022). Men are no longer viewed as superior to women in leadership roles (Gillard & Okonjo-Iweala, 2022). This is evident as institutions of higher learning are giving women opportunities to be part of executive management and are no longer scrutinized (Donnelly et al., 2016). Thus, women are transitioning from stay-at-home mothers to becoming successful professionals (Alliet et al., 2021). In some countries like the United States of America, women have been in leadership positions in universities and colleges and excelled in these roles (Nehemia & Lenkoe, 2023). In South Africa, few universities and colleges have followed the steps of employing women in leadership positions; however, they often do not last as they get impeached or removed (Gabster et al., 2020). It is crucial to explore the challenges associated with the balance between personal life and professional life in the new world of work; as one of the challenges women face, to

suggest possible mechanisms to alleviate the challenges associated with work-life imbalances.

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Work-life balance for women in leadership has become a burning issue in the changing world of work (Malik, 2023). Even though the modern world allows all employees to be flexible and advance in their careers, work-life balance has been one of the challenges women face in leadership at institutions of higher learning (Maheshwari & Nayak, 2022). A study by Bashir and Khan (2022) revealed that women on boards of directors, chief executives, heads of departments, deans, and professors face multiple challenges. These include lack of recognition, unequal pay, gender discrimination, time management issues, less developed female leadership networks, health care issues, elderly and children care, and lack of proper social support. Moreover, management in institutions of higher learning has high expectations from their staff, especially at the managerial level (Head of Departments, Directors, and Deans) to formulate strategies. Therefore, maintaining a healthy balance between professional and personal lives becomes difficult for these staff members.

Research findings by Rosa (2022) indicated that work and family life have evolved into mutually exclusive domains, which leads to friction as they often compete for the same amount of time and energy. Moreover, women in leadership positions find it challenging to balance the cultural contradictions of motherhood and the pressure that comes with tasks assigned to them at institutions of higher learning (Brough, Timms, Chan, Hawkes & Rasmussen, 2020). Furthermore, women in leadership positions encounter challenges finding appropriate and reasonably priced child and senior care for their families (Nehemia & Lenkoe, 2023). Nehemia and Lenkoe (2023) indicated that many female leaders across a range of institutions have a problematic work-life balance, which contributes to high divorce rates, poor family relationships, and workplace conflicts.

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has forced many organisations and institutions to adapt to the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), as people were forced to work from home and use technology to deliver services (Irawanto, Novianti & Roz, 2021). However, working from home meant women had to shoulder childcare responsibilities due to an inadequate childcare system (Hjálmsdóttir & Bjarnadóttir, 2021). Women in leadership experience burnout more frequently than males, which has a detrimental impact on their ability to work from home. According to Molla (2022), 79% of males reported having a favourable work-from-home experience throughout the pandemic, compared to 37% of women. Subsequently, during the pandemic, one in three mothers and one in four women were reported to have considered taking a career downturn or leaving their jobs altogether. Furthermore, when working from home, many women in leadership struggled to separate working hours and family time, leading to longer working hours (Molla, 2022).

To support women in leadership and assist them in balancing their professional and personal lives, institutions of higher learning need to employ a holistic approach when designing and implementing policies (Bahrami, Nosratabadi, Palouzian & Hegedűs, 2023). According to White and Burkinshaw (2019), there are no contemporary work-life balance practices in institutions of higher learning; there is no evidence of a decrease in working hours, tangible and intangible work-life intrusions, uneven departmental adoption, a lack of institutional formalization of policies, a lack of employee voice in the introduction and implementation of policies, policies are primarily focused on meeting the needs of the institution rather than those of employees, and the persistence of women performing domestic duties.

Bahrami et al. (2023) indicated that management in institutions of higher learning often neglect to implement a work-life balance program that can improve the challenges women in leadership positions face. Rao et al. (2022) accentuated that understanding the working environment and home compulsions of female leaders at different faculties is essential in designing effective interventions to improve their work-life balance. Women in leadership are expected to frequently demonstrate superior performance to validate their ability to handle leadership responsibilities to their managers. The

congruity theory emphasises that women in leadership positions often experience a double bind, where conforming to their leadership positions may result in failure to conform to their gender roles, and maintaining their gender roles may result in failure in their leadership roles (Kubu, 2018). This leads to women constantly trying to prove that they belong in these leadership positions and are capable leaders as opposed to belonging at home or in the kitchen. Moreover, women in leadership are expected to be both powerful and nurturing, authoritative yet collaborative, all while avoiding exhibiting emotion or appearing weak, which puts them in a perpetual balancing act (Thelma & Ngulube, 2024). Women in leadership positions are also experiencing the pressure of embodying their gender collectively with their successes and failing is perceived as an indication that women do not belong in the workforce. As a result, women in leadership are continually strained by the obligations of their roles and the burden of being a minority in leadership.

However, there is less information on work-life challenges that women in leadership at institutions of higher learning face, especially in a changing world of work dominated by the digitalisation of services. The constant effort to balance professional and personal life remains a fundamental problem for women in leadership. Women in leadership positions are frequently expected to be ideal in both domains.

1.3. AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to explore work-life balance challenges brought by changing nature of the world of work among women in leadership at the selected institutions of higher learning and to recommend probable solutions for promoting the balance between their work-life roles.

1.4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives derived from the study's aim are:

To examine work-life balance challenges that women in leadership come across at the institutions of higher learning.

To determine causes of work-life balance challenges faced by women in leadership at the institutions of higher learning.

To explore the consequences of work-life balance challenges faced by women in leadership at the institutions of higher learning

To recommend probable solutions for promoting the balance between work-life roles for women in leadership at the institutions of higher learning.

1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study sought to address the following research questions:

What are work-life balance challenges that women face in leadership at the institutions of higher learning?

What causes of work-life balance challenges facing by women in leadership at the institutions of higher learning?

What are the consequences of work-life balance challenges facing by women in leadership at the institutions of higher learning?

What are probable solutions for promoting balance between work-life roles for women in leadership at institution of higher learning?

1.6. DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Work-life balance

Brough, Timms, Chan, Hawkes, and Rasmussen (2020) defined work-life balance (WLB) as the pursuit of fulfilling experiences across all domains of life requiring a variety of resources, such as energy, time, and commitment. Work-life balance means successfully balancing personal and professional goals (Khateeb, 2021). For the

purpose of this study, WLB refers to being able to do profession duties and family roles simultaneously.

Changing world of work

The changing world of work is when the world of work is experiencing permanent changes, which imply new challenges for individuals and organisations (Beck, 2014). According to Susskind (2020), the changing world of work indicates the increasing popularity of changing working patterns such as flexible work hours, part-time working, telecommuting, compressed workweeks, and job-sharing in the 21st century. For the purpose of this study, the changing world of work refers to key trends that are affecting employees, work, and management in the 21st century.

Leadership

Leadership is defined by Cortellazzo, Bruni and Zampieri (2019) as a relationship in which an individual convinces others to work together freely on shared tasks to achieve the leader's ambitions. According to Samimi, Cortes, Anderson and Herrmann (2022), leadership is the procedure of influencing people to actively work towards accomplishing group goals. For this study, leadership refers to academic leaders who lead academics, faculties, departments and administration.

Women in leadership

The definition of women's leadership is their involvement in positions of authority and decision-making within businesses. The idea was created more than 40 years ago by Loden (1987), and it has recently rekindled the conversation on gender equality. For this study, women in leadership refer to women that are Head of department, directors of the schools, deans, executives and managers of departments in administration.

Institution of higher learning

An "institution of higher learning" is defined as a college, university, or other similar establishment that offers postsecondary level academic instruction leading to an associate's degree or higher, including technical or business schools, provided that the school is authorized by the relevant State education authority under State law to award associate's degrees (Machado et al., 2018). For the purpose of this study, it refers to University of Limpopo and University of Venda.

1.7. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is uncommon for women to occupy leadership positions in higher education institutions, as women have traditionally been renowned for raising children and undertaking domestic duties (Bashir & Khan, 2022). However, their family responsibilities do not cease when they occupy these leadership positions, which implies that they are able to perform both these roles successfully. This study adds to the body of knowledge concerning work-life balance, especially among women in leadership positions. Thus, in this ever-changing world of work, it is critical to acknowledge the unique challenges women in leadership face regarding work-life balance. These include cultural expectations, gender bias, and the pressure of juggling professional and personal responsibilities. Understanding these barriers can lead to more focused initiatives and policies to support women in leadership positions.

The nature of work is speedily changing and influenced by the emergence of COVID-19 and the 4IR (Naidoo & Potokri, 2021). Although the 4IR made things easier for women in leadership as they can work from home and complete their tasks, there are challenges with work-life associated with working from home (Austen, 2022). There are limited studies aimed at understanding how the new world of work has influenced work-life balance for women in leadership, and this study contributes towards filling that gap.

Although COVID-19 caught everyone by surprise, employees adapted to new ways of working using technology at home during lockdown. However, technology can contribute both positively and negatively concerning balancing work-life roles for women (Al Dilby & Farmanesh, 2023). The research approach for this study provided women in leadership positions with the opportunity to narrate their experiences. This study explored in-depth insights concerning women's challenges with work-life balance, which laid a foundation for future research.

In addition to providing insight into female leaders and their outreach capabilities at institutions of higher learning, this study will also inspire other women. According to Thomas (2012), the women's drive is in the hands of strong female leaders who have reached the pinnacle of their professions and feel obligated to reach out to and motivate other females who will come after them. This study will also aid in improving women's mental health and well-being because balancing leadership obligations with family or personal commitments can generate stress, burnout, and mental health difficulties. Stretching on this issue can help to determine how work-life balance affects women's well-being; and can motivate institutions of higher learning to create strategies that support the mental health of women in leadership.

Furthermore, the findings of this study and recommendations can assist institutions of higher learning in addressing some of the challenges related to work-life balance. This will assist in designing and implementing work-life balance policies that will reduce stress and workload and increase flexible working hours and rest time for women in leadership. Also, institutions of higher learning can use the study's insights to create leadership programs that tackle work-life balance concerns and give women in leadership the resources they need to succeed in their positions and cope with the challenges they face. The study will further assist in shaping future programs for the development of women leaders.

1.8. THE STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH

This research study includes five chapters namely:

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This chapter serves as the introduction to the study since by setting it sets the stage and provides background information on the subject. The problem statement is discussed in the study, and the aim of the study and objectives are provided to answer the problem. Ethical consideration, the significance of the study is discussed and definition of concepts guiding the study is briefly discussed.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the theoretical and empirical literature on work-life balance amongst women in leadership is discussed. The chapter further aimed to outline theories of work-life balance to understate the background of the study and also outline what other scholars indicated on the work-life balance of women. It further explores the challenges of work-life balance for women in leadership in the changing world of work.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides information on the study area, the research design, the study population, data collection through semi-interviews, statistical procedures used to analyse and interpret collected data and finally ethical considerations.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter includes discussions and presentations on the findings of the challenges of work-life balance among women in leadership in a changing world of life. The literature and empirical results are integrated.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The chapter concludes the results of the whole research and further discusses the limitations of the study, recommendations, and areas for future research.

1.9. CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter One provides an overview of the study, which includes an introduction and background, the problem statement, its aim, four objectives, four research questions, and a definition of concepts. An outline of the dissertation guides readers on the direction of the dissertation. The following chapter discusses the literature review of work-life balance among women in leadership positions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the literature on work-life balance and covers the existing literature by focusing on theoretical and empirical literature. The theoretical literature provides an overview of theories relevant to this study, namely, Spillover theory, Compensation theory and Segmentation theory. The chapter further presents the empirical literature that focuses on previous research findings relating to the work-life challenges faced by women in leadership, causes of work-life challenges for women in leadership, consequences of work-life challenges faced by women in leadership and probable solutions to promote balance between work-life roles for women in leadership.

2.2. THEORETICAL LITERATURE

This section presents theories that are considered important in understanding the "work-life balance" phenomenon. These include three theories of work-life balance, namely, Spill over theory, Compensation theory and Segmentation theory.

2.2.1. Spill over theory

Since the 1960s,–scholars' understanding of work-family spillover has greatly expanded. Early studies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s concentrated on the relationship between the quality and satisfaction of one's non-work life and that of one's work life (Baron, Straus & Jaffee, 1988). The Marshall-Arrow-Romer (MAR) theory of information spill over was established by English economist Alfred Marshall in 1890. Kenneth Arrow and Paul Romer, two economists, expanded knowledge spill overs in the future (1986). Spill over occurs when one role's experiences impact those of the other, it makes the two roles more comparable (Audretsch & Lehmann, 2022).

Although most of the research has concentrated on mood spill over, other factors like values, abilities and behaviours have also been studied.

According to Sundaresan (2014), employees carry over the feelings, attitudes, abilities, and behaviours they develop at work into their personal lives and vice versa. Spill over is described by Bello and Ibrahim (2020) as a beneficial interaction between professional work and family, wherein positive work experiences would be correlated with positive family experiences and poor work experiences would be associated with negative family experiences. According to Hobfoll (1989), negative spill over suggests that having insufficient resources to manage various jobs across both domains may lead to stress and strain and serious family disputes or catastrophes may make it difficult for employees to concentrate on their work, which considerably reduces their production. Moreover, negative spillover has been linked to mental illnesses including depression in numerous research with working adults from the Netherlands, Australia, Sweden, and the United States (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). For example, a female employee who is experiencing negative emotions throughout her shift could be influenced both during and after the stressful time at work and continuing to be impacted by the stressful shift at her home (Wayne, Lemmon, Hoobler, Cheung & Wilson, 2017).

A study by Puranik, Koopman and Vough (2021) revealed that similar circumstances could arise for an employee who is experiencing marital issues, thus both home life and work life may suffer. Additionally, the issues that an employee carries over from personal life may have a negative impact on performance at work. Similarly, pleasant experiences in the home life can improve the work environment, joyful professional experiences like a promotion or the sense of pleasure once a project is done can also transfer to family life (Bello & Ibrahim, 2020). Family and work co-exist according to the spill over theory, meaning that there is no separation between the home and the workplace. Consequently, what occurs at work will also occur at home (Williams & Alliger, 1994). Hence, the terms continuation, isomorphism, extension, generalisation, familiarity and similarity have all been used to explain spill over in the literature (Mahn

& Poblete, 2023). The way that women in leadership manage work-life balance is greatly aided by this theory.

Spill over can be understood in one of two ways: (a) as the beneficial association between personal life and work satisfaction and values of life and work or (b) as the complete transfer of behaviours and skills between areas, such as when work-related exhaustion is felt at home or when family responsibilities conflict with work obligations (Audretsch & Lehmann, 2022). According to a review article by Rice et al. (1980), spill over theory is the most widely adopted viewpoint by researchers studying the relationship between work and family and it has the most evidence supporting it. The self-reports of the individuals provided some evidence in favour of the spill over idea (Bromet et al., 1986).

In their 1995 study, Doby and Caplan examined spill over from the standpoint of potential harm to the subject's reputation. Thus, an employee who is experiencing emotional pain due to the loss of a good reputation or unfavourable feedback from a supervisor or coworker may carry over their negative feelings from work to their personal lives (Puranik et al., 2021). Willians and Alliger (1994) support this by discovering that negative moods leaked more readily than positive moods throughout the day. However, spill over in one area can have a positive or negative impact on another. Mmakwe and Ukona (2018) argued that spill over theory assumes that work environments and family environments are comparable and happiness or satisfaction in one area of life may affect happiness or satisfaction in other area, and this is known as Emotional spill over.

Greenhaus and Powell (2006) outlined that positive spill over is the idea that good things happen at work, and they might improve life at home. According to some studies, positive spillover also known as "crossover" between dual-earner couples is more strongly linked to depressive disorders than negative spillover (Hammer, Cullen, Neal, Sinclair & Shafiro, 2005), is negatively related to problematic drinking and can also have an impact on the depression of their family members. A study by Vasumathi (2018) indicated that the work life balance of women employees showed that spillover

in terms of time, energy and behaviour is typically negative if work-family interactions are rigorously controlled in time and space. The idea that works flexibility enables people to integrate and overlap work and family duties in time and place, promotes positive spillover and is essential to maintaining a healthy work-family balance. Furthermore, according to Zedeck and Mosier (1990), stress from the job might stifle opportunities for healthy family interactions while forcing family members to use their own money to assist the worker in managing the stress.

According to Braunerhjelm, Ding and Thulin (2018), there are two different types of spill over, namely vertical and horizontal spillover. Vertical overflow illustrates how one life domain affects a neighbouring life domain. For instance, feeling satisfied at work might affect how satisfied one is with one's personal life, and vice versa. However, understanding the notion of domain hierarchy is a prerequisite for comprehending the notion of vertical spill over. Moreover, people rank the different facets of life in a hierarchical order, and the greatest superordinate domain, which is whole life, is at the summit of the hierarchy. These emotions reflect one's subjective well-being, happiness, contentment, or life satisfaction. The other significant spheres of life, including those related to family, work, leisure, and community, are subservient to the most superior spheres (Ghio, Guerini, Lehmann & Rossi-Lamastra, 2015).

Spillover can be apparent in time demand and role workload for women in leadership, since long working hours and leadership responsibilities can have a negative impact on personal life (Schnettler et al., 2021). It can also represent emotional tiredness since the expectation to achieve in male-dominated leadership roles can induce stress, which can spill over into personal relationships and well-being, resulting in women in leadership who are unhappy and do not enjoy social activities. Kumar and Sarkar (2021) reported that women leaders frequently face guilt about perceived disregard of family obligations, as society conventions continue to place great expectations on women to be primary caretakers. Understanding the implications of spillover is critical for addressing work-life balance issues for women in leadership as institution of higher learning can build a more supportive atmosphere by harnessing

positive spillover and avoiding negative spillover, allowing women in leadership to thrive professionally and emotionally.

2.2.2. Compensation theory

The compensation theory was developed by Alfred Adler in 1997 and is described as putting more effort into achieving positive outcomes in one area to make up for unfavourable negative outcomes in another domain (Basem, Norawati, Kamal, Munika & Hastuti, 2022). In other words, unhappy employees putting their families first instead of their job is one example of how human resources could be reallocated. A study by Piotrkowski (1979) indicated that males view their homes as safe havens and sources of fulfilment that are absent from the workplace. Compensation theory emphasises that individuals strive to make up for lack of happiness in one area, such as their jobs or personal lives, by seeking out more fulfillment in the other. The workplace and family life are predicted to be a part of the same environment by compensation theory, however, there is a compensatory influence between work and home (Lambert, 1990).

In most cases, compensating for what is lacking in one area may be done through another as a fulfilling experience at home might make up for a less satisfying one at work (Young & Kleiner, 1992). According to Staines (1980), compensation occurs when there is a conflict between work and family. Therefore, an employee who has trouble at work due to workplace conflicts may desire to stop working and this illustrates the compensation principle. Pleck, (1977) argued that one might become unsatisfied with their work and focus more on their personal life, where they feel appreciated or rewarded for their efforts.

Similarly, employees with marital problems might devote more time and effort to their professional life where they see good results for their labour (Soomro, Breitenecker & Shah, 2018). In addition to the above-described disengagement from one sphere, this idea can also be viewed as complete involvement in one sphere at the expense of another. Consequently, an employee might feel tremendously invested in the work experience and completely satisfied with the anticipated results of their involvement.

According to Edwards and Rothbard (2000), there are two distinct types of compensation. Firstly, a person may become less involved in the unsatisfying area and more involved in the area that might be more satisfying (Lambert, 1990). Secondly, the person may seek rewards in one domain in response to unhappiness in the other (Champoux, 1978). In addition to Chompoux's view, the latter type of compensation can be proactive or supplemental. When people change their aspirations for rewarding experiences from an unsatisfying role to one that may be more satisfying, this is known as supplemental compensation (Zedeck, 1992). For instance, people who experience limited autonomy at work look for it elsewhere.

Zedeck and Mosier (1990) divided compensation into two main categories, supplementary and reactive. Positive experiences sought after at home because they are insufficient at work result in supplemental pay. Moreover, reactive compensation occurs when bad work experiences are balanced by good home involvement. In other words, since work and personal life have an opposed relationship, according to compensation theory, employees try to fill the gaps in one area by obtaining fulfillment from the other. Several studies have revealed that people attempt to make up for bad experiences in one area by chasing positive experiences in another. Zedeck and Mosier (1990) discovered a compensating link between work and life roles.

Compensation theory distinguishes between two types of psychological interference, work-to-family and family-to-work (Scharlach, 2001). Work, for example, may be ordinary and undemanding, but this is offset by a significant engagement in local community activities outside of work. Bott and Spillius (2014) indicated that the compensation theory, on the other hand, believes that the relationship between the two involves one domain that compensates for what is missing in the other. In other words, it indicates efforts to compensate for unpleasant experiences in one area (work or family) by increasing efforts to seek positive experiences in the other domain (work or family). Additionally, these efforts are carried out in one of two ways, with one approach comprising increased involvement in one domain (e.g. employment) followed by decreased interest in the other area (e.g. family).

It has been conclusively shown that the opposite approach involves pursuing the domain that provides more rewards and fulfilment at the expense of the domain with little or no returns (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Furthermore, the notion here is that women in leadership that are unhappy with their personal life may be happier putting in longer hours and improving their performance at work, and vice versa (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Lambert, 1990).

2.2.3. Segmentation theory

Segmentation theory was developed by Zedeck and Mosier in 1990. O'Driscoll expanded the knowledge of segmentation in 1996, where it was indicated that work and personal life are two distinct entities that have no bearing on or interaction with one another (Michel, Bosch & Rexroth, 2014). Therefore, work and family are treated as separate entities in the segmentation hypothesis with no contact between work and family life. Blood and Wolfe (1960) applied this approach to blue-collar employees and reported that for people with unpleasant or uninteresting occupations, separation of work and home life happens naturally.

A study by Young and Kleiner (1992) revealed that in segmentation theory, work and family are independent entities, and experiences in one do not affect or influence experiences in the other. In other words, work has no impact on the family unit, and the family unit does not impact work life. For example, a person in a very stressful profession may feel overwhelmed by work and, as a result, may wish to construct a wall to separate work from the family unit. However, according to Lambert (1990), this segmentation happens, it does not occur naturally. Instead, workers intentionally segregate work and home life to cope with work-related stress.

Furthermore, Ernst Kossek and Ozeki (1998) discovered that relationships within the work environment (work characteristics) and within the family environment (family attributes) within two professional couples and indicated that workplace variables such as role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload were connected to job happiness but

not to family satisfaction. Moreover, family conflict and parenthood were associated with family satisfaction rather than job satisfaction. As a result, given the sample they used, this study revealed a true separation between work and family life. The authors of this study explain their findings and classify them as segmentation. This was due to the individuals' ability to separate or segment different aspects of their lives to reduce pressure caused by multiple roles.

As reported by Zedeck (1992) in separate spheres paradigm, the home is a domestic heaven for women while work is a public arena for males. However, scholars who believe that work and family are tightly interwoven aspects of human existence questioned this notion of segmentation (Voydanoff, 1987). Work and life roles, according to the segmentation hypothesis, exist in separate realms and do not influence one another. Therefore, this hypothesis refers to the complete classification of work and family systems in which the two realms are independent and have no influence over the other (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Segmentation theory, however, is thought to have the least empirical support and is hence only considered to have theoretical potential in the interplay between employee social life and work. This concept has been used in work-life balance studies to show the links between various aspects of employees' lives and stress reduction.

The mutual separation of work and life into two distinct roles that are independent of one another is emphasised by segmentation theory. Since the Industrial Revolution work and personal life have always been intrinsically separated by time, space, and function. Zedeck and Mosier (1990) explained this process as what occurs when people intentionally suppress personal life difficulties or pleasures while consciously suppressing work-related thoughts, feelings, and behaviours in the work domain. Furthermore, it has been suggested that it is a way for employees to firmly restrain thoughts, actions, and emotions related to work when they are at home and vice versa, allowing them to maintain a delicate balance between family and work (Michel, Bosch & Rexroth, 2014). Consequently, employees can skilfully plan their lives (Michel et al., 2014).

Since the segmentation theory suggests that each domain acts separately, this theory opposes the spillover theory (Bruke & Greenglass, 1987). Furthermore, it holds that an individual's work and family situations do not influence one other and always operate independently. The family is considered a place of affectivity, intimacy, and significantly attributed interactions, whereas the professional world is portrayed as impersonal, competitive, and instrumental rather than expressive (Piotrkowski, 1979). For example, feelings of discontent with employment can be segmented inside the job domain, preventing these negative feelings from affecting other elements of personal life (Zedeck & Mosier, 1990).

Comparable studies have indicated that work and family have been separated by time, geography, and occupation since the Industrial Revolution (Clark, 2000). Moreover, the industrial world defined segmentation as what happens when people intentionally repress work-related thoughts, feelings, and actions in the family sphere and vice versa. As this has been demonstrated to no longer be true and possibly segmentation is now referred to as the active process by which people construct and maintain borders between work and family (Edwards & Rothbard, 1999). This approach is described in the literature by terms such as compartmentalization, independence, separateness, disengagement, neutrality, and detachment (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). This theory also proposes that one can separate their personal life and work roles, with work serving instrumental purposes within a competitive environment and non-work satisfying affective and expressive needs (Evans & Bartolome, 1984; Lambert, 1990; Zedeck, 1992; Fredriksen-Goldsen & Scharlach, 2001).

Women in leadership frequently seek to keep their personal and professional life separate in order to be productive in both. However, due to cultural expectations, position demands, and gendered leadership issues, attaining rigorous segmentation can be challenging (Dilmaghani, 2020). Women in leadership may intentionally avoid allowing professional stress to interfere with home life and vice versa, a practice known as psychological boundary setting. This can help prevent burnout and improve overall well-being. A study by Rincy and Panchanatham (2014) demonstrated that women who firmly identify as leaders may find it easier to separate work and personal life, but

those who regard family roles as equally vital might have difficulty with segmentation. Added to the phrase by emphasizing that leadership roles frequently need ongoing availability, decision-making, and emotional commitment, making it impossible to totally separate work from personal duties.

Furthermore, while Segmentation theory provides a structure for achieving work-life balance, total segregation is frequently unachievable for women in leadership due to the high demands of their roles. A more integrated approach, balancing segmentation and flexibility, may be required to effectively handle work-life balance difficulties. For the purpose of the study, women in leadership challenges are related to spillover theory.

2.3. EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

To present the underlying rationale for this study, this section focuses on previous research findings on work-life balance amongst women in leadership. The empirical literature reviewed was guided by this study's objective, thus, the focus is on the challenges, their causes, consequences, and possible solutions for promoting work-life balance among women in leadership.

2.3.1 Work-life balance challenges facing women in leadership

In the 1990s there were many variations in the workforce and the work settings in Western cultures; from a manual method of production, the nature of employment, however, changed to a knowledge-based economy (Healy-Clancy, 2017). There was a shift in the gender makeup of persons beginning formal employment from a predominance of men to women. Another factor that led to more advanced technology and increased competitiveness between nations was globalisation. According to Langa and Kiguwa (2013), the interplay of the above variables led to perpetual change becoming a characteristic of most institutions.

As many institutions restructure and keep a core team to save costs and stay effective, there has been a steady increase in unusual forms of employment in South Africa in recent years (Rubenstein, Bergin & Rowe, 2020). When a democratic government was established in South Africa in 1994, laws aimed at addressing the injustices brought on by the apartheid rule went into effect. The Employment Equity Act and the Labor Relations Act in South Africa attempted to give marginalized groups equitable access to opportunities (Department of Labour, 2014). This resulted in an increased number of women engaging in the labour force between 1995 and 2019 (Statistics South Africa, 2019). This also saw a more diversified workforce, with an expansion in women occupying and retaining executive roles at institutions of higher learning. While South Africa has introduced legislation to advance workplace fairness, the nation has not made substantial progress in introducing and implementing legislation that advances work-life balance at institutions of higher learning (Rubenstein, Bergin & Rowe, 2020).

A comparable study by Longman and Madsen (2014) indicated that women in leadership career advancement are hampered by the work-life balance challenges based on the fact that patriarchy and gender are ingrained in society. Along with sociocultural influences that affect work-life balance, personality traits also impact how work and life interact. Based on the findings of Nehemia and Lenkoe (2023), work-life balance was reported to be influenced by demographic factors, personality traits, employment factors, and home factors. Women occupying leadership positions in institutions of higher learning experience many challenges and some are discussed below.

2.3.1.1. Working Hours

Working hours are one of the factors that mainly contribute to the work-life imbalances especially to women in executive positions. This is clearly shown in the study by Perold (2022) which stipulated that superiors often require subordinates and individuals at executive positions including women to work a set number of hours each day, overtime, and complete tasks beyond working hours. As a result, this undermines the Basic Conditions of Employment Act No.75 of 1997 (as amended), which states that, the employees cannot work more than 45 hours per week, 9 hours per day if a worker

works 5 days or fewer each week and if a worker works more than five days a week, he or she should work eight hours per day.

Excessive working hours, including overtime, working on weekends, leave days, and public holidays are primary barriers to work-life imbalance for women who have family responsibilities as they will spend more time on their professional work than with their families (Balamurugan & Sreeleka, 2020). These other factors play a role in how employees evenly balance their professional and personal lives. A study by Uddin (2021) emphasized that superiors think that working overtime is a sign of commitment, loyalty, productivity, competence, and enthusiasm for advancement in the institution as it shows that employees are dedicated to their jobs. Women in leadership often accept more work duties and refuse to take time off to be considered valuable employees for advancement considerations.

According to the results reported by Mbobo (2020), lengthy working hours impact female employee's performance and family life. Long working hours have been a challenge to women in leadership as it has an adverse effect on their health and reduces social engagement with family members, society, spouses, and children. Other problems connected with lengthy working hours include weariness, stress, and insomnia all of which contribute to poor work performance. Balamurugan and Sreeleka (2020) reported that working long hours without relaxation is challenging because the human body and mind require rest to perform well at work. Additionally, women occupying various leadership roles bear great responsibilities as they must care for their families, and struggle to find enough time for them. There is less interaction with families, and this negatively impacts the employees' work performance. Dousin, Collins, and Kler (2022) stated that women require adequate rest for improved health and family problems.

Mbobo (2020) reported that long working hours are an employment requirement for leadership positions and some connected elements including work environment and culture. Women in leadership are forced to work excessive hours to receive large pay, this is motivated by large family size, the demand for more income, promotion

opportunities, improved job stability, and workplace and industry culture. The current study demonstrates that employment requirements for leadership positions, including task completion, are crucial determinants for working long hours (Saraf, 2020).

Noronha and Aithal (2020) argued that failure to complete tasks on schedule, lengthy working hours, night shifts, and insufficient vacation time all contribute to work-life disparities, and the performance and progress of the task suffer significantly. Women nowadays work harder to earn more money to sustain their standard of living and meet their economic demands. As a result, this leads to fewer interactions among family members, relatives, friends, and partners. This also leads to less engagement between children and their parents, resulting in strained relationships.

A study by Dousin et al. (2022) indicated that children who lack their parents' love, spend most of their time doing outdoor activities as they are unhappy with the inhospitable environment at home. This is common when parents prioritize their work time over their family time. Mothers in leadership roles have numerous challenges, including a lack of time for social interactions with their family members and friends. These working mothers are usually preoccupied with demanding schedules (Saraf, 2020). Often, when their children become ill, these working women encounter challenges balancing their time at work, caring for their sick children, and taking them to the doctor.

2.3.1.2. Workload

Overutilisation is a significant issue at institutions of higher learning, especially in leadership positions. Overutilisation happens when professionals are allocated more work than their capacity permits, this often leads to poor performance or work stress (Thakre & Sharma, 2024). Managers have high expectations from employees in leadership positions as they are believed to be expected in their field. Women in leadership are expected not to underestimate the time required to complete given tasks, however, some senior members make last-minute requests, resulting in overtime to meet deadlines. This makes it difficult for them to find time for their families

because they have a lot of work to accomplish and reports to compile. According to Khalid (2023), women in leadership are given targets that do not meet the criteria set for them, they are assigned tasks that are beyond their skills, and they are expected to work harder to complete everything on time, which takes away time to socialize.

A study by Kellerman and Rhode (2014) indicates that the duties of women in leadership positions at institutions of higher learning are quite demanding. These women work in a rigid atmosphere and often deal with academic responsibilities at a strategic level. Newly appointed women in leadership positions have demanding jobs and they work hard to accomplish tasks to show their managers their capabilities, especially in male-dominated institutions. Moreover, advances in information technology as well as information load, the need for quick responses, the value placed on excellent service, implications for constant availability, and the rate of change with its ensuing disruptions and modifications, all demand employee's time and have been putting pressure on them (Anttila et al., 2021).

2.3.1.3. Societal and family expectations

Societal and family expectations can be a barrier to work-life balance for women in leadership as society has certain expectations that women are to prioritize their role as mothers and caregivers making it challenging to balance work responsibilities. Individuals' work-life balance varies based on factors such as gender and marital status, as well as societal expectations that require women to prioritize family and housework over their careers (Johnson & Mathur-Helm, 2011; Matias & Fontaine, 2015; du Plessis & Barkhuizen, 2015). Women often play several roles, including being wives, mothers, family members, managers (employees), caregivers (housekeeping, cooking, and laundry), and church members, and their leadership positions have tasks for them to accomplish. Notably, some women chose these roles, while to some they are culturally imposed. A study by Uddin (2021) revealed that women have always been viewed as nurturers and caregivers, responsible for all aspects of family life, men are often expected to be breadwinners and support their families through work according to the African culture. Thus, societal and family expectations add to the struggle of balancing the work-life roles for women.

Women in leadership positions in institutions of higher learning found it harder to balance work and life versus males as they bearded with a disproportionate amount of responsibility, especially at home (Mazerolle & Barrett, 2018). Moreover, women frequently face obstacles in their work progress since they must simultaneously care for their children and carry out their home duties (Sharma & Parmar, 2016). Since it is socially acceptable for women to devote time to their children, spouses, and jobs, juggling work and family life is challenging (Semlali, & Hassi, 2016). Earlier studies on work-life balance had the drawback of implicitly treating work as a stable, unproblematic factor in demands for childcare, family relations, or another element; family has always been an issue. It is acknowledged that the nature of work itself is becoming problematic (Abalkhail, 2017). According to Ortega-Liston and Rodriguez Soto (2014), institutions of higher learning are rapidly becoming greedy and placing total claims on the time, attitudes, and behaviours of their employees, especially women leaders. As a result, women in leadership put in more time at the office and demonstrate great dedication to their jobs. Despite the family and gender dynamics, care for the elderly, and childcare concerns that impact their work-life balance (Aruldoss et al., 2021).

A study by Abalkhail (2017) revealed that women in leadership positions who are newly married face difficulties when it comes to spending time with their loved ones and working in the office for long hours to cover day-to-day duties as leaders. So, career-oriented women experience time restraints especially when they work late and overtime. Hutcheson (2016) indicated that women have a lot of obligations from their families, particularly if they are married, have children, or need to care for elderly relatives, they must effectively balance their family and professional lives. Furthermore, social stereotypes about gender roles, such as the idea that men should be the breadwinners and women should be the domestic goddesses, have also made it harder for women to balance professional work and family obligations (Ellemers, 2018).

2.3.1.4. Family and management support

Lacking family and management support adds to the struggle to balance work-life roles. It has been reported that work-life balance is impacted by various factors including family size, number of hours spent away from home, age and number of children, marital status, support, control over working hours, flexibility, and workplace support (De Vito & De Vito, 2021). According to Brough, Timms, Chan, Hawkes, and Rasmussen (2020), women in leadership roles with preschool children are more likely to face work-family conflict, especially if they do not have support from their family members as they need to knock off early from work to pick up children at school. Uddin, Ali, and Khan (2020) indicated that married women who receive support from their husbands have less work-life conflict than unmarried women and single parents. A study by Dousin et al. (2022) shows that most working women cannot cope with their work and family responsibilities because they do not have a support system.

Additionally, most women lack sources of support including but not limited to supervisory support, spousal support, institutional support, structural life support, and cultural work-life support. A study by Uddin et al. (2020) indicated that women in leadership also receive less assistance from their superiors and have less liberty when their supervisor is male. The findings revealed that organisational characteristics such as supervisors, the support provided, and the power people have over their work all impact women's leadership aspirations. Furthermore, the authors mentioned the following when discussing their findings: "Women have higher leadership aspiration with a female supervisor than with a male supervisor because they experience more support and job control with a female than with a male supervisor, whereas men's leadership aspiration is less affected by supervisor gender". These findings are significant in the further development of the role congruity viewpoint on gender and leadership and in terms of practical application.

2.3.1.5. Advancement in technology

The inappropriate usage of technology can negatively impact work-life balance by disrupting personal lives. Raja and Soundarapandian (2022) argued that disruptions occur when employees use corporate mobile devices outside of working hours, leading them to prioritize personal interests above work. Maharani et al. (2020) reveals that in reaction to the pressures of competition, achievement, and success, new technologies and working practices, therefore, require more flexibility. A study conducted in Britain found that along with occupations, gender, age, and caring responsibilities, weekly hours worked are a very important determinant of work-life balance (Bagaskara, Hilmiana & Kamal, 2021). Moreover, it also negatively affects the standard of home and family life of women in leadership (Backhaus, 2022).

Furthermore, technology has the potential to both assist and delay the work-life balance of women in leadership. A study by Maharani et al. (2020) indicated that technology has provided easy access to work for employees, and they now are able to work around the clock. However, this impacts employees' personal lives as they are working longer hours as they can take work home due to easy accessibility. Jayasingam et al. (2021) argued that people are continually working because it is anticipated that they will put in whatever effort is needed to finish their tasks. Moreover, technological advancements have raised organisation or institution expectations of employees, who are now sometimes not treated with respect for their personal time as they are working twenty-four hours a day.

In the age of technology-driven connection, there are some difficulties in finding a balance between professional and personal life (Austen, 2022). Since they have a propensity to meld together rather than remain as separate realms, maintaining the strictest separation between personal and professional lives is one of the most important difficulties in work-life balance (Mills, 2020). Even though many employees now prefer remote work options, with over 50% of the Swedish labour force working remotely, there are still some difficulties involved. Moreover, many Swedish young professionals were reported to be under-stimulated by remote work, according to

research by ISS Facility Services (Nenasheva, 2023). In addition, the survey discovered that one in five people felt depressed because of working remotely. A further study by Elbogen, Lanier, Griffin, Blakey, Gluff, Wagner, and Tsai (2022) discovered that distant labour during the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on depression and the general mental health of employees, indicating that remote work may be a public health risk. According to other studies, working remotely, particularly with the usage of digital meetings, increases feelings of anxiety, social isolation, and emotional weariness due to minimal in-person social connections (Elbogen et al., 2022).

2.3.2. Causes of work-life balance challenges for women in leadership

Numerous human characteristics influence an imbalance between work and life. The challenges of work-life balance are influenced by factors, including age, gender, marital status, goals in life, cultural expectations, parental responsibilities, and different personalities (Madipelli, Sarma & Chinnappaiah, 2013). The following are the causes of work-life balance challenges for women in leadership:

2.3.2.1. Marital status

In African tradition, women marry and form alliances between households. The current study established that married women place a higher value on their personal lives than on their work lives. Employees with families frequently struggle to establish boundaries between their work and personal lives, negatively influencing both work and family life (Taşdelen-Karçkay & Bakalım, 2017). Married women who are leaders have many responsibilities at work, and at the same, they need to fulfill their roles as wives. Moreover, married people experience more work-life conflict than single people since they constantly care for their husbands and children. Sheppard (2016) stated that newly married employees complained about balancing the workload and spending time with their husbands and children because leadership positions come with many responsibilities. Women in leadership positions may have time constraints, especially if they are required to work later hours than normal (Malik et al., 2020).

2.3.2.2. Parental status

Women that have children experience challenges when balancing their duties as parents and their leadership work demand. A study by Graham et al., 2021) indicated that the presence or absence of children in the family has a major impact on the level of work-life balance experienced by adults. Moreover, parental status is proven to be a factor of parents emphasising the family function. Household time demands, marital support, family duty level, household income, and life course stage have all been identified as factors of work-life stress. Padmasiri and Mahalekamge (2016) revealed that dual-earner couples without children have higher level of work-life balance, whereas single and married parents have much lower levels of perceived balance than single, non-parents. In their study on the association between workplace policies and family structure, Alami et al., 2020) discovered that the presence of children in the household was the most important family structure element that promoted work-life imbalance. Additionally, women in leadership who must balance work and family obligations are typically impacted by family responsibilities, making it more difficult for them to attain the amount of work-life balance they desire. Family participation and caring for children, elderly parents, and relatives are among the family needs that have been researched in relation to work-life balance (Vasumathi, 2018). This is because they have all been found to contribute to work-family conflicts among women in leadership.

2.3.2.3. Life demand

Work, financial resources, leisure, home, neighbourhood, family, friendship, social involvement, and health are among the more than 170 life demands characteristics documented by Kelliher et al. (2019). According to Sirgy and Lee (2018), many employees who struggle with managing life demands also suffer from emotional tiredness because of psychological and emotional demands placed on them. This occurs when an individual faces excessive demands on their time and energy

2.3.2.4. Age and lifestyle

Work-life balance extent has been found to be determined by age and lifespan and recent generations' lifestyle preferences have shifted (Sun et al., 2020). Employees born after 1969, or 'Generation X,' are reported to enjoy a lifestyle that includes non-work time, regardless of other commitments, and may deliberately seek employee's work-life balance arrangements at work from their supervisors (Dias & Silva, 2021). Additionally, work-life balance works better for older employees at office premises because when people hit a career plateau, they are less tolerant of work-life balance since putting in the extra effort to their work does not seem justified.

2.3.2.5. Personality

Certain personality traits predispose people to work-life balance difficulties (Wei & Ye, 2022). Ünal and Dulay (2022) indicated that the inclination to feel guilty, to be loyal to others, a lack of empathy towards others, the need and want to support family members, and being unable to manage a new circumstance, influence the degree to which an individual experiences work-life balance difficulty. A person's emotional response to a position influences their interpersonal accessibility and mental presence in a variety of roles, and people with high negative affectivity have more unfavourable interactions at work and at home (Padmasiri & Mahalekamge, 2016).

2.3.2.6. Burden of excessive work

Society has long maintained prejudices about women in positions of power because women are known for taking care of their families rather than working in the corporate world. As a result, breaking through obstacles associated with their job obligations can be tough. A study by Jessar and Kazmi (2023) indicated that women in leadership roles frequently face challenging workloads, resulting in long hours, working overtime, few breaks, and ongoing pressure to perform. Moreover, women in leadership positions have little control over the heavy workload that comes with their responsibilities, as they are obligated to lead by example. It is difficult to always

consider the best plan to execute for your firm to remain competitive and achieve its goals, and it requires a significant amount of effort. According to De Golia et al. (2023), there are times when women in leadership positions cannot complete their work tasks at work and must bring the work home with them, which interferes with family time.

2.3.2.7. Work demand

In an ever-increasing environment of long work hours and pressure, many employees become increasingly disconnected from family and leisure activities (Haar et al., 2019). Working long hours at work is considered a sign of devotion, loyalty, competence, and great potential, but it is a major impediment to establishing work-life balance Literature by Chowhan and Pike (2022) revealed that employees in leadership positions who do not devote the maximum time to the organisation are often regarded as less productive, less devoted and are in turn not appreciated than those who work longer hours.

Women in leadership spend excessive amounts of time working and are under much stress because they are attempting to outdo one another or complete their tasks timeously (Vasumathi, 2018). Additionally, some experience pressure from the work environment to never take a break or admit to being overburdened by work. All these lead to a person's work taking precedence over everything else in their lives, which essentially ruins their work-life balance by putting their personal connections, interests, and rest on the back burner (Vasumathi, 2018).

2.3.2.8. Job insecurities

Women in leadership take additional responsibility to safeguard their jobs and are more inclined to speculate about work matters throughout their time. Wang, Zhao, Chen, Maguire and Hu (2020) emphasised that women in leadership positions frequently experience professional biases and discrimination, such as lower compensation, limited advancement opportunities, and a lack of credit for their

achievements. These biases can make it harder for women to reconcile their career and personal lives as they tend to try hard to demonstrate that they are highly competitive in their workplace. As unfair as it is, female leaders may face lower or different criteria than men in similar positions. According to a cultural diversity study conducted by Olaniyan and Hystad (2016), women in senior executive posts are more likely to report feeling pressured to balance respect and likability, overcome preconceptions, and deal with gender-related cultural expectations. As a result, women are trying hard to demonstrate that they, too, are capable of achieving the same things as men. Furthermore, global figures show that women are still taken less seriously as leaders than men as they are less likely to be given official responsibilities and have lower professional development goals (Demir & Budur, 2022).

2.3.2.9. Insufficient trainings and workshop

Global workforce trends and talent investments have led to a rise in demand for women's leadership development programmes to address underrepresentation in leadership roles. According to Pereira (2017), women in leadership who do not fully participate in training interventions in male-dominated organizations are less likely to engage in social networking and self-advocacy and possess higher levels of positive psychology. Jessar and Kazmi's (2023) findings indicated that many female employees express concern about the effectiveness of their organisation's employee programs and workshops in creating a supportive atmosphere for women to advance and be competitive in leadership positions.

2.3.3. Consequences of work-life balance challenges facing by women in leadership

According to previous research and findings, several factors seem to be associated with work-life balance (Verma & Gautam, 2022). Work-life balance is one of many elements that influence employees' productivity at work. Therefore, women in leadership who balance their jobs and personal lives are likely to be more productive both and contrary. The struggle to arbitrate a balance between family and personal life

is one of the difficulties these women face daily. The following are the consequences of challenges in work-life balance for women in leadership:

2.3.3.1. Role conflict

When women are struggling to balance their professional and personal role will result in work-life conflict. It has been conclusively shown that the theory behind role conflict contends that because the obligations and regulations of the personal and professional realms are contradictory, they cannot coexist (Zhang et al., 2020). One might therefore claim that being exposed to stressors in one area of life, like at work, may result in fatigue, irritability, or preoccupation with those issues, which limits one's ability to meet the demands of other areas of life, like family, and ultimately leads to work-family conflict (Hutcheson, 2016). Verma and Gautam (2022) further indicated that conflict between professional work and personal life appears to be reasonably common in most civilizations, mainly for women in leadership. A study by Khateeb (2021) indicated that work-life imbalance can result in work-life conflict as it affects sizable segments of the population in the US, Europe, Canada, and Australia when the demands of work and family are "mutually incompatible." Work-life conflict causes conflicts and compromises in family relationships, which affect when and how families interact, how much time parents and kids spend together, and the emotional climate of those interactions (Bhandari, 2022).

Furthermore, one of the most significant elements that contribute to the Work-Life conflict is pressure from the workplace (Kara, Günes & Tüysüzer, 2021). According to Borgia, Di Virgilio, La Torre and Khan (2022), when an employee cannot complete a task at work and must take it home, this is one of the most obvious signs of a conflict between work and personal life and these are the employees who most frequently complain about the need to strike a healthy work-life balance because their jobs interfere with their personal, familial, and social lives. Additionally, most of them are worried and worn out. A study by Şensoy and Avci (2023) reveals that for female leaders, work-family issues lead to issues at home. The person may get more frustrated and stressed as a result of these issues, which may lower their level of life

satisfaction (Rosa, 2022). Also, if family troubles accompany a worker to their place of employment, they may get consumed with them and create new challenges.

In addition to harming individuals, work-life conflict also has a negative impact on institutions (Rosa, 2022). Additionally, the ongoing struggle to strike a balance between one's commitments to one's families and the demands of the institution can seriously influence a person's life by impairing both their general well-being and quality of life. According to Lamichhane et al. (2023), there is a widespread demand from women in leadership on the right to balance work and family roles in today's busy world were finding time for themselves seems to be impossible

2.3.3.2. Disharmony at home

Poor work-life balance leads to less or no peace at home. African social conventions require women to complete household tasks regardless of employment status (Budhiraja & Kant, 2020). Working women may struggle to adapt to societal conventions, leading to family conflict and disharmony. According to Budhiraja and Kant (2020), women in leadership positions face pressure from family members who are unwilling to share work and neglect their employment status, which leads to the woman taking on all domestic obligations.

2.3.3.3. Physical and mental health problems

Women in leadership positions have many responsibilities that come with lots of pressure, and it affects their mental health. Mental health is a delicate balance that can be influenced by four factors: unfavourable genes, bodily trauma, private demands, and, most recently, work-related stress (Wu et al., 2021). Women in leadership unintentionally subject themselves to so-called workplace stress since the "hard worker" receives more social acclaim. These elements can contribute to a lack of balance in several areas of life. Long and rigid schedules, demanding, intense employment, unexpected work hours, or a lack of autonomy cause women in leadership to have time, emotional, and cognitive deficiencies that limit their ability to

provide care (Lamichhane et al., 2023). It also has a detrimental effect on productivity, job satisfaction, burnout, and turnover at work.

Rendon (2016) stated that work-life conflict had been connected to reduced job satisfaction, increased staff turnover and absenteeism, decreased performance, increased job stress levels, and a desire to leave the workplace. It is vital to remember that turnover is expensive and disruptive. The institution's greatest asset is its workforce, and training new hires to be productive employees in leadership positions takes time (Nehemiah & Lenkoe, 2023). Hence, work-family balance is theoretically and practically imperative for both individuals and the workplace.

Khateeb (2021) indicated that employees who work long hours suffer from both physical and mental health problems, and long hours worked in paid occupations are directly correlated with absences caused by medical illness. Over time, the idea of high performance has grown significantly because it is now regarded as the key to an organisation's success. On the other hand, work-life conflicts that arise from stress brought on by a heavy workload ultimately have a negative impact on employees' performance (Kara et al., 2021). Bhandari (2022) also viewed that job tasks, role ambiguity, and role conflict all affect an individual's ability to adapt and learn, making it difficult to manage their work-life balance. Research examining the connection between stress and performance found a negative correlation between the two factors (Yu, 2019).

Work-life challenges can have negative effects on employees' physical and emotional health and working more than 55 hours per week increases the risk of heart attack by 13% (Mubeen & Rashidi, 2014). Additionally, women in leadership who have a bad work-life balance typically sleep less, which increases the risk of anxiety, a weakened immune system, and even stroke. Borgia et al. (2022) revealed that unplanned absences significantly impact the workplace regarding production and if sick pay is provided. Nehemia and Lenkoe (2023) added and stated that work-life balance issues harm working women's health since they are likely to experience more stress,

headaches, muscular strain, depression, and weight gain compared to their male colleagues.

2.3.3.4. *Decreased job satisfaction*

Being in a leadership position comes with increased expectations associated with being a specialist in the field. Padmasiri and Mahalekamge (2016) indicated that working hard but not being noticed or valued for efforts made might lead to job dissatisfaction. In a study by Gallup (2023), only 21% of women in leadership positions are engaged at work, and only 33% report "thriving" in their overall well-being. The low percentages could be attributed to various issues, including a lack of meaningful work and poor relationships with management. Nonetheless, overworking is a substantial contributor to low employee engagement. Years of excessive working hours. missed major life events, and strain on family life will make female employees feel dissatisfied and resentful at work. This can lead to a loss of motivation and subtle quitting behaviour, which employees resort to in their attempts to recover control of their work lives (Novitasari et al., 2020).

It is no secret that the duties in leadership positions frequently clash with the demands of life outside of work. A recent study by Novitasari et al. (2020) indicated that over two-thirds of employees believe they have not attained a healthy work-life balance. This lack of balance might subsequently reduce job satisfaction. A poll by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) found that women in leadership positions who lack a healthy work-life balance are more likely to be dissatisfied with their careers. Additionally, these employees are more likely to be disengaged at work and mostly likely to quit.

According to Chowhan and Pike (2022), job dissatisfaction can decrease performance. Women in leadership who feel constantly undermined by male colleagues tend to be disengaged in their occupations. They start to put forth less effort, resulting in lower productivity and missing deadlines, as they are tired of putting their effort into their work and not being recognised. Instead of putting their best foot forward, they may

adopt a casual demeanour and perform merely at their minimum. Smith et al. (2021) indicated that all humans have an innate desire to be acknowledged in both their personal and professional lives and feeling valued at work extends beyond simply being recognised for their performance. Additionally, people want to feel that they are valued as employees and colleagues because of who they are as individuals, and if they feel unimportant, they may lose their feeling of purpose inside the organisation and become dissatisfied with their position.

A study by Uyeno (2020) showed that 53% of employees receiving more gratitude from their manager are encouraged to stay with the company longer. Furthermore, Boamah et al. (2022) indicate that women in leadership positions are never at peace since they deal with personal difficulties at home and professional issues at work. They attempt to strike a balance between the two, but it is futile without organisational support. Thus, without organisational support, employees unknowingly become frustrated and cannot give their best efforts to their profession.

2.3.3.5. Higher rates of absenteeism

The responsibilities given to women in leadership positions include a wide range of activities that come with much pressure, leading to them being prone to burnout (Abbas et al., 2019). This may further result in a higher rate of absenteeism as employees handle pressure differently; some will create ways to avoid coming to work and take leave repeatedly to prevent burnout and psychological problems and, therefore, focus on personal issues (Mastekaasa, 2020). Abbas et al. (2019) further explained that burnout mainly occurs when employees are required to complete duties without being provided with the necessary resources to complete a given task successfully. It is indeed stressful and not easy to handle the feeling of being inexperienced and out of control in a workplace on a daily.

Muresherwa et al. (2022) found that employees mention workload (20%) and extended working hours (18%) as factors contributing to weariness, a leading cause of absence, with 46.2% of employees reporting missing work due to weariness. Employees in

leadership positions who are working long hours run the danger of burnout over time, which has a variety of concerns, including depression-like symptoms. Additionally, women in leadership positions worldwide have reported that more often they suffer from burnout resulting from their overload work from their professional jobs and family responsibilities as parents (Tan et al., 2020).

2.3.4. Promotion of balance between work-life roles for women in leadership

A study by Meletiadou (2023) indicated that technology has advanced, which impacts how women in leadership work because they can perform their work anywhere in the world. Therefore, institutions and employees today must be ready to adapt swiftly to the ever-increasing changing work of work. Few literatures have been written on strategies that women should use in their lives to achieve a better balance between their professional and personal lives, and a number of them are supported by anecdotal evidence pointing to the pressures of maintaining dual roles (Heath & Weber, 2020). The following are possible solutions to work-life balance for women in leadership:

2.3.4.1. Having support from Family and management

Women in leadership positions require help from their life partners, children, relatives, and organisations in order to combine work and life roles simultaneously. Akanji et al. (2020) indicated that the influence of institutional culture and managerial support of employees' efforts to combine family and work duties must be considered for work-life balance programs and policies to be effective. Women in leadership positions who are juggling multiple duties at work and home may seek additional help and direction. Organisations should provide access to specialists who can assist working parents in navigating how to succeed in all aspects of their lives, allowing them to maintain a healthier work-life balance.

Vasumathi (2018) denoted that to give comprehensive assistance for parents, management can offer virtual mental and physical healthcare with providers who can satisfy their needs whenever they arise. Health support that is accessible and easy to utilize is critical for women in leadership who are parents and may be short on time and unable to make it to a doctor's office., Gallagher et al. (2020) discovered that "almost every executive mom whom I interviewed has a house manager, a housekeeper, a nanny, a husband or wife who supports them and/or someone else who provided crucial administrative and psychological support" (p. 193). Moreover, the study advised all women who are working and raising a family at the same time to set up a supporting system before advancing more in their careers.

A comparable study by Griffin (2019) revealed that wellness and health programs may help women in leadership to balance their personal and professional lives. However, women in leadership cannot resolve the issues of an imbalance of work-life on their own, so institutions of higher learning should implement interventions for their staff members to find a way of balancing work-life roles simultaneously. The literature analysis clarifies that the issues and challenges that are faced by women are multifaceted; as a result, further investigation is necessary to help women in leadership balance their family and professional lives (Pruitt, 2020). Management should schedule a regular meeting with staff to discuss how they feel about their workload, what they enjoy, what they would rather not have on their plate, and whether they are experiencing indications of burnout (Uddin, 2021). These sessions should be open discussions where employees can express any problems or queries about their tasks.

Kossek et al. (2014) offered the following ten suggestions for promoting work-life balance from an institutional perspective:

Strengthen what you are already accomplishing through improved communication.
Bring all work-life benefits, practices, and policies together, and make them known as a work-life package.
Discontinue internal Friday afternoon gatherings.

If the worker has put in the extra time during the week and there are no booked appointments with external clients, allow them to take a half-day off on Fridays.

Encourage one day a week of work from home.

Provide rewards for exercising away from the office.

Establish and encourage athletic teams, taking into account underwriting a portion of the cost.

Grant authorised community involvement one or two paid days off.

Establish a yearly or quarterly "bring your family to work" day.

Create a "disconnect from work" vacation policy; no computers or cell phones are allowed.

For people who leave the company, especially if it's to spend time with family, create a more accommodative "on-and-off ramp" strategy. Make it simple for them to pick up where they left off when they indicate a desire to return.

According to Akanji et al. (2020), women can be successful professionally as well as in their responsibilities as mothers when they are supported in their efforts to seamlessly blend work and family by partners, family, friends, childcare teammates, and colleagues. A study by Kim et al. (2022) revealed that results of a poll published in 1996 by Catalyst explain how female CEOs balance their professional and home lives. They claimed that women would hire domestic help, pursue or give up personal interests, use day-care 40 services, and form networks outside of the workplace.

2.3.4.2. Flexible working hours

Flexible working arrangements can solve work-life balance in the changing world of work because of the advancement of technology. According to Chung and Van der Lippe (2020), flexible working refers to various work arrangements that give employees some freedom regarding where, when, how, and how long they work. Women in leadership face challenges balancing their workload and family duties in today's competitive workplace. Thus, organisations can assist them in balancing work and life by providing flexible work arrangements such as flexitime, job sharing, shift work, homeworking, mobile working, etc. Moreover, employees can connect to the

organisational system and work at home the entire day with their colleagues or anyone connected to the system. Anderson and Kelliher (2020) suggested that some jobs do not require an individual to be physically present at work, notably positions where an employee works on her or his laptop can allow an employee to work remotely if they have internet connectivity.

A study by Subramaniam, Overton, and Maniam (2015) states that flexibility enables individuals to manage their professional and personal responsibilities better, resulting in a healthy work-life balance. Flexible work schedules might help alleviate worries about the workplace's lack of paid leave, wellness programs, and family support policies. Many academic institutions recognise the importance of work-life balance in Western countries. This includes attracting and keeping talented employees, reducing employee stress, increasing job satisfaction, lowering absenteeism, providing health benefits, and fostering better life balance (Griffin, 2019). Work-life balance-improving strategies can be used as interventions around working hours, such as flexible hours (Mashele & Alagidede, 2022). Furthermore, self-rostering, often known as flexible working hours, allows women in leadership to frequently request specific working hours and flexible start and stop timings (Mashele & Alagidede, 2022). As a result, the employee has more control and choice. Due to this increasing influence, work-life balance has been proven to improve in several cases (Imburgia et al., 2021).

2.3.4.3. Establish boundaries

Women in leadership who struggle to say no should consider setting boundaries on their work hours and planning time for other activities. Basile and Beauregard (2020) demonstrated that women in leadership who struggle to create limitations and convey their needs at work should learn this skill. Setting boundaries at work entails developing good professional practices for oneself and setting boundaries can frequently help women in leadership to be productive and happy at work while also allowing themselves to divide their professional and personal lives. Anderson and Kelliher (2020) suggested that employees must communicate when they will be

unavailable online, and they must disconnect their phones, switch off their work emails, or go to internet-free areas for several hours.

According to Mohanty and Jena (2016), maintaining a healthy work-life balance requires establishing boundaries to prevent work from invading our personal lives. Lakshmi and Prasanth (2018) used six tactics to achieve a balanced life. The first is the capacity to view issues not as challenges but as possibilities; eliminating harmful guilt is the second; building supportive networks is the third step; and monitoring and adjusting to changing requirements is the fourth; setting aside time for oneself and enjoying every second. Additionally, Zuhriatusobah et al. (2023) advised women in leadership to strive to perform at their best so as to manage all of their duties at work and home, as it can be the best strategy to maintain a healthy balance.

2.3.4.4. Prioritising well-being

Spending time on personal care, socializing, hobbies, and relaxation is crucial as it might help one feel better. Chung, Jaga and Lambert (2022) indicated that it is critical to prioritize well-being, which is sometimes regarded as less vital than paid jobs or core. According to Lakshmi and Prasanth (2018), work-life integration is about finding the ideal balance between work and recreation, which depends on your preferences, requirements, objectives, and circumstances. Balance is attained when emotions, expectations, and the environment operate well. Women in leadership need to let go of any guilt, adopt a serene atmosphere, schedule downtime, reserve a vacation in advance, enjoy the moment, and find the energy to ensure that the emotional side of life is managed appropriately.

Akanji et al. (2020) indicated that women must communicate and ask questions where they do not understand, make attainable objectives, be realistic, arrange routines and set aside time for themselves, avoid insane deadlines, plan recovery time, and embrace the seasons of life to manage expectations. Khateeb (2021) also advised women in leadership to avoid terms like urgent and “ASAP” from their lexicon as they lead to more stress and irritability. The third component contends that people’s

surroundings might influence their feelings about balance. Vasumathi's (2018) research findings indicated that women in leadership also need to surround themselves with upbeat individuals, clear the space of clutter, and indulge their senses with candles, aromatherapy products, calming music, or a water feature. A more enjoyable and effective environment can be created by using pleasant noises, fragrances, and sights.

Battur and Kandagal (2022) established an approach called "Mind Management" to promote work-life balance and lessen stress. The Ripples 47 Process is used to manage thoughts: reflect, identify, plan, prepare, leverage, assess, and succeed. This technique can enable women to start transforming outdated assumptions into new mindsets. Moreover, women in leadership can act on the issues that truly matter in life by recognising what is essential. According to this notion, even a minor, seemingly trivial alteration can substantially impact and result in a work-life balance. Furthermore, time management, prioritising, networking with other women, focusing on the future, controlling turmoil, and dealing with challenging circumstances are just more ways to balance a work-life.

Irfan et al. (2023) proposed to assist women in leadership to balance the numerous demands of life. According to a summary provided by Zuhriatusobah et al. (2023), mothers in leadership positions should use the following techniques to fully utilise their mommy brains: reclaim motherhood by telling themselves that they are smarter; determine their priorities; recognise the influence of sleep; develop their mental toughness by turning difficult situations into mental challenges; make use of oxytocin, a hormone produced during pregnancy and lactation that improves memory, interact and work out with other mothers; and prioritise themselves by giving themselves breaks.

Tang (2022) indicated that women in leadership positions might also search online for work-life balance strategies. Many publications and online resources are available to help working parents, such as popular resources for women looking for ways to juggle their jobs and family life, including Parents Magazine and The Working Mother. A study

by Russo et al. (2016) revealed that Hall (2009) discusses a phenomenon he labels mom.com, which is characterised by moms' increased traffic and the intricacy of their varied personal and professional interests. Moreover, women who wish to offer advice on finding a work-life balance, raising children, finding domestic shortcuts, and other topics now have a great outlet through online groups and social networks, with themes like "eliminate the chaos in their life" and maternity apparel recommendations for women as these websites cater to mothers.

Women's personal solutions for achieving work-life balance include joining support groups, and social support can lessen the harmful impacts of stressors (Taşdelen-Karçkay & Bakalım, 2017). This kind of assistance is provided through interpersonal interactions that show emotional care, respect, knowledge, and practical assistance. Women need to remind themselves of their worth, forcefully seek challenging assignments, desire more rewards for their work, and develop the ability to negotiate well. Moreover, women should attend workshops, conferences, professional associations, small groups, churches, and other functions for social networks and communities. According to several studies, social support can enhance a person's complete stress management process (Taşdelen-Karçkay & Bakalım, 2017).

2.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter examined the three theories in relevant to this study, namely, spill over theory, compensation theory and segmentation theory. The challenges of work-life balance on women were explored as well as the causes and consequences of work-life balance challenges. It also explored the probable solutions to work-life balance from sources. The research methodology employed in this study will be covered in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined the literature review on work-life balance amongst women in leadership. The present chapter discusses the research methodology used in this study. A research methodology chapter outlines the study area, research design, target population, sampling method, data collection methods and procedures, and data analysis.

3.2. RESEARCH PARADIGM AND METHODS

The study utilised an interpretivist research paradigm because it is effective in understanding the subjective meaning of an individual's experience(s). The interpretative paradigm contends that reality and truth can be generated through understanding the meaning that people attach to their world views (Pham, 2018). Moreover, Ryan (2018) and McChesney and Aldridge (2019) state that interpretivists take into account the varieties of culture, situations, and time that contribute to the development of various social realities. Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) and Chowdhury (2014) posit that interpretivism cannot be compared to the physical phenomena in the natural sciences, because human beings construct in-depth meaning through their senses. Hence, Rehman and Alharthi (2016) opined that interpretivism is contrary to the notion of positivism, which claims that knowledge is acquired through measured and verifiable facts. In other words, researchers using this paradigm cannot impose what they believe is the truth on their participants but instead aim to understand how their participants perceive their surroundings.

The researcher used a qualitative approach to undertake the study. Several authors are in agreement that the qualitative approach can be used by qualitative researchers to describe and understand phenomenon from the participants' perspectives (Kumar,

2018; Lapan et al. 2012; Teherani et al., 2015). In other words, a qualitative approach is used by researchers who seek to gain answers to multifaceted questions through interaction with participants. Researchers utilise the qualitative approach to collect narrative data from participants to unpack, create verbal descriptions, and form meaning out of the attained data (de Vos, 2011). To Grossoehme (2014), a qualitative approach entails a systematic collection, organisation, and interpretation of data from participants. Gentles et al. (2015) posit that a qualitative approach involves an observation and interpretation of people's views of the world and their situations in their natural settings.

The researcher opted for the qualitative research approach because it is holistic in nature and researchers using this approach remain open-minded to retain objectivity and immerse themselves in the participants' described situations (Kumar, 2018). In support of this approach, Eyisi (2016) and Mohajan (2018) propose that qualitative researchers collect multidimensional data by reading literature, observing behaviour, and holding in-depth interviews, instead of merely relying on one data source. The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to interact with participants by interviewing them and gaining insight and information from them regarding their personal experiences of work-life balance in a changing world of work.

3.3. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study used exploratory research design, following a phenomenology research design which falls under a qualitative research approach. In qualitative research, non-numerical data (such as text, video, or audio) are gathered and analysed to better comprehend concepts, beliefs, or experiences (Bhandari, 2020). According to Goldfarb et al. (2023), an exploratory study is undertaken to study an issue that is unclear, understudied, or somehow insufficiently understood. Additionally, it can be used to uncover complex insights into a situation or come up with fresh research concepts. The exploratory design is suited for this study because the topic is not extensively researched or acknowledged. For example, in a study on issues related to work-life balance for women in leadership, an exploratory approach aids in

identifying underlying elements, lived experiences, and views that have not previously been widely investigated.

The chosen study design contributed to a better understanding of Complex and Underexplored Phenomena. Unlike structured research, exploratory studies allow for a variety of data collection methods, including in-depth interviews, focus groups, and open-ended questionnaires (Jain, 2021). This adaptability allowed the researcher to adjust the questions based on new findings, resulting in richer and more useful data (Jardim et al., 2021). Furthermore, because exploratory investigations seek preliminary findings, they provide a platform for future research. The tenets of ontology and epistemology form the basis of the methodology. Braun and Clarke (2013) demonstrated that epistemology examines how knowledge is construed and what is recognized as valid evidence in qualitative research, which is seen as being largely dependent on the study design and the quality of collected information, ontology considers the nature of the acclaimed meanings/realities in relation to the existence of objective reality.

The study is based on the subjectivism ontological stance and interpretivism epistemological stance that view people as social constructionists with multiple stories to telll (Don-Solomon & Eke, 2018). The ontological and epistemological assumptions formed the cores upon which one's thinking and understanding of the world and its phenomena test. As a phenomenological study, the primary focus of the study concerns the lived experiences of a group (women in leadership) in relation to a certain phenomenon (work-life balance).

3.4. STUDY AREA

The study was conducted in Limpopo Province at the University of Limpopo and University of Venda due to its diversity and the fact that it has the most languages spoken of any South African province. A study by Lekganyane (2020) indicates that most of the rural villages in the province of Limpopo are made up of several ethnic

groups with distinct cultures, therefore there are women with different cultural background access their work-life balance. A study by Budeli (2021) indicated that these two traditional black universities are South African comprehensive rural-based institutions that was established to serve black people and there are few women in leadership positions. The universities were selected because there are less studies around work-life balance experiences and challenges of women in leadership in these universities and by choosing these two institutions, which are both in rural areas, assisted in obtaining larger sample size. University of Limpopo is in Mankweng Zone 1 and University of Venda in Thohoyandou.

3.5. TARGET POPULATION

The population is the segment of the population (often individuals) from which the researcher hopes to draw conclusions (Malthus, 2023). The study targeted women in leadership position from University of Limpopo and the University of Venda. It covered all women in leadership irrespective of their ethnic background, age, type of leadership position or years of experience. The population size at the University of Limpopo is 37 women in leadership. However, the researcher could not obtain the statistic of all women in leadership from Human Resource department University of Venda and it is part of the limitations of the study. The population of this study included women aged between 28-62 years of age who are in leadership positions at University of Venda and University of Limpopo.

3.6. SAMPLING

A sampling method refers to the process of choosing a few individuals to represent a population from which they were selected. Taherdoost (2016) proposes that sampling methods aid researchers in saving time and resources by selecting a small group that is representative of the larger group. The study used purposive sampling. Purposive sampling involves choosing a sample based on expertise, knowledge of the population, and understanding of the goals of the study (Campbell et al., 2020).

Creswell (2014) described in qualitative research; purposeful sampling is used to select participants based on the needs of the research study as the researcher select participant who provide a richness of information that is suitable for comprehensive research. In this study, the researcher purposefully sampled women in leadership because they possessed qualities that helped her to achieve the study's aim.

A study by to Malterud et al. (2021) stated that sample size is crucial for qualitative research planning. However, the final sample size must be regularly assessed during the research process to ensure data saturation. In qualitative investigations, sample size is determined by data saturation and data saturation occurs when the interviewer receives no new information regarding the phenomenon. Moreover, Braun and Clarke (2013) suggest that the minimum sample for qualitative research before reach saturation is 12 participants, however, the researcher reached the level of saturation at sixteen participants. 16 participants were interviewed whereby nine (9) Participants were from the University of Limpopo and seven (7) from the University of Venda. However, in this study, the researcher reached the level of saturation at Six (6) participants from the University of Limpopo. The researcher went on to interview three (3) more participants after reaching saturation. From the University of Venda, data saturation started to emerge with Participant 4, but the researcher continued to interview three (3) more participants and stopped at participant 7. Data saturation represents gathering information from consecutive participants to the point of completing the data set as indicated by data repetition (Saunders et al., 2018).

3.7. DATA COLLECTION

The data collection method used in the study was semi- structured interviews. A study by Kallio et al. (2016), semi-structured interviews focus on posing questions inside a predetermined theme framework and the questions do not, however, follow a predetermined order or format. Moreover, semi-structured interviews have a qualitative quality and are frequently used in research. From semi-interviews conducted, interview guide was formulated with demographic question to make sure

that the researcher is interviewing the right participates, followed up by question that will answer to the research question for the study.

Semi-structured interview was used to interact with participants. This type of interviews encouraged two-way communication and allowed participants to open-up about sensitive issues they are experiencing at their personal and professional lives. The researcher was able delve deeper into issues that women in leadership are facing when balancing their work-life roles as this type of interview does not have limitation. The researcher introduced herself, getting comfortable with the participant and explaining the purpose of the interview. Unstructured questions such as, “what has been like to work at leadership position at this institution?” was asked, it was occasional question from the researcher for clarification.

3.8. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The permission letter to collect data was released from TREC and the letters of request was sent to both institutions to collect data from participants. The arrangements for appointments with possible participants from the University of Limpopo and University of Venda were made. Emails of request was sent to women in leadership from University of Venda to arrange telephonically interview and checking which time slot is suitable for them to communicate. Before conducting an interview, a consent form was sent to the participants to sign and return before the interview day. For both Universities in Limpopo, interviews were conducted telephonically on teams meeting, and interviews was also conducted during lunch time and after hours to not interfere with their work schedule.

Interview guide was followed but not stick to it rigidly, as it was there as a reminder to ask questions that will answer to the research question. The Interviews was scheduled for 1 hours for each participate. Researcher requested a permission to use recording devices record the responses and requested permission to take notes as well. After each interview with a participant, the researcher wrote down her insights and

impressions. In addition, follow-up clarification interviews were also conducted with at least few women at executive level during data analysis to ascertain the provisional findings.

Secondary methods of data collection were used to collect data from existing literature. According to Martins, da Cunha and Serra (2018:2), “secondary data may include data that has been previously gathered and is under consideration to be reused for new questions, for which the data gathered was not originally intended”. In other words, secondary data is data that is not collected by the author; as an alternative, it is obtained from secondary sources such as journal articles, books, and internet websites. In this study, secondary data was used to corroborate the new findings, and/or to dispute the existing literature. The researcher collected data from peer-reviewed published articles from various journals and government documents. These articles were sought from reliable databases such as Google scholar, Sabine and South African National ETD portal.

3.9. RIGOUR AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

To ensure the quality of a qualitative study, the researcher must ensure that the study is trustworthy. Semi-structured questions were prepared and given to two experts or professionals to evaluate them and send feedback. In qualitative research, reliability and validity is not used, however, credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability were used to assess the trustworthiness of the research study. Kyngäs et al. (2020) stated that credibility is when data obtained is accurate/representative of the phenomenon being studied, transferability refers to how well the findings can be applied to other contexts, dependability is a detailed explanation of the study methodology and analysis that enables the study to be reproduced and confirmability refers to the efforts taken to ensure that the data and findings are not influenced by participant or researcher bias. Credibility was assured by making sure that research results are reliable and plausible by quoting some of participants’ word-for-word responses as extracted from the recording devices and notes taken during interviews. Dependability was ensured by ascertaining that the results of the study could be

repeated under identical circumstances. Confirmability was also ensured by sharing results with the participants in order to ensure that data and the conclusions drawn relate to the collected data while transferability assured by making sure that the result of the study is applied specifically to the higher education setting or context and women in leadership only.

3.10. DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis in qualitative studies entails organising acquired data into key themes or patterns to produce findings (de Vos et al., 2011). The study used thematic analysis as it involves scanning through textual data, coding those concepts, spotting emerging themes and Inductive analytical techniques will also be used in the process of thematic induction. Khaldi (2017) indicates that qualitative researchers use inductive reasoning, and they start with specific research questions and make general conclusions from their findings. Thus, it was of paramount importance for the researcher to use a qualitative approach that facilitated precise thematic categorisation of the collected participant data. It is in this context that the researcher analysed data using inductive thematic analyses. Thematic analysis was done through Microsoft Excel by creating a structured table where each row indicates a piece of text, and the columns were utilized to code and classify those text categories into themes, through characteristics like selection, separating, and conditional formatting to detect patterns and common themes within the data collected.

According to Kiger and Varpio (2020), inductive thematic analysis is a data analysis method employed in qualitative studies to bring order to and find meaning in the collected data. Clarke and Braun (2006) claim that researchers who use an inductive method of analysis are not influenced by pre-existing data. In support of this assertion, Creswell (2014) states that these researchers rely mainly on the data collected from the field before drawing conclusions. In this study, the researcher relied on data collected from interviews (not theory) to conclude the study. Again, the inductive thematic analysis method enabled the researcher to organise themes and achieve an understanding by interpreting participants' recounts of their lived experiences. Six

steps of Braun and Clarkes (2006) (Familiarisation, generating themes, coding, defining themes, reviewing themes and summarisation) was followed for analysing the data collected from the participants. The researcher was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2014) six steps of data analysis:

Step 1: Familiarisation with data

Familiarisation with data is the first step that entails a deep understanding of data achieved by reading textual data, listening to audio recordings, and watching videos. Following the process of data collection, the researcher immersed herself with data that was collected, read interview transcripts, and listened to audio recordings to gain a clear understanding of the data. Byrne (2022) proposes that understanding the data before proceeding to the next stage helps the researcher to identify information that may be relevant to research questions. For that reason, the researcher reverted back to participants to verify her interpretations of their statements to eliminate misinterpretation or misunderstanding. Communicating with participants again enabled the researcher to be intimately familiar with the data. Subsequently, the researcher commenced with data transcription. Although the transcription of data is time-consuming and monotonous, the researcher-maintained focus to ensure objectivity and to equally consider every angle of the dataset. Once the researcher completed the first step, she proceeded to the second stage, namely data-coding.

Step 2: Generating codes

This step is marked by generating codes to order the collected data. According to Byrne (2022), this phase can commence when a researcher is completely familiar with collected data and has an idea of what the data is about and has seen what interests them. As such, the researcher categorised the collected data into consistent categories guided by the researched phenomenon. The researcher grouped similarities in data and arranged them systematically, while simultaneously reducing

the unsolicited data. In other words, the researcher progressed from unstructured data to achieving a firm notion of then data contents. Moreover, the researcher utilised various colours to highlight the important areas, as data coding was done manually. Following the development of initial codes and a list of different codes across the data set, the researcher moved to the next phase of generating themes.

Step 3: Identifying themes

This step follows code creation and is the stage during which the researcher sorts and channels the coded data into themes. DeSantis and Ugarriza (2000) underscored that a theme is a concept used by researchers to describe consistency and regularity of data during data analysis in qualitative research. In the same vein, Byrne (2022) define a theme as and its variant manifestations. As such, a theme captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole. Accordingly, the researcher captured critical points of data that were related to the research questions and used them to create themes.

Step 4: Reviewing themes

This step involves reviewing emerging themes to verify whether they align with the whole data set. In this study, the researcher reviewed the developed themes against the codes to establish if the data arranged into codes worked in relation to the themes. In addition, the researcher re-visited themes that lacked coherence and not were not supported with enough data to combine and/or form new themes. This is supported by Braun and Clarke (2013) who reiterate that differences observed in established themes should be easily recognised, and all themes must be comprehensible and eloquent. Nowell et al. (2017) claim that the fourth step allows the researcher to add themes that were not covered by an existing code, or to delete those that repeat themselves. In reviewing the themes, the researcher ensured that they addressed the study objectives.

Step 5: Defining themes

This step involves defining and naming themes. In other words, the researcher should identify and capture the meaning of each theme that emerges from the collected data. In this study, the researcher determined unique and non-overlapping themes that addressed the research questions and guaranteed that the themes were supported by extracts from the collected data. Furthermore, the researcher produced concise theme names and operational definitions that provided a summary of the study. According to Braun and Clarke (2013), developed themes should be brief and provide the reader with a sense of what the theme is about. In Chapter 4, the researcher explains each theme in the introductory sentence.

Step 5: Summarisation

This is the final step of data analysis in which the researcher writes and produces a report. At this stage, the researcher has completed the data analysis process and produced an interpretable piece of writing in the form of a dissertation. The report writing is presented in Chapter 4, where the researcher presents the theme, including the definitions, interpretations of the findings, and a discussion of findings guided by the theoretical framework that guides the study.

3.11. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Permission to conduct the study

Permission to conduct this study was obtained from the University of Limpopo Ethics Committee (TREC) and from University of Venda, permission was obtained from Research Ethics Committees (UREC).

Informed consent

Participants agreed to partake in the research and was made aware that they can cease participating in the research if they want to. The participants were given an informed consent form to sign. The researcher requested permission to record the interview from the participants.

Voluntary participation

Participants participated in the study out of their own free will. They were not coerced in any way or promised incentives for participation. When the researcher sent an email requesting their participation, the participants had a choice to respond, "I am interested," indicating that their participation stems from their curiosity or “I am not interested”. Data was collected from those who were interested to participate in this study.

Confidentiality

Participants were made aware of the extent to which their responses will be kept confidential and all participants who partake in the study adhered to confidentiality agreement. The information collected was accessed by the researcher only. The researcher used pseudonyms such as Participant 1 to refer to those who participated in the study. The collected data was stored in a password-encrypted Google Drive.

Avoiding biasness

To avoid bias in the study, no preconceived ideas that influenced the outcome of the study were used. The researcher presented the results the way they are, and extracts were used to support the participants’ word-for-word responses.

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Anonymity

Anonymity was maintained through strict controlled access to the collected data and data was presented I such a way that responses could not be linked to a particular participant. Participants were not asked to provide personal details that compromise their identity.

Autonomy

Participants were informed of all the information that is necessary for them to know. They were allowed to express their thoughts and concerns freely, without any interruptions or judgement.

Avoidance of harm

The best interests of the participants were upheld. They were not coerced into doing or saying anything that they choose not to do, or which may pose them to possible harm. They were free to refrain from responding to any questions perceived intrusive. Participants who seemed to have emotional and psychological problems, they were referred/advised to seek professional assistance.

3.12. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter thoroughly explained the study area, research design, target population, sampling method, sample size, data gathering technique, data collection procedure and data analysis. In every situation where data collecting concerned a targeted demographic, ethical considerations were thoroughly explored and regarded as a crucial step to take. The study's findings are the main topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined the methodology, system of methods used in the study. The present chapter focuses on the presentation of results of the data collected from the participants through semi- structured interview using interview guide that had demographic questions and 15 interview questions. The interviews were conducted online using Microsoft Teams with women in leadership position at University of Limpopo and University of Venda in Limpopo province. This chapter is structured in such a way that the demographic of research is presented first and followed by the presentation of the research findings on the work-life balance amongst women in leadership positions.

4.2. DEMOGRAPHICS PROFILE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

This study comprised 16 participants in leadership positions, including 9 from the University of Limpopo and 7 from the University of Venda. The demographic information for participants from the two institutions is presented below.

4.2.1. Demographics profile of participants

This section provides details on the demographics of the employees who participated in the research. The demographic data comprises age, race, marital status, children, position, highest qualification, and years of experience.

4.2.1.1. Age

From Figure 4.1 below, the age profile of women in leadership seems to be slightly different in both institutions. The age categories range between 28 and above 65 years. As depicted in Figure 4.1, at the University of Limpopo, 22% of the participants are in their early life-career stages (28-35 years), 22% in their middle life-career stages (40-50 years) and 56% in their late life-career stages. At the University of Venda, 28% of the participants are in their early life-career stages (28-35 years), 57% are in their middle life-career stages (40-50 years), and 15% are in their late life-career stages. The number of women in leadership roles has climbed to 57% at the University of Venda between ages 40-50 years compared to the University of Limpopo with 22%. In their 40s, women tend to have more experience in the world of work, which means they faced challenges and did not give up but came up with solutions to their challenges. Moreover, the University of Limpopo has more women in leadership in their late life-career stages compared to the University of Venda. Some women, at their late age, are no longer energetic and usually do not wish to continue their functions in the institutions.

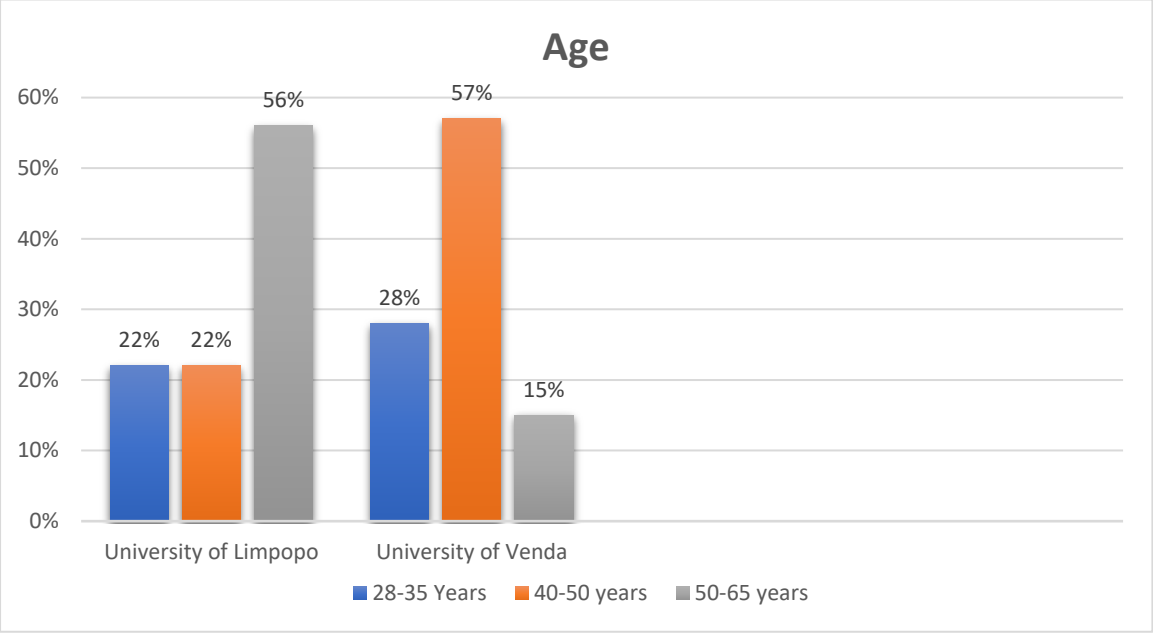

Figure 4.1. Age

4.2.1.2. Race

As demonstrated in Table 4.1 and Figure 4.2 and table 4.1, the race of the participants is black, white, coloured and Indian, where 44% are black, 22% are white, 12% are coloured, and 22% are Indian. University of Venda has 100% black participants. The dominant race in the study in both institutions is black, and this might be influenced by the fact that both these institutions are based in the black communities in the Limpopo province.

Table 4.1*:* Race

	Institutions of higher learning	
Race	***University of Limpopo***	***University of Venda***
Black	4	7
White	2	0
Coloured	1	0
Indians	2	0
Total	9	7

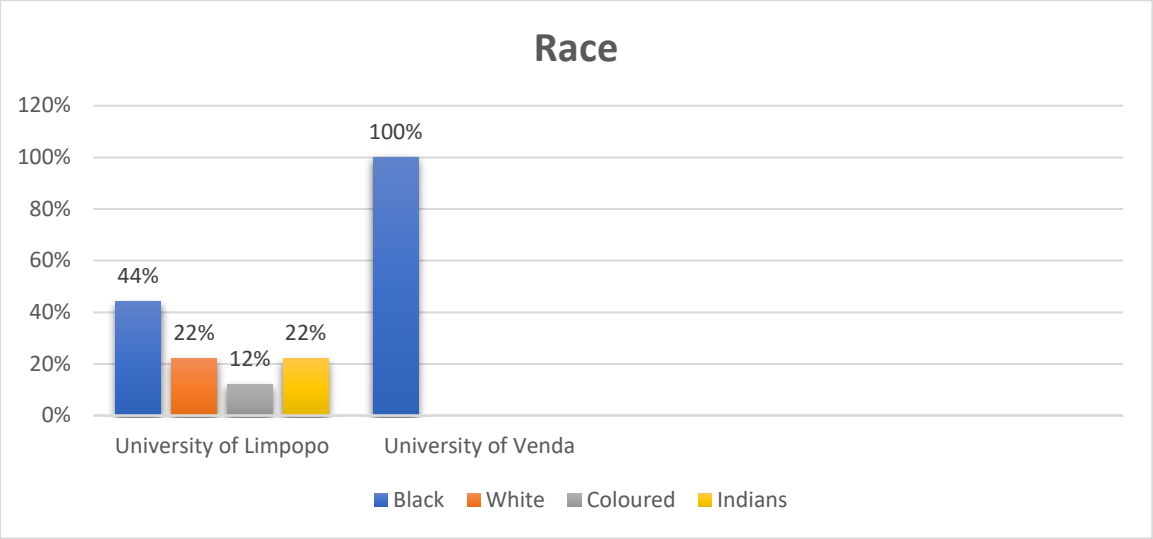

Figure 4.2. Race

4.2.1.3. Marital status

Figure 4.3. presents the marital status of the participants where University of Limpopo has 11% are single, 67% are married and 22% divorced. 11% that are single and 22% that are divorced, they have imbalanced work-life role. Most participant are married with 67% and some have family support while most are not able to balance their roles as wife, mothers and leaders at the same time. Moreover, University of Venda has 29% of participants that are single, 28% are married and 43% are divorced. The results confirmed that most of them are divorced and raising their children alone as single parents, and their children are in boarding schools compared to University of Limpopo as it has more married women that raise their children and have supportive husbands.

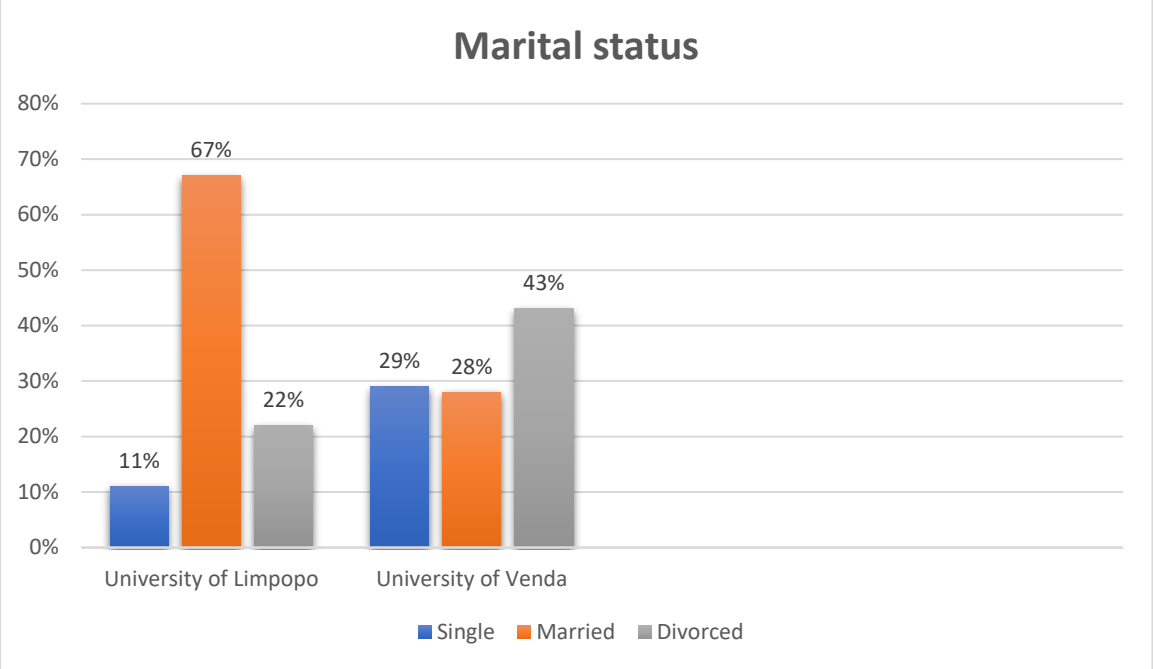

Figure 4.3. Marital status

4.2.1.4. Children

Figure 4.4 shows the number of children the participants have. At the University of Limpopo, 22% of the participants have no children, 22% have 1 child, 44% have 2 children and 12% have 3 children. The percentage of those with 3 children is lower, at

12%, as women in leadership positions have a lot of responsibilities, and most women do not want their children to suffer because they will not have time to spend with them. At the University of Venda, 28% of participants have no children, 29% have 1 child, 29% have 2 children and 14% have 3 children. The findings indicate that there is an equilibrium between those who have no children and those who have one child. Women in leadership in both institutions have a lower percentage of three children, which I believe has to do with not having time to look after more children and growing their families since they have a lot of responsibility at work.

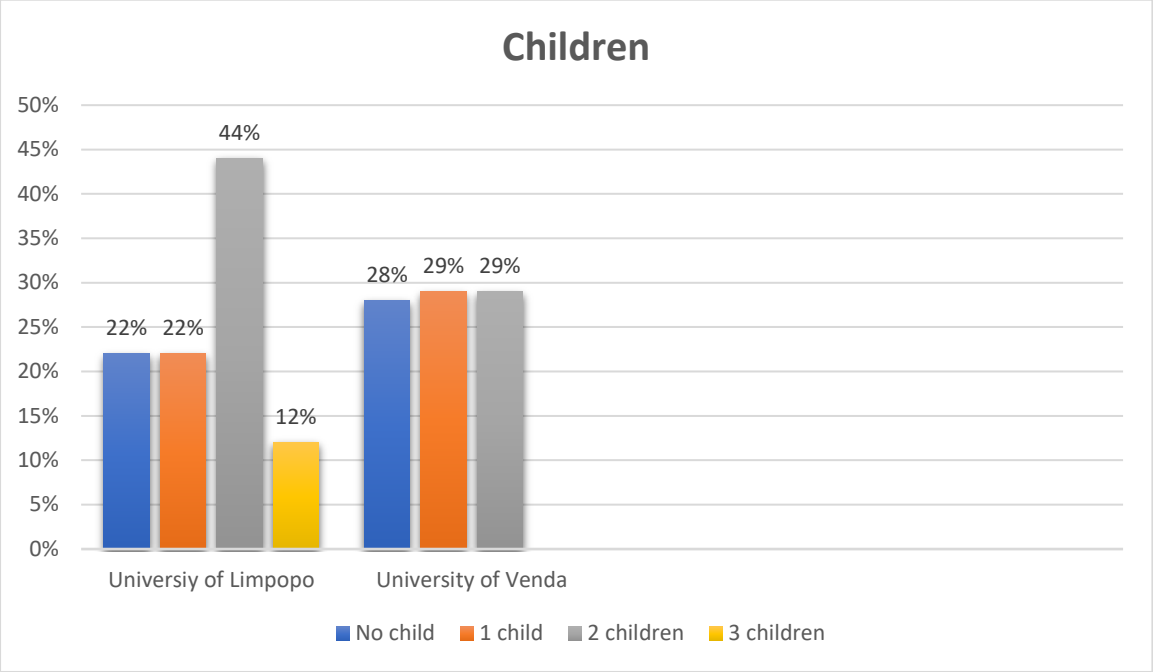

Figure 4.4. Children

4.2.1.5. Position

Figure 4.5 demonstrate the positions of the participants. In University of Limpopo, the majority of the participants are on 5-year contract in their leadership position where 33% are Administration managers, 22% are Directors and 45% are Head of Department. University of Venda a high majority of participants have permanent leadership roles, with 71% being administrative staff and 29% being department directors.

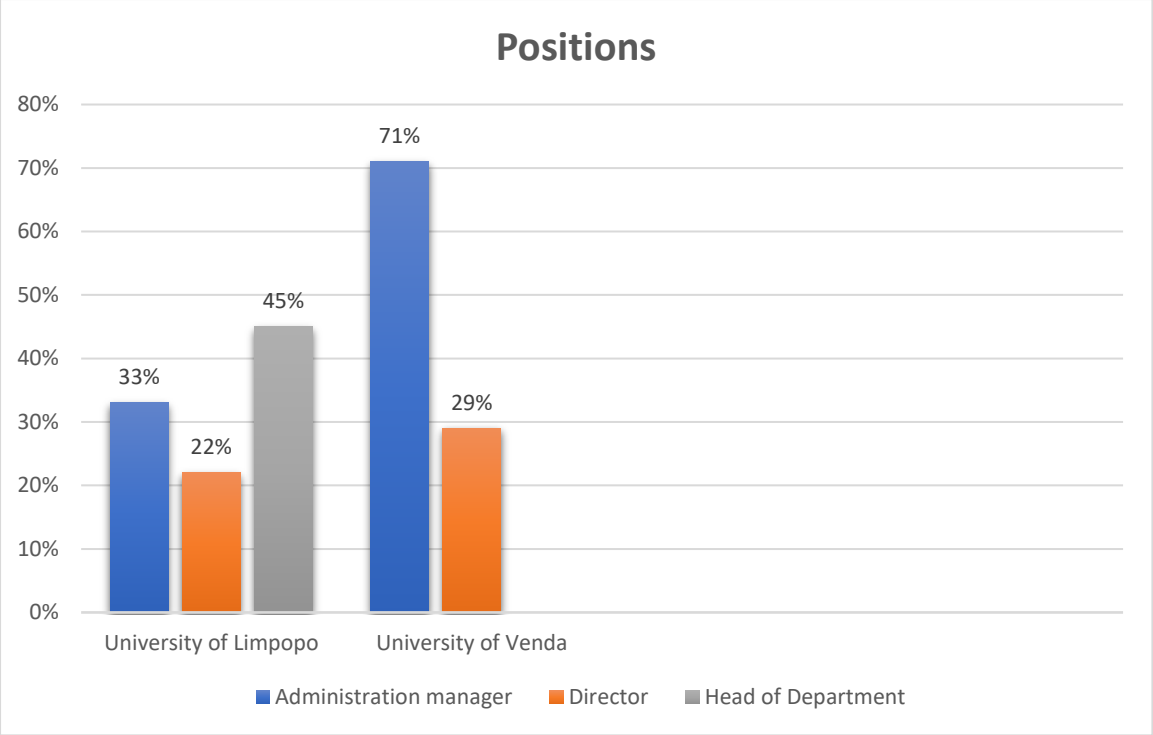

Figure 4.5. Positions

4.2.1.6. Highest qualifications

Figure 4.6 shows the highest qualifications of the participants. The University of Limpopo has the majority of the participants with PhD qualifications (56%), with 33% having master's degrees and 11% having honours degrees. The participants with PhD qualifications are the Heads of Departments, as it tends to be a minimum requirement in leadership positions in academia. Of the 33% of participants with master's degrees that are in academic positions are studying towards their PhD degree, 11% have honours degrees, and they are working as administration managers. On the other hand, the majority of participants from the University of Venda have master's degrees, with 57%, 29% having an honours degree, and 14% having a PhD.

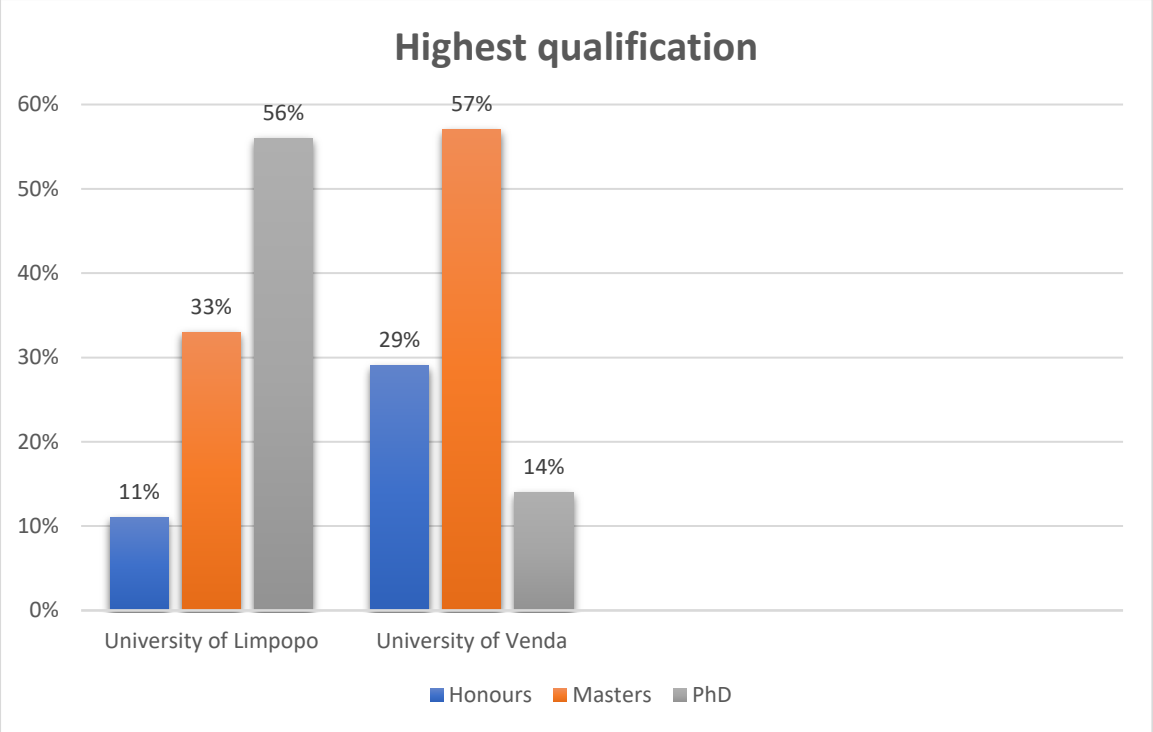

Figure 4.6. Highest Qualification

4.2.1.7. Year of experience

Figure 4.7 displays the years of experience of participants. The University of Limpopo has only one woman who has been working in a leadership position for more than 15 years (11%); 44% have 10-15 years, 33% have 5-9 years and 11% have 0-4 years. The University of Venda has only one woman (14%) who has been in a leadership role for ten years, 57% have 5-9 years of experience, while 29% have 0-4 years of experience. Therefore, the University of Limpopo has more experienced women than the University of Venda. In this study, there are fewer women who have 0-4 years of experience in leadership positions.

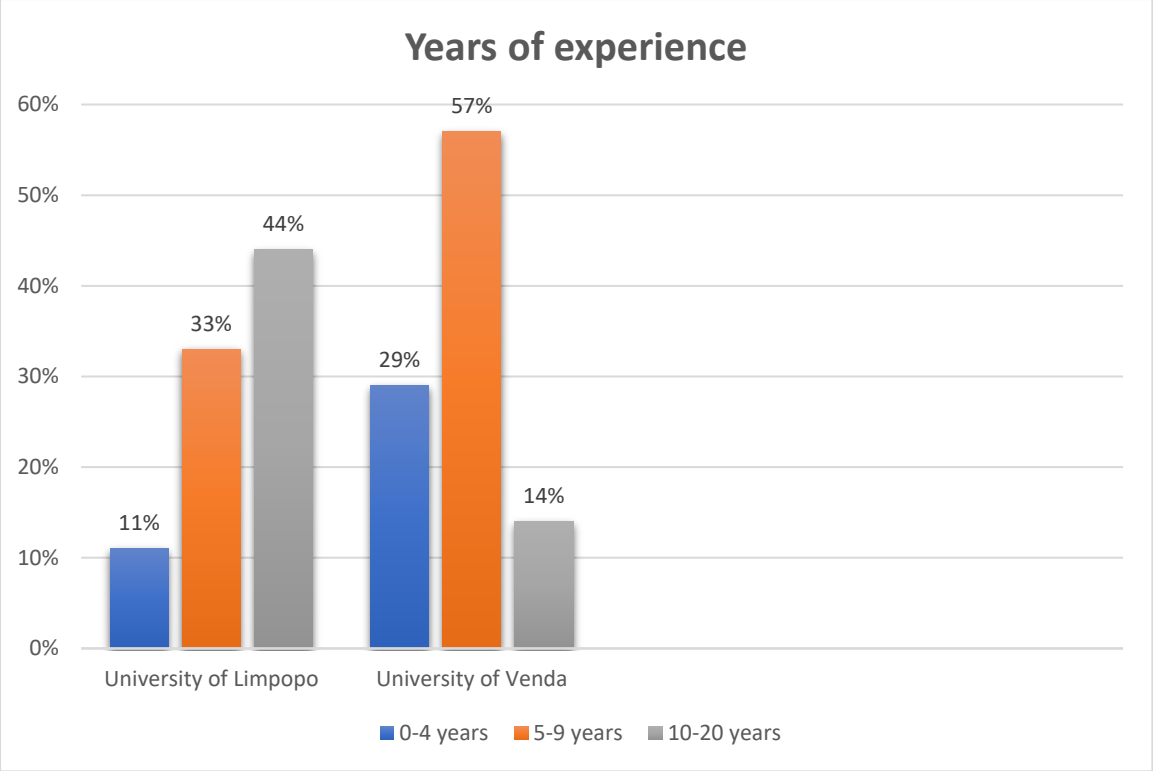

Figure 4.7. Year of experience

4.3. EMERGING THEMES AND SUBTHEMES

This session focuses on themes related to the study's research objectives. Thus, the presentation of the current study's findings on work-life balance among women in leadership is arranged around the four objectives of this study. The discussion focuses on the themes that emerged during thematic analysis in relation to each objective.

4.3.1. Objective 1: Work-life balance challenges that women in leadership come across at the institutions of higher learning

One theme emerged as the main work-life challenge that women in leadership are faced with, namely, work interfering with personal life. From this theme, four sub-themes emerged: failing relationships, children helping with household chores, scarcity of family time, and scarcity of attending societal gatherings, as illustrated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: *Work-life balance challenges*

N	(%)	Theme	Sub-themes
14	88%	Work interfering with personal life for women in leadership	1. Failing relationships 2. Children helping with household chores (Child labour) 3. Scarcity of family time 4. Scarcity of attending gatherings

4.3.1.1. Theme 1: Work interfering with personal life for women in leadership

Work can interfere with personal lives when work-related tasks impact personal life roles. Wang et al. (2018) indicated that women in leadership must go through and fulfil the demands of their leadership responsibility during their family time, at night, and on weekends. Women in leadership continue to work at home after working hours; this tends to interfere with their personal lives as it is difficult to leave their work in the office.

In this study, academic and administrative participants were asked if they take work home, and 88% confirmed that they do take their work home. One of the participants stated the following:

"I take work home a lot, I would say. At least three, four times a week, I suppose it is just the nature of the job" (Participant 14).

From the statement presented, the rise of remote working increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, and it appears that women in leadership are continuing with this practice, which has a detrimental effect on their personal lives. Spillover theory states that one area can have a positive or negative impact on another area in such situations (Baron et al., 1988). According to Sundaresan (2014), women in leadership positions carry over the feelings, attitudes, abilities, anger, and behaviours they develop from their leadership responsibility into their personal lives. Moreover, their work negatively impacts their personal life as they no longer have time for themselves and their

families. Tóth-Király et al. (2024) indicate that leadership positions demand a lot of availability and attention. In today's world of work, where technology is advanced, women in leadership take unfinished work home as the work can be done on their laptops, and managers and employees contact them on their phones even at night. This interferes with women's duties at home, which include working on household chores like cooking and spending time with their loved ones.

The following subsections present the four subthemes (failing relationships, children helping with house chores, missing family time, and not attending gatherings) that emerged during data coding concerning the theme of work interfering with personal life.

Sub-theme 1: Failing relationships

In this study, participants mention failing relations due to their work demands. However, determining why a relationship is failing is difficult since failure is a long and intricate process that takes time to resolve. Ronnie and Philip (2021) define a failing relationship as any interpersonal dynamic that cannot reach its desired outcomes or does not have the necessary harmony to be a viable partnership. Thus, a broken relationship involves more than just discord or unfulfilled goals. Women in leadership must navigate and fulfil their personal life needs after work, which is impossible because work follows them wherever they go. Simon (2022) asserts that women in leadership continue to work after hours, negatively impacting their personal lives since they do not have time to maintain relationships because they are constantly preoccupied with work.

In this study, the participants expressed that:

"Mmmmh…. the majority of my time is committed to my work as a director, there was a time when my sister was hospitalised, and I could not see her because I was in Pretoria as an examiner setting exam papers. People were coming to see her except

for me, and now we are not in good teams because she says I disregarded my family at the expense of work" (Participant 5).

Participant 2 stated:

"……*my relationships suffer, I did not have time for friends anymore as I'm always say am not available then planning social events and coming to my house. I'm always trying to balance work that overlapped to even weekends and we attend workshop and writing retreats on weekends and that take time to socialize*"

Participant 16 added that:

"*As a single parent who is working far from home, I feel like I do not have a strong bond with my children. They are staying with my mother (their grandmother), and she seem to know a lot about them than I do and that create a discomfort to me as I feel like I do not have a strong relationship with my children for them to communicate with me when they need something or update me with their personal lives*"

These findings clearly show that women in leadership have failing relationships as they always prioritise their work. Women in leadership value their work; they want to work hard and secure their positions as it provides food on the table, regardless of its detrimental impact on their personal lives. This is consistent with previous research findings.

Noronha and Aithal (2020) argued that failure to complete tasks on schedule, lengthy working hours, night shifts, and insufficient vacation time all contribute to work-life disparities. However, the performance and progress of the task suffer significantly. Women nowadays work harder to earn more money to sustain their standard of living and meet their economic demands (Acheson et al., 2021). As a result, it causes less interaction among family members, relatives, friends, partners, and offspring. Regarding these restrictions, the women in leadership struggle to maintain relationships with families, children, and friends because of their work duties. This is

very challenging as it affects their social life, and they feel lonely and socially distant (Semlali & Hassi, 2016).

Sub-theme 2: Children helping with household chores (Child labour)

The participants in this study reported their concern that their children are forced to perform household chores on their behalf. Household chores are tasks that include cleaning, washing, and ironing that have to be done regularly at home (White et al., 2019). A study by Uddin (2021) reveals that women have always been viewed as nurturers and caregivers, responsible for all aspects of family life, including taking care of household duties. Men are often expected to be breadwinners and support their families through work according to African culture. Thus, societal and family expectations exacerbate the difficulty of reconciling work and life roles for women in leadership, as they feel terrible about not performing their obligations at home as they seem to pass on all household chores responsibilities to their children and other family members as they knock-off late and still have to work when they get home. It was evident in this study that some women in leadership feel guilty for not fulfilling household chores, and their family members and children are doing it on their behalf.

The following statement supports this:

"…. *Most of the time I remain at work to complete report and why my older son has to now help me with house chores, washing dishes and all that"* (Participant 2).

Participant 13 added that:

"*With me often working late, my children are stepping up to help with household chores, taking on duties such as preparing dinner and cleaning up to keep the home running seamlessly."*

Follow-up question with Participant 2: How does that make you feel?

“He does not deserve this, I have to let him be a child and I feel like sometimes I am so invested in my career that made him miss childhood time, like going to his friends after school to play or do homework”.

The statements cited above make it abundantly evident that children assist with household chores while their parents are working late. A study by Ironmonger (2024) disagrees with the findings as they mentioned that housework demonstrates to children what their parents do for them and instils a sense of responsibility for household tasks. Moreover, it teaches children that housework does not do itself; there are no housework fairies to wash their clothing, organise their beds, and put away their toys, and children may also become more conscious of the mess they create and more appreciative of the effort required to operate a household.

Oliveira et al. (2024) further indicate that household chores help to teach children life skills because they can be young now but will not be young forever. Working mothers must know that laundry, cooking, and budgeting are just some of the skills their children will need once they finally move out, therefore, they must appreciate it when children help with chores on their absences. These are also things that schools do not fully teach, making learning them at home even more crucial. The mentioned studies confirmed that women in leadership should not feel guilty when their children are helping with household chores as they learn responsibility and self-reliance.

Sub-theme 3: Scarcity of family time

The participants reported scarcity of family time as one of the work-life balance challenges they face. Family time means any form of connection or engagement between parents, legal custodians, guardians, siblings, and children for the purposes of maintaining and strengthening family connections (Hosany & Hamilton, 2023). A study by Southerton and Southerton (2020) indicates that one significant difficulty that working women in leadership positions confront is a lack of family time. Moreover, time management involves balancing home, office, children, and self and it can be

challenging to schedule time for all necessary tasks. Women in leadership position find it challenging to spend meaningful time with their families and friends due to excessive working hours and work pressure that comes with leadership roles (Khalid, 2023).

In this study, participants explained that they do not have time to spend with their family due to workload and working far from home.

Participant 2 said:

“So, I always take work home to finish what I couldn't do during the day when I get home, which has an influence on my children's lives because I can't even create time to help my kids with homework anymore; the focus is on "unfinished work" that I need to finish before going to work the next day. Since I became a Head of Department, I am unable to monitor their grades at school because work is simply too much”

Participant 4 said:

“*OK, the challenges that I experience is that I don’t get enough time to spend with family and friends; for instance, I work far from home, and I usually go home during recess. You know, and sometimes I get beat in such a way that I can't even call them. I can't even make conversation in a day as am very busy with work. Is very challenging to not be able to balance your family time and work. We priorities work than family especially us young professionals as we work to impress or prove to management that we are capable to leader*”

Another participant said:

“……. *On my children, I genuinely want to spend more time with them, and I feel terrible and miserable about not giving them as much time as some stay-at-home mothers. I can't assist them with their studies as am always on the road, attending countless meetings even at night. I did my best on weekend and take them to mall,*

but there was not enough time. My son is struggling to keep up in school, and I feel useless as we no longer having mother-son talks. I wish I could get them outside more often and do some things with them. But I just can't. That is incredibly upsetting" (Participant 7).

Participant 15 said:

"*I'm working far from home and so "busy" that I'm missing out on those precious time with my husband and daughter sometimes once in a lifetime, and it does stir up feelings of regret or thinking I aborted my family for work. I can't remember when the last time I had a family vacation and really enjoy being with my partner and my daughter or even my grandkid*".

These findings collaborate with a study by Sundaresan (2014), who reported that women in leadership positions have a scarcity of time with their children and loved ones and further highlighted the negative repercussions thereof. Thus, repercussions of women in leadership's persistent absence include children getting into unwanted activities and demonstrating unaccepted behaviour patterns. This has opened ways for children to get acquainted with computers, television, and the internet and explore both good and bad realities of life, and often they follow the so-called bad or unaccepted paths of life (Sundaresan, 2014).

Participant 9 shared the following: "……*My son is smoking as we speak, and I heard this from neighbours when I returned home during recess. It was very tough to confront my son, and after hearing his reasons why he started smoking, I realised that if I was available, he would tell me the difficulties he has with his father, rather than using the cigarette as a coping mechanism*"

However, a study by Bastian (2020) argued that working mothers should not feel bad about working for their children as a means of avoiding poverty. They should reject society's expectations and face reality, even if they feel like they are always falling

short when it comes to doing, giving, and being enough for their children, partners, ageing parents, and extended family.

Sub-theme 4: Scarcity of time to attend- gatherings

The scarcity of time to attend gatherings was reported as another challenge faced by the research participants. A gathering is a coming together of people in a group for social, religious, or political goals (Hosany & Hamilton, 2023). Rajan (2018) stated that workload can limit one's time from participating in social activities, both formal and informal, such as happy hours with family and attending funerals as one is dedicating all the time to work dealings. This results in missed opportunities to develop the rapport and relationships that are necessary for job growth or family bonds.

In this study, participants highlighted the scarcity of time to attend gatherings. Participant 8 said the following:

".... *honestly speaking, my family suffers. There are so many funerals and family celebrations that I've missed as I'm not at home*"

In addition, another participant said:

"I didn't have time to go for family gatherings for Easter holiday because I was trying to balance work that overlapped to even weekend. …….so, when there's a funeral on weekends, I cannot go and attend that funeral because I have work that I took home" (*Participant 2*).

From the above statements, it is reasonable to state that women in leadership do not have time to attend family gatherings and funerals due to workloads that can overlap on weekends. James and Leader (2023) demonstrated that whether it is considered impolite not to attend family gatherings depends on the individual's conditions and expectations within their family; attending family reunions is valued in many cultures and families as a way of maintaining relationships and showing respect to family

members. Moreover, if one routinely misses family events without a solid reason or without informing the family about such absence, it may be seen as unfriendly or disrespectful behaviour (Crocetti & Meeus, 2014). Thus, it may convey the idea that they do not value time spent with family or are uninterested in preserving those relationships.

4.3.2. Objective 2: The causes of work-life balance challenges faced by women in leadership at the institutions of higher learning

A total of three themes emerged as the causes of work-life challenges faced by women in leadership. These themes are impact of high expectations from management level, with work to impress and working when on leave as its sub-themes; work overload from leadership responsibilities; and lack of support structure, with lack of management support and lack of family support as its sub-themes as depicted in Table 4.3. These three themes are discussed independently in the following sub-headings.

Table 4.3: *The Causes of work-life challenges*

N	**(%)**	**Theme**	**Sub-theme**
9	56%	High expectations from management level	1. Work to impress 2. Working when on leave
14	88%	Work overload results from leadership responsibility	
7	44%	Lack of support structure	1. Lack of management support 2. Lack of family support

4.3.2.1. Theme 1: High expectations from management level

Leadership requirements have evolved over time and are influenced by both external and internal factors inside the institution. Management is boosting the bar of

acceptance in leadership positions so to help the institution operate successfully and achieve its goals (Day et al., 2014). However, employees in leadership are under pressure to adhere to established processes and procedures to meet management's expectations. In this study, 56% of the participant reported the impact of high expectations from their higher level of management at the institution as a cause of work-life balance challenges.

Participant 1 supported this by stating the following:

"*Despite my capabilities and qualifications, in position I often find myself under tremendous pressure to live up to management's expectations, sacrificing authenticity and my personal personality traits to avoid disappointing the executive"*

From the above statement, women in leadership are suffering at the expense of meeting management's expectations to avoid disappointments, and this is explained by focusing on the two sub-themes linked to the impact of high expectations from the management level theme, namely, work to impress and working while on leave.

Sub-theme 1: Work to impress the management

South Africa has a relatively high unemployment rate, and being employed is regarded as a blessing, particularly for women seeking leadership positions, which have traditionally been filled by men (Yaldiz et al., 2017). Since society has labelled women as belonging at home, women in leadership roles are working extremely hard to be acknowledged and to earn respect for their abilities in their roles (Verma & Gautam,2022). Evidently in the study, participants have reported that they are working so hard to adhere to policies and meet the expectations of the institution.

Participant 4 said:

"….. my priority at the moment is work than family as young professional I have to fulfil the expectation of the management as they trusted me with this role."

Participant 2 shared the same perspective and said*:*

“Am the young colleague in the department and it has been a bit difficult working with the older generation because I have to know all the policies and academic rules for me to give them instructions as you want to be in the same level with them with knowledge in your role, If you don't, they will take advantage of you and lead you if you don't demonstrate your leadership skills.”

The findings presented above demonstrate that women in leadership work extremely hard to meet expectations and stand out in their positions to be seen and recognised. According to Abbas et al. (2019), there are still doubts about women's capacity for leadership, thus those in positions of authority need to demonstrate their abilities and willingness to perform to the best of their abilities, regardless of other responsibilities they may have in the community, as wives, mothers, or different roles they play after work. Hence, women in leadership positions at institutions of higher learning are working so hard to gain recognition and a sense of belonging in their positions. They are working hard with their responsibility at the back of their mind. This is supported by Participant 10’s statement:

“Although you make an effort to strike a balance, you are a leader, and you can't afford to make mistakes. A while back, I told my managers that even when you're not working, you're still looking for ways to improve the status quo, find better solutions, or find alternatives because not everything is perfect or goes as it should, and you're looking for ways to get things done.”

Sub-theme 2: Working while on leave

A protracted term of absence from work is known as employee leave and employees may take time off for various reasons, such as to attend to personal concerns. The participants in the study stated that they are working while on leave, whereas leave is defined as taking a break from work under the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 75 of 1997. Subsection (2) of the Act allows employees to take leave that has accrued

for an annual leave cycle on consecutive days (Williamson, 2019). Working while on leave is a dilemma because women in leadership are required to work and carry laptops everywhere they go, making it impossible for them to take time off to attend to personal matters.

Participant 2 said:

"I'm on sabbatical leave because I'm gathering data for my thesis, but I'm still assisting my department's acting head of department with tasks that need to be done, and I am reachable by phone or email if necessary."

Another participant echoed:

" Leadership positions demand you to be available all the time because people rely on you for so many things. I am always working while on leave, which to us means taking a leave and subjected to work when needed since work cannot stop because you are on vacation" (Participant 12).

The presented findings confirmed that women in leadership do work while on leave. Schneider et al. (2021) agree with these findings by demonstrating that in some working environments, women in leadership may be expected to always be available at all times, leading to blurring the lines between work and personal time. Moreover, some women in leadership may be concerned about their job security and continue to work to demonstrate their devotion and importance. A study by Khateeb (2021) found that if an employee's workload is large or if they anticipate falling behind, they may feel obliged to stay connected and keep up with tasks even when on leave and some employees choose to stay up to date on company advances, initiatives, or team changes, believing that this will help them reintegrate seamlessly upon their return which results in having a negative impact in their personal life.

4.3.2.2. Theme 2: Work overload results from leadership responsibilities

In this study, 88% of the participants reported work overload as a cause of challenges in maintaining work-life balance. The phrase "workload" refers to the volume of duties or responsibilities that an individual, team, or system is expected to complete within a set timeframe. It includes the quantity of tasks, obligations, or duties that are required to be addressed (Longo et al., 2022). One of the most pressing difficulties confronting the leadership position is the right role of the leader.

Zydziunaite et al. (2020) indicated that leadership study had produced a wealth of empirical results to address the subject and the heart of the issue; there are numerous references such as workload or the time consumed by the position. Furthermore, the literature includes numerous explanations of the effects of workload, and some contend that management and leadership are different and often incompatible roles. Women in leadership struggle to balance their work and family responsibilities because leadership positions require a lot of time as it has extreme workload, particularly at institutions of higher learning for academic purposes, as everything must be completed within a semester, exams, and board meetings must be prepared within a time frame (Anttila et al., 2021).

Christner et al. (2020) gave an overview of the workload associated with the Dean's position, which includes amongst others monitoring the development of the HODs in the faculty and ensuring that each HOD is put through effective and suitable support, in a position where she can teach, supervise research students, and maintain an academic profile. Furthermore, the Dean, directors, and Head of Department should provide guidance, resources, and monitoring to help ensure the timely submission of technical, progress, and compliance reporting obligations in conformity with federal laws and University and funding agency policies and procedures (McKenna, 2020). As a result, the Deans are always writing reporting, making countless submissions, setting exam papers, drafting and maintaining a rolling three-year staff plan, and ensuring that it is drafted, approved, reviewed, distributed, and made available.

The participants mentioned that leadership positions have a lot of administrative work.

Participant 7 shared the following:

"…...it's five hours because of a lot of documents that I have to submit to the office. There are lot of templates that we are using, lot of admin work and my faculty is big. I'm leading about 53 Staff members in different departments. The modules that I must manage there are 32 in 1 semester. So, it's not easy. So sometimes you feel like you can break".

To extend the view of Participant 7, Participant 5 shared the following:

"The School of Education is very large, and I am in charge of all administrative tasks for each department. As a director, I am always sent out to be an examiner, which is really tiring since you are preparing a paper while also having to put out a report to the board because everything does not have to stop because you are away"

The above findings show the overwhelming administration work that women in leadership positions in academia perform. Gaubatz and Ensminger (2017) state that executive and middle-level managers, including Deans and Heads of Departments, are responsible for monitoring academic programs and verifying papers. In fact, they prepare and organise documents and preserve information in both physical and digital forms in the form of reports. From this study's findings, it is confirmed that leaders' roles at institutions of higher learning are no longer to ensure that their teams have what they need to complete their jobs, manage the work process, motivate employees to perform their duties well, and monitor performance, but rather to get their heads down and get things done. As a result, women in leadership positions are timely fighting extreme deadlines.

Participant 13 shared the following:

"…HR is very administrative by nature, as a director, I am constantly juggling deadlines for various departments, including recruitment and selection, skills development, rewards and compensation, wellness, and performance management. I receive data from each department and must compile reports for Board members to stay informed about the organisation's progress and challenges. The reason for stating I'm always fighting deadlines is because each department has a date to submit to me and I have different dates to present to the board."

The findings underpin the work overload that women in leadership positions at institutions of higher learning face. Geera and Onen (2023) showed that women in leadership positions at institutions of higher learning are unable to cope with their workloads since the institution is attempting to save money by not hiring enough secretaries and personal assistants to assist with the manager's paperwork.

This is supported by Participant 7:

“Sometimes you'll find that the institution is trying to save cost by not recruiting more people in leadership positions, such as with us; before there were two departments, but they have been combined into one department. So, when they merged, they needed one manager, which increased the workload, so you ended up doing work for two people instead of one, and the number of people managing also increases.”

4.3.2.3. Theme 3: Lack of support structure

In this study, women in leadership positions at higher education institutions appear to struggle with getting support from executives, colleagues, and family members at home, resulting in a work-life imbalance as 44% of the participants reported a lack of support structure as a cause of challenges related to work-life balance. A support structure, which can include support from family, friends, relatives, wives, children, church members, and the community, is critical for providing the foundation or framework required for the stability and functionality of various fields (Borup et al., 2020). People require emotional, mental, and physical support in certain situations

(Singh & Chawla, 2024). Working in leadership positions can be draining emotionally, mentally, and psychologically, which shows how critical support is for women in leadership because it provides them with a sense of belonging in positions traditionally reserved for men (Shava & Chinyamurindi, 2022).

Participant 2 attests to the lack of support structure in the institution by saying:

“Our department lacks a supportive network, we function independently, and there is a lack of mentorship and resources, forcing me to manage challenges on my own, underlining the significance of equal support networks in the workplace. I could claim that our university occasionally fails to provide adequate mentorship programs, networking opportunities, and professional development tools specifically geared for women. This makes it tough for me to stay motivated to perform my best because I do not always receive acknowledgment and credibility for my efforts. At home, I am a single mom who cares for two boys who require my attention because I do not have anyone nearby to look after them"

As two sub-themes emerged in relation to the lack of support structure, namely, lack of management support and lack of family support, these sub-themes are presented in the next sub-sections.

Sub-theme 1: Lack of management support

The participants reported that they lacked management support. Ahmed et al. (2016) emphasised that women in leadership positions are confronted with numerous challenges and cannot handle the issue of work-life balance on their own. Therefore, management should create interventions that can assist them in carrying out their daily activities. Research shows that the concerns and obstacles that women confront are multifaceted; as a result, greater investigation is required to help women in leadership reconcile their family and professional life (Pruitt, 2020). However, in this study few women highlighted the lack of management support they received in their institution and shared their experiences.

Participant 12 said:

"We are not given a voice to express our feelings and concerns, we do not have any session with our superior at least monthly meeting to raise issues that we are faced with in our department and try to come up with solution that is suitable to our problems individually. Since I was appointed, they think I got everything right, no one has asked if I am copying, all they want is productivity and good results."

Another participant said:

"… Management fails to recognize the unique capacities and responsibilities of each school. For example, my school has a single director who oversees multiple departments…… Management fails to recognize the importance of family responsibilities as well. It is not feasible to send me away for 7 days writing retreat when my children require my presence at home. We are even terrified to take leave since it could be denied because job requires your attention as am the only one responsible for that section" (participant 5).

The above findings confirmed that a lack of managerial support can lead to work-life imbalance. It would be better if management could grasp that women are not the same as men even though they strive for equality; it needs to be taken into consideration that they have other obligations outside work and need emotional support as well.

Sub-theme 2: Lack of Family Support

Family support refers to informal help from family members, such as emotional or instrumental support (De Vito & De Vito, 2021). Women in leadership in the study noted a lack of support from their family members and how it negatively affects their lives. According to Jolidon et al. (2024), a lack of family support can lead to emotional estrangement and a breakdown in communication between family members and sponsors. This might cause feelings of loneliness and bitterness. Furthermore, without the assistance of family members to enable communication and settle disputes, women in leadership who are single and divorced reported a lack of family support as

they have no one to depend on for their children, and they end up sending them to boarding school.

Participant 9 said:

"…..I relocated for this position as I was working in the government, in the absent of my family support in terms of looking after my kids, I had to take one of my boy to boarding school to avoid conflicts as I could not take him with me because of the language barrier and change of environment as it can affect his life and grades at school"

According to Brough et al. (2020), women in leadership who have preschool children are more likely to face work-family conflict, especially if they do not have support from their family members because they must leave work early to pick up their children at school.

Participant 2 supported this by saying:

“…...I do not have anyone at home and am staying with my children, who are in primary school. I always have to ask my boss to drop them off at 3 p.m. so that I can take them to school and either bring them to work or go home to continue working. It was OK for me when I was still a lecturer, but not as a HOD; it's exhausting since I always leave work incomplete every day, and going on a writing retreat is another story because I have to take them to a friend's house."

The findings presented indicate the negative impact of not having someone to depend on for their kids. A study by Dousin et al. (2022) shows that the majority of working women cannot cope with their work and family responsibilities because they don’t have a support system, as most are married and stay in their homes without family members.

4.3.3. Objective 3: The consequences of work-life balance challenges faced by women in leadership at the institutions of higher learning

The analysis of the consequences of work-life balance produced one theme: poor health and wellness. This theme is composed of two sub-themes: poor mental health and poor physical health, as illustrated in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: *Consequences of work-life challenges*

N	(%)	Theme	Sub-theme
13	81%	Poor health and wellness	1. Poor mental health 2. Poor physical health

4.3.3.1. Theme 1: Poor health and wellness

The workplace is a primary location for promoting employee health and well-being, as employees spend most of their time at work. Wu et al. (2021) state that employee health includes the physical and mental status of employees, and it can cover illness and wellness. Furthermore, they stated that both physical health and mental health are equally important (Wu et al., 2021). Leadership positions have a lot of responsibilities that come with a lot of pressure, and it affects employee's mental and physical health (Nadeak et al., 2019). Poor health and wellness were reported as the main consequence of work-life balance challenges by 81% of the participants.

One participant said:

"My work role comes with a lot of stress because I am constantly having tight deadlines and intense workloads that have negative effects on my body because I am always tired from sitting for hours in meetings and sleeping less than 8 hours. ……. For me, juggling work responsibilities with family and household duties can create insufficient stress and that leads to me having burnout and exhaustion" (Participate 3).

The sub-sections below focus on the two sub-themes that emerged from thematic analysis regarding poor health and wellness, namely, poor mental health and poor physical health.

Sub-theme 1: Poor mental health

The research participants highlighted mental health issues that they are experiencing due to the demands associated with their leadership roles. Rendon (2016) emphasised that the mental health of employees is affected due to job demands linked to leadership positions. Women in leadership have a challenging workload that results in working long hours, taking work home, always being on a laptop, and lack of autonomy in personal life (Chowhan & Pike, 2022). Lamichhane et al. (2023) found that women in leadership often struggle with mental health issues, including depression and anxiety, which can lead to stress and isolation, negatively impacting their overall well-being.

Participant 2 said:

“…. I’m not coping at all. I’m always stressed. It's so stressful because I’m account for the whole department. If lecturer A is not delivering, the HOD must take accountability. Why is lecturer A not delivering when students are not passing? You have to account. Why are students not passing in module A and B? What's happening? So, I do have a burden of everyone on your shoulders, and reports are needed all the time. So yeah, coming up with solutions to every problem is stressful as you have to think deeply with the decision you are making to the problem. So, it's a lot of responsibility on my shoulders”.

Another participant expressed the following:

"…. because of heavy workload, tight deadlines, a lack of control sometimes within the department in School of education and a fear of underperforming, I have

developed anxiety and am always worried about my work and me not being a full-time mother to my children and grandkids" (Participant 5).

The aforementioned findings demonstrate that workload and leadership responsibilities have a negative impact on women's mental health as they are always stressed and feeling anxious. Women in leadership struggle to sleep at night as they are also working at night to complete daily tasks, and they are in positions that require them to be available even at night.

Participant 15 expressed the following:

"The University library closes at 12 a.m. and can close at 2 a.m. during exams and I cannot sleep until it closes as I have to wake up at night to respond to emails or calls and I'm always worried and panic when calls come in as I wonder what is happening now, is very stressful".

Due to the level of stress and anxiety they are experiencing, women in leadership tend to isolate themselves and disconnect emotionally from people and society. Rugulies et al. (2023) demonstrated that mental health issues syndrome can be feeling sad or down, confused thinking or reduced ability to concentrate, excessive fears or worries, extreme feelings of guilt, extreme mood changes of highs and lows, withdrawal from friends and activities, significant tiredness, low energy or problems sleeping, which result in inability to cope with daily problems or stress. Some of the symptoms that were reported that attest to poor mental health include anxiety, insomnia, panic disorder, affective dysregulation, and anorexia, and the extracts to support these are depicted in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Mental health issues

Participants	Mental health issues extracts
P1	*"Always stressed by work"*
P2	*"Am not copying at all, am always stressed"*
P15	*"Am struggling to sleep and am always worried of what could happen in the library"*
P8	*"…. Am experiencing panic attacks, mental problems and not eating probably as I do not have time to prepare good meal"*
P10	*"Am emotionally breaking, I'm not able to play my role in the family because I'm constantly wanting or need to satisfy the university"*
P11	*"……I have a huge mental health issue as am always stressed and overthinking…. Am compromising my health"*

Sub-theme 2: Poor physical health

The research participants reported poor physical health as a consequence of work-life imbalance. Physical health refers to how well one's body functions although the body can have problems that cause discomfort and pain (Lacey et al., 2022). Pega et al. (2021) indicated that working long hours, always working on a laptop, and sitting in long meetings can result in physical health issues. In the study, participants reported that they experience physical health problems due to their leadership roles and responsibilities.

Participant 8 shared the following:

"…working long hours and seating in a long meeting for a long time is taking a toll on my health because I won't eat in between and my sugar levels will go down, my doctor always complain about my state of health because is not improving"

With regard to the repercussions of attending long meetings, Participant 15 said:

I'm sitting on a chair with a lower back, extreme lower back pain because I sit in a chair for so many hours, and I don't get up, I don't stretch and is affecting my body. I do not even sit properly on the chair because of the lower back pains I have"

Another participant said:

"…...the physical aspects also suffer and also sitting at a computer/ laptop screen the whole day for 12 to 15 hours a day caused a problem for me, my eyesight has deteriorated quite considerably, I wear glasses all the time" (Participants 1).

From the above findings, women in leadership at institutions of higher learning are experiencing physical health problems due to their obligations as leaders in their institutions. Pees et al. (2024) confirmed that the more hours people work, the higher their risk of experiencing back discomfort and fatigue, which is a frequent symptom of stress produced by muscle tightness. Women in leadership who participated in this study reported that they are struggling to create time to go and do outdoor activities to activate their bodies as they are always busy during wellness programmes at their institution.

Participant 3 shared the following:

"…...the HR department do provide health services, counselling services, mental health workshops, and outdoor activities, but I do not attend those events due to conflicting committee meetings or a busy schedule"

As the participants reported back pain, exhaustion, and eye problems as a result of spending more time on their laptops, it is critical to consider their physical health as it can lead to lifelong sickness, which can have a severe impact on their duties both at home and at work.

4.3.4. Objective 4: The probable solutions for promoting balance between work-life roles for women in leadership at institutions of higher learning

Women in leadership must accept challenges that come with their role's responsibility and find a way to cope with the stress and pressure associated with leadership expectations and social life. One theme with four sub-themes emerged as the probable solution for promoting balance between work-life roles for women in leadership and is discussed separately. This theme is the creation of work-life integration (WLI) pathways, and its sub-themes are planning, kinship support, wellness programmes, and women's forums, as illustrated in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: *Probable solutions for promoting balance between work-life role*

N	**(%)**	**Theme**	**Sub-theme**
15	94%	Work-life integration pathways	1. Planning 2. Kinship support 3. Wellness Programme 4. Women's Forum

4.3.4.1. Theme 1: Work-life integration pathways

Work-life integration pathways Work-life integration (WLI) is the combination of personal and professional duties that improve the overall quality of life, which pushes for strict separations between work and personal life. Work-life integration proposes a more fluid approach in which work and personal activities coexist and complement one another (Brough et al., 2020). The creation of WLI pathways was identified by 94% of the research participants. Building work-life integration pathways necessitates the implementation of strategies employees can use to defend themselves during life-threatening situations such as health issues, family disputes, or unforeseen circumstances at work.

Participant 13 said:

"I successfully combine my job and personal lives by proactively developing a disciplined planning strategy and prioritizing attendance at wellness programs. This devotion not only benefits my personal well-being, but it also increases my productivity and effectiveness in my professional tasks."

Furthermore, several authors have stipulated that women in leadership can manage stress through reactive and proactive measures (Vaculíková, 2016, Neubauer et al., 2019; Algorani & Gupta, 2022). Reactive measures refer to the actions taken during a stressful event, whereas proactive measures refer to premeditated measures for future stress (Mazaraki & Kasianova, 2015). These measures are linked to the four sub-themes that emerged in relation to work-life integration pathways, namely, planning, wellness programme and women forum.

Sub-theme 1: Planning

Planning provides direction for action by specifying how tasks will be completed ahead of time, and it ensures that goals and objectives are clearly stated, serving as a guide for selecting what action to take and in which direction. Participants in the study emphasised the importance of planning daily since their roles are highly complex and have a lot of responsibilities, and if they do not plan, they would always be anxious because multiple things require their attention at the same time. Butler (2024) indicates that there are two common styles of planning: formal and informal. Informal planning usually entails meeting to discuss short-term goals for the coming weeks. Formal planning often entails the management team discussing and drafting clear short- and long-term goals that their colleagues can regularly strive for. In this study, it was evident that participants perceived planning as the best way to better handle their daily duties.

Participant 11 stated:

“I balance my work responsibilities by planning, and I believe that planning is important because your emphasis should be on what you planned so that when it's time to

execute, you know what time to do it, when to do it, who will help you with it, and so on. So, in order to juggle all of the balls, I believe that planning is extremely necessary"

Another participant mentioned:

"So, there's a time for everything. I make sure to plan everything. I arrange my vacations ahead of time to ensure that no one else does my work when am away. Any job-related activities take place within the time that I have set aside for holidays, and I carefully plan my diary so that when I leave the workplace, I have time for my family and personal time, as well as the occasional need to work later, when I do that, my children have already gone to bed" (Participant 13).

Participant 1 said:

"I do try and get to bed early to maintain good and healthy sleeping patterns, at least over weekends. Planning is important to set time aside for yourself and family life"

The foregoing data show that planning helps to manage a day-to-day task since it is clear where the areas of concentration will be. Given the size of the departments, women in leadership roles across a range of departments have a great deal of responsibilities. Additionally, as most institutions of higher learning have an annual calendar that informs them of what will occur on certain days and months, women in leadership, through planning, can minimise stress by setting weekly, monthly, and annual goals (Basile & Beauregard, 2020).

4.3.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Kinship support

Kinship support is the assistance offered by family members, relatives, or close social networks to those facing a variety of issues, such as financial difficulties, caregiving demands, or emotional discomfort (Hassall et al., 2021). This type of support can take a variety of forms, including emotional support during difficult times which close people provide comfort, understanding, and encouragement. Croft et al. (2021) indicated that

If grandparents, aunts, uncles, or other relatives can frequently assist with childcare, women in leadership positions will perform to their full potential at work and cease worrying about picking up children from school and cooking at home.

This is corroborated by Participant 9, who said:

"...So, I stay with my mother, and she's an elderly woman, a pensioner, and she's taking care of the admin of the house while I'm not around to do that"

Participant 7 stated that:

"…. No, my family does not complain; in fact, they support me because there are other things that I need to accomplish, and I've already informed them about the type of work that I do is quite stressful. My sister and mother are always there to support me. As you can see, I'm currently busy with an interview as part of my job, but one of my family members is at home to cook and prepare everything for my children this week. They are really supportive, and I can't say there are any items that are falling behind at home because of my workload."

The kinship support approach exemplifies all aspects of family support. The participant's family members, including their parents and sisters, are aware of their job function and assist with household chores, and their support includes emotional, instrumental, and informational components. Greenglass et al. (2020) stated that it is very important for women in leadership to request support from family members to balance their personal and professional lives and must ensure that their families understand their employment responsibilities and the pressures that come with it.

Participant 13 explained the following:

"*If I'm probably missing a deadline and want to simply make up for it. I would have to explain to my family that for the next two days, I need a little bit of space to do what is required of me. After that, I make it up to them, and they understand."*

From the above findings, it is evident that not all women in leadership have time to be with family and friends. Women in leadership can communicate with their families regarding their workload and the pressure that comes with their roles and responsibilities, and hopefully, families can understand and support them.

Sub-theme 3: Wellness Programme

A wellness programme refers to a group of programs within an organisation or institution that promote healthy lifestyles among employees. Singh and Chawla (2024) state that employee wellness initiatives benefit both organizations and employees as they foster a healthier, more engaged workforce and promote long-term positive health changes. From the study, both institutions have wellness programmes that are hosted for employees' well-being and mental issues awareness. Participants reported that the health programs are highly beneficial when they get a chance to attend because they occasionally clash with meetings.

Participant 3 stated that:

"Yes, HR department do provide health services, counselling services, mental health workshops and training, etc. However, I cannot attend all programmes as I'm always busy, but I do attend if I can work while listening, and I always come back with positive mind and coping skills."

Participant 16 mentioned:

"I do attend wellness workshop that the university that is hosting for us. They are making us aware of mental health issues, how to deal with teenagers, how to manage your finance and also, they assist with counselling. and the wellness people are available 24/7. I can call at night, and they will be able to assist me if am not copying at home".

The foregoing findings clearly demonstrate that women in leadership do occasionally attend the programmes, although there are always limitations.

Moreover, participant 13 indicated that:

"Majority *of employees who attend the workshop are not in leadership positions, but we make online workshop available with the service provider who offer wellness programmes to accommodate those who are unable to attend physical sessions due to busy schedules.*"

Participant 6 sadly shared the following:

"There is a wellness plan that includes online sessions, but we believe they are ineffective since they are not personalised enough. After the session, nothing occurs; I'm not sure what should happen, but I get the impression that they give us all this information that Executive doesn't care about; they don't even attend the seminars, so they either don't know what they're doing wrong or don't want to. They say they're busy and have meetings, which speaks a lot about how they feel about our health."

According to the above statement, it is critical for the executive team to also attend these wellness programmes also, so to demonstrate that the workshop is vital for everyone to attend as a way of increasing the institution's productivity through good mental health.

Sub-theme 4: Women's forum

Women's forums promote women's important role in the economy and society by implementing tangible actions to address systemic gender inequity and discrimination and allowing individuals to join in continuing debates and share knowledge about a certain issue or theme. In the study, the University of Limpopo has University of Limpopo Women's Academic Solidarity Association (ULWASA) which is a collaborative network of female professors and postgraduates aimed to promote and

assist one another in academic and research topics. Women in leadership who are still pursuing master's and doctoral degrees while working joined the forum to take a break from work and go on a writing retreat to focus on their research. A women's forum is particularly valuable for women in the organization as it allows them to come together and exchange ideas and difficulties that they are encountering in their department, as well as help one another come up with solutions (Atiqah et al., 2023). However, at the University of Limpopo, the forum is for academic purposes, allowing staff and students to motivate one another and work together to advance their studies.

Participant 15 said:

"…. I always attend the ULWASA writing retreat, which helps me forget about work and focus on my thesis."

Another participant said:

"The ULWASA is very beneficial for us who are still studying because it gives me an opportunity to use a few days away from work to focus on my study on a writing retreat, and I get to be motivated to be busy as everyone will be focusing on their studies for that time, no destructions as you forget about your work and life problems for a moment" (Participant 2).

ULWASA plays a crucial role in supporting women in leadership at the institution and giving them an opportunity to go on a writing retreat for a week away from the institution in a booked venue in Limpopo or outside Limpopo. The forums are aimed at identifying and altering the position of women in the organization by creating a platform that allows women to be vocal in addressing challenges that impede their advancement in the workplace and careers (Longman & Bray, 2024). The University of Limpopo has done something unique by establishing a forum that encourages women to further their studies to be more advanced in this changing world of work where qualification is valued in any position, particularly in leadership. Women in

leadership should join such forums to acquire strength in their struggles, as it can be beneficial not only academically but also socially.

4.4. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter mainly displayed the demographic profile of the participants and discussed the data collected through semi-structured interviews conducted telephonically with women in leadership positions at institutions of higher learning. The work-life balance of women in leadership has been a challenge, and some cannot manage their workload and personal lives simultaneously. Despite this, occupying leadership positions is a great opportunity. The findings reveal that women in leadership are experiencing work-life imbalance as their work is interfering with their personal lives. They are having failing relationships, having children helping with household chores, missing out on family time, and not being able to attend gatherings. The main causes are high expectations from management, workload from leadership responsibility and lack of supporting structure. These lead to women in leadership experiencing mental health and physical health issues. To cope with the challenges of work-life imbalance, women in leadership developed coping strategies. These coping strategies involve advance planning, attending wellness programmes and joining women's forums. The next chapter summarises the findings, makes recommendations, and provides a conclusion.

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a summary of the entire study. This study explored work-life balance amongst women in leadership at selected institutions of higher learning in Limpopo. This study used an exploratory research design, following phenomenology research design through qualitative. Data was collected through semi-interviews to gain insights into work-life balance amongst women in leadership in a changing world of work, and data was analysed through an inductive thematic analysis. The main purpose of the final chapter is to draw conclusions regarding this study. As a result, the main research findings and their consequences are outlined in this chapter and contrasted with those of earlier studies that examined related topics to the current one. The chapter also discusses the study's limitations and offers recommendation for work-life balance for women in leadership at institution of higher learning.

5.2. SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS AND THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The subsections that follow present a summary of this study’s chapters as well as the research findings.

5.2.1. Summary of chapters

This section provides an overview of this study’s chapters. Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the study, which explained the problem statement and aim of the study and outlined the research objective and questions. The first objective was to examine the work-life challenges that women in leadership come across at institutions of higher learning. The second objective was to determine the causes of work-life challenges faced by women in leadership at institutions of higher learning. The third objective was to explore the consequences of work-life challenges faced by women in leadership at

the institutions of higher learning and the fourth objective was to recommend probable solutions for promoting the balance between work-life roles for women in leadership at the institutions of higher learning.

Chapter 2 presented a relevant literature review on work-life balance, by focussing on research conducted in various industries, sectors, and regions around the world. It focused on a theoretical overview of work-life balance, discussing many theories relevant to the research, including spillover theory, compensation theory, and segmentation theory. The chapter further discussed empirical literature on work-life challenges, causes, and consequences of imbalanced work-life roles. Recommended probable solutions from other scholars worldwide on work-life challenges were discussed as well.

Chapter 3 discussed the methodology adopted in this study. This study employed a qualitative research inquiry. As a result, the study's research design is described in great depth, including how each process was carried out. The use of an exploratory research design, which follows a phenomenology research design and is classified as a qualitative research approach, was highlighted. The study area included two traditional black universities, which in the South African comprehensive are rural-based institutions, and women in leadership positions were the target population. Purposive sampling and snowball sampling were used to select the participants. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from the participants. The collected data was transcribed and processed, and thematic analysis was used to create a theme during the data analysis process.

Chapter 4 focused on data analysis, presentation, and interpretation of findings. The chapter detailed the demographic profile of the participants. Furthermore, it focused on a discussion of the research findings by identifying five significant themes about work-life balance challenges, namely, work interfering with personal life, high expectations from management, workload from leadership responsibility and supporting structure and poor health and wellness of employees. The work-life

integration pathway is the key theme that emerged in relation to the probable solution to work-life balance challenges. It is noteworthy to mention that sub-themes have also emerged from each of these themes.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the entire study, including an overview of chapters and research findings. The chapter critically integrated and conceptualised the six major themes and sub-themes in connection to the study's objectives and research questions. Lastly, a summary of the study's conclusive findings is followed by recommendations

5.2.2. Summary of research findings

The discussion that follows offers an overview of the research findings, with particular reference to the study's objective, from which the research questions (RQs) that served as a guide for the current study were derived.

5.2.2.1. Objective 1: To examine work-life balance challenges that women in leadership come across at the institutions of higher learning

Objective 1 was achieved by answering the research question (RQ1): “What are work-life balance challenges that women face in leadership positions at the institutions of higher learning?” The current study revealed one main theme, work interfering with their personal life. Thus, the main work-life challenge of women in leadership is their work interfering with their personal lives. Sundaresan (2014) supports this by stating that women in leadership positions carry over their work burden with them at home, which negatively impacts their personal lives as they no longer have time for themselves and their families.

A total of four subthemes emerged in relation to work interfering with their personal life, namely, failing relationships, children helping with house chores, missing family

time and not attending gatherings. The issue of taking work home has an impact on women in leadership's lives as it results in failing relationships as they do not have time to maintain relationships due to being constantly preoccupied with work. Women in leadership are working lengthy hours that affect their time with family. Due to their busy schedules and lack of availability, children assist with household tasks after school instead of doing their homework, which negatively impacts their children's lives.

However, Ironmonger (2024) disagreed with the findings as they mentioned that household chores can instil a sense of responsibility and life skills. Also, Oliveira et al. (2024) indicated that children learn life skills through doing household chores because, although they are young now, they will grow and need these skills in the future. Another challenge that women in leadership face is scarcity of time with family because most of them work far away from home and only visit home during recess, resulting in their children attending boarding school or being raised by family members. Lastly, women in leadership have a scarcity of time to attend gatherings, as the workload that overlaps with weekends holds them back from attending funerals and family ceremonies.

5.2.2.2. Objective 2: To determine causes of work-life balance challenges facing by women in leadership at the institutions of higher learning

Objective 2 was addressed by answering the research question (RQ2): "What causes the work-life balance challenges faced by women in leadership at the institutions of higher learning?" The current study revealed three main themes linked to the causes of work-life balance challenges, namely, high expectations from the management level, work overload from leadership responsibilities, and lack of support structure. There are two sub-themes linked to the first theme, the impact of high expectations from management level theme, namely, work to impress and working while on leave. In this study, it was established that the root of work-life issues for women in leadership is high-line management expectations, which women in leadership work extremely hard to satisfy. Truninger et al. (2021) supported this by pointing out that women strive to impress their managers to be perceived as capable leaders and feel encouraged in their positions. Women in leadership strive to impress management and be recognised

as capable of leading and they also work extremely hard to adhere to policy and ensure that their department outperforms others, which necessitates additional dedication and sacrifices.

The second theme, work overload from leadership responsibility, has no subthemes. In this study, women in leadership demonstrated that their contracts mentioned that they are required to work whenever necessary and that they even work when they are on leave because they do not have anyone acting on their behalf. They added that their leadership role requires them to be available at all times and that they, therefore, bring their computers with them wherever they go to be able to attend to problems that arise even when they are not at work. There is a shortage of assistance in leadership positions, resulting in an overburden of work. Moreover, leadership responsibility has a workload that requires a great deal of administration as they always write reports, file documents, make submissions, and consistently chase deadlines. Turner and Baker (2018) demonstrated that women in leadership may fear being rejected and seen as weak when they ask for assistance because they presume it shows weakness or incompetence, which can cause shame and embarrassment. Nonetheless, requesting assistance is a sign of power and a crucial component of being a proactive team player (Turner & Baker, 2018).

The third theme, lack of support structure, has two subthemes, namely, lack of management support and lack of family support. Women in leadership reported a lack of management and family support, which makes them uncomfortable to share their feelings and concerned about their role. Shava and Chinyamurindi (2022) found that working in a leadership position drains emotionally, mentally, and psychologically, implying that having a good support structure is crucial for women in leadership. However, similar to the current study's findings, Jolidon et al. (2024) found that women in leadership have a lack of family support, which results in emotional estrangement and communication breakdown with family members.

5.2.2.3. Objective 3: To explore the consequences of work-life balance challenges faced by women in leadership at the institutions of higher learning

Objective 3 was achieved by answering the research question (RQ3): “What are the consequences of work-life challenges faced by women in leadership at the institutions of higher learning?” Poor health and wellness emerged as the only theme in relation to consequences of work-life balance challenges. This theme has two subthemes, namely, namely, poor mental health and poor physical health. The study found that the work-life balance problems that women in leadership face have a negative influence on their health. An intense workload has a severe impact on the mental health of women in positions of leadership, causing stress, despair, and anxiety. Poor work-life balance can result in persistent stress, worry, sadness, and physical problems such as coronary artery disease, stroke, headaches, and gastrointestinal issues (Reverberi et al., 2022). Similarly, Lamichhane et al. (2023) found that women in leadership often struggle with mental health issues, including depression and anxiety, which can lead to stress and isolation, negatively impacting their overall well-being.

Women in leadership withdrawn themselves and feel lonely since they do not have strong relationships with friends and family. They stated that they are always compromising their health. Women in leadership frequently have physical health difficulties as a result of sitting in long meetings, including back pain, swollen feet, and exhaustion. Furthermore, their eyesight has suffered as a result of staring at a laptop screen, and they now need prescription glasses. This is confirmed by Pees et al. (2024) who discovered that the more hours people work, the higher their risk of experiencing back discomfort and fatigue, which is a frequent symptom of stress produced by muscle tightness.

5.2.2.4. Objective 4: To recommend probable solutions for promoting the balance between work-life roles for women in leadership at the institutions of higher learning.

Objective 4 was addressed by answering the research question (RQ4): “What are probable solutions for promoting balance between work-life roles for women in leadership at institutions of higher learning? Work-life integration pathways are the only theme that emerged in relation to this objective. The theme has four subthemes: planning, kinship support, wellness programme, and women’s forum. Work-life integration pathways are mechanisms which are aimed at separating work and personal life (Brough et al., 2020).

The current study found that creating a work-life integrated pathway is a compensatory mechanism that women in leadership adopt to achieve work-life balance. Women in leadership highlighted that planning benefits them by allowing them to set down their weekly tasks and provide guidance on achieving their weekly objective; this way, they will know when to do what, at what time, and what to concentrate. This is supported by Shanmugam and Rajeswari (2022), who emphasised that planning is an important aspect of leadership because it allows an individual to prioritise activities based on importance and urgency, focusing on finishing the most crucial tasks first. Women in leadership who can execute planning will be able to take time at the start of each week to identify their priorities, commitments, and deadlines, taking into consideration catering for both work and personal life. Furthermore, establishing work-life boundaries is crucial because without limits, conflicts in their private life might permeate into professional life, and vice versa.

Moreover, kinship acts were reported to be a basic support system for women in leadership, allowing them to better balance professional and personal life by obtaining emotional, childcare, domestic duties, well-being, and financial assistance from family members, relatives, and the community. Croft et al. (2021) emphasised that the support from grandparents, aunts, uncles, or other relatives in reducing the extra burden that women in leadership may have to carry, especially in relation to family matters is crucial.

Wellness programmes were also reported to be important in helping women to become more conscious of their mental health and work to find solutions to lessen the likelihood of mental health problems. Even though the wellness programme often conflicts with meetings, when they do have the opportunity to attend, it is beneficial because they can share their well-being issues. Counselling services are also provided for employees who are unable to attend physical sessions due to their busy schedules. The importance of wellness programmes in fostering healthy lifestyles was emphasised by Singh and Chawla (2024).

Another alternative for work-life balance for women in leadership is joining a women's forum that allows them to focus on their studies as it offers writing retreats giving them to take a break from work and focus on their studies outside of work. Abou-Shouk et al. (2021) indicated that joining the women's forum will help women find mentors and sponsors within the group and provide a safe space for them to discuss similar issues. It will also serve as great networking possibilities and benefit from various backgrounds and experiences. The forum is valuable for women in leadership to get together and exchange ideas and difficulties they encounter in their workplace and help one another to come up with solutions.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's recommendations are divided into three categories: recommendations for future researchers and academics, recommendations for top management at institutions of higher learning, and recommendations for women in leadership. These recommendations are offered in the following subsections:

5.3.1. Recommendation for future research

The most known challenges that women in leadership experience are harassment, bullying, discrimination, and inequality. In the current study, findings revealed the

work-life challenges that women in leadership faced when balancing their work-life roles simultaneously. Therefore, it is recommended for future researchers to:

Conduct larger studies covering probable solutions to promote work-life balance among women in leadership to develop a clearer and more detailed mechanism for solving the work-life imbalance of roles for women in leadership.

Conduct studies on how the Human Resource Management department can promote employee work-life balance through policymaking and wellness programmes.

Lastly, research should be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of work-life balance as outlined in the Work-Life Balance and Miscellaneous Act of 2023 used in Ireland.

5.3.2. Recommendation for top management

The following recommendations are directed to the top management:

The Human Resources Management division should amend policies and procedures and include a retention policy on ways to retain women in leadership and to promote work-life balance

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act No. 75 of 1997 should apply fully to women in leadership, and they should work according to recommended working hours and be on leave without working

Human Resource departments should recruit secretaries and assistants for those in leadership positions so that each leader has a secretary or assistant. As well as implement appropriate acting roles when someone is on annual leave.

Institutions should promote a forum for women to express their feelings about the challenges they face. The institutions can have software that allows women in leadership to capture their problems.

Management should reduce NQF level requirements in leadership as it puts more pressure on women in leadership to further their studies while working.

Wellness programmes are recommended for top management to attend so they can hear concerns that women in leadership raise and devise. They should also propose interventions to solve challenges that serve as a barrier to work-life balance.

Human resource management should amend the travel and accommodation policy to include travelling with sponsors or children on work trips. For instance, bookings should include additional family members. The following can help to relieve the stress of a failing relationship and spending less time with family and children.

Universities must schedule weekday writing retreats, workshops, and work conferences. These should not overlap with weekends as this can interrupt women in leadership's personal lives.

Permanent employment should be the norm for leadership positions instead of three to five-year contracts, as this puts additional pressure on women in leadership roles to demonstrate their abilities and aptitude to lead. This makes them compromise their personal lives and deliver according to management expectations to secure the leadership position for a long period.

The study recommends revising current women's empowerment policies to generate advocacy for women in leadership development since they require platforms to share their success stories and how they can manage work-life balance issues.

5.2.3. Recommendation for women in leadership

The following recommendations are directed to women in leadership:

Women in leadership positions should not compromise their personal lives or mental health to appease management, despite being leaders, they are also human beings who occasionally get tired and need to rest.

Women in leadership should take ownership of their work-life imbalance as they know what causes the imbalance in their role. I recommend they set boundaries and limitations to time spent doing their work.

Women in leadership should check the university calendar and plan their leaves accordingly.

Women in leadership should be transparent enough to communicate their role's responsibility at work with their sponsors, relatives, and children to avoid feeling guilty about not meeting their expectations.

Women in leadership should have helpers in their house to avoid child labour as it has a negative effect on their children's life.

Women in leadership should create social clubs; it is crucial to remember that a happy, healthy team is essential for getting the best results. This can help them maintain a healthy work-life balance and improve their overall well-being. Joining a social group is a great way to relieve stress and create work relationships.

Lastly, it is recommended that women in leadership do not resist the assumption that leaders must be infallible and show no vulnerability to those under their authority. Instead, they should be open about their mental and physical health difficulties and schedule therapy sessions for themselves. This can help them serve as role models for those reporting to them.

5.4. CONCLUSION

The main purpose of the study was to address the proposed research problem: work-life balance amongst women in leadership at selected institutions of higher learning in South Africa. The work-life balance of women in leadership has been studied from a South African perspective; therefore, research objectives of the study were stipulated to be a) to examine work-life challenges that women in leadership come across at the institutions of higher learning, b) to determine causes of work-life challenges faced by women in leadership at the institutions of higher learning, c) to explore the consequences of work-life challenges faced by women in leadership at the institutions of higher learning; d) to recommend probable solutions for promoting the balance between work-life roles for women in leadership at the institutions of higher learning. Conclusions were drawn about the study's research problem and research questions using the information gathered from 16 interviews performed at the University of Limpopo and the University of Venda with women in leadership.

The research findings conclude that women in leadership experience work-life challenges when they try to balance their personal and professional roles simultaneously. A major challenge was that their work was interfering with their personal lives as they were forever taking work home. This resulted in them having failed relationships, their children helping with household chores in their absence, having less time with their family, and not attending family gatherings and funerals in their community. Most participants confirmed that their challenge was caused by the high expectations from top management and workload as leadership positions have become so administrative. Women in leadership are forever handling reports and have long hours of meetings, which have an impact on their mental and physical health. The findings also revealed that most women in leadership lack supporting structure; they always want to prove themselves to society, family, and management.

In conclusion, the researcher established the work-life challenges women face in leadership positions at institutions of higher learning. All research questions were answered, and the aim was achieved. From the challenges mentioned, this calls for the institutions of higher learning to take suitable development procedures to address the challenges faced by women whether in academics or administration. This can be achieved through a review of the legislative framework in South Africa. There must be an implementation strategy to make sure that women in leadership do not compromise their personal lives for the success of the institution. They must have a balance between personal and professional life.

5.5. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

This work has produced substantial contributions in three categories: theoretical, empirical, and practical. The following discussion demonstrates how this study made the specified contributions.

5.5.1. Theoretical contribution

Due to societal shifts that have made women enter the workplace both out of necessity and personal preference, the role of women in society and their economic contribution has been receiving increased attention throughout time. Globalisation, digital transformation, access to higher education, and the feminist movement have all impacted women's workplace place. Every position has its own set of difficulties, and work-life balance is often a major concern for women in leadership roles. Their professional development is influenced by their role outside of work, and their personal development is influenced by their role in the workplace. The study explored women's perceptions and experiences of work-life balance in leadership roles at selected institutions of higher learning. The changing nature of work posed more threats to work-life balance, which made it necessary for scholars and practitioners to research how best they can assist to add to the body of knowledge of work-life balance challenges. This study uniquely explores the dual nature of work-life balance among women in leadership, potentially adding to the body of knowledge. Guest (2002) emphasised the need for research on work-life balance in specific contexts to identify situational and contextual factors that impact balance across roles.

5.5.2. Practical contribution

The study used a qualitative approach, which provided the researcher with quality data that came directly from the participants to add to knowledge on work-life balance. This dissertation has significant implications for practice. To begin, participants highlighted a coping mechanism for work-life challenges that they faced when they tried to balance their professional and personal life roles simultaneously, resulting from the leadership responsibilities they have. Coping methods can help to lessen stress and pressure on them while demonstrating their abilities in their roles. Based on the challenges identified by participants, every institution of higher learning in South Africa must invest in their employees' work-life balance, considering how technology has changed, and how work revolved regarding administration in the system and tools used to perform duties of their professional roles.

It is important to come up with a solution to find a balance between women's personal development and academic and professional development. The findings of this study provide institutions of higher learning with useful strategies that can be used to tackle work-life balance challenges and initiate relevant support such as training for mental health awareness and mentorship for leadership enhancement to prevent work-life imbalance. Another outcome with implications for the world of work is the need to comprehend work-life balance among women in leadership from a South African indigenous viewpoint, taking into consideration the role of women in society. Management and Human Resource departments should base their policies on the Basic Conditions of Employment Act No. 75 of 1997 and the Work-Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act of 2023, as both acts seek to recognise the importance of family life and assist employees in achieving a better balance between their home and work lives.

5.5.3 Empirical contribution

The study employed an exploratory research approach to better understand work-life balance patterns and investigate women in leadership's experiences in a changing world of work, specifically how they balance their personal and professional lives. This study's findings provided a detailed insight into the challenges that women in leadership face when juggling their personal and professional lives at institutions of higher learning, as well as the possible coping mechanisms to adapt. According to Arifin (2018), qualitative research has various advantages, including offering thorough knowledge, being flexible and adaptable, and producing descriptive data that may be utilised to develop new theories using the inductive technique. Therefore, by conducting qualitative research, a thorough picture of how women in leadership can balance their professional and personal lives based on their experience and social interactions was uncovered. There appear to be limited studies focusing on women's work-life balance in leadership (Kelliher et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the current study is one of the few that analysed work-life balance insights from two institutions located in rural areas, aiming to change the perspective

of how African culture perceives women. This assisted in identifying the similarity of major work-life balance challenges for women in leadership at both institutions. Thus, conducting a qualitative study in an unfamiliar setting provided unique insights into a phenomenon and helped identify effective strategies for managing work-life balance difficulties. This study can inspire practitioners and scholars in Industrial and Organizational Psychology and Human Resources Management to pursue more studies at institutions based in rural and other areas. Thus, deeper understanding and insights gained from this exploratory study may open doors for more thorough studies using different methodologies, leading to the development of more reliable strategies that can appropriately portray and effectively address the complexities of human life.

5.6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There is no such thing as a flawless study in research, even this study has its benefits and disadvantages. Despite these limitations, research adds greatly to the body of knowledge. As with other studies, this study also has limitations, but the study's objectives were met. Although this study provides insight into the work-life balance of women in leadership positions in a changing world of work, it was a small-scale study as the research setting only represented two of the highest institutions in the Limpopo Province. Some of the conclusions on work-life balance challenges faced by women in leadership in higher education institutions may be correct and specific to the research area, Limpopo, where race and cultural backgrounds may not be reflective of the entire South African population. It would be good to expand this study to a larger population to better understand the specific issues of work-life balance. A study that uses a larger population and employs a mixed-methods strategy can benefit from the advantages of adopting both quantitative and qualitative methods. Although the findings are reflective of women's leadership experiences in other institutions of higher learning, other inquiries were too personal, and the participants could not respond completely honestly since it would violate institutional confidentiality. Lastly, the researcher could not get the statistics of all women in leadership positions from Human resource Department at University of Venda.

5.7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter presented an overview of the study's primary findings in response to the research questions related to work-life balance challenges brought by the changing nature of the world of work among women in leadership at the selected institutions of higher learning. The objectives of this study were fully met, and all research questions were answered. Recommendations were made for future research possibilities, top management, and women in leadership. The theoretical, practical, and empirical contributions and limitations of this study were discussed.

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APPENDICES

ANNEXURE A: CONCENT FORM

Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa

Topic: The changing world of work: work-life balance amongst women in leadership at selected institutions of higher learning.

I…….. the participant, agrees to participate in the research project. titled “The changing world of work: work-life balance amongst women in leadership at selected institutions of higher learning”. I realise that:

1. The purpose of the study is to explore work-life balance challenges brought by changing nature of the world of work among women in leadership at the selected institutions of higher learning.

2. The researcher is a master’s student in the Department of Business Management at the University of Limpopo.

3. The researcher will safeguard and adhere to the confidentiality of the information provided by respondents and their anonymity is guaranteed.

4. I may withdraw from the study at any time.

5. I am aware that it is anticipated that my participation in the study will enhance understanding of the relationship among the variables of interest in my workplace.

6. If I have any questions or problems regarding the study, you can contact the researcher on 0711 437 237 (Cell.) or 201904653@keyaka.ul.ac.za (Email).

7. My signature below indicates that I have given my informed consent to participate in the above-mentioned study.

Signature of respondent: _____ Date: _____

Signature of researcher: _____ Date: _____

ANNEXURE B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Demographic questions

What is your gender?

What is your age?

Where are you located?

What is your ethnicity?

What is your marital status?

How many kids do you have?

How many people are depending on you for survival?

What is your highest qualification?

What is your employment status?

How many years of experience do you have in leadership position?

Interview questions

How has been like to work at this institution?

How competitive are you in your position?

What does work-life balance mean to you?

Is it possible for you to balance day to day duties as a leader and your personally life simultaneously?

What are work-life challenges that you experienced when you were trying to keep your work going and also spend time with your family?

How does work-life challenges affect you?

What do you think are the main causes for work-life challenges?

What are the consequences of having balanced/ Imbalanced work life balance?

How satisfied are you with your work schedule and current working hours?

Do you sometimes take work at home?

Do you sometimes take day off just to spend time with your family?

What does your institution do to help its employees to maintain work-life balance?

Is there anything that your institution can do to support women in leadership in balancing their work-life roles?

What do you do to give yourself better work-life balance?

Is there anything else you feel we should talk about, or I should know about your experience regarding work-life balance?

ANNEXURE C: ETHICS CERTIFICATE

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: tukiso.sewapa@ul.ac.za

TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING: 26 SEPTEMBER 2023

PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/1560/2023: PG

PROJECT:

Title:	The changing world of work: work-life balance amongst women in leadership at selected South African institutions of higher learning
Researcher:	TT Maribe
Supervisor:	Dr FD Mabasa
Co-Supervisor/s:	Dr HR Maluka
School:	Economics and Management
Degree:	Master of Commerce in Human Resource Management

PROF D MAPOSA
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) This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.

ii) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for Amendment form.

iii) PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

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ANNEXURE D: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

University of Limpopo
Office of the Registrar
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 2407, Fax: (015) 268 3048, Email: Kwena.Masha@ul.ac.za /Retha.Balie@ul.ac.za

08 January 2024

TT Maribe

Email: 201904659@keyaka.ul.ac.za

Dear TT Maribe,

GATEKEEPER PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

TITLE: **THE CHANGING WORLD OF WORK: WORK-LIFE BALANCE AMONGST WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP AT SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING**

Researcher:	**TT Maribe**
Supervisor:	**Dr. FD Mabasa**
Co-Supervisor/s:	**Dr.HR Maluka**
School:	**Economics and Management**
Degree:	**Master of Commerce in Human Resource Management**

Kindly be informed that Gatekeeper permission is granted to you to conduct research at the University of Limpopo entitled:"

The changing world of work: work-life balance amongst women in leadership at selected South African Institutions of Higher Learning".

Regards.

PROF. JK MASHA
UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR

Cc. Prof. RJ Singh: Deputy Vice-Chancellor; Research, Innovation and Partnerships
Prof. RN Madadzhe: Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning
Dr. T Mabila, Director: Research Development and Administration
Prof. D Maposa – Chairperson: Research and Ethics Committee
Dr. T Sevalo, Ethics Officer
Ms. M Hutamo – Assistant: Ethics Secretariat
Ms. C Ngobeni – Research Administration and Development

Finding solutions for Africa

ANNEXURE E: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

Directorate: Research and Innovation
Private Bag X5050, Thohoyandou, 0950, South Africa
Tel: 015 962 8313 /015 962 8504
Date: 05th December 2023

Enquiries: Ms. Vanecia Khoza
Contacts: vanecia.khoza@univen.ac.za

To : **Ms TT Maribe**
University of Limpopo
Faculty of Management and Law
School of Economics and Management

Email : 201904653@keyaka.ul.ac.za

Permission to conduct Research at the University of Venda

Your research will be based on your master's research title, "The changing world of work: work-life balance amongst women in leadership at selected South African institutions of higher learning," registered at the **University of Limpopo**.

Approval period: **February 2024 – February 2025**

Supervisor: Dr FD Mabasa Email: fumane.mabasa@ul.ac.za
Co - Supervisor: Dr HR Maluka Email: harriet.maluka@ul.ac.za

The conditions are that all the data on the University of Venda will be treated per the Ethical Principles and that results will be shared with the University upon project completion. In addition, as a researcher, you should seek consent from participants.

Attached is our policy on ethics.

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
2024 -02- 12
Private Bag X5050
Thohoyandou 0950

Thank you.

.....
Prof IEJ Barnhoorn
Chairperson: UREC

Cc: Prof JC Makhubele (Director Research and Innovation)
Cc: Prof TS Mashau (Chairperson RESSC)

ANNEXURE F: LANGUAGE EDITOR'S LETTER

WOKHANYO TRADING AND PROJECTS

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0781371627

35 Vidago Street

Stonehenge

Nelspruit

1201

We offer the following services:

- Academic writing
- Academic editing

Email inquiries to: Lungisile.Tshitshi@gmail.com

CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING AND PROOFREADING

Services offered to Ms. Thakgatso Theresa Maribe

This certifies that the document listed below has been edited to ensure that the language, grammar, punctuation, and spelling are academically sound and appropriate.

The following were examined and corrected: Grammer, Typos, spelling, verbs, subjects, agreement, consistency, and correct abbreviations.

Title: The changing world of work: Work-life balance amongst women in leadership at selected South African institutions of higher learning

Regards

Signature:

Lungisile Tshitshi

11 March 2025

ANNEXURE G: TURNITIN REPORT

Full dissertation research for masters (HR) Maribe Thakgatso Theresa(13 Nov 2024) (1).docx

ORIGINALITY REPORT

5%	4%	2%	2%
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