



**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT**

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**Gender bias and management roles. A study of women  
working in beverages manufacturing firms - Operations  
Division**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of Master of Business Administration

By

**Agatha Chitava**

2019

**Graduate School of Management**

**University of Zimbabwe**

Supervisor: Dr A. Zinyemba

## GSM DISSERTATION COVER PAGE

<b>DISSERTATION TITLE</b>			
Gender bias and management roles. A study of women working in beverages manufacturing firms - Operations Division			
<b>DISSERTATION METHODOLOGY (please tick one)</b>			
<b>QUANTITATIVE</b>		<b>QUALITATIVE</b>	<b>MIXED METHODS</b>
<b>INTAKE (YEAR AND MONTH)</b>			
2017 JANUARY			
<b>REGISTRATION NO:</b>		<b>STUDENT NAME:</b>	
R174051G		AGATHA CHITAVA	
<b>DISSERTATION SUBMISSION DEADLINE</b>		<b>SUBMISSION DATE</b>	
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## **DEDICATION**

Nyasha, Mufaro, Londi, you have always been my motivation, all these efforts are for you.....

My parents, I am forever grateful. For the unending support, attention, guidance and the best education. This degree is not mine but ours because every moment in this journey, you were always by my side. I still need your covering, for the rest of my life.

My Almighty God Jehovah, I am grateful and I believe in your word. Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” It can never be by my own might, but by your grace. Thank you.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This research would not have been possible without the valued understanding and support of various individuals. I would sincerely like to thank the following people for their involvement and contribution to this project:

To my dissertation supervisor, Dr A. Zinyemba. The attention she gave to me and this research, I could not ask for more. For the guidance and feedback, I am truly grateful. Your invaluable help enabled me to achieve this final result.

To each of the wonderful ladies who agreed to be part of research respondents. They volunteered their time, and decided to share their experiences with me. The information they gave produced the outcome of this research.

To my friends, Fadzai, Godfrey, Patrick and Robin, thank you for the helpful reviews and interest, your support made this research possible.

## **ABSTRACT**

The number of women in positions of control and authority in Zimbabwean companies has remained small in the manufacturing sector, despite the increase in the number of educated women and the passage of legislation on gender equality. Although there is a surge in women's education and employment, it is not leading to a decline in gender inequality and an improvement in women's status in Zimbabwean manufacturing or operations fields. The drive behind this research was to highlight women's experiences in Operations Management and see how they can improve their effectiveness. Among the objectives, was to establish the reasons why there is less representation of women in operations management as compared to men, to illuminate the challenges they face in such occupations and identify coping strategies that women who have made it in operations management relied upon to succeed. Theories used to ground this study included The Human Capital theory, Occupational Segregation, The Gatekeeper Philosophy, The Mommy Track Theory, The Glass Ceiling and The Labyrinth. Research questions focused on the views and experiences and of females who have come across issues of gender inequality in regard to professional advancement opportunities in the beverages manufacturing industry. In order to get a clear view of these experiences, the methodology of choice became qualitative. 18 women who work under operations functions in beverages manufacturing sector participated in the study. Data studied revealed a number of themes which were Fighting Back, Education-Training-Network, Traditional Organizational Culture, Traditional mentality- Transitional Workforce and Worker Bee. The findings show that lack of noticeable and concrete commitment to empowering women in organisations remains and it requires change. It requires that women stand united and support each other, paradigm shift in the education system to allow equal opportunities to both sexes, awareness in policy making demanding management to seriously consider women as potential shape shifters in upper echelons in operations management.

Key words: gender imbalance, family/work balance, fighting back, education.

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# CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Society holds a deep rooted idea that men are the movers and shakers in the business world (Ziman, 2013). Salas-Lopez, et al. (2011) added that men are viewed as the Chief Executive Officers, the Chief Finance Officers, the Directors and the ones who make things happen. However, Catalyst Census (2010), argues that while that may have been the case around forty years back, today it is a different case, there is a fresh and very fascinating trend emerging. Women are making great strides in the business world and the share of men to women is beginning to smoothen out (International Labour Organization, 2016).

Bellot (2011), and Evertsson, et al. (2009) postulate that women participation in the workforce and their level of education is increasing, but opportunity for them to realise the shape-shifting positions is greatly limited. This fact is supported by Carli and Eagly (2001), who explain the presence of some major dynamics that hold women back more than men. They added that, that those factors, contribute to the enormous variance in representation when it comes to organisational leadership and governance, resulting in there being too few women at the top. The factors that limit women from rising in operations management are the focus of this study. Such factors should be addressed because new research has shown that women in leadership roles bring higher profitability, new and effective leadership styles, and many other benefits to a company (McKinsey & Company, 2016).

Cheng and Tavits (2011), mention that women who work in male-dominated occupations face challenges that differ from those who work in more gender-balanced occupations. Carl (2012), added that these challenges affect their retention in the workplace and career success. In this study, the author explored the challenges faced by women who wish to management positions in a typical male dominated occupation, that is, operations. The study also focused on how the women responded to such challenges in order to persevere in beverages manufacturing firms in Zimbabwe.

## **1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

In 2018, women held under a quarter of senior roles across the world (24%), a decrease from 25% in 2017 (International Labour Organization, 2019). According to the Forbes Magazine List (2018), women held only 5% of Fortune 500 CEO roles amounting to only 25 out of 500. The article showed that the highest on that list, took the 10<sup>th</sup> position while the 25<sup>th</sup> one was a distance 471 positions below. Furthermore, the article explained that in 2018, 75% of businesses had at least one woman in senior management, compared to 66% in 2017. The Global Ambassador for Gender Equality (2011), highlighted that the industry's most lacking women among hires for leadership roles in 2017 include manufacturing, energy and mining and corporate services. This study is focused one of these industries, that is, manufacturing sector.

Dunn (2012), expresses that men are largely viewed as default business leaders, affirming the, 'think manager - think male' mindset. Senior managers often apply gender stereotypes to leadership—women 'take care,' men 'take charge' (Barclay, 2006). Bosse, et al. (2012) articulated that, in cases where there are public outcries or civil rights groups raising complaints, women end up facing the 'glass cliff' situations, where they are appointed to leadership positions in times of economic crisis, limiting their chances of success.

### **1.1.1 Global Situation of Women in Employment and Manufacturing sector**

#### **Australia**

According to the Global Ambassador for Gender Equality (2011), in Australia, most senior management posts are held by men in all sectors. The article stated that in 2016–2017, women represented just over a third (38.4%) of all managers in Australia. It added that women are less likely to reach the top levels of management. In 2016–2017, women accounted for:

- 41.9% of other (i.e., non-senior) managers
- 34.9% of senior managers
- 30.4% of other executives/general managers
- 29.7% of key management personnel
- 16.5% of CEOs/Heads of Business (Global ambassador for gender equality, 2011)

#### **India**

In India, nearly half of Indian women leave the workforce between junior and middle management levels (Global ambassador for gender equality, 2011). The same article adds that in 2017, women held only 7% of all senior roles in India and in 2018, the number increased to 20% out of all senior management (CEO/Managing Director) roles.

## **Japan**

According to Kosuke & Kyoko (2014), Japan has set targets for increasing women in leadership positions by 2020. They add that in 2016, in private corporations, women accounted for:

- 18.6% of section chiefs
- 10.3% of directors

## **Canada**

In Canada, women accounted for slightly more than a third (34.6%) of all managers, but only 28.9% of senior managers, in 2017 (Quinlan, 2008). Women made up just 51 (9.4%) of the 540 C-level executives among Canada's 100 largest publicly traded corporations in 2017 (Dunn, 2012).

## **Europe**

According to Grant Thornton's 2018 rankings, 87% of Eastern European businesses reported having at least one woman in senior management, and 36% of businesses' senior roles are held by women. In the European Union, 73% of businesses reported having at least one woman in senior management and 27% of businesses' senior roles are held by women (Global ambassador for gender equality, 2011).

The Global Ambassador for Gender Equality (2011) added some statistics: among the largest publicly listed companies in the European Union (EU-28) in 2017, only 15.8% of executives and 5.5% of CEOs were women; in politics, since 2004, women's representation has increased in parliaments (by about 0.6% per year) and among senior ministers in governments (by 0.5% per year). Among the EU-28 national parliaments in 2018, over a quarter of members of both the single or lower houses (30.0%) and the upper houses (28.9%) were women (Mencarini and Sironi, 2012).

## France

France saw a three-year high of businesses with at least one senior woman at 79%, as well as a three-year high of businesses' senior roles being held by women at 33% (International Labour Organization, 2016).

## United Kingdom

The United Kingdom reported their highest percentage of businesses with at least one woman in senior management at 75%, with 22% of businesses' senior roles being held by women in 2018 (Barclay, 2006).

## United States

Table 1.1.1: Women's Employment by Industry

Industry	Total Employed	Women
Agriculture	2 237 000	24.7%
Mining	1 088 000	13.3%
Construction	9 813 000	8.9%
Manufacturing	15 100 000	29.3%
Wholesale and Retail Trade	20 251 000	45.0%
Transportation and Utilities	7 581 000	23.0%
Financial Activities	9 871 000	53.2%
Professional and Business Service	17 004 000	41.2%
Education and Health Service	32 830 000	74.7%
Leisure and Hospitality	13 489 000	51.4%
Other Services	7 169 000	52.8%
Public Administration	6 757 000	45.4

Source: Women in the Labour Force, A Databook (2011)

Table 1.1.2: Women in The U.S. Labour Force

	Women
U.S. Population	51%
U.S. Labour Force	47%
U.S. College Graduates	61%
All Prof & Managers	52%
Registered Nurses	90%
Elementary School Teachers	81%
Accountants	63%



<b>Scientists</b>	47%
<b>Lawyers</b>	33%
<b>Software Developers</b>	20%
<b>Engineers</b>	12%

Source: Women in the Labour Force, A Databook (2011)

Table 1.1.3: Women in Manufacturing Leadership

	<b>S&amp;P 500</b>	<b>Manufacturing Durable Goods</b>	<b>Manufacturing Non-Durable Goods</b>
<b>Industry Labour Force</b>	44.3%	29%	36%
<b>1<sup>st</sup> and Mid-level Leaders</b>	36.4%	28%	32%
<b>Executive and Senior Leaders</b>	25.2%	20%	24%
<b>Board Seats</b>	19.9%	N/A	N/A
<b>CEO's</b>	4.6%	5%	6%

Source: Women in the Labour Force, A Databook (2011)

In the United States, women make up more than half of the population (51%) and almost half of the labor force (47%) as shown by the data in table 2. Table 1 shows that of the 15.1 million people employed in the manufacturing sector, women only make up 29.3% of that number. Table 3 shows that in manufacturing firms, in 1<sup>st</sup> and middle level management, women representation ranges from 28% to 32%. The ratio is even lower at executive and senior leadership ranging from 20% to 24% only. There is no female representation at board level and only 5% to 6 % of women may rise to CEO positions in manufacturing firms.

In S&P 500 Companies, it was stated that, ‘the higher up the corporate ladder, the fewer the women (International Labour Organization, 2016).’

## **Africa**

There are not many sources for African statistics, but the following statements are deduced from (McKinsey & Company, 2016): ‘Women are still under-represented at every level of the corporate ladder – non-management and middle and senior management – and fall in number the higher they climb. Only 5% of women make it to the very top. Although the number of women in leadership positions may have risen, women do not necessarily have greater power. In the private sector, more than half of senior women occupy staff roles rather than the line roles from which promotion to CEO typically comes. In the public sector, approximately half

of women cabinet ministers hold social welfare portfolios, with arguably limited political influence, that do not open doors to top leadership roles.’

In Africa:

- 5% of CEOs are women
- 22% of cabinet ministers are women
- 25% of parliamentarians are women
- Women account for 29% of senior managers
- 36% of promotions go to women

### **1.1.2 Zimbabwe**

Sources for reliable employment statistics pertaining to the manufacturing sector were not readily available in the public domain. Researches done focusing on operations in beverages manufacturing sector were unavailable. Hence this study sort to zoom in to provide information on a sector where there was none. However, information available shows that generally, women in senior roles only amount to 15% of senior management in Zimbabwean companies (International Labour Organization, 2016).

As shown by the varied statistics discussed above from different geographical locations, women who work in male-dominated occupations are few. There must be constraints that suppress their representation in upper management. Such constraints challenge their motivation, retention and career success. This study is focused on their lived experiences and the distinct coping strategies they rely upon, to sail through.

## **1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The number of women in positions of control and authority in Zimbabwean companies has remained small in the manufacturing sector, despite the increase in the number of educated women and the passage of legislation on gender equality (Evertsson, et al., 2009). Although there is a surge in women’s education and employment, it is not leading to a decline in gender inequality and an improvement in women’s status in Zimbabwean manufacturing or operations fields.

Catalyst Census (2006), highlights that women comprise of a considerable portion of the population which is around 52%, and workforce, but when it comes to management and leadership, that is, executive positions, most are in the hands of their male counterparts (Bellot, 2011). Even with adjustments in the Labour law, enforcing equal pay and consideration for both genders as well as development and funding of Affirmative Action Groups, such as, Msasa Project, Girl Child Network, ZimRights, Global Female Organizations, the impact has not been that far reaching to influence executive or senior management opportunities for women. Gender inequality remains a factor in the makeup of the social order. As a consequence, it was the researcher's intention to get an understanding of the challenges women are facing in operations management, and how these women respond to those challenges in-order to cope and persevere in positions of leadership.

### **1.3 AIM OF STUDY**

The aim of the study is to highlight the challenges that women who aspire to work in operations management face, and the response strategies that they use to cope and persevere in such occupations.

### **1.4 STUDY OBJECTIVES**

Objectives of this study are:

- i. To establish the reasons why there is less representation of women in operations management as compared to men.
- ii. To discover the experiences and challenges of women working in male-dominated occupations in the manufacturing sector in Zimbabwe.
- iii. To identify success factors and coping strategies that women who have made it in operations management relied upon to succeed.

### **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What are the reasons why there is less representation of women in operations management as compared to men?

2. What are the experiences and challenges being faced by women working in male-dominated occupations in the manufacturing sector in Zimbabwe?
3. What are the success factors and coping strategies that women who have made it in operations management relied upon to succeed?

## **1.6 RESEARCH PROPOSITION**

In operations management, more promotional opportunities are awarded to men than women.

## **1.7 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

Institutes that are trying to promote women's entry into, and success in, traditionally male-dominated occupations require information on the underlying forces and consequences of increasing the numbers of female employees in these environments. The author hopes that findings from this study will provide factual information for developing feasible strategies and gender policies designed to ensure the success and sustainability of the co-existence of the two genders in previously male-dominated spheres, without dominance or discrimination.

This research has the ability to promote positive social change in the workplace and throughout society, as well as the ability of changing perceptions of gender issues among individuals. People need to work together as change agents. Females need to allow their voices to be heard. The education system needs to enforce change early on during childhood development. The results of this study may lead to a better awareness of gender inequality, as it can be used as the voice amplifying the need for change and acceptance thus adjusting the mind-set of existing leaders that represent the manufacturing industry in our economy.

The research also has value because it provides a basis for future research that can be conducted on the same phenomena. Future researchers could expand on this issue by examining a specific group that has interests in this topic; the male counterparts also vying for the positions. Researchers could look in a more in-depth manner to see how they view the idea of having women leaders in their areas of specialty.

## **1.8 SCOPE OF RESEARCH**

This phenomenological study was limited to only the investigation of females who are employed under operations divisions of beverages manufacturing firms in Zimbabwe.

## **1.9 DISSERTATION OUTLINE**

Chapter 1, has discussed gender inequality faced by women world-over under background of the study. It endeavoured to display the struggle women face fighting for gender equality in the workplace. This chapter identified the purpose of the study, the problem, the rationale of the study and scope of research. This research was undertaken because, in operations, it appears women have grown to accept that gender inequality is the norm and the struggle to rise up the corporate ladder through that route, will never end. As shown, regardless of effort and successes, no country has yet managed to eradicate gender inequality.

Chapter 2 will look at empirical data with the framework that affects the reality of women's professional growth. It will be a literature review that will explain various theories and models that have been previously used in the research area. It will also contain definitions of main terms that will be used continuously in the research. The search strategy for secondary data will also be explained.

In chapter 3, the researcher will explain the research design and show why it was most appropriate for this type of study. The chapter will identify the population, the sample, and explain the role the researcher played during the data collection process.

A report of the research findings will be included in Chapter 4. It will show how the findings addressed the specific research questions and how patterns and themes sprouted from the findings, and what measures the researcher followed to ensure reliability and validity of data.

Chapter 5 closes this research with an interpretation of the findings, and will explain how this study has promoted positive social change in the workplace and society. Recommendations will also be given.

## **1.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Chapter 1 introduced the topic. It gave a global view of employment statistics on women. The chapter highlighted the research problem, aim of study, study objectives, research questions and research proposition. These will help guide the direction the research will take. The following chapter is the literature review and it will give an insight into theories around the gender inequality in the workplace.

## **CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides a review and analysis of available literature on the subject issue: gender inequality and the rise of women to positions of influence within organizations. It begins by outlining how literature was searched for and validated for this research. It also defines key words or texts which are made reference to in this research from time to time. These words circle around the phenomena under study. The information explored within this literature review will go further to address a number of theories which help explain the phenomena under study. These include the mommy track theory, human capital theory, occupational segregation, gatekeeper philosophy, glass ceiling and labyrinth theory.

The chapter also explains the factors leading to a small percentage of female involvement at higher levels within organizations. The key variables of the research and they are: biological differences, family/work imbalance impacting mainly females, gender stereotypes, traditional organizational cultures, institutional sexism, and lack of access to networks and mentoring.

### **2.2 SEARCH STRATEGY FOR LITERATURE**

The researcher designed a set of question which she believed where aligned to the topic of interest under study (see Appendix A). These questions were the corner stone in searching and identifying relevant literature on the phenomenon. These questions she believed would best provide answers to the research questions. In addition, the researcher took advise from her dissertation supervisor to look at past researches on the phenomena, search for University of Zimbabwe published dissertations and thesis', management and organization studies and EBSCO. The internet and the university's online library were constantly referred to so as to get access to various authors and works done in investing gender inequality in the workplace.

### **2.3 DEFINITION OF PHENOMENON**

**Diversity:** Diversity is explained as the perceived dissimilarity among people in age, profession, or gender. Quinlan (2008) defined diversity as a characteristic of groups of two or more people and typically refers to demographic differences of one sort or another among group members. Diversity is an essential trait in any business as it stimulates creativity and

cultural integration in a business environment increasingly characterized by intercontinental trends. We cannot speak of gender equality without diversity.

**Discrimination:** Discrimination may be described as the disparity in benefits to individuals based on various attributes of how others identify people. Foyes et al. (2013), explained these various attributes as being based on religion, weight, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability and socioeconomic status. In this research, discrimination is scripted as the difference in promotional opportunities between genders.

**Inequality:** The term can be used to describe uneven balance between genders within the division of child care, house hold duties, salary, control, and status. Inequality is a relationship that links the haves and the have-nots (Catalyst Census, 2006). The imbalance impacting mainly females is the focus of this study.

**Gender gap:** The gender gap is defined as the difference in pay and promotions between males and females. Esmaili, Kaldi, and Navabakhsh (2011) describe gender gap as the differences that exist between males and females in accessing opportunities and resources, such as political activities, educational institutions and equal compensation. However, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics (2004), the gender gap can be described as the difference in jobs held by females and males, and the difference in earnings between genders. Factors that contribute towards the widening of the gender gap include years of schooling, industry of employment, experience and occupational choice (Heilman, 2001).

**Gender inequality:** Esmaili et al. (2011), explained gender inequality as the “differences between men and women in getting social and economic benefits which is often to the advantage of men at the expense of women” (p. 564). In this study, gender inequality can be used synonymously with occupational segregation, where the later refers to differences along gender lines, whereby certain opportunities are given to a particular gender over another (Sidle, 2011). These two terms will be used continuously in the study to reflect imbalance between men and women with respect to promotional opportunities.

**Gender stereotypes:** In this research, gender stereotypes propagate gender inequality. According to Carl (2012), gender stereotypes envisage ill thoughts on gender differences basing on traditional male-oriented discriminations that are in place because of built-in



inequalities. Stereotypes influence evaluations in work settings, they believe being competent provides no guarantee that a woman will advance to the same organizational levels as an equally performing man (Heilman, 2001). Such stereotypes include the notion that females are too emotional and sensitive to effectively make decisions in the interests of the company, males are incapable of practicing a sensitive management style, females do not have the intelligence and wit to manage companies, and males do not have ability to change in their acceptance of female leadership. Catalyst (2005) described that male personalities are defined as aggressive, rational, and independent, whereas female personalities are defined as friendly, sentimental, and caring. The media and organisational cultures strengthen gender stereotyping.

**Leadership:** Salas-Lopez et al. (2011) described leadership as the ability to influence others to do their best and to want to follow the vision of the leader. The element of wanting means there is a mutual agreement between the leader and his followers to collaborate towards the leader's vision. Leadership can be said to be the ability to influence success through the use of employees in alignment with the mission of the organization (Hawkins 2009). Leadership is what gatekeepers, as will be later explained, jealously guard from females.

**Phenomenological study:** In research, a phenomenological study is used to describe the real life experiences of individuals in relation to a phenomenon. A phenomenological design is a qualitative experiential research approach engrained in psychology for the purpose of making sense of personal experiences by focusing on participants' cognitive, linguistic, affective, and physical well-being (Pringle et al. 2011). This approach was the best suited to assess lived experiences of women in male-dominated industries.

**Promotional advancement:** this term may be used interchangeably with professional development, leadership development, career advancement opportunities and professional opportunities. A professional is an individual who is an expert in their occupational field, development may be described as progress, progression or a consequence, and opportunity may be described as the chance, prospect, opening or a break for advancement in rank within that work field (Dictionary.com, 2012). This term is used to demonstrate a noteworthy change toward success, and growth in rank which may be reflected by title change, capital gain, skill development, and greater access to information and resources.

**Role models and mentors:** Fried and MacCleave (2009), described a mentor as a person who has an influence over another's, who may be, an apprentice, a student or a pupil, career decisions by encouraging certain behaviour and by providing support, advice, and information; and role model as a person an individual admires. People look up to role models and aspire to be like them, and mentors on the other hand, act as coaches and teachers who provide direction, and help in developing individual's skills and intellectual growth supporting personal and professional goals. The problem however as shown by the research is lack of female leadership mentors and role models.

**Traditional organizational cultures:** These can be described as the norms, experiences and expectations in an organization (Bellott 2011). In every organization, there is a dominant culture in which people must conform to in order to be accepted and fit in. Carli and Eagly (2001), explained traditional organizational cultures as consisting of customary managerial hierarchy patterns of social interaction through which males exert more influence and exercise more leadership in board rooms and in top leadership meetings. Such cultures promote systems such as the 'gentlemen's club' where males build relationships based on similarities and where leaders do little to support the development of disadvantaged groups. It is in such cultures that females find it hardest to penetrate to the top.

## **2.4 UNDERPINNING THEORIES**

There are a number of theories which help explain the phenomena under study. The following is an explanation of each of them. The eight theories that have been used to explain workplace gender inequality are mommy track, human capital, occupational segregation, cultural transformation, gatekeeper philosophy, institutional sexism, the glass ceiling and the labyrinth theory.

### **Mommy Track Theory**

The mommy track theory is used to elucidate why gender inequality continues to exist, in the face of increased female participation in the workforce. According to Miller (2011), most working females struggle to juggle the obligation of parenting and working, in addition to striving to continue their education to pursue and obtain certain careers. In Sidle (2011) the mommy track theory goes further to explain that females end up taking reduced work hours or

extended leaves of absence to focus on family. Other women actually take a break from work to go and focus on bearing and raising children away from work. Once they feel the children are ready to take on the day without their mothers, they then try to get back in the working field. Miller (2011) goes on to claim that the natural act of becoming pregnant and bearing a child is the chief element that finishes female career aspirations. During the stages of social development, nature often interferes with female educational and career goals. As women enter their college years, the mind of eventually settling down to raise a family stays with them more unlike their male counterparts. Cultural elements in Zimbabwe also hammer it home that success is also being able to grab not just the education but the man as well to settle down with. Laurin et al. (2013), went on to explain the mommy track as social maturity that hinders female career advancement and leads to less education and experience. The mommy track theory is used to explain why gender inequality continues to exist, despite female participation in the workforce.

### **Human Capital Theory**

Human capital theorists have identified various variables that hinder female career advancement. Dunn (2012), describes the human capital theory as the capabilities and talents that individuals offer based on their training, knowledge, experience and qualifications, that organizations search for. Learning and education are considered an investment that involves sacrifices of resources with no present benefit but with an expectation of future gains (Bunting, 2013). Miller (2011), argued that females achieve less experience in the labour market due to having children during the childbearing years. As indicated by the mommy track theory as well, females take more time away from work to attend to nurture requirements. As a result, females invest less into their human capital compared to males. (Bunting, 2013) explained that employers end up viewing females as unreliable if they are 'unwilling or unable to relocate due to family responsibilities,' women who are seen as juggling a career and a family are sometimes perceived as not adequately committed to the organization.

### **Occupational Segregation**

Occupational segregation can be said to be the unequal chances of obtaining income, status, and power. Kalantari (2012), explained that occupational segregation pushes females to follow careers that identify with their gender roles such as teaching, nursing, school teachers, and secretarial jobs, which also mirror a low pay scale. Klimova and Ross (2012), discussed gender

division among industries and occupations, that is, male dominated industries versus female dominated industries, make it clear that women concentrate in low paying occupations despite their high levels of education and have remained at a disadvantage in terms of pay and status. Men associate themselves with higher pay scale jobs like engineering. That is why they are sector like mining, manufacturing, engineering, logistics and assembly are viewed historically as being male-dominated.

.

### **Gatekeeper Philosophy**

The philosophy developed from traditional employment practices in-order to control access to resources and to determine barriers that prevent those deemed to be unaligned from professional advancement. Cheng and Tavits (2011), explained how the ‘gatekeepers’, a group made up of males who are part of the headship, are powerful enough to control the pipeline of candidates are admitted to leadership and corporate governance and this has an indirect effect on women. Gatekeepers can significantly influence the process of gaining access and trust. The retiring generation of senior business professionals is viewed as the well of wisdom and whose recommendation into the inner circle carries most weight. Those who are grudgingly finally accepted in, first go through a painful vetting process with the gatekeepers.

### **Glass Ceiling**

Females have entered the workforce in significant numbers and continue to face challenges. Bosse and Taylor (2012), confirmed the glass ceiling theory continues to influence behaviour among gatekeepers. Zamfirache (2010), expressed the glass ceiling theory as invisible obstacles and artificial barriers hardened by stereotypes, media related issues, and informal boundaries. She went further to explain that the media plays a substantial part in maintaining stereotypes and setting standards for women. Studies revealed that the glass ceiling still exists, where females can only rise so far within an organization.

### **The Labyrinth**

Eagly and Carli (2007), state the labyrinth image as an alternate to the glass ceiling. According to this representation, there are some professions, in which women face countless obstacles which demand determination but which are not totally impossible to overcome. When women opt for professions traditionally done by men, their paths still encounter several different challenges (i.e., structural discrimination) and a sort of “labyrinth” (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

The move from the glass ceiling to the labyrinth is because times have changed, the glass ceiling image now seems less representative of what is actually happening (Eagly and Carli, 2007). For instance, it describes a complete and outright barrier at a specific high level in organizations (Bosses and Taylor, 2012). According to Eagly and Carli (2007), the fact that there are female chief executives, engineers, scientists, operations managers, university presidents, state governors, ministers and presidents of nations proves the statement is not full-proof. They add, a better metaphor which accurately describes what confronts women in their professional endeavors is the Labyrinth.

Eagly and Carli (2007), narrate that from history, the labyrinth is an image with a long and varied history in ancient Greece, Nepal, India, South America and native North, medieval Europe, and elsewhere. They added that as a contemporary symbol, it carries the idea of a difficult journey toward a goal worth striving for. Path through a labyrinth is not simple or direct, but demands persistence, knowledge of one's progress, and a thorough analysis of the puzzles that lie ahead (Eagly and Carli, 2007). It is this view and image that the researcher seeks to convey. For women who desire to rise to top leadership, routes are there but, are full of twists and turns, both unexpected and expected. However, as all labyrinths have a feasible or practical route to the center, it can be concluded that goals are attainable. The metaphor acknowledges that there are obstacles (indications of prejudice, resistance to female leadership, issues of leadership style required, responsibilities of family life, underinvestment in social capital), but is not ultimately discouraging.

## **2.5 IMPORTANCE OF SUBJECT**

This study can provide factual information for developing feasible strategies and gender policies designed to ensure the success and sustainability of the co-existence of the two genders in previously male-dominated spheres, without dominance or discrimination.

The aim is to promote positive social change in the workplace and throughout society, as well as the ability of changing perceptions of gender issues among individuals. People need to work together as change agents, females need to allow their voices to be heard, and the education system needs to enforce change early on during childhood development. This research area

may lead to a better awareness of gender inequality, as it can be used as the voice amplifying the need for change and acceptance thus adjusting the mind-set of existing leaders that represent the manufacturing industry in our economy.

## **2.6 DISCUSSION OF EXISTING MODELS AND AREA OF FURTHER RESEARCH**

Each of the theories explained, highlights the hitches that limit female professional development systematically across organizational contexts, that is, division of labour, organizational norms and institutional sexism.

These theories simply described situations and not what can be done to get through the situations. This research therefore tracks female career paths that find themselves in the different situational theories discussed, that is, glass-cliff, gatekeepers, labyrinth situations. Tracking the actual experiences will then reveal the challenges and coping strategies to succeed.

## **2.7 LITERATURE SYNTHESIS AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL**

In this section the researcher links her own perceptions about the area of study and structure of the problem to the available literature on the subject. The researcher notes that continued transformation is needed. She discovered that direct relationships exist among biological differences, institutional sexism, division of labour in parenting, traditional organizational cultures, gender bias, lack of access to effective mentoring and networks, and female career advancement.

Therefore, there is need to put in place systems (interventions) that assist in eradicating unequal gender norms to allow society to adjust its attitude, beliefs, and behaviour (Gupta, 2006). In-order for females to gain access into leadership, it is fundamental that they empower themselves through human, social, and professional development channels with the backing of institutions, society, and the government. It is equally important that females also strive to attain the necessary job characteristics of leadership, actively participate in social networks, and develop mentoring relationships linked with the traditional masculine managerial cultures.

**Figure 2.7.1 Conceptual Framework**

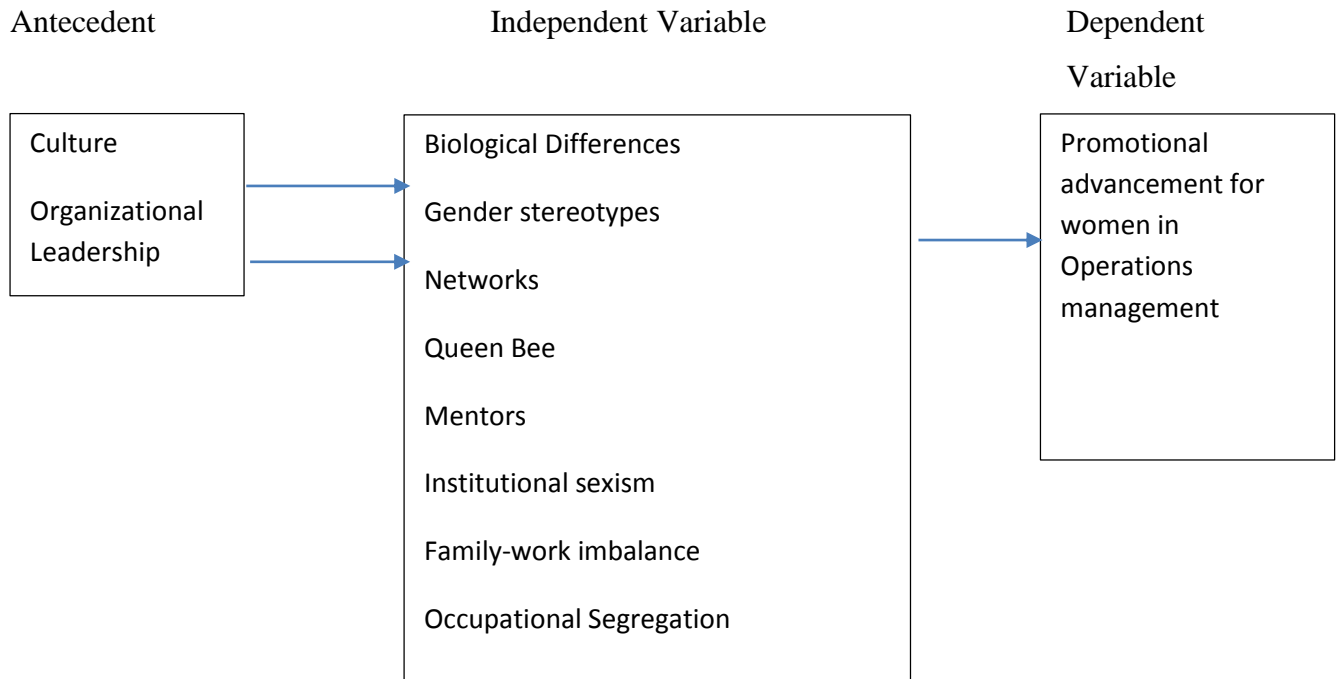


Figure 2.7.1 Conceptual framework

The way people are raised and society affects what they think of themselves and how they view others, regardless of sphere of influence. Those perceptions, alongside other factors such as biological differences, networks, family-work balance in the end affects the attainment of promotional opportunities for women in operations management. The following section discusses each of the independent variables in the conceptual framework.

## **2.8 DISCUSSION OF KEY VARIABLES**

### **Biological Differences**

The heart of operations in manufacturing industries is male-dominated. The only difference between genders is given in biology, which is established at birth by the infant's reproductive functions (Sharabi and Harpaz, 2013). According to Lee-Rife (2010), the reproductive capacity assigned at birth leads to a pre-assigned part of a woman's identity. The female image is established from infancy to be submissive to males through gendered stereotypes (Danjuma et. al., 2011). Rigney (2011), explains that society backs gender roles as the child transitions from infancy to early childhood, girls and boys are given gender-related toys and are dressed in a way acceptable according to gender.

## **Family-Work Imbalance**

Research suggests that division of labour inside the home deters female professional growth. As explained in the mommy track earlier, the barriers to female career success were due to a trifold responsibility: females are mother, wife, and worker, where family commitments seem to take the leading role in a female's existence leading them to leave their career to bear and care for children (Stewart, 2003). As argued by Yoshioka, et al. (2012), females are incapable of remaining devoted to their job demands once parenting responsibilities kick in and that delays career opportunities. According to Sharabi and Harpaz (2013), females take out more time out of work due to child bearing and family obligations than males. There is an interpersonal reward with respect to child care that females enjoy (Sperlich, Peter, and Geyer, 2012).

Stewart (2003) also argues that childbearing has a negative effect on economic outcomes for females. Stewart claimed females with children had a reduced opportunity for educational and work-related development, suggesting, women's prominence in the home may be counter to educational and occupational success. O'Neill (2003), expressed that, it is because of family responsibilities, that female invest less time into the labour market, ultimately resulting in a reduction in skills and earnings, which in turn effects the 'gender gap.' Klasen (2005), supported this point, as he mentioned that education was a variable that contributed to the gender wage gap. He went further to postulate that, educated mothers in turn produced smaller families, which permitted for greater investments into encouraging better health and education for their children which will end up, reducing population growth rates, promoting economic growth and poverty reduction.

The major reason disparity exists between genders was because females had to organize their schedules around childcare responsibilities, while males arranged their schedules around their workforce (Mellor, 2003). According to Harris (2010), the inroads into leadership, management or control positions are challenging for females with family responsibilities because it clashes with the ideal worker model categorizing the 'breadwinner-homemaker' family arrangements and requires complete work commitment. Harris continues, females with families are not able to pledge themselves to the labour market as much as their male counterparts, nor are they able to invest in an equivalent amount of time into their education to strengthen their skill set to rise just as equally as their male counterparts in their career.



## **Gender Stereotypes**

Research suggests that stereotypes deter female professional growth. Stereotyping is the standardized concept used by members of a group. Stereotypes are preconceived perceptions of a group that coincide with certain characteristics, attributes, forms, or traits (Alev, et al., 2010). The same author further explained that stereotypes are derived from limitations in the ability to process information. He explains that stereotypes are developed to cover ignorance, satisfy motivational needs, and as a way to assign social structures to the world.

Humans have distinctive characteristics, irrespective of gender. However, some occupations are viewed as either masculine or feminine (Alev et al., 2010). According to Laurin et al. (2011), female traits are viewed as relationship-oriented and warm whereas male traits are seen as capable and competitive. Alev et al. (2010) also defined female attributes as caring in nature, skilled and experienced at household related work, greater honesty and better physical appearance. On the other hand, Kliuchko (2011) proposed male traits reflect activity, authority, supremacy, self-confidence, forcefulness, logical thinking, and leadership ability. The opposite of which, dependency, consideration, care, nervousness, low self-esteem, and emotionality coincide with female characteristics (Kliuchko, 2011). These characteristics may represent gendered stereotypes. These stereotypes command unfair gender roles (Alev et al., 2010; Laurin et al., 2011).

Heilman (2001) explains that if gendered stereotypes cheapen female achievements, then such stereotypes affect how females are projected to perform at work. According to Hewlett (2007), in a firm, if a model of effective management mirrors masculine values, then making promotional decisions to assess prospective managers is tied to traditional male-managerial cultures and females do not qualify into that executive mould. Alev et al. (2010) explained that success is alleged to depend on masculine qualities and masculine jobs are endorsed with higher prestige and higher income. According to Linehan and Scullion (2008), females are able to succeed in male-dominated organizations by signifying male characteristics, but in other circles, they opt to maintain their traditional roles to support their spouses to circumvent social and political pressures.

It requires further research to determine exactly how gender stereotypes cause gender bias in the workplace and how traditional organizational cultures propagate gender stereotypes. According to Heilman (2001) and Kliuchko (2011), gender stereotypes prescribe how males

and females should behave, not the real characteristics of their behaviour. Some stereotypes are tied to reality in some fashion, making them more dangerous and potentially long lasting (Heilman, 2001).

### **Self – Stereotyping**

According to Sultana (2011), differences in the office are coined from traditional paradigms categorizing female roles as wife and mother and males as the breadwinner. In Coleman and Hong (2008) it is stated that, “the nature versus nurture debate with regard to the origin of gender differences is without question one of the biggest issues facing researchers” (p. 35). They further claimed that females consent gender inequality, lower social status, and limitation in the roles offered to them due a biological gender theory and a social gender theory that they hold about their own gender identity. As a result, gender self-stereotyping leads to a validation of the division of labour (Schmitt & Wirth, 2009). Gender role stereotyping is a mental barrier restricting the number of females in leadership (Schien, 2010, as cited in Alev et al., 2010).

### **Occupational Segregation**

In terms of the occupational gender model, there are observed abilities in occupation for which gender roles exist. Anker (1997) explained that occupational segregation adversely affects the self-identity of females and how males perceive females; it affects female standing and income and adversely effects education and training that produce gender stereotypes. According to Oswald (2008), studies found that females make career choices associated with success in feminine occupations and self-stereotypes impacts their attitude and decisions for choosing careers. Many women are in ‘role conflict’ in terms of career goals due to the expected norm.

Research suggests that occupational segregation distances females from the leadership opportunities. According to He and Xiaoping (2008), while the percentage of females attaining education has grown, the gap in the occupational status has increased at a larger multitude. They further argued that although females are furthering their education at a higher rate than their male counterparts, occupational segregation in employment opportunities terms, continues to exist.

Stier and Yaish (2014) suggested that female prospect for promotion is restricted as a trade-off to fulfil their dual role in society. Sultana (2011) argues, the existing social system regulates power structures within families and work settings. Occupational segregation develops from social systems that are an institutionalized system of social networks that separate male and female roles based on their social status (Ridgeway, 2014).

### **Gendered Organizational Structures**

Mandu (2011) explains that, leadership in organizations creates the culture formation process. According to Bellot (2011), Mandu (2011) and Siehl and Martin (1983), the culture of an organization is shaped by a set of structures, rules, values, beliefs, perspectives, habits, and prejudices that guide and constrain behaviour.

According to Alvesson (2002), culture is an interrelated system of meanings and symbols where social relations takes place. Foss, Woll, and Moilanen (2013) emphasize that numerous organizations embrace the European American, male-dominated culture. They continue to explain that in several organizations, female values are given less significance than male values in traditional organizational cultures.

Organizational culture is defined as a “dynamic phenomenon that surrounds us at all times, being constantly enacted and created by our interactions with others and shaped by leadership behaviour, and a set of structures, routines, rules, and norms that guide and constrain behaviour” (Schein, 2010, p. 1). Crawford and Mills (2011), explain that traditional organizational cultures entail customary managerial hierarchy forms of social interaction through which, the principal culture, being European American males wield more influence and exercise more leadership in board rooms and in top leadership meetings. It is these traditional organizational cultures that Eddy and Cox (2008) referred to as ‘gendered organizational structures,’ those that develop power structures that form the basis of the hierarchy that gauge’s females against the male model of leadership.

According to Valentine (2011), culture is defined as the existing ideologies, values, norms and expectations shared by an organization that has an impact on its members and their performance. In support of this, Sultana (2011), also added that, traditional gender ideologies impact the roles of females and males, meaning that men are considered as the breadwinner and women have a different role, that is in nurturing and homemaking activities. Traditional organizational cultures do not value females by applying values, practices, rules, and norms in

organizations that disregard females and limit their ability of advancing into leadership positions (Washington, 2011).

A lot of companies have been historically and continue to be designed with top management positions being mainly held by men and with the resulting success context of think manager-think male (Bruckmuller and Branscombe (2010). Mills (2003) argues that, traditional organizational cultures have an inclination to be established and cultured in situations of male dominance that are disadvantageous to females. Yet, uncertainty exists as to why there remain a small percent of females in top leadership positions.

If the difference between success and failure is contingent on the value created by the culture of the organization, then the problem is engrained in the existing leader's values and beliefs endorsed and created by the founders of traditional organizational culture tying successful management to masculine values. Gender gaps at work rise in numerous forms, as discussed above, the culture of the organization establishes the core disparity between genders.

### **Institutional Sexism**

Education results in enhanced career opportunities and in higher income for individuals. Despite this, Shaw (1995), saw education as the bottleneck in the path for females, creating gender inequality. However, more females are embracing the advantage of educational opportunities to acquire knowledge of strategic choices.

According to Catalyst (2011), research showed that women attained more bachelors, masters, and doctorate degrees than males between 2008 to 2009. Zeher (2007), also established that females outperformed males in educational achievement; females enrolled in college in greater numbers than males and graduated with their respective college degrees. Yet, Boudarbat and Montmarquette (2009) argued that the variances are more noteworthy when we look at the field of study than the level of education. In addition to this, Klugman, Kolb, and Morton (2014), discovered that females consistently remained the minority in the following career fields: science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

Kabeer (2005), postulates that education is primarily important to female cognitive abilities, it escalates female independence, enhances female power in relationships, and raises female tolerance for networking and fighting for social fairness. "Education is one key to unlocking

the power of women,” (Gupta, 2006, p. 7) as it opens reach to various opportunities, limits gender unfairness, and affects life outcomes such as economic security.

However, Kabeer (2005), also claimed that education may hinder female empowerment as social inequalities are often strengthened through school systems as girls are encouraged to study fields like nursing while boys study engineering. Klugman, Kolb, & Morton (2014), explained that gender inequality is evident in the field of study that females choose, such as education and humanities instead of engineering and computer science. Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) revealed that females form the mainstream of teaching positions in the United States; they hold approximately 40% of the faculty and senior staff positions in higher education.

Ruterana (2012), explained that children receive knowledge about gender in the school curriculum as early as second grade in the subject of civic education. Ruterana argued that education reinforces gender roles in courses such as home care, economics, and general hygiene for girls, while boys are equipped for dominant roles that carry duties in the army and other leadership facets of societal activities which require intelligence, wisdom, and strength. The separation of gender roles exists in educational institutions, which in turn contributes to gender inequality.

### **Glass Cliff**

Research discovered that the need to promote females during a crisis goes hand in hand with the glass cliff theory. According to Kabeer (2005), during the world wars, females became accustomed to working following the need for factories to continue running in the absence of males who had joined the military. However, when the males returned home from war, many females chose to continue working as a means of supporting with the care of their families.

The glass cliff theory suggests that females are seen as more appropriate for leadership positions in times of crisis. Ryan and Haslam (2007), monitored four experimental studies in which female leaders were chosen during an organizational crisis. They argued that females only surpass the glass ceiling if the organization or the economy is a calamity because of the gender stereotyped features aligned with femininity as being helpful, intuitive, understanding, creative, and aware of feelings. These attributes make females well equipped to deal with the socio-emotional challenges that crises present (Ryan & Haslam, 2007).

In support of this view, Bruckmuller and Branscombe (2010), claimed that females are highly likely to attain leadership positions during a state of predicament or when organizations assume

risk of failure is probable. Females often perform jobs that require emotional demands (Ren and Foster, 2011). Based on the glass cliff theory, in a crisis, leadership opportunities are created for females.

### **Lack of Access to Networks and Mentors**

Access to the right network circles and mentors is major to female professional growth. Hersby, Ryan, & Jetten (2009) describe developmental relationships using two variables, mentoring and networking as a means by which females gain increasing opportunities and career development experiences within their professional field.

Although there are minor differences between mentoring and networking that involve developmental relationships, Wang (2009), explains the difference in networking is the durability of the relationships created. Linehan and Scullion (2008), discuss of relationships that are personal and less intense, but they admit that mentoring, to a greater extent, involves a hierarchical relationship.

Eddy and Cox (2008), argue that the model of positional leadership as the peak of success begins to leave no alternative role models for women coming up through the ranks. Wang (2009) highlighted the gender differences in founding networks, as well as discrepancies in access to and use of networks. Network structures and mentoring relationships many a times exhibit inequalities.

The lack of access to network circles may be thwarting to female career advancement opportunities. Ehrich (1994), argued that mentoring relationships are more influential than networking relationships. Linehan and Scullion (2008) differed, they found that networking can influence positive career advancement and acceptance. Dalton (2011), added that networking is a factor necessary for career advancement. According to Ely et al. (2011), networks can open doors to leadership opportunities. Bevelander and Page (2011) also supported that networking is needed for success in gaining a promotion.

Hersby et al. (2009) pointed out that networking aids as two functions: (a) identity, as a means for individual females to rise the ranks within organizations and (b) collectively, as a means of pooled knowledge, resources, and support to fight against gender barriers. According to Linehan and Scullion (2008), the benefits of networking include career advancement and success. Networking enables individuals to cultivate alliances, collaborate, exchange

information, share knowledge, and gain visibility and support. “The purpose of engaging in networking is to help individuals develop their social capital” (Wang, 2009, p. 35).

### **Good ‘Ole Boy’**

Research revealed that gender inequality is present within network circles. There are variations in the contents and structural characteristics of social networks that have an effect on the individuals who benefit in the network (D’Exelle & Holvoet, 2011). These systematic differences in the structure and contents of networks are based on a male versus female ideology (D’Exelle & Holvoet, 2011; Wang, 2009). According to Linehan and Scullion (2008), access to such organizational networks is not always equitable.

Males dominant the good old boy social structure and females do not have equitable admission into these networks (Bevelander and Page (2011). According to Linehan and Scullion, the good old boy network is prevalent in most organizations, which are traditionally composed of males and exclude females. Purcell (2012), highlighted that there is no easy admission into male-dominated networks for females because such a network is fortified after working hours, in bars, or during sporting events like rugby, football, and golf. Berry (2010), went further to elucidate that females are deprived of the opportunity to practice what they might be successful at because the male-dominated culture of the organization prevents females from advancing.

Networks may be used for gatekeeper functions to preserve existing norms and status quo, traditional organizational cultures, and to reinforce present stereotypes in society (D’Exelle and Holvoet, 2011). As explained by Metz (2009), people prefer to work and form relationships with others who are like themselves. For example, males prefer to interact with other males similar to them, they favour groups based on demographic similarity, and females find it hard to establish connections in male-dominated networks (Metz, 2009).

The ‘good ole boy’ network circle is designed to exclude females and maintain the American, male-dominated culture. According to Bevelander and Page, (2011); Ely et al., (2011) the European American, male-dominated network circles have higher influence, better visibility, access to informal discussions, and speed of promotions in which males achieve higher positions in organizations. Females who are attached to other networks which are not part of the dominant coalition experience greater hurdles in career advancement (Bevelander & Page, 2011). Metz (2009), confirmed that females have established their own network circles due to their preference to interact and work with others with related characteristics and because they

find it difficult to gain equal access to dominant male networks. Patton (2009), supported this by adding that women are inclined to feel comfortable having women mentors and are more appreciative of these relationships. Another noteworthy obstacle females face regarding female-dominated networks is the constant lack of support from other females who have adopted the queen bee syndrome.

### **Queen Bee**

Females who succeed to the upper strata of the hierarchy do not support other females seeking professional advancement. According to Mavin (2008), solidarity behaviour between females entails having senior females engaging in practices that support and sponsor alliances with hopeful females to advance into leadership roles by acting as role models, mentors, and resources in 'female networks'. However, these expectations are dwindled because of the limited number of females actually realizing senior management positions.

Johnson and Helm (2011) stated that there is mistrust amongst females working together. Some people dislike working under female leadership (Marvin, 2008). In addition, some females do not have time open for networking because of family responsibilities (Purcell, 2012). Senior females are uninterested in collective initiatives to simplify the climb of other females desiring to follow in her footsteps (Hersby et al., 2009). Marvin (2008) added, females who succeed into leadership positions do not take it upon themselves to address the problem of lack of females in leading roles.

Johnson and Helm (2011) discovered that women naturally adopt masculine traits when they are in primarily male environments. The queen bee title is used to refer to senior females in organizations who make it to the upper ranks of the organizational hierarchy and do not back other career-driven females through their journey into senior management. Queen Bee behaviour is described as bad as she simulates male characteristics of not connecting with other females and as acting as a gatekeeper by concealing information and power (Marvin, 2008).

The queen bees favour working with males, are usually inclined to promote and support males ahead of females, and refuse to form relations with other females unless they are in equal positions of power (Johnson and Helm, 2011). The kind of behaviour is also a contributing factor to gender disparities in issues to do with professional advancement outcomes. Senior females in leadership roles keep information and resources to themselves (information



asymmetry), contest with other females for recognition and benefits, and show an unwillingness to support other females in their motivations and desires to reach senior management.

### **Mentoring Relationships**

A mentor is a guide, counsellor, supporter and adviser, who has the knowledge, skills, and ability to help understudies develop by a means of supporting, directing, motivating, and sharing learned experiences (Linehan and Scullion, 2008). Linehan and Scullion (2008) further add that it is essential for everyone to have a mentor. Mentoring is the most substantial success factor in developing leadership characteristics (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011), and is a progressive resource to assist female career advancement (Tharenou, 2005).

Sharing the learning experiences involves telling protégées stories about grounding visibility and credibility, about their profession; about the value of education and learning; about how gender influences career development; about taking risks; about relationships; about perspective; and about values, this is what binds the mentoring relationship (Mysyk, 2008). A mentor is well-informed, has mastered the learning curve that was needed for their own career advancement, and gives back by supporting others to achieve their career goal (Mysyk, 2008).

As stated by Linehan and Scullion (2008), mentoring relationships are vital for females because they face more barriers to career advancement. The barriers that females face are different from those faced by males (Washington, 2011). Tharenou (2005), added that mentors are important to female career advancement because females come across more obstacles, that include gender inequality, distinction from male managerial hierarchies, and lack of networks.

Mentoring can help females achieve career success (Dunbar and Kinnersley, 2011). As suggested by Washington (2011), females need mentors who can train them and pull them through the ranks as mentoring support is known to create or lead to prospects for promotions, higher salaries, and increased job satisfaction.

However, barriers in mentoring relationships exist, which are often a result of traditional mentoring hierarchical relationships and the small supply of mentors available. Levitt (2010), pointed out that models for mentorship are traditionally masculine in nature. Patton, (2009) (as cited in Darwin, 2011) explained, “traditionally, the mentoring relationship has been framed in a language of paternalism and dependence and stems from a power-dependent, hierarchical relationship, aimed at maintaining the status quo” (p. 512). According to Eddy and Cox (2008),

the traditional mentoring relationship is rooted in the model of positional leadership and it that leaves no alternative role models for females coming up through the ranks.

Mentors may consciously or unconsciously choose not select female protégés (Linehan & Scullion, 2008). There are two main problems related to the organizational structure: organizational culture and formal mentoring (Washington, 2011). There is little support from organizational culture to increase resources and opportunities for females. On the other hand, formal mentoring relationships may be forced by organizations, they are forced in that, someone in a higher authority selects and pairs the mentor and protégé. It produces a hierarchical relationship which is comprised of a senior person who mentors a less-experienced protégé matching through a mentoring program (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011).

Washington (2011), cites that these forced mentoring relationships are less effective also due to the time invested into the mentoring relationship, which is usually six months to one year; such a relationship is short, it is not given adequate time to grow and develop, the relationships are less sympathetic and formal mentors are hesitant to involve their understudies in career development behaviours such as providing challenging assignments and visibility because they may fear that their place may be taken.

The impact of the mentoring relationship is also different by virtue of a protégé being male or female. Males are more likely to expect it as part of the career game and females may perceive it as just a brief opportunity to learn the informal rules (Mysyk, 2008). The difference in choice of the mentor being male or female for female protégés also carries advantages and disadvantages. As Tharenou (2005) put it, female protégés achieve more when mentored by someone with a comparable identity who have experienced similar stumbling blocks females face; female protégés learn more career strategies in alignment with their identity.

Although Linehan and Scullion (2008) discovered that the mentor's gender does not influence the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship, they did mention that females are more calm selecting female mentors to avoid problems associated with male sexual harassment. Having female protégés enables female mentors to minimize the number of barriers into senior management (Marvin, 2008). Patton (2009) referred to the 'female mentor and female protégé mentoring relationship' as a form of mothering that reflected positive exchanges because females share alike needs, interests, and cultural experience. A female mentor is viewed as a role model and guide who can better relate to the experiences of the female mentee (Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011).

The similar needs and challenges that females face cement the female mentor and female protégé mentoring relationship, and creates a collective vision for females to back one another in career advancement. However, there are too few females in senior management to act as mentors (Linehan & Scullion, 2008); females are tougher on other females than males, many females destabilize female authority, some females undermine each other (Marvin, 2008), queen bees are reluctant to invest the necessary time to expose other females to various career opportunities (Washington, 2011), and some females distrust other females (Bevelander & Page, 2011).

If effective female mentors are accessible to females wishing to advance their professional careers, then female career advancement may increase. As put across by Brown and Lewis (2005), female role models are needed for females with similar struggles, women need guides who have successfully crossed over the barriers that confront women, barriers which men may not even be aware of. The lack of female mentors a factor which affects female professional growth.

## **2.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Using the information shown in the above literature review, from a wide range of principles of human, social, and leadership development, the researcher reached the conclusion that the issue of gender inequality still subsists and huddles remain in the way of women who have the skill, aspiration, and drive to advance their career.

Chapter two has contributed to the leadership studies by exploring the correlational nature of barriers that hinder females from progressing through the ranks. The above outline covered biological differences that pre-assign the gender roles of inequality at birth; the back and forth decisions females are faced with between work, family, and continued education; gendered stereotypes stipulating leadership attributes binding successful managers with masculine characteristics diminishing female worth; institutional sexism supporting male initiatives toward continued education in fields that improve their knowledge and skill set to match leadership attributes; traditional organizational cultures imposing gender roles as ascribed by the patriarchal society to maintain the status quo; and the absence of leadership development through networks and mentoring relationships that limit females from gaining the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to take advantage of promotional opportunities.

In the following chapter, the researcher describes why a phenomenological study approach was selected to investigate current obstacles contributing to the under-representation of women in leadership roles. It will explain why this methodology is ideal to reveal the lived experiences of women who have come across challenges that limit them from attaining the knowledge and the skills necessary to progress their career. The researcher will describe the role she played in the data collection process, as well as the criteria for picking the participants involved in the study.

## **CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter explains how the researcher ended up opting for a phenomenological study as best suited to address the research questions. The researcher explains how the research questions were organized around and includes the justification for using electing the qualitative research methodology. The chapter will give detail on the population, sample, and explain a few sampling methods. Measures that were taken to ensure no ethical considerations were abused. The researcher will explain her role in the data collection process, support the technique used to collect data, and describe the system used for keeping track of the data and emerging themes. Lastly, issues of reliability and validity will be accounted for.

### **3.2 RECAP OF RESEARCH AIMS, MAIN STUDY OBJECTIVE, MAJOR QUESTION, PROPOSITION**

#### **3.2.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

- i. To establish the reasons why there is less representation of women in operations management as compared to men.
- ii. To discover the experiences and challenges of women working in male-dominated occupations in the manufacturing sector in Zimbabwe.
- iii. To identify success factors and coping strategies that women who have made it in operations management relied upon to succeed.

#### **3.2.2 MAIN OBJECTIVE**

The aim of the study is to highlight the challenges that women who aspire to work in operations management face, and then look at the response strategies that they are implementing to cope and persevere in such occupations.

### **3.2.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What are the reasons why there is less representation of women in operations management as compared to men?
2. What are the experiences and challenges being faced by women working in male-dominated occupations in the manufacturing sector in Zimbabwe?
3. What are the success factors and coping strategies that women who have made it in operations management relied upon to succeed?

### **3.2.4 RESEARCH PROPOSITION**

In operations management, more promotional opportunities are awarded to men than women.

## **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The research design provides guidance for the collection and analysis of data for a study (Trochim, 2006). It provides the glue that holds the research project together. The researcher's aim was to reveal experiences of women who pursued career opportunity advancement, but came across hurdles in relation to gender inequality. Hence the design became a phenomenological study as it was most appropriate to gain full understanding of perceptions these women who pursued growth opportunities in operations management. A phenomenological design looks at individual experiences of people. It can involve long, in-depth interviews with respondents, and sometimes the researcher might have interview the same respondent several times in-order to get a full picture of their experience with the phenomenon. As Saunders et al., (2000) put it, phenomenological designs zoom in on the process and how individuals shape and give meaning to the social world. In this study, the approach requires the research to raise questions such as what is happening and why is it happening the way it does.

For purposes of this research, the most appropriate research methodology proved to be qualitative method. A research method is a way of gathering evidence or data. Qualitative approaches focus on achieving understanding from an in-depth or close-up perspective (Sekaran, U. and Bougie, R, 2010). The research question needs to be precisely defined and geared to objective answers. A smaller number of

participants is typical, with open-ended questions allowing interviewers to understand the experiences of their participants in greater depth. Sometimes the verbal information gathered can be converted to numbers, but qualitative research is more anecdotal than quantitative approaches.

Although it demands a great deal of researchers' time and effort, and results can be confusing to interpret, a key strength of qualitative research is the ability it offers researchers to penetrate the masks and defences of interviewees, to discover meanings and to reveal the complexities of social issues and problems.

### **3.3.1 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY**

According to Saunders et al., (2007), research philosophy refers to the researcher's view of the world. Researchers have different world views or belief systems which guide them in their research, influencing the decisions they make about how to conduct their studies, what counts as valid knowledge, what is the right way to obtain that knowledge, how it should be analysed (e.g. using quantitative or qualitative-based methods) and what their own role in the process is. These assumptions will determine research strategy and the methods of that strategy. There are three main types of research philosophies which are Ontology, Epistemology and Axiology.

Ontology can be defined as “the science or study of being” and it deals with the nature of reality. Ontology is a system of belief that reflects an interpretation by an individual about what constitutes a fact (Saunders, et al., 2007). It is how one views reality, that is, is it objective (factual), or subjective (feelings & attitudes of people). This study is taking the subjective view of ontology because it is based on what people feel when they experience certain challenges.

Epistemology deals with the sources of knowledge, and how the data will be generated. It is concerned with possibilities, nature, sources and limitations of knowledge in the field of study (Cooper and Schindler, 2006). The researcher classifies what does and does not constitute the knowledge. In simple words, epistemology focuses on what is known to be true.

In research philosophy there are many different sources of knowledge. Sources of knowledge related to business research in particular can be divided into the following four categories:

- i. **Intuitive knowledge** is based on intuition, faith, beliefs etc. Human feelings plays greater role in intuitive knowledge compared to reliance on facts.
- ii. **Authoritarian knowledge** relies on information that has been obtained from books, research papers, experts, supreme powers etc.
- iii. **Logical knowledge** is a creation of new knowledge through the application of logical reasoning.
- iv. **Empirical knowledge** relies on objective facts that have been established and can be demonstrated.

For purposes of this research, sources of knowledge will be intuitive knowledge (belief, feelings) and logical knowledge which will as we derive facts (logic) form circumstances prevailing in these women's lives.

Axiology is a branch of philosophy that studies judgements about the value. Specifically, axiology is engaged with assessment of the role of researcher's own value on all stages of the research process (Cohen,et al, 2007). Axiology primarily refers to the 'aims' of the research. This branch of the research philosophy attempts to clarify if you are trying to explain or predict the world, or are you only seeking to understand it. In simple terms, axiology focuses on what do you value in your research. This is important because your values affect how you conduct your research and what you will value in your research findings.

### **3.3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH**

This research followed an inductive approach. Inductive research involves the search for pattern from observation and the development of explanations – theories – for those patterns through series of hypotheses ( Cooper and Schindler, 2006). No theories or hypotheses would apply in inductive studies at the beginning of the research and the researcher is free in terms of altering the direction for the study after the research process had commenced. This research took an inductive approach and started off with a proposition, which the researcher seeks to validate or prove.



### **3.3.3 RESEARCH STRATEGY**

Eighteen respondents were observed and interviewed as the researcher strategy. Through simultaneous collection and analysis of data, the researcher frequently compared data excerpts within and between the eighteen cases as well as with relevant theory to the point of theoretical saturation, that is, when she found no new themes emerging. A core theoretical understanding of the experiences of women in male-dominated occupations was developed.

## **3.4 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

It was important for the researcher to understand the lived experiences of the participants in relation to the phenomenon under study. The researcher set aside any preconceptions about the issue and concentrated on identifying common themes emerging from participants' descriptions of their experiences. The forms of data collection were interviews and observation.

### **3.4.1 INTERVIEWS**

According to Merriam (2009), an interview is a meeting or discussion between two or more individuals for whom information is required after engaging into a conversation. In terms of research, Merriam (2009) added that an interview is a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study. Interviews provided in-depth information in cases where simple observation alone was not enough to build a case. Interviews were necessary because lived meaning of past events encountered by participants cannot be replicated (Merriam, 2009).

There are three main structures of interviews: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured, these vary subject to flexibility, the type of questions being asked, and the nature of interaction between the researcher and the participant. Flexibility refers to place, time, and the number of interviews to be scheduled. Unstructured interviews usually consume more time than structured interviews due to the probing questions that may arise during the session. What is essential is to ensure you ask good, relevant questions because different types of questions produce different information. According to Merriam (2009), the technique in which questions are worded is a vital consideration in extracting the type of information desired. In support of this, Leedy and Ormrod (2005) added that good questions should include questions that are aligned

with facts, views about the facts, feelings, motives, present and past behaviours, standards for behaviours (what should be done in certain situations), and conscious reasons for actions. The researcher explains in detail how she conducted these interviews with respondents under section 3.7.

So as not leave room for doubt, the research followed Merriam's model of interview questions which addressed six types of categories: (a) background/demographic questions (structured format), (b) experience and behaviour, (c) opinion and values, (d) feeling questions (how did this make you feel), (f) knowledge (actual facts), and (e) sensory (more in-depth about what was seen, heard, touched, etc. – unstructured format). The researcher also followed Merriam's three variables that govern the nature of interaction between the investigator and the participant: (a) the personality and skill set of the interviewer, (b) the attitude and orientation of the interviewee, and (c) the definition of both in the situation. It was important for the researcher to be seen as respectful, non-judgmental, and nonthreatening. Allowing the interviewer to create and maintain rapport, be more flexible with an unstructured approach and Be able to learn enough about a situation through informal conversation. However, as Leedy and Ormrod (2005) put it, interviews also have their own problems, researchers must rely on participants' memories of past events, behaviours, and perspectives and these may be subject to distortion and accuracy failure.

### **3.4.2 OBSERVATION**

Observation is a different technique used to gather data. Observations are usually used in combination with interviews as they pick specific incidents and behaviours as it is happening, they further validate the findings. As Merriam (2009) put it, observations are very helpful when participants are unwilling to discuss more details or worry they might be punished for sharing their lived meaning.

The researcher closely followed a checklist of elements to observe as listed by Merriam (2009): the physical setting, (b) the participants, (c) interactions (relationships), (d) communication (the conversation), (e) subtle factors (unplanned, nonverbal, and discreet movements), and (f) the researcher's own behaviour. Therefore, two data collection techniques (interviewing and

observation) were used in unison to provide a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon being studied.

### **3.5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT (INTERVIEW GUIDE)**

#### **3.5.1 INTERVIEW GUIDE DEVELOPMENT**

The interview questions were derived from the research questions (Appendix B). After reviewing the conceptual framework, the researcher came up with a set of question which she believed would reveal meanings of study variables, questions which were aligned to the topic of interest under study (Appendix A). These questions she believed would best provide answers to the research questions.

#### **3.5.2 PILOT TESTING**

The interview procedure was initiated after a pilot test recruitment of four individuals. The first individual was male, a fellow worker who was interested in reviewing the research based on his own interest to check for leading questions and bias. The second individual was a female peer, a fellow student who gave her thoughts on content error, bias, clarity and understanding. The third individual was a female, a lecturer at Catholic University in Zimbabwe who took interest in the topic and agreed to challenge and critique the discussion questions. The fourth individual was also female; a person the researcher holds in high regard as she also holds an influential position in one of the country's leading firms.

Three pilot tests were done in face-to-face interview setups and one pilot test was done over the telephone. According to Allen and Carlson (2003), the reason for conducting the pilot tests was to detect any difficulties that could happen in the actual interview and to build the researcher's interviewing skills. The researcher enforced consistency throughout the pilot process by following an identical interview approach and strategy with all participants. The session and data collected during the pilot test using an audio device accumulated to an hour of recorded audio.

## **3.6 POPULATION AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES**

### **3.6.1 POPULATION**

As Cooper et al., (1998) put it, population speaks to the total collection of elements on which the researcher intends to make inferences. The population for this research was made women who work in operations divisions (Warehouse, Distribution, Freight and Logistics) in Zimbabwe. The research focused on women who work in beverages manufacturing organizations under operations. Women who have risen or who aspire to rise to effective decision making positions in operations management but have come across hurdles along the way that make that dream unachievable.

### **3.6.2 SAMPLE SIZE**

Cooper et al (1998), explains that a sample refers to the selection of some elements in a population from which conclusions about the whole population are can be made. In this study, because the sampling strategy required intensive interviews, the sample size was 18. Only 18 respondents were chosen because the study required in-depth interviews. Such interviews demand adequate time, conducive environments for respondents and in most cases, require further probing. Therefore, the researcher would need to go back to respondents and ask further in instances where she had gotten responses that were inconclusive.

### **3.6.3 SAMPLING METHOD**

For this study, the researcher decided to use non probability sampling, that is, Purposeful Sampling. The researcher purposely chose respondents using her judgment basing on key characteristics, such as; they had to be female, working under operations and in beverages manufacturing sector. She believed they would provide relevant data for the study.

## **3.7 CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS**

To avoid leaving doubt, the research followed Merriam's (2009) model of interview questions which addressed six types of categories: (a) background/demographic questions (structured format), (b) experience and behaviour, (c) opinion and values, (d) feeling questions (how did

this make you feel), (f) knowledge (actual facts), and (e) sensory (more in-depth about what was seen, heard, touched, etc. – unstructured format). The researcher also followed Merriam's three variables that govern the nature of interaction between the investigator and the participant: (a) the personality and skill set of the interviewer, (b) the attitude and orientation of the interviewee, and (c) the definition of both in the situation. It was important for the researcher to be seen as respectful, non-judgmental, and nonthreatening. Allowing the interviewer to create and maintain rapport, be more flexible with an unstructured approach and be able to learn enough about a situation through informal conversation. However, as Leedy and Ormrod (2005) put it, interviews also have their own problems, researchers must rely on participants' memories of past events, behaviours, and perspectives and these may be subject to distortion and accuracy failure.

### **3.8 DATA GATHERING, PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS**

The study sought to increase understanding of the reality of females who had experienced obstacles, related to gender inequality, in regard to professional advancement opportunities within operations management field. Methods of data collection in search for lived meaning included observation, with the researcher role being a mix-observer, meaning an observer as a participant and as a complete observer; and an in-depth, semi-structured interview which had specific questions, but allowed enough flexibility to add in probing questions.

Analysis is crucial because it derives meaning from the data collected through observation and interviews. As explained by Merriam (2009), data analysis is the process used to answer your research question. The meaning of this study was found through emerging themes from collected data. To conduct the analysis, the researcher first selected a sample population (females) who work in operations in manufacturing firms and carried out semi-structured interviews. The researcher then made sure she jotted down all the expressions (verbal and non-verbal) from the respondents. From the texts developed she looked at different words or phrases that could be used to refer to the same thing. That is how categories were developed from the interview responses. To analyse further, the researcher then looked at frequency of occurrences of similar categories, and came out with themes.

In the end, the researcher wrote a narrative report on the core of the experiences. Intensive analysis was redone to verify if concrete detailed information was obtained from participants and meaning was discovered. The researcher also verified with the participants the analyses summary of themes developed so that any new data can be offered and incorporated into the analysis.

### **3.9 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS**

The occupations the participants represented are only a small fraction of the male-dominated occupations that exist. There is various male dominated fields, namely engineering, mechanics, physics, brewing, etc. Opting to focus on operations management in the manufacturing sector represents a small proportion of areas where women are disadvantaged. However, the participants were rich in information about the phenomenon under study.

English was the language medium the researcher used whilst collecting data. Although they are educated enough to read, speak and comprehend, this may have affected the ability of subjects, whose home language was not English, to express themselves as freely and eloquently as they may have done had they been using their mother tongue.

Another limitation lies with the phenomenological design selected. Although it explains the understandings of participants from their perspectives and may help to later develop casual studies. Qualitative studies in their nature, lack generalizability to a larger or different population, this limitation was intentional because of the need to formulate a foundation for future research and to explore the issue in its initial stages.

In addition, the study was restricted to the examination of females and their individual cases pertaining to their experiences of gender inequality within the manufacturing industry in Zimbabwe. This means that there is no capacity to make generalization about other industries in our country. However, it was hoped that the unit of analysis would include diverse females at different levels of an organization so that the researcher may determine the impact that organizational career models relative to stereotypes regarding professional development have in terms of gender equity and to allow the researcher to present general findings on the experiences of gender inequality among females from various backgrounds. There was no control for ethnic bias.

The researcher faced intense time constraints as she was tackling two researches simultaneously from different institutions. That added to the fact that she has a job and a family also requiring her time and attention, proper work life balance was required. However, she put her organisational skills to task and delivered her project in time.

### **3.10 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

#### **3.10.1 VALIDITY**

Validity is measured in order to determine whether or not the data represents reality. Merriam (2009) postulates that since reality cannot be captured, validity has to be evaluated in relation to the purpose and findings of the research. Merriam (2009) went on to point out five tactics that qualitative researchers can implement to increase the validity of their findings.

The first is triangulation, which can also be called crystallization. It is the use of multiple approaches or methods (quantitative and qualitative), multiple methods of data collection (surveys and case studies), and multiple theories (mommy track and glass ceiling). The second tactic to enforce credibility is respondent validation (Lombard, et al., 2005). In this case the researcher asks for feedback from participants who took part in the interview process to avoid misinterpretation of the meaning of what the interviewees described and their examples. The third way is immense involvement in the data collection process. The researcher persistently seeks data supporting different explanations and challenges her initial expectations or findings.

The fourth tactic is, reflexivity (Merriam, 2009). In this case the researcher tries to understand how her opinions and values might affect the shape of the study. As a result, the researcher then explains his or her own biases and assumptions about the research. The final strategy is peer review, this is when an associate or dissertation committee assesses the raw data and evaluates whether the findings are reasonable based on the data.

In this research, to ensure validity, the researcher made use of triangulation, that is, respondent validation, reflexivity, and peer examination. Using the triangulation approach, the researcher employed multiple methods of data which involved observations and interviews. The researcher used a member check strategy in the analysis stage to deduce the meaning of the

data collected during observation and interviews to ascertain whether what is interpreted captures the true lived meaning. Peer-review was regular throughout the dissertation process, share her progress with her peers so that they help her highlight areas she can look at. The researcher also sat down with her dissertation supervisor so that she assesses and provides guidance as the research progressed. The four participants chosen for the pilot test evaluated the face validity assessment. The researcher used the pilot test to test the validity of the developed interview questions.

### **3.10.2 RELIABILITY**

Reliability is the overall exactness of the measurement. According to Lombard et al. (2005), and Singleton et al., (2005), explain that a measurement is only reliable if it consistently produces the same results. Despite this, Merriam (2009) elaborated that although the experiences which are explained by participants may be unique, that does not nullify the results. Human behaviour is never fixed, therefore repeating a qualitative study will not produce the same results, but there can be numerous interpretations of the same data (Merriam, 2009). What is of importance is that the results be consistent with the data collected.

Just as validity, reliability can also be tested using a number of strategies such as the triangulation, reflexivity, peer examination, pilot, and audit trail. The audit trail strategy may be defined as the listing of explanations showing how the researcher attained at the results. It details how the data was collected, how the categories were structured, and how certain decisions were reached throughout the research process (Merriam, 2009). The researcher kept a manual log of notes, as well as recorded audios, so that she could easily look back and reassess her understanding of the findings. Also, converting all research data into text and assessing frequency of occurrences of similar sentiments about a phenomena helped increase the reliability of the study.

## **3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The moral dimension of this research study, required that the researcher be weary of ethical considerations. It was the responsibility of the researcher to develop and apply proper ethical measures as an obligation to the research community and to safeguard research participants.



The researcher opted for a qualitative study that used a phenomenological method, interview protocol, and non-participatory observation. This methodology avoids creating an issue of ethical harm to potential participants in the research study.

The impact of the selected methods allowed the data to express itself and not allow presumptions of the research to establish reliability and validity of the data (Hopwood, 2004). Singleton et al. (2005) added that, an interview and non-participatory observation method is less harmful than experiments; however, interviews come with the risk of asking threatening questions and the risk of discovery.

The ethical concern arising from such a study was in the participant selection process. It required the identification of participants, the business they worked for, and their views related to the phenomenon. To protect the identity of participants, the researcher concealed their names to protect their reputation. The researcher, with the help of The University of Zimbabwe, developed a consent form (Appendix C), which acted as a cover letter and also addressed confidentiality issues and the participant's right to privacy.

The research participants were females over the age of 18 (age of consent) who experienced the phenomenon and who work within the operations industry. All participants were knowledgeable of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time without any sort of penalty. No incentives were advertised for individuals to participate in the research study.

### **3.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

There are a number of research methods, however the researcher chose the qualitative method due to her interest in uncovering the meaning of a phenomenon for women who desired to advance their careers but came across many barriers related to gender inequality. As highlighted by this chapter, the researcher made use of a phenomenological design in-order to best interpret the lived meaning of respondents, affecting the outcome of the research and providing patterns.

A purposeful sampling technique was implemented and the researcher selected a sample of 18 respondents who met the selection criterion. The researcher made use of two data collection techniques: interviews and observations, in combination to provide a holistic comprehension of the phenomenon under study. To analyse the data the researcher first got a sample population

to draw inferences from, converted audio interviews into text, extracted categories from the text as they related to variables, quantified the categories, and connected categories themes to variables. As a validity and reliability measure, the researcher implemented the triangulation method which involved respondent validation, reflexivity, and peer-examination. All these methods increased credibility.

In chapter 4, the researcher explains how the research tools were made use of to gather various data to support the research, how the findings were developed logically from the problem, and how the research design addressed the research questions.

## CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 details results from observation and interviews with case respondents to build data to support the research. It will also show how the research design was effective in addressing the research questions, leading to the development of themes evolved from the findings.

### 4.2 AN OVERVIEW OF THE CASE OR RESPONDENTS

The table below provides an overview of case respondents:

**Table 4.2.1 Respondent Details**

Respondent	Position	Years In Company	Marital Status	Children	Age	Education Level	Level
R1	Stock Controller	20	Engaged	None	>46	UG	MSPT
R2	Warehouse Supervisor	16	Single	2	36-45	GD	MSTP
R3	Shift Leader	8	Single	None	26-35	UG	MSTP
R4	Stock Controller	18	Widowed	4	>46	UG	MSTP
R5	Finance and Admin Manager	8	Married	2	36-45	GD	MGT
R6	Freight Overseer	15	Widowed	3	36-45	UG	MSTP
R7	Warehouse Supervisor	2	Engaged	None	26-35	GD	MSTP
R8	Operations Manager	10	Married	1	36-45	GD	MGT
R9	Distribution Supervisor	6	Married	3	26-35	UG	MSTP
R10	Depot Controller	2	Single	2	26-35	GD	MGT
R11	Managing Director	14	Widowed	4	>46	PG	EXEC
R12	Operations Manager	6	Married	None	26-35	PG	MGT

<b>R13</b>	Freight Supervisor	24	Widowed	3	>46	UG	MGT
<b>R14</b>	Supply Chain Director	22	Married	5	>46	PG	EXEC
<b>R15</b>	Brewing Manager	13	Married	3	36-45	PG	MGT
<b>R16</b>	Operations Manager	15	Married	3	36-45	GD	MGT
<b>R17</b>	Warehouse Supervisor	19	Married	4	>46	UG	MSTP
<b>R18</b>	Shift Leader	6	Single	None	26-35	UG	MSTP

**Key:**

**Educational Level:**

UG – Undergraduate

GD – Graduate

PG – Post Graduate

**Level:**

MSTP – Management Support

MGT - Management

EXEC – Executive

The interview contained semi-structured questions and lasted on average 45 minutes (Appendix C).

## **4.3 DATA FRAMING AND ANALYSIS**

### **4.3.1 QUESTION 1**

**Where do you see yourself in the near future, say five years, within this organization’s hierarchy? Why?**

16 of the women interviewed indicated that they felt they were at the lowest end of their organization’s hierarchy and viewed themselves as the ‘worker bees’. R17 argued that progression opportunities for females were unavailable and males were beset and groomed for advancement. R4 claimed that males than females were chosen for exposure-type of projects. R4 also described herself as a worker bee.

R1 voiced, in a thoughtful tone and with a serious look, that she saw herself at the bottom of the organization and also described herself as a worker bee, she explained,

*“those in my department do not give recognition to women and their abilities”*  
(Appendix D).

R2 restated this belief and said that she viewed herself at the lowest of her organization’s hierarchy. Her words were,

*“this organization does not raise people of my gender to higher positions”* (Appendix D).

R1 and R2 claimed that traditional organizational models were influenced by many stereotypes regarding promotional opportunities for females.

R8 explained that she felt left out of the ‘loop’ because of the good ole boy network system. R8 went further to explain that she saw herself as only one step away from entry level. She supported that traditional organizational cultures are still a barrier to females acquiring career advancement opportunities

One Respondent, R5 expressed that she was in the middle of her organization’s hierarchy because she felt individuals who worked in administrative positions were the ones at the bottom of her organization’s hierarchy. She explained that she was given autonomy and was, therefore, included in the decision-making process in her department. As she was a manager, she was not interested in advancing further up the corporate ladder because of time and self-interest.

Only two Respondents believed that they were at the highest of their organizations’ hierarchies. R11 stated that she started her own business and was the Managing Director, securely she feels no one is coming in to take her position. R14 explained that she was at the top of her organization’s hierarchy because she was the only female who sat on the group’s board.

Of the 18 Respondents interviewed, half of these women felt that they were at the bottom of their organization’s hierarchy because of their gender. Therefore, the theme propounded out of this question, in relation to how most females viewed themselves, was worker bees.

#### **4.3.2 QUESTION 2**

**What measures have you taken to prepare yourself, in regards to talent, skill, and abilities, to make yourself more marketable?**

R17 stated that she was studying more about her position and improving her presentation, leadership and communication skills through a debate club so that she speaks more eloquently and improve her marketability. R17 also showed, with some bit of tension in her voice there are others who do not have to put in as much effort as she does to move up the ladder. R10 added that she has made lateral transfers, joined network circles, and has taken risks within the organization in effort to market herself. R16 suggested that females want to move up the corporate ladder but still experience issues of gender inequality regarding promotional opportunities. This respondent did however acknowledge and appreciate that her organization offers developmental opportunities through various courses, clubs and activities including tuition reimbursement for continued education.

R18 specified that she involved herself in a number of training opportunities to make herself more marketable. R5 admitted that she has attempted to gain more knowledge about the organization she works for, the business's network, and performed as well as she could to rise up the corporate ladder. R2 highlighted that she is currently furthering her education to make herself more marketable and she took the opportunity when her organization offered tuition reimbursement for employees interested in continuing their education.

R7 explained that she tried to make her existence known all over the organization, she was friendly, and continued her education. R13 highlighted that she was furthering her education, researching and training so that when an opportunity arises she can receive a promotion and rise the corporate ladder.

Each of the respondents above proved that females are determined to knock down barriers obstructing them from climbing the corporate ladder by improving their education, searching for training opportunities, and involving themselves in social networks within the workplace. The researcher found that the manufacturing organizations under study do support professional development opportunities for both genders through tuition reimbursement for continuous education and training. However, the differentiating factor was the specification on the types of colleges and professional programs to study which could be approved or disapproved. Although many females are open to career advancement, there remain a few whom are not interested in pursuing professional advancement opportunities.

R3 expressed that she had no longing to move up the corporate ladder and that she preferred being in the "worker bee" position. R1 claimed that she was not desiring to climb the corporate ladder, because she felt she would face barriers if she attempted to do so due to her gender.

Participate Su aired the following reasons for not wanting to rise through the ranks: male dominance, favouritism towards young males, prejudice, and that hard work that goes unrewarded and unrecognized. She made the statement,

*“The experienced crowd is unappreciated. Only the younger employees, especially men, are preferred, recognized and set for succession planning to make them eligible for promotion. It appears new college graduates are valued. The older workers are rushed into retiring to replace them with more new college graduates. I would prefer to work in a management position where the culture is fair, friendly, and equal for all”* (Appendix D).

In addition, R6 explained that she was brought in as a low-level entry checker, although she already had competent education and experience. These respondents affirmed that some females are satisfied with low-level positions and are not interested in advancing themselves because they feel they will be continuously undermined. They have given up seeking a higher career path without a fight. The theme developed out of this question, which focused on individual efforts currently being undertaken by these women to make themselves more marketable was Education, Training and Network.

### **4.3.3 QUESTION 3**

**Are women equally good leaders as men? Explain.**

R7 expressed that she believed that females have equal leadership abilities to males. R7 stated,

*“Although they are equal, however, men and women employ different styles of leadership”* (Appendix D).

R11 reiterated that, given the opportunity, females possess leadership qualities equal to males, but the problem is the traditional, male-dominated career models females have to work in. R12 jokingly said that, if females can manage a home, then they could easily use the same skills to manage a workforce.

R17 mentioned that females are denied the opportunities but are as able as males. R5 expressed that females are superior leaders because they are more inclusive and rational. R1 sternly stated,

*“In College, there are more women enrolled than men, more women pushing for leadership roles, women are doing what needs to be done.”* (Appendix D).

R10 proudly argued that females are better than males at almost everything they attempt to do, while R14 explained that females are influenced by society to believe that they do not possess the same leadership skills as males. The respondents highlighted that career-committed females exist and are resolute to climb the corporate ladder and challenge to knock down the barriers preventing them from career advancement.

#### **4.3.4 QUESTION 4**

##### **Is the female representation in top management in your organization fair?**

R3 claimed that there were too few women in top leadership positions, although some women are beginning to be promoted into director positions. R4 argued that in her organization, there were only males in top leadership positions. R8 believed females were few in upper management because

*“they are timid when it comes to promoting themselves, and women do not ask for the respect and promotions they feel deserve”* (Appendix D).

R16 claimed that there was only one female director in her organization.

R9 added,

*“High rank positions are usually held by men.”* (Appendix D).

R10 had the following to say about her organization,

*“the organisation is in transition stage, but females are not equally represented in top leadership positions.”* (Appendix D).

R1 depressingly mentioned that she had not seen a female Operations Executive or Director within her organization since she joined, two decades ago and claimed it seemed like the ‘good ole boys’ club. Respondents showed that promotional decisions when evaluating potential managers was tied to traditional male managerial cultures infused with stereotypes regarding leadership, and thus led to continued lack of female access to power and leadership.



#### 4.3.5 QUESTION 5

**Are there any issues of gender inequality in manufacturing operations organizations today? Explain.**

R12 was of the notion that there are issues of gender discrimination in manufacturing firms in our country because she felt there are few opportunities for females, marked by their low representation figures in operations statistics. R11 begrudgingly stated,

*“Males hold the power, the promotions come from males given that they are the ones in control, and they are not promoting women.”* (Appendix D).

R5 claimed that in her organization, there were no female directors. Based on the respondents' assertions in regards to workplace and promotions into leadership roles, females continue to lack access to career advancement opportunities because of traditional thinkers (males) who hold political power.

#### 4.3.6 QUESTION 6

**Have you experienced gender inequality? If so, how have you responded to it?**

R11 described her position as a chief negotiator on behalf of her organization and explained how a male contractor refused to work with her because she was a female. The male contractor refused to even just discuss part of the contract with her because he believed women are not 'level headed.' (Appendix D). However, R11 jokingly added, what the contractor failed to realise was that all men he preferred dealing with, were all her subordinates. In response to such a challenge, she reported the issue to her legal department and a meeting was held. A male work colleague then advised the contractor to 'back-off'.

R8 described her own experience with gender inequality, it was during a job interview that a male manager advised she works from home because she had 'many children'. She said she felt frustrated with the interviewing manager's feedback but failed to say anything to defend or dispute his utterances. R8 admitted that the biggest challenge to beating current barriers and initiating change was women not defending themselves, not fighting back and accepting male behaviour of treating them unfairly.

However, there were some respondents who refuse to give up without a fight. R15 expressed that she encountered gender inequality in her workplace when a male colleague continuously referred to her as a ‘young girl,’ suggesting that she could not handle her job responsibilities. R15 chose to file a complaint with her human resources department, a demonstration of how women can institute change by fighting back and allowing their voice to be heard.

R13 explained that her experience with gender inequality happens on a daily basis as her work is always second-guessed or quizzed. R10 expressed herself with some level of shock and disgust that at one time at a business dinner, a male customer declined to sit at her dinner table because of her gender and because she was expecting. Respondents showed that gender inequality in operations exists and women have to stop allowing such sexist behaviour to continue or affect their leadership track.

#### **4.3.7 QUESTION 7**

##### **Try to describe your organization’s culture or climate?**

R4 quickly answered that the culture is traditional. She stated,

*“Men run meetings and women are shown little respect in meetings”* (Appendix D).

R15 described her organization’s climate as being male-dominated. R8 reiterated the fact by adding there were more males in managerial positions than females. R7 added a political aspect to describing the culture by saying,

*“How far you advance is determined by who you know.”* (Appendix D).

Fourteen out of eighteen respondents termed their organizations as traditional in the sense that males dominant leadership roles. However, a few believed their organizations are in a transition phase. R10 labelled the culture of her organization as both traditional and transitional. She believed her organization to be of a traditional mentality but with a transitional workforce. R12 also described her organization’s culture as transitional, as her organization was in the process of hiring a diverse workforce. These respondents admitted that females may be noting a change within the workforce because of the transitions, but it does not change the fact that the high-ranking positions are still filled by traditional-thinking males.

Based on the respondents’ assessments about the cultures in their organizations, traditional organizational cultures were clearly an obstruction for females who were seeking promotional

opportunities. Despite a few respondents believing their firms were in a transition phase, they still viewed top-level management as traditional thinkers. The theme developed out of this question, which focused on how respondents described their organisational cultures was traditional mentality/transitional workforce.

#### 4.3.8 QUESTION 8

**Please explain some of the barriers that you have come across during your career development?**

R3 made note of a number of hurdles she came across as she tried to forge a path to develop her career: Males, family, and stereotypes. R3 said,

*“Men are able to hold women back in certain positions.”* (Appendix D).

R4 highlighted she met with some level of aggression. She said,

*“Men do not have respect for women, and that aggression works against women.”*  
(Appendix D).

R14 mentioned time and money management as the barriers she experienced during her career development. R5 picked stereotypes as a barrier to her career development. She said,

*“Men are reluctant to give women an opportunity because they inherently believe women are not as capable as men”* (Appendix D).

R11 claimed that she once felt hitting the glass ceiling during her career progression and that lack of female mentorship was an obstacle to female career development. R6 stated,

*“Men rip-off credit from women and women are so confrontational with each other they do not help one another”* (Appendix D).

As shown, respondents made note of both internal and external barriers which they encountered as they were putting effort in their career development. They were sure that gender stereotypes were a significant hold-back to females attaining leadership roles. Respondents believed that males held all the power, were traditional thinkers, and were the ‘gatekeepers’ holding females back from career advancement and only endorse those with similar attributes. Respondents suggested that traditional organizational career models, run by males that do not promote

females, including stereotypes towards leadership are the proponents of gender inequality in many organizations.

#### 4.3.9 QUESTION 9

**What is your opinion on women's access to power and leadership? Explain.**

According to R4, males hold back females from professional advancement opportunities because males wield the power. R15 stated,

*“Men use many different reasons to rationalize gender inequality, gender roles, family responsibilities, and women just let it go.”* (Appendix D).

R8 explained that unavailability of female mentors was a contributing factor to gender inequality and limited promotional opportunities for women. R14 added,

*“Some women just don't know how to play the game. Women are not demanding to take it! You don't get what you don't ask for”* (Appendix D).

This triggered something in the researcher's mind, she decided to test R14's theory. She asked for a promotion at work and amazingly, a promotion was given. A valuable lesson here is that one should allow her voice to be heard and should ask for what they want. R10 argued that females are to blame for their limited access to power and leadership due to the queen bee syndrome, which meant,

*“instead of building a sisterhood, there can only be one queen bee.”* (Appendix D).

Respondents showed that the reason why it is difficult for women to knock down barriers existing was because of not coming together to collectively fight for change.

R11 picked traditional organizational cultures as the reason why females continue to lack access to power and leadership opportunities, she added that it would help if organizations even out the playing field from point of recruitment onwards. R5 stated that continued lack of access to professional development was due to gender roles when raising children. R5 deduced that women leave the workforce to bear children; therefore, it leaves them with little time to learn how to position themselves in the corporate game. R12 expressed a contributing factor to gender inequality as male fear added to the fact women do not strive for promotional opportunities because they doubt they can be promoted. Respondents highlighted the need for

women to collectively work together and support each other such that their voices to be heard, they can make a change and gain access to power and leadership in operations.

#### **4.3.10 QUESTION 10**

##### **Are female role models and/or mentors significant in operations?**

R11 had an interesting view to the whole mentoring relationship. She said,

*“The skill of mentoring was the good, the bad, and the ugly. It’s a flip of a coin, it can go either way.”* (Appendix D).

She explained that she believed mentors are important as they can help bring about professional, intellectual, and social development; but the mentee – protégé relationship may turn sour and alternatively lead to a great deal of dissatisfaction. R11 further added that females should stop seeing each other as competition. Her words were,

*“If a woman perceives you as competition, she will not mentor you well. As women, until we learn to play out in the field, lose, and still be friends, we will continue losing”* (Appendix D).

R15 expressed that female mentors were vital to the growth of young employees within an organization as they chaperon them through the trenches and explain things to them from a female point of view, the view of someone who has been through the same challenges and came out the other side, along with guiding them towards the appropriate skills needed to be promoted. R5 excitedly added,

*“It will take women forever to learn the game if they do not see other women who have succeeded, therefore mentors are essential.”* (Appendix D).

R1 reiterated the fact that female mentors were substantial as they could make evident to other females how to handle several situations. All respondents highlighted the importance of female mentors to female career advancement and that their lack thereof formed a barrier contributing to gender inequality in operations.

#### 4.3.11 QUESTION 11

##### **Do gendered stereotypes affect female professional development?**

R12 exclaimed,

*“Gendered stereotypes make it impossible for women to chase tasks if she is already being labelled as unable, they limit female chances for career development.”*  
(Appendix D).

R4 explained that stereotypes create an environment of fear of losing one’s job, which prevents females from speaking their minds. She added that it is necessary that women take ownership of their personal professional development through education and training so that they develop themselves into the type of professional they need to be, regardless of the presence and effect of gender stereotypes. R8 claimed that gendered stereotypes set limitations. The above shows that although respondents highlighted that females need to take ownership of their professional goals, the problem of gender inequality remains in many organizations as it is supported by gender stereotypes.

#### 4.3.12 QUESTION 12

##### **Do female roles in society and the home affect professional development in the organization?**

R14 complained that demands from society and the custom that females are to take care of their families are factors that influence organizational cultures and in the end also contributing to gender stereotypes. R10 stated,

*“Young women are expected to only last about five years, before they quit and have children”* (Appendix D),

which corresponds with the stereotypes about female family responsibilities.

R13 exclaimed that she is regularly second-guessed, which left her demotivated. The models of ideal managers in operations industry reflect and seem to require masculine values, influencing promotional decisions when evaluating potential managers, hence females are not seen as befitting that executive mould. Respondents that have experienced some form of gender inequality in leadership opportunities seemed to have become used to such biases and

stereotypes. As the interviews progressed, the researcher found that most of the women experienced issues of gender inequality regarding their leadership skills, were challenged because of family responsibilities and societal roles in which women are expected to live by.

#### **4.3.13 QUESTION 13**

##### **Does culture in an organization contribute to promoting gender stereotypes?**

R3 explained when an organization implies that females with children or families cannot hold the same positions as males, it will be promoting gender stereotyping. R13 said this occurs,

*“by not approving women to study certain courses and excel in professions that are usually male dominated”* (Appendix D).

R2 agreed that an organization’s culture might contribute to females remaining stationary in one position instead of soaring into higher ranks of the organization.

As the interviews progressed, the researcher found that those who were interviewed face-to-face appeared more hesitant when it came to providing information than respondents who were interviewed over the phone. This was because in face-to-face interviews, anonymity was quite less thus they felt worried about giving more information about their organizations.

### **4.4 DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS**

From interviewing the 18 respondents about their experiences with gender inequalities present in operations management, the following themes came out: Worker Bee, Traditional Mentality/Transitional Workforce, Education/Training/Network, Traditional Organizational Culture, and fighting back. These main themes reflect how respondents viewed the causes and proponents of gender inequalities present in operations management.

#### **4.4.1 WORKER BEE**

In interviewing the respondents about where they saw themselves within their organization’s hierarchy, of the 18 respondents, 11 (66%) acknowledged themselves as worker bees, only 2 (11%) of respondents felt they were at the top, whilst the rest (5) thought of themselves as only one step away from entry level, a position where they are still not able to make decisions

autonomously. One of them highlighted that even at this position, they are not given proper recognition.

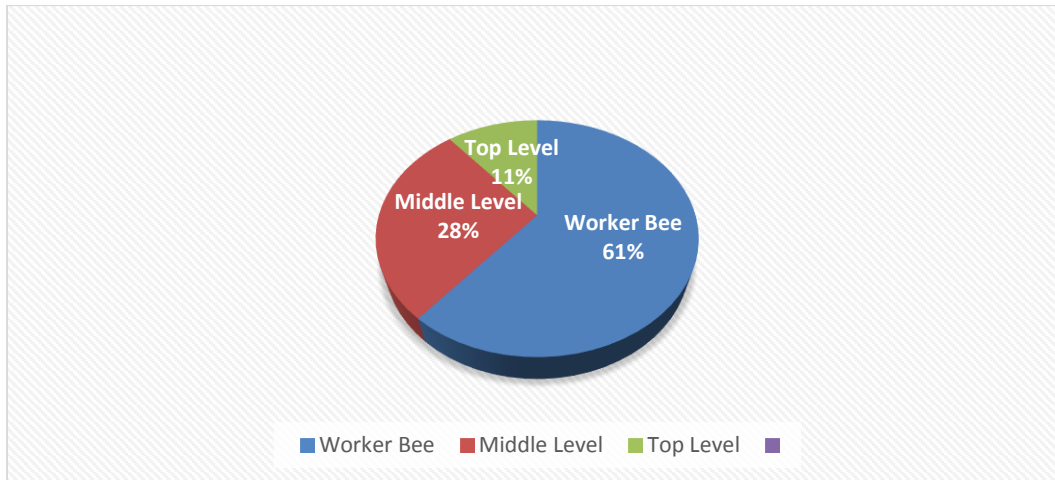


Fig4.4.1: Worker Bee

The glass ceiling theory discussed in the literature review by Zamfirache (2010) described invisible barriers that greatly slow down women's rise the corporate ladder. The profile of women interviewed showed that these women have worked for their organizations an average of more than eleven and a half years. Yet after so long, only a few of them have managed to rise to the top. It is as if there is a set limit (ceiling) as to just how far they can rise.

As stated, even at a higher position they feel they have no recognition, which can be explained by the Human capital theory. (Bunting, 2013) explained that employers end up viewing females as unreliable if they are "unwilling or unable to relocate due to family responsibilities." Women who are seen as struggling to juggle a career and a family are sometimes perceived as not adequately committed to the organization, the efforts they put in are pre-empted.

#### 4.4.2 TRADITIONAL MENTALITY/TRANSITIONAL WORKFORCE

14 out of 18 (78%) respondents described the culture in their organizations as traditional and only 4 described it as transitional. They added that it was traditional with a male dominance sense of leadership where males controlled meetings and majority of managerial position were held by men.



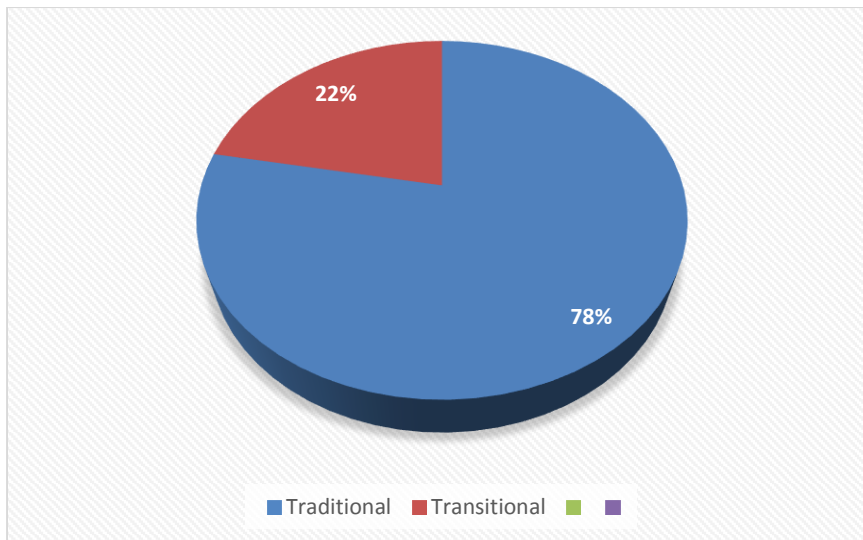


Fig 4.4.2: Traditional Mentality/Transitional Workforce

During the interview process, R10 described the combination of the traditional mentality and transitional workforce as,

*“The ones with power and influence have a traditional behavioural thinking. When they are forced by society to change the organization’s demographics within, there is diversity. But the people selected do not have any influence or power to effect any change”* (Appendix D)

There were some respondents such as R12 who said their organization was in transitional mode, citing,

*“The organization is in the process of hiring a diverse workforce.”* (Appendix D).

R6 added,

*“The right idea is there; it just lacks proper practice”* (Appendix D).

She said this considering that there were new hires of varying races of both genders in the firm she works for. This theme evolved as it was noticeable that a diverse calibre of people are now entering into spheres that were predominately held by men.

The traditional mentality is propagated by gatekeepers. When literature was reviewed, gatekeepers were described as a group made up of males who are part of the headship. They have held the realm for so long such that they are viewed as a well of wisdom. These men control the pipeline of candidates that are admitted to leadership and corporate governance and

this has an indirect effect on women. Gatekeepers can significantly influence the process of gaining access and trust (Cheng and Tavits, 2011).

#### 4.4.3 EDUCATION/TRAINING/NETWORK

On review of responses from respondents about efforts they were putting in to be noticed when opportunities to rise were availed, 15 of the 18 women (83%) answered they were advancing their education, attending training sessions, networking and researching on organizational needs. A small percentage of the women, only 3 (17%) responded they were not pursuing promotions which they know they will not get. R1 said,

*“although I am not looking to rise up the corporate ladder, in College, there are more women enrolled than men, more women pushing for leadership roles, women are doing what needs to be done.”* (Appendix D).

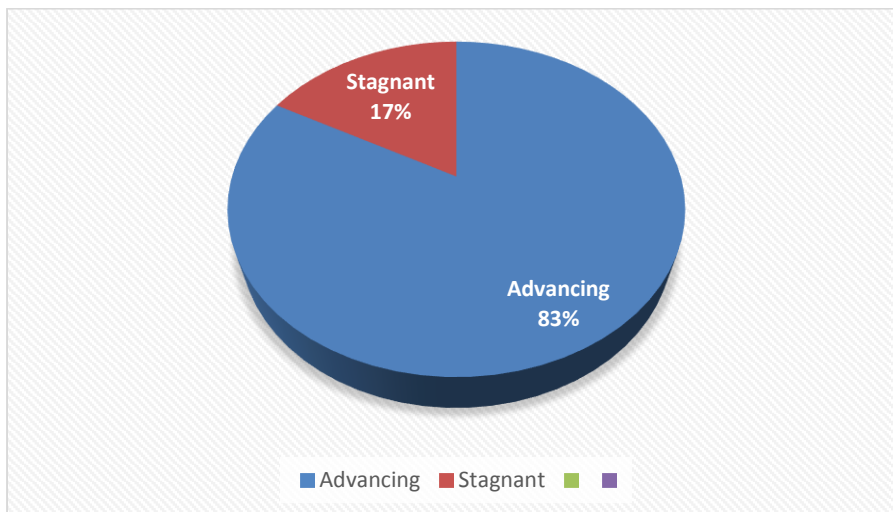


Fig 4.4.3: Education/Training/Networking

The Human Capital Theory discussed by Dunn (2012), focused on the capabilities and talents that individuals offer based on their training, knowledge and experience (qualifications), capabilities which organizations are in search of. Learning and education are considered an investment that involves sacrifices of resources with no present benefit but with an expectation of future gains (Bunting, 2013). The majority of women studied showed they recognize the importance of education and improving oneself to become better marketable.

#### 4.4.4 TRADITIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The researcher also reviewed what respondents viewed as the hurdles that challenged growth in their career path, 8 women out of 18 (44%) described the organizational culture as the most significant hurdle to women’s professional development. Statistics for other reasons cited were: 4 chose stereotypes (22%), 1 stated time management (6%), 3 picked female emotions (11%), and 3 stated family (17%).

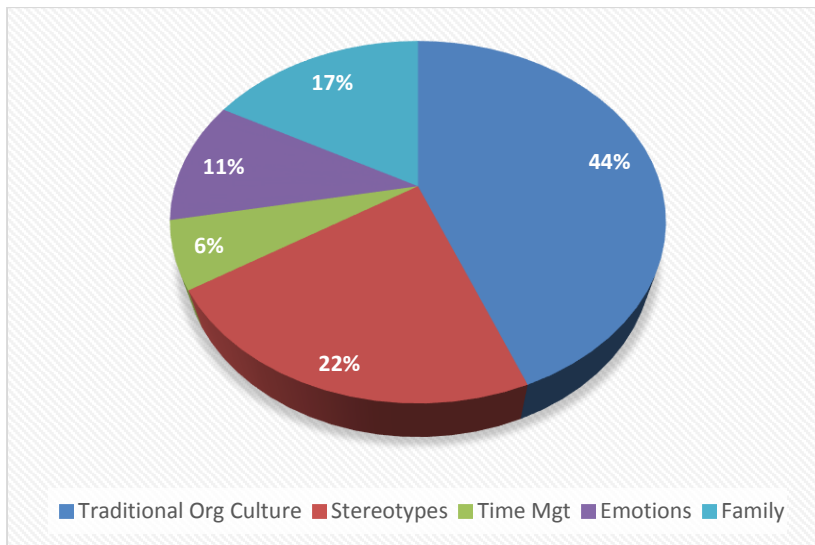


Fig 4.4.4: Traditional Organizational Culture

R5 said,

*“Although the profession is supposed to be gender neutral, men are reluctant to give women an opportunity because they inherently believe women are not as capable as men.”* (Appendix D).

R1 expressed that

*“managers want a ‘yes man’ and they feel threatened by people with qualifications higher than them. Most women are actually held back because of their qualifications and education.”* (Appendix D).

To further claim traditional organizational culture being influenced by stereotypes as a cause for gender equality, R16 stated,

*“Culture is a long rooted norm or pattern of behaviour, patterns of behaviour infused in an organization. It is difficult to try change to stereotypes, because most of the*

*stereotypes are aged, they are used to the certain behaviour which hinders women's professional development. Stereotypes influence decision making in-regards to promotion opportunities between genders.” (Appendix D).*

This theme goes hand with the gatekeeper theory as well as the good ‘ole boy’ and gendered organizational structure thinking discussed in the literature review. Purcell (2012) described the good ‘ole boy’ club as a network traditionally composed of males where there is no easy admission into such male-dominated networks for females, because they are fortified after working hours, in bars, or during sporting events like rugby, football, and golf. One is invited into upper echelons of the organization if they belong or conform to the good old boy standards.

It is these traditional organizational cultures that Eddy and Cox (2008) referred to the ‘gendered organizational structures,’ those that develop power structures that form the basis of the hierarchy that gauge’s females against the male model of leadership. Males wield more influence and exercise more leadership in board rooms and in top leadership meetings.

#### **4.4.5 FIGHTING BACK**

There was no direct question requiring the identification of this theme, but it materialized from information gained from listening to the female respondents who experienced gender inequality.

*“Men use many different reasons to rationalize gender inequality, gender roles, family responsibilities, and women just let it go.” (Appendix D – R15).*

From the interviews, the researcher discovered that females give the impression that there is nothing wrong when they are treated wrongly. 7 out of 18 respondents indicated females do not speak up for themselves, only 3 out of 18 highlighted the need to speak up and 8 out the 18 spoke nothing in relation to fighting back. Some highlighted that they had no choice than to fight back citing the situation does not allow them to fold back. Family responsibilities, economic situation, working conditions end up putting them in a position where they have to improve their situation regardless of will.

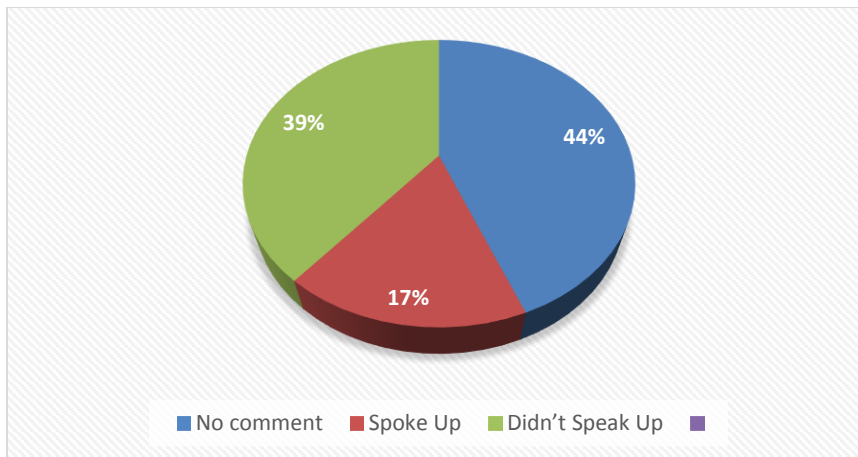


Fig 4.4.5: Fighting Back

R8 expressed that women are few at the top because

*“they are timid when it comes to promoting themselves, and women do not ask for the respect and promotions they feel deserve.”* (Appendix D).

R14 reiterated this point by saying,

*“Some women just don’t know how to play the game. Women are not demanding to take it! You don’t get what you don’t ask for.”* (Appendix D).

R1 also added,

*“Women should to take ownership over their own professional advancement through education, training, and researching the organization’s culture and discovering where they can best penetrate. They should observe how managers interact with each other. Whether you are promoted or not you can still grow into the type of professional you want to be – master where you are currently.”* (Appendix D).

The fighting back theme does not only relate to the human capital theory which states self-improvement in education, skills and worth, it also proves the Labyrinth theory to be true. Eagly and Carli (2007), described the labyrinth as a difficult journey toward a goal worth striving for. Path through a labyrinth is not simple or direct, but demands persistence, knowledge of one’s progress, and a thorough analysis of the puzzles that lie ahead (Eagly and Carli, 2007). As evidenced by the dwindling percentage of female representation among top leadership in operations, it is not an easy road, but it is not impossible.

## **4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The drive behind this phenomenological study was to gain understanding of the experiences of women who had experienced difficulties, related to gender inequality, in regards to career advancement opportunities within Operations management. This qualitative research study was derived from a concern that there are limited opportunities for women because barriers exist preventing them from advancing professionally. The researcher discovered a number of facts as the study unfolded. She found out most women viewed themselves as worker bees and are quite okay with low-level positions and have since given up pursuing higher career paths because they feel they will be always undermined; traditional organizational cultures are still a significant barrier for women pursuing promotional opportunities even in this era; men are the gatekeepers, propagating stereotype behaviours, stealing credit and promoting those with similar identities; female mentors are vital to female career advancement and it is important for women to come together to collectively push for change and gain access to power and leadership.

In this chapter, the researcher addressed how the research tools (observation and interviews) were used to gather data to support the research, how the findings were built reasonably from the problem, how the research design was effective in addressing the research questions, including how themes evolved from the findings. In chapter 5, the researcher will evaluate the results.

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter, the researcher deduces the findings and explains how this study is able to promote a positive social change in the work environment and society. The researcher also includes how this study can be used as a basis for future research conducted on the same subject but unpacked using different methods and research designs.

### 5.2 ACHIEVEMENT OF RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this study was to highlight the challenges that women who aspire to work in operations management face, and then look at the response strategies that they are implementing to cope and persevere in such occupations. This aim was unbundled through three objectives which were:

**To establish the reasons why there is less representation of women in operations management as compared to men.**

The study revealed that challenges women face emerges from different factors. On one end, challenges are propounded by gender-segregated status quos that are maintained either formally or underhandedly in male-dominated environments. On the other, the physical nature of women, their unique physical needs, work-life balance and work identity needs pose a challenge to their knack to easily function in male-dominated environments. The first instance (formal or covert gender-segregated work structures) may be achieved through biased infrastructure, inadequate resources or policies. Majority of participants made no mention of any relevant practices or policies that were designed to improve their incorporation and adaptation in male-dominated work environments, giving the impression they are not aware of their existence.

Regarding workplace infrastructure, R3 noted the struggle to get adequate facilities and resources in the manufacturing firm in which she works. She explained that,

*“The female locker room is too small compared to the men’s. It is actually difficult when you want to get in one and find someone already in there and in most cases, you do not have a locker in it. Where are we supposed to put our safety shoes and dustcoats? We end up always carrying big handbags to and from home to carry our uniforms and change of clothes daily.”*

The physical nature of women (physical strength, hormonal cycles, and emotional strain) limits their effectiveness to perform labour-intensive work. As Lee-Rife (2010) explained, biological differences cannot be disregarded as they cause fatigue and body pain which is quite less or non-significant in their male counter-parts. Feminine unique physical needs have adverse effects on the physical and mental well-being of women. Personal negative work-identity perceptions affect levels of confidence in one's abilities to perform. Gender self-stereotyping leads to a validation of the division of labour (Schmitt & Wirth, 2009). The study revealed females consent to gender inequality, lower social status, are reluctant to push themselves to progress through male dominated positions because of negative self-perceptions. Although none of them showed signs of wanting to leave such industries, they showed the found comfort in 'softer' roles where they are lead instead of leading such that they remain working in - dominated environments.

**To discover the experiences and challenges of women working in male-dominated occupations in the manufacturing sector in Zimbabwe.**

As reflected by the mommy track theory, the juggle between obligations of parenting and working, in addition to striving to continue one's education to pursue and obtain certain careers is a struggle for working females (Miller, 2011). Females end up taking reduced work hours or extended leaves of absence to focus on family (Sidle, 2011). The study showed that conflict arises because of the need to balance the role of being a primary caregiver and the role of a career woman. Participants showed that their domestic duties repressed the pace of their career progression compared to their male colleagues. They explained as though achieving work-life balance and career advancement were mutually exclusive. A choice had to be made, to neglect facets of one in order to focus on the other. The women also spoke of disrespect and intimidation that they faced from the male counterparts. Being always second guessed, challenged, unbelieved and losing hard earned credit also formed part of the challenges.

**To identify success factors and coping strategies that women who have made it in operations management relied upon to succeed.**

The fact that there are women who have made it to the top in male-dominated occupations shows that the labyrinth is achievable. Discovering these adjustment techniques applied in adverse challenges and bias in male-dominated occupations was the core of this research study. Participants to the study revealed the value of effective mentorship and availability of female role models and mentors. To the participants, mentorship was an authentic and proven means



of getting support and guidance in the firm and of achieving career success. Participants proved Mysyk (2008) sentiments that mentors connect aspiring candidates to the right networks, share their experiences on how to ground visibility and credibility and requirements of the profession; show the value of education and learning; explain how gender influences career development; provide guidance on taking risks; about relationships; about perspective; and about values. A mentor is well-informed, has mastered the learning curve that was needed for their own career advancement, and gives back by supporting others to achieve their career goal.

It is however necessary to avoid the queen bee syndrome once one gets to the top, so that women provide each other with the support needed in-order to get more women to the top. Solidarity behaviour between females, where senior females engage in practices that support and sponsor alliances with hopeful females to advance into leadership roles, is an essential success factor (Mavin, 2008).

The study also revealed the need to speak out. Those who recognized gender inequality and did something about it, got positive results. Those who asked for what they wanted, the recognition or positions they felt they deserved received the opportunities to prove their potential. Therefore, having the confidence to stand against gender bias and expressing oneself is an essential success factor in mitigating often hostile environments and is an effective coping strategy.

### **5.3 CONCLUSION**

Studying the experiences of these women has proven that in operations management, more promotional opportunities are awarded to men than women. The researcher agrees that lack of noticeable and concrete commitment to empowering women in organisations remains, despite employment equity legislation. Previous studies also show that women in general continue to experience both obvious and indirect oppression that constrains their career development in male-dominated fields (Harris & Giuffre, 2010).

The researcher resolved that females must learn that although organizational cultures still remain largely traditional, times have changed and the workforce is increasingly becoming more diverse (traditional mentality, but transitional workforce). United, women can prove to society that they have equal or better leadership skills to men. Compensation and promotion should be equal to both parties. It is now more important than ever that women stand firm,

speak out, and fight back when they are faced with prejudices. Not speaking up entails shooting themselves in the foot, holding themselves back and no meaningful facilitation of change. Instead, banding together to fight against injustice collectively, allows them to create a positive change and open opportunities to recognition and career advancement.

## **5.4 ANSWER TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **What are the reasons why there is less representation of women in operations management as compared to men?**

The study managed to identify some reasons why female representation in operations management is limited:

- a) males – they rip-off credit from females, they prefer to promote those they relate to, and they hold back resources;
- b) family –the answerability of having to balance family life obligations and work demands affects time available to pursue education, training and networking which might have helped to make females more competitive as they pursue career advancement prospects;
- c) stereotypes –females are not given opportunities because gendered stereotypes embedded in traditional organizational cultures label women as incompetent, undermine and devalue female leadership abilities, hence deprive women the opportunity to rise to operations management. Gendered stereotypes habitually relate successful management to imitate masculine values;
- d) lack of female mentorship – the unavailability of female mentors generates a longer journey for females to glimpse into the upper strata and obstructs them from getting the knowledge in how to strategize the advancement game, how to negotiate and how and which network circles to join.
- e) Queen bees – queen bees act as gatekeepers, hindering other ‘wanna-bees’ from growing and advancement. They are of the belief there can be only one, hence they will not mentor another female or support her efforts if they perceive her as competition.

### **What are the experiences and challenges being faced by women working in male-dominated occupations in the manufacturing sector in Zimbabwe?**

As the interviews progressed, each respondent was asked 13 open ended questions which were designed to address the research questions (Appendix C). As one participant expressed,

*“The experienced crowd is unappreciated. Only the younger employees, especially men, are preferred, recognized and set for succession planning to make them eligible for promotion. It appears new college graduates are valued. The older workers are rushed into retiring to replace them with more new college graduates. I would prefer to work in a management position where the culture is fair, friendly, and equal for all”*  
(Appendix D).

R2 suggested,

*“this organization does not raise people of my gender to higher positions”* (Appendix D).

R5 believed that,

*“Although the profession is supposed to be genderless, men are reluctant to give women an opportunity because they inherently believe women are not as capable as men”*  
(Appendix D).

Majority of respondents showed that in reality they identified themselves as worker bees. R1 described herself as a “worker bee” as she said,

*“those in my department do not give recognition to women and their abilities.”*  
(Appendix D).

There were participants such as R3 and R1 who showed no desire to move up the corporate ladder, and explained they preferred staying as worker bees. R1 claimed that she was not desiring to climb the corporate ladder, because she felt she would face barriers if she attempted to do so due to her gender.

The manufacturing industry culture is traditional in the sense that males dominate the high-ranking positions, such men sustain traditional thinking to leadership such that they end up posing as gatekeepers to preserve the status quo. R4 was one of those who believed the culture in her organization to be traditional. She expressed that

*“Men run meetings and women are shown little respect in meetings”* (Appendix D).

R7 added a political aspect to the culture in her organization by adding that,

*“How far you advance is determined by who you know.”* (Appendix D).

R10 explained,

*“The ones with power and influence have a traditional behavioural thinking. When they are forced by society to change the organization’s demographics within, there is diversity. But the people selected do not have any influence or power to effect any change”* (Appendix D).

### **What are the success factors and coping strategies that women who have made it in operations management relied upon to succeed?**

Although some women have accepted such prejudices as normal and fixed, others are still driven to overcome them. Career advancement is attainable through improving one’s competitiveness or marketability. This is done through continued education, training, active involvement and participation in different networks and getting guidance from mentors who have made it.

## **5.5 CONTRIBUTION**

### **5.5.1 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION**

In the beginning of this research, the proposition claimed that in operations management, promotion opportunities are mainly awarded to males than females. The fact that data on specific employment statistics could not be found in operations management in Zimbabwe required that the researcher go into industry to try discover situation on the ground, focusing on operations. Women interviewed proved the proposition to be true. They confirmed that inequalities and bias affects the advancement of women to positions of power to run operations in Zimbabwean firms. An interesting addition to the study was the discovery that economic hardships facing women in our country are also a motivating factor for them to want to move higher the hierarchy. Yes, they are affected by traditional organizational structures, institutional sexism, gender stereotypes, queen bees, gate keepers, lack of access to the ‘good ole boys’ club but they also continue to strive and endure because the economic situation leaves them no choice.

### **5.5.2 METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION**

Similar studies on gender imbalances in the workplace usually take a quantitative approach, whereby statistics are used to prove or disapprove the latter. Studies show what is on the ground

but usually ignore the human aspect of those affected by the imbalances. The researcher's aim was to reveal experiences of women who pursued career opportunity advancement, but came across hurdles in relation to gender inequality. Hence the design became a phenomenological study as it was most appropriate to gain full understanding of perceptions these women who pursued growth opportunities in operations management. A phenomenological approach focuses on lived, real or actual experiences of people. Yes, it is time consuming as it requires in-depth interviews with respondents which may have to be repeated to gain clarity, but such a method provides a full picture of real experiences including feelings. The use of a phenomenological approach in this study showed the process, the situation and how individuals shaped and gave meaning to the social world. It answered what was happening and why it was happening the way it was. A research method is a way of gathering evidence or data. Qualitative approaches focus on achieving understanding from an in-depth or close-up perspective

### **5.5.3 EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTION**

The data produced by this research showed that the rise of women to leadership positions in operations management is a labyrinth. There is light at the end, and women can achieve what they set out to achieve if they remain focused, speak out, network and make use of mentors. It then becomes necessary that we continue to track their career paths, through the various glass-cliff situations they may end up in. The importance of mentoring in the rise of women was highlighted, this background can be used to study further e-mentoring. Considering that people can choose role models that are geographically based far away from them. Their influence, guidance and example needs assessment to gauge its effectiveness.

### **5.6 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Policy makers should induce education reforms, that readdress curriculums that try to structure gender roles from early childhood. The study showed that gender inequalities do not just sprout in the workplace, they start from childhood, biological differences influence gender roles in the home and society then they are re-enforced through institutional sexism when the child attends school. The education system is vital as it has the ability to change perceptions of gender issues among individuals (individuals who make up the home and society). This encourages

individuals to start changing the microenvironments within the institutions they belong (Eddy and Cox, 2008). Hence, educators should consider the results of this study.

Organizations require some level of force to conform to gender equality through legal mandates and not leaving the issue overly in the hands of private management of institutions. It also requires support from national leadership to envision clear business advantages in gender equal workplaces so that such a view point cascades through its citizenry. There should also be clear recognition of firms that are doing the right thing supporting change to reverse gender inequality in the workplace.

## **5.7 MANAGERIAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Management should introduce formal organisational initiatives that create an environment conducive for women to enter and remain in male-dominated occupations. Such initiatives should reflect strong, visible and effective policies geared towards addressing women's physical needs, change management approaches and practices to sustain female-integrated culture, measures to provide appropriate emotional support and mentorship.

When improving gender policies, management should work in consultation with women involved, they should also invite back those women who have worked in male-dominated occupations but subsequently left for more gender-neutral environments or occupations. Management should not only focus on the professional aspects of the job, but should also take into consideration cultural traditions and gender roles affecting women's effectiveness in the workplace. There is also need for management to prioritize motivating women to remain in male dominated work environments through visible and achievable career opportunities. Women in this study showed some level of giving up and no hope for growth, but if management stipulates policies shielding them from hurdles limiting their career advancement, then they are motivated to stay and soldier on. Their success requires recognition from top management to boost their personal drive. Traditional thinkers, 'gatekeepers', gender stereotypes need re-education to realise women's abilities and achievements and management should lead the way to successful gender integration.

Regarding mentorship, management should allow for gender balanced mentorship to ensure the relationships assist women to cope and persevere. Management should ensure there is no

lack of female mentors who have risen to the top in their organizations because their absence reflects management failure to address gender inequality throughout the organization.

## **5.8 GENERALISATION OF FINDINGS**

The researcher's main aim was to explore the experiences of women who worked in largely male-dominated occupations and to develop a better understanding of the unique trials they face and the resources that enabled their career resilience and advancement. The researcher was mainly interested in operations management as it is a field she works under and has great interest in discovering just how far she can go. In our country, statistics for women who work in such occupations that make up operations (Distribution, Logistics and Warehouse) are not readily available. Networks for women in such professions are also yet to be developed or are still in grass-root stages such that support for aspiring candidates is limited. The research managed to prove that discrimination and bias seem to be the principal challenges women face, whether they are apparent in formal policies and tangible resources or in hidden aspects of the organizational culture that reflect gender stereotypes and male resistance.

Although this study was field specific (operations management), its results tie directly into other studies showing that women in general experience both explicit and elusive mistreatment that inhibits their career progression in male-dominated fields (Harris & Giuffre, 2010). A similar study was done in construction industry, and the findings of Haupt (2009), echo the same sentiments as this study that the lack of written gender policies and gender-based education in certain fields shows that organizations are not fully committed to empowering women to positions of power and influence, regardless of employment equity legislation.

Davey and Davidson (2000) conducted a similar study in the aviation sector and discovered that the female pilots are not that popular and they usually experience a lot of insulting comments about women, on some occasions, hostile and chauvinist behaviour from male co-workers and even passengers. Dodge, Valcore, and Gomez's (2011) chosen to study the police officer sector. They zoomed in on female police officers in male-dominated special weapons and tactical teams (SWAT). They affirmed that the challenge of incorporating female officers into the SWAT subculture required altering perceptions in an overall organizational culture that continued to recommend the values of masculinity.

The fact that a number of studies on gender imbalance in male-dominated occupations produce the similar findings in challenges women face as they try to rise to management levels in such occupations proves that the situation is the same in any male dominated industry or sector. Hence results for this study can be generalised in defence, engineering, sports, mining, and even carpentry.

## **5.9 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS**

English was the research language and the language medium used in collecting data. The respondents were rich in information about the area of study, however, only a few of them could effortlessly express themselves in the research language (English). No participant used English as a home language hence it affected their eloquence in expression. The researcher did however allow them to respond in a language they were comfortable with and she ended up having to translate their responses to English.

Availability of respondents was also a research limitation. As these women work in largely male dominated occupations, there were quite few eligible respondents to choose from. Response rate on some of the questions was also low because of fear of identification, and risk of revealing potential private information. However, the researcher did put effort in highlighting the utmost importance of confidentiality for purposes of the study.

Statistics on women employed under operations in Zimbabwe were not readily available. National employment statistics stated numbers of citizens employed by sector, for example, mining, teaching, and hospitality but could not exactly zoom in to the exact percentage of such positions held by women. Also, besides institutions that offer professional qualifications in Operations such as The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport, there were no specific Operations specific boards or networks for women only in operations where accurate statistics could be found.

## **5.10 AREAS OF FURTHER RESEARCH**

This research can be used as a basis for future researches that can be done on the same subject (gender inequality in Operations management) but using different techniques. A phenomenological approach to this study revealed lived experiences of women who have faced hurdles related to gender inequality as they tried to forge their paths to career success in



operations. The same method can be used on other industries in Zimbabwe that are largely male dominated, for example, Defence, Automotive, etc. Future scholars could further this issue by looking at the female workforce in operations through a quantitative method. Experiments can be done to test the hypotheses related to gender inequality and gender roles from childhood development, education system to societal expectations.

As R10 put it: “The ones with power and influence have a traditional behavioural thinking. When they are forced by society to change the organization’s demographics within, there is diversity. But the people selected do not have any influence or power to effect any change” (Appendix D). This shows that change may be there but it is slow because it rather comes as a command than a voluntary development. This leads to a new research paradigm, of how gender inequality can be quickly reversed.

An interesting area of further research may also address how the different ethnic cultures in Zimbabwe affect the integration of women into traditional male dominated occupations.

## **APPENDIX A: LITERATURE SEARCH STRATEGY QUESTIONS**

1. How education relates to career opportunities for women?
2. How to expand work opportunities for women?
3. Any subtle forms of gender bias in society and organizational cultures that interfere with career advancement opportunities for women?
4. What are the common leadership attributes? Are they visible in women?
5. How organizations create conditions that limit women professional development
6. How can organizations can also create conditions that encourage females to take on the role of mentors (scarcity of senior female mentors)?
7. Queen Bees, how they perform and relate to others once they are in positions of influence.
8. Organizational performance with a woman at the realm.
9. What happens to the performance of organizations that have more women in senior positions or positions of influence?
10. Challenges faced by women as they try to move up the ladder.
11. How stereotypes make it difficult for female achievements to be noticeable?
12. Does having children affect women career advancement?
13. What social frameworks create barriers that prevent women from attaining leadership roles?
14. How do women respond to gender inequality?
15. Are there any organizational structures that limit women ability to climb the corporate ladder?
16. How do mentors assist their apprentices/disciples to become successful?
17. How can we change gender inequality in the workplace?

## **APPENDIX B:**

### Interview Questions:

1. Where do you see yourself in the near future, say five years, within this organization's hierarchy? Why?
2. What measures have you taken to prepare yourself, in regards to talent, skill, and abilities, to make yourself more marketable?
3. Are women equally good leaders as men? Explain.
4. Is the female representation in top management in your organization fair?
5. Are there any issues of gender inequality in manufacturing operations organizations today? Explain.
6. Have you experienced gender inequality? If so, how have you responded to it?
7. Try to describe your organization's culture or climate?
8. Please explain some of the barriers that you have come across during your career development?
9. What is your opinion on women's access to power and leadership? Explain.
10. Are female role models and/or mentors significant in operations?
11. Do gendered stereotypes affect female professional development?
12. Do female roles in society and the home affect professional development in the organization?
13. Does culture in an organization contribute to promoting gender stereotypes?

## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

### Assignment: Gender Equity and Women in Operations Management

Date:

Time:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of interviewee:

### Demographic Survey

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Under 26    \_\_\_\_\_ 26 – 35    \_\_\_\_\_ 36 - 45    \_\_\_\_\_ 46+

Marital Status:    \_\_\_\_\_ S    \_\_\_\_\_ E    \_\_\_\_\_ D    \_\_\_\_\_ W

Educational Level: \_\_\_\_\_ Undergrad    \_\_\_\_\_ Graduate    \_\_\_\_\_ Ph.D

Occupational Status: \_\_\_\_\_ Mgt Support    \_\_\_\_\_ Mgt    \_\_\_\_\_ Exec

### Questions

1. Where do you see yourself in the near future, say five years, within this organization's hierarchy? Why?
2. Are you pursuing opportunities to rise up the corporate ladder? If so, what measures have you taken to prepare yourself, in regards to talent, skill, and abilities, to make yourself more marketable?
3. Do you believe that women are equally good leaders as men? Explain.
4. In terms of representation in top leadership, according to your view, are women equally represented? Why?
5. Do you feel there are issues of gender inequality in manufacturing operations organizations today? Explain.
6. Have you experienced gender inequality? If so, how have you responded to it?
7. Try to describe your organization's culture or climate?
8. Please explain some of the barriers that you have come across during your career development?
9. What is your opinion on women's access to power and leadership? What factors do you think contribute to gender inequality? Explain.

10. Do you feel female role models and/or mentors are significant in operations? Why?
11. Do you think that gendered stereotypes affect female professional development?  
Explain.
12. Do you feel that female roles in society and the home affect professional development in the organization?
13. Does the culture in an organization contribute to promoting gender stereotypes?  
Explain.

## APPENDIX D

### Question 1

<b>Where do you see yourself in the near future, say five years, within this organization's hierarchy? Why?</b>	
R1	No hope for change, will still be at the bottom of the organization. We do all the hard work, those in my department do not give recognition to women and their abilities. Gender stereotypes at the top prefer to keep the traditional organizational structure.
R2	This organization does not raise people of my gender to higher positions. Gender stereotypes support traditional organizational structures.
R3	I am one step away from the bottom but it has taken me long to get here. I have little hope things will change. I do not wish to move up the corporate ladder and I am happy where I am.
R4	I will still be where I am, nothing will change. Same position doing the same job and most of the work. Males than females are chosen for exposure-type of projects.
R5	Currently as I am a manager, I'm in the middle of the organization's hierarchy, those who work in administrative positions are the ones at the bottom of the organization's hierarchy. I have autonomy and I am included in the decision-making process in her department. However, I am not interested in advancing further up the corporate ladder because of time and self-interest.
R6	As an Overseer, we are a little just above the lowest level, maybe things can change for the better in the near future is there are some drastic changes in top management.
R7	I am just a supervisor, still very close to the bottom. A have little faith my position will have changed in the next few years because I have made so many lateral transfers.
R8	I am always left out of the 'loop' because of the good ole boy network system. I feel I am only one step away from entry level. The traditional organizational culture in my organization is a barrier that keeps females far from acquiring career advancement opportunities.
R9	Maybe I will be a manager by then.
R10	I am still finding my way up, hopefully things improve for the better and I get to a position of higher responsibility.
R11	I started my own business and I am the Managing Director, I feel secure no one is coming in for my position.
R12	Things will remain they as they are now. Have been in the firm long enough to know that once you get to certain position, things get stagnant.
R13	Nothing will change. People like me will still be doing the hard work and getting no recognition for it.
R14	I am already at the top of the organization's hierarchy because I am the only female who sat on the group's board.

R15	I manage a whole department, that I feel I do not have actual decision making authority. In the near future if positions arise, I might go a step higher, and then I will have more power.
R16	Progression opportunities for females are unavailable and males are beset and groomed for advancement, chances are high that in the next 5 years, my job will not have changed much.
R17	Maybe I will have moved a step higher, but chances are very low.
R18	I do not expect much change, I have been in this firm long enough to know better.

## Question 2

<b>What measures have you taken to prepare yourself, in regards to talent, skill, and abilities, to make yourself more marketable?</b>	
R1	I am not chasing after anything higher because the higher you go, the more challenges you will face because you are a woman. The experienced crowd is unappreciated. Only the younger employees, especially men, are preferred, recognized and set for succession planning to make them eligible for promotion. It appears new college graduates are valued. The older workers are rushed into retiring to replace them with more new college graduates. I would prefer to work in a management position where the culture is fair, friendly, and equal for all.
R2	I am currently enrolled in a professional course, I took the opportunity when my organization offered tuition reimbursement for employees interested in continuing their education.
R3	I do not wish to move up the corporate ladder and I am happy where I am.
R4	I am taking courses in my field of interest.
R5	Not currently, but there was a time I attempted to gain more knowledge about the organization by following the website, newsletters, and researching and performed as well as I could to rise up the corporate ladder.
R6	I was brought in as a low-level entry checker, although I already had competent education and experience. I am slowly losing hope.
R7	I tried to make her existence known all over the organization, I tried to be friendly, and continued my education. I am yet to realise the benefits.
R8	I am taking part community projects that improve my exposure to problem solving situations.
R9	I am studying further to improve my qualifications.
R10	I want something better. I have made lateral transfers, joined network circles, and have taken risks within the organization in effort to market myself.
R11	I always read wide and deep. I want to stay relevant and up to date with current events, that is how I survive in my business.

R12	
R13	I am furthering my education, researching and training so that when an opportunity arises I stand a higher chance of receiving the promotion and rise the corporate ladder.
R14	I never get tired of reading. I am currently enrolled for another higher educational qualification.
R15	I want to stay relevant so I always do researches in my area of specialty.
R16	I am studying more about my position and working to improve my presentation, leadership and communication skills through a debate club that I joined to help me speak eloquently and improve my marketability. I appreciate that our organization offers developmental opportunities through various courses, clubs and activities including tuition reimbursement for continued education.
R17	Have taken part in a number of training seminars to improve my chances of getting a promotion.
R18	Women do want to move up the corporate ladder but still experience issues of gender inequality regarding promotional opportunities.

### Question 3

<b>Are women equally good leaders as men? Explain.</b>	
R1	In College, there are more women enrolled than men, more women pushing for leadership roles, women are doing what needs to be done.
R2	Women are better because they consider all aspects of a person's life before deciding their fate.
R3	Women are good leaders, I think even well than the opposite sex.
R4	Yes they are, women are even better. They have a heart.
R5	Females are superior leaders because they are more inclusive and rational.
R6	Women are more understanding of situations that face people they lead. They weigh that against what the job demands and make the best choice. They do not just focus on the needs of the job.
R7	I believe that females have equal leadership abilities to males. Although they are equal, however, men and women employ different styles of leadership.
R8	They can be, but are accused of being emotional.
R9	Women put in extra effort to be where they are, hence in leadership, they appreciate it more and work harder to stay there.
R10	Females are better than males at almost everything they attempt to do.
R11	Given the opportunity, females possess leadership qualities equal to males, but the problem is the traditional, male-dominated career models females have to work in.



R12	If females can manage a home, then they can easily use the same skills to manage a workforce.
R13	There are many different styles of leadership.
R14	Females are influenced by society to believe that they do not possess the same leadership skills as males.
R15	There are many different styles of leadership. A good leader is flexible enough to adjust depending on situation regardless of gender.
R16	Females are denied the opportunities but are as able as males.
R17	Career resolute women can be better leaders because they give it their all.
R18	Leadership has nothing to do with being male or female, your skills and ability to handle people defines your leadership success.

#### Question 4

<b>Is the female representation in top management in your organization fair?</b>	
R1	I have not seen a female Operations Executive or Director within my organization since I joined, two decades ago. It seems the like the 'good ole boys' club.
R2	There are no female representatives in top leadership in my organization.
R3	There are too few women in top leadership positions, although some women are beginning to be promoted into director positions. Gatekeepers keep them out.
R4	In my organization, only males are in top leadership positions.
R5	There is one female, among 11 males as the top directorate.
R6	The numbers are not exactly half to half, but I think we have a few at the top.
R7	In the kind of industry I am in, men are viewed as more able than women, hence, women are few at the top.
R8	Females were few in upper management because they are timid when it comes to promoting themselves, and women do not ask for the respect and promotions they feel they deserve.
R9	High rank positions are usually held by men.
R10	The organisation is in transition stage, but females are not equally represented in top leadership positions.
R11	At least we have one woman at the top, representing that women can also do it.
R12	No I do not think we have equal representation, a few believe in women's abilities.
R13	Women are not welcome in the top hierarchy
R14	The reason why there are few women on top baffles me.
R15	This industry requires toughness and decisiveness, women usually lack that.
R16	No there is no representation of women in top management.
R17	We have two women out of nine directors.

R18	There is only one female director in our organization.
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### Question 5

<b>Are there any issues of gender inequality in manufacturing operations organizations today? Explain.</b>	
R1	Yes, there are. Look at even our toilets, they are too few and too far away, yet every building has a Gents toilet here.
R2	In grievance meetings, our complaints are not taken seriously.
R3	Our changing rooms have no showers, no lockers, or they are there but too few. You end up carrying everything in your handbag, daily, to and from work.
R4	Issues are there, it is only that women have stopped complaining about them and everything seems as if it is okay.
R5	In the firm I work for, there are no female directors.
R6	Males rise faster than women, you can clearly see their careers progressing.
R7	There is some favouritism and preference towards males.
R8	Gender inequality is real in manufacturing firms. The atmosphere or culture just feels unfair.
R9	The fact that women are too few in this sector says it all.
R10	Women have the highest number of grievances that are unsolved in our sector.
R11	Males hold the power, the promotions come from males given that they are the ones in control, and they are not promoting women.
R12	I am of the notion that there are issues of gender discrimination in manufacturing firms in our country because I feel there are few opportunities for females, marked by their low representation figures in operations statistics.
R13	You are only promoted if you are related to someone from the top.
R14	It does not mean that we are unable, but we are never given the opportunity to prove our capabilities.
R15	Females continue to lack access to career advancement opportunities because of traditional thinkers (males) who hold political power.
R16	Getting no help on new jobs in order to prove your incompetence is the order of the day.
R17	There are men who just believe they cannot be led by women.
R18	Men control everything.

### Question 6

<b>Have you experienced gender inequality? If so, how have you responded to it?</b>
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R1	I was challenged that there are things I could not do as a woman in operations. I responded by becoming a very active person, learning to drive trucks even forklifts. I actually loved the challenge.
R2	I was continuously overlooked for acting positions in a higher grade in my department. I later on voiced my concerns and they started giving me a chance to run things.
R3	No one seems to be paying attention when I make presentations.
R4	They expected I would back down on the night shift, but I would just say, 'hey bring it on', night shift actually gives me a chance to focus on my personal life the next morning.
R5	Meals in the canteen are biased towards what our male counterparts prefer. I put in complaints through Human Resources department to ask them to offer variety.
R6	I was given many jobs to do at the same time, and all jobs required commitment. They expected I would back down but I did not. I decided to be more organized and improve my planning skills.
R7	It depends on where it is coming from, sometimes the perpetrator is so high up there is nothing you can do about it.
R8	It was during a job interview that a male manager advised that I work from home because I had 'many children'. I felt frustrated with his feedback but failed to say anything to defend or dispute his utterances. I see that the biggest challenge to beating current barriers and initiating change was women not defending themselves, not fighting back and accepting male behaviour of treating them unfairly.
R9	I was told women cannot do this, I just kept quiet.
R10	One time at a business dinner, a male customer declined to sit at my dinner table because of I am a woman and because I was expecting.
R11	I am the Chief Negotiator of my organization, once a male contractor refused to work with me because I am a woman. The male contractor refused to even just discuss part of the contract with me because he believed women are not 'level headed'. What the contractor failed to realise was that all men he preferred dealing with, were all my subordinates. I engaged my legal department and a meeting was held. A male work colleague then advised the contractor to 'back-off'.
R12	I used to have a boss who each time I wanted to make a contribution during brain storming, would interject my every sentence. With others he would let them finish. I decided to ask him to respect my views as well in-front of everyone in the meeting.
R13	I experience gender inequality on a daily basis as my work is always second-guessed or quizzed.
R14	I was told I was not ideal for the next job because it required someone who is career oriented, the next thing, they gave the job to my male colleague.
R15	I encountered gender inequality at work when a male colleague continuously referred to me as a 'young girl', suggesting that I could not handle my job responsibilities. I filed a complaint with human resources department.
R16	Everyone else's work is always accepted on first trial, my work is always reviewed many times, even if they have found no corrections before. I am the only woman in the section.
R17	Sometimes you are called names, derogatory names because of your gender. I choose not to respond.
R18	I just feel I am not respected even in my position, my subordinates take every chance to challenge me, they feel I have no right to instruct them. I make I am well versed with the conditions of service booklet to guide and protect me when I deal with them.

## Question 7

<b>Try to describe your organization's culture or climate?</b>	
R1	Male dominated
R2	Traditional, they believe men are the 'thinkers'
R3	Traditional, they still think as they did centuries ago.
R4	The culture is traditional. Men run meetings and women are shown little respect in meetings.
R5	You can only rise unless you are related to one of the top guys.
R6	Male dominated.
R7	How far you advance is determined by who you know.
R8	It is male dominated. There are more males in managerial positions than females.
R9	Male dominance is the way of life
R10	The culture in our organization is both traditional and transitional. It has a traditional mentality but with a transitional workforce.
R11	All management positions are largely in the hands of men.
R12	Organization's culture as transitional, as management is in the process of hiring a diverse workforce.
R13	Men call all the shots.
R14	Things are changing, some organizations are having a balanced mix of both male and females.
R15	It is male-dominated.
R16	Transitional, we seem to be adjusting to bit by bit
R17	No recognition for women.
R18	Traditional.

## Question 8

<b>Please explain some of the barriers that you have come across during your career development?</b>	
R1	Being constantly looked down upon.
R2	Men superiority.
R3	Men, family, and stereotypes. Men are able to hold women back in certain positions.
R4	I met with some level of aggression. Men do not have respect for women, and that aggression works against women
R5	Stereotypes halt one's career development. Men are reluctant to give women an opportunity because they inherently believe women are not as capable as men.

R6	Men rip-off credit from women and women are so confrontational with each other they do not help one another.
R7	No one believing in your abilities.
R8	No one willing to give you a chance, gender stereotypes.
R9	No support from management.
R10	No female mentors
R11	At one time, I felt had hit the glass ceiling during my career progression and I had no role model or female example that I could look up to.
R12	Time management and family responsibilities.
R13	Male dominance
R14	Time and money management were my toughest barriers.
R15	Queen bees saw me as a threat to their posts.
R16	Traditional organizational culture.
R17	No one to mentor me.
R18	Family balance with work

## Question 9

<b>What is your opinion on women's access to power and leadership? Explain.</b>	
R1	Men do not like being led by women.
R2	No female examples to look up to.
R3	Family work life balance.
R4	Males hold back females from professional advancement opportunities because males wield the power.
R5	Gender roles that are instilled in people when raising children. Women leave the workforce to bear children; therefore, it leaves them with little time to learn how to position themselves in the corporate game.
R6	Gender stereotypes, they deny access to the top.
R7	Queen bees limit one's growth
R8	Unavailability of female mentors is a contributing factor to gender inequality and limited promotional opportunities for women.
R9	Traditional organizational cultures.
R10	Females are to blame for the limited access to power and leadership due to the queen bee syndrome. Instead of building a sisterhood, there can only be one queen bee.
R11	Traditional organizational cultures are the reason why we continue to lack access to power and leadership opportunities, it would really help if organizations tried to even out the playing field from point of recruitment onwards.
R12	Fear of men and no effort in striving for promotional opportunities because one doubts they can be promoted.
R13	Gender roles from childhood, they are a deep-rooted limiting.
R14	Some women just don't know how to play the game. Women are not demanding to take it! You don't get what you don't ask for.

R15	Men use many different reasons to rationalize gender inequality, gender roles, family responsibilities, and women just let it go.
R16	Low self-esteem, not believing in oneself and abilities.
R17	Men, family responsibilities.
R18	Up-bringing, gender stereotypes.

## Question 10

<b>Are female role models and/or mentors significant in operations?</b>	
R1	Female mentors were substantial as they could make evident to other females how to handle several situations
R2	Their existence at the top is proof enough it can be done. It is encouraging.
R3	Seeing other females who have made it encourages us to keep persevering to improve our career paths. They are proof it can be done.
R4	Mentors help guide you and give you support.
R5	It will take women forever to learn the game if they do not see other women who have succeeded, therefore mentors are essential.
R6	I have two mentors, they help me a lot, but they are both male. I sometimes wish if just of them was a woman.
R7	Mentors help a lot, they give you guidance in dealing with various issues.
R8	Yes they are essential, but you have to be humble and respectful so that she does not see you as competition.
R9	My male mentor has the right ideas, but there are limitations as to what we can talk about.
R10	Female mentors are better for women as they have an experience in dealing with work/life balance issues. They are more understanding.
R11	The skill of mentoring was the good, the bad, and the ugly. It's a flip of a coin, it can go either way. Mentors are important because as they can help bring about professional, intellectual, and social development; but the mentee – protégé relationship may turn sour and alternatively lead to a great deal of dissatisfaction. As women we should stop seeing each other as competition. If a woman perceives you as competition, she will not mentor you well. As women, until we learn to play out in the field, lose, and still be friends, we will continue losing.
R12	Mentors are important, they can open doors for you and force you to challenge yourself in-order to build you.
R13	Female mentors can help you deal with the emotional side of your issues.
R14	They are good but you should be careful not to build an enemy for yourself.
R15	Female mentors were vital to the growth of young employees within an organization as they chaperon them through the trenches and explain things to them from a female point of view, the view of

	someone who has been through the same challenges and came out the other side, along with guiding them towards the appropriate skills needed to be promoted.
R16	Some women will see you as a threat and will not want to mentor you.
R17	I am about to go on maternal leave. This is going to be my first child. All my make counterparts cannot relate to that, they have never been affected by it. Since this is new to me, who do I ask? Who do I look up to for example in handling the situation? If I need advice on this kind of situation, who do I go to?
R18	Mentorship is important, it connects you to networks that can develop your career.

## Question 11

<b>Do gendered stereotypes affect female professional development?</b>	
R1	Gendered stereotypes want to prove you wrong all the time.
R2	You are expected to work under the same conditions as men and your fall is greatly awaited for.
R3	They do not believe we are also as capable as they are. When an opportunity for a promotion comes, women are never the first to come to mind as eligible contenders.
R4	Yes, they do. They create an environment of fear of losing one's job, if you make a misstep which prevents females from speaking their minds. It is necessary that women take ownership of their personal professional development through education and training so that they develop themselves into the type of professional they need to be, regardless of the presence and effect of gender stereotypes.
R5	Most of them have either clear or covert links to top management. If they do not approve of you, you can kiss your progression goodbye.
R6	I got no assistance as a newly appointed freight overseer. There was no actual guidance or someone to show you how it is done. You learn on your own, doomed to fail.
R7	They prefer males to females.
R8	Gendered stereotypes set limitations as to how far one can rise.
R9	They can influence others to see you in negative light.
R10	They do not believe women are capable, hence they will limit you as much as they can.
R11	They have been in these industries for far too long, they are respected and people follow them. They can easily spread negative perceptions about you and everyone will believe them.
R12	Gendered stereotypes make it impossible for women to chase tasks if she is already been labelled as unable, they limit female chances for career development.

R13	They are greatly limiting, they act as gatekeepers, denying others the privilege.
R14	Yes they have an effect, they just deny you the opportunity with no clear reason.
R15	They are really stubborn; he can pass by and notice that you are struggling, but he will not help you. They say, 'isn't it that you wanted equality, here it is, deal with it.'
R16	Gendered stereotypes are always out looking for faults to nail you. Every day is like a battle.
R17	If you are unlucky to have one as your boss, they will never accept your work as suitable.
R18	Gendered stereotypes are stingy with the knowledge they have. They see you as a threat if you get to know what they know, or are able to do what they can do.

## Question 12

<b>Do female roles in society and the home affect professional development in the organization?</b>	
R1	When I told my grandmother that I wanted to study operations, she asked, "is it possible for women to do that?"
R2	African men want respect. Even if you want to give them instructions, they want you to say it with respect.
R3	Our male counterparts believe that as a woman you should be home or in the kitchen pregnant and you are not intellectually capable to lead them.
R4	It is our culture that hard labour is for men, women should do soft duties. Hence shift working, ever busy schedules in operations are seen as not fit for women.
R5	Some of the men who work in this industry are old and have a traditional understanding that the workplace is for men, women should be at home.
R6	You cannot be wife material and be a career woman, society's views just make it hard for us.
R7	Your own husband expects you home in time to do house chores and you should not be seen as lacking in that area, if you are tired, you are told to quit the job instead.
R8	No one really takes you serious, they think you will struggle to balance the home and demanding work schedule.
R9	Society's belief is that a woman's place is in the home, not in industry.
R10	Young women are expected to only last about five years, before they quit and have children.
R11	If you have many kids, you are seen as if you are not serious with your profession.



R12	Taken maternity leave is seen as a bore to others, it is like you are disrupting the flow of work, why not just stay home.
R13	I am regularly second-guessed because of my many responsibilities at home which usually leaves me demotivated.
R14	Demand from society and custom that females are to take care of their families influence organizational cultures and in the end also supporting gender stereotyping.
R15	Both sides require you put 110% in everything you do. You are just human you cannot be perfect.
R16	Females are seen as unreliable and should not be involved in long term plans of the organization as they are not expected to stay long.
R17	It is hard to find time to allocate to furthering your studies once you are working and also have a life partner.
R18	One is expected to focus on the home and family life. That should be their first priority.

### Question 13

<b>Does culture in an organization contribute to promoting gender stereotypes?</b>	
R1	Yes, especially when it is propagated by traditional thinkers.
R2	The culture might contribute to females remaining stationary in one position instead of soaring into higher ranks of the organization. No one will notice because that is the way things have always been.
R3	When an organization implies that females with children or families cannot hold the same positions as males, it will be promoting gender stereotyping.
R4	The problem with culture is that it is an unsaid way of doing things. If the culture prefers male leaders, it will be done with no hard thought or consequences.
R5	Some cultures have no support to women who want to further their careers, which is greatly limiting.
R6	Yes, if it is predominately male related.
R7	Some cultures consistently appoint males to higher positions with the same not being availed to women.
R8	Women with families do not usually rise that fast or that high. Such a culture is promoting stereotyping on gender lines.
R9	Some organizations do not approve women studying certain courses yet to males they will face no challenge to get approval.
R10	When you see that female representation is very limited higher up yet they are present with the requisite skills and experience in the organization but that will not be enough to get them recognized.
R11	Yes it does, getting to positions of authority is hard because of gatekeeper's thinking and a culture they want to promote.
R12	You will notice that if a man is given a task, and does it okay, no one says anything. But if a woman is given a task and does it well, everyone will be like, 'well, well, well, congrats.' It is as if you weren't expected to be able to do it.

R13	Organizational cultures sometimes promote gender imbalance by not approving women to study certain courses and excel in professions that are usually male dominated. They simply deny them the opportunity or support.
R14	Some cultures do not believe in women's abilities, so women have to work extra hard to prove them wrong.
R15	Some cultures promote men looking down on us, if they do not talk to you like they are talking to a child, they will talk to you like they are talking to an idiot.
R16	Some cultures will leave you thinking you are not able because you are a woman They actually build in you low self-esteem.
R17	Some cultures just look down upon women.
R18	It promotes gender stereotyping when it assigns smaller and easy tasks to women and thought-requiring tasks to men.

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