



**Mentoring experiences of women leaders in advancing to
senior positions at a South African university**

by

NONJABULO FORTUNATE MADONDA

Student number: u20759721

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PhD)

in

Education Management, Law and Policy

Faculty of Education

at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Supervisor: Prof. R. N. Marishane

Co-supervisor: Dr A. Du Plessis

November 2022



DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Nonjabulo Fortunate Madonda, declare that:

- (i) The thesis titled: “**Mentoring experiences of women leaders in advancing to senior positions at a South African university**” which I hereby submit for the degree Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education Management, Law and Policy, is my own work.
- (ii) This thesis has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.
- (iii) The thesis does not contain other persons’ data, pictures, graphs, or other information unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
- (iv) It does not contain other persons’ writing unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:
 - a) Their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced.
 - b) Where exact words from other persons have been used, their writing has been placed inside quotation marks and referenced.
- (v) This thesis does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source is detailed in the thesis and in the references section.

Ms N. F. Madonda

20759721

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'N. F. Madonda'.

Date: November 2022



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Education

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

CLEARANCE NUMBER: **EDU198/20**

DEGREE AND PROJECT

PhD

Mentoring experiences of women leaders in advancing to senior positions at a South African university

INVESTIGATOR

Ms Nonjabulo F. Madonda

DEPARTMENT

Education Management and Policy Studies

APPROVAL TO COMMENCE STUDY

09 February 2021

DATE OF CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

30 November 2021

CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE: Prof Funke Omidire

CC

Ms Thandi Mngomezulu
Prof R.N. Marishane

This Ethics Clearance Certificate should be read in conjunction with the Integrated Declaration Form (D08) which specifies details regarding:

- Compliance with approved research protocol,
- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
- Registered title, and
- Data storage requirements.



DEDICATION

“For with God nothing will be impossible” (Luke 1:37, NKJV). Indeed, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13, NKJV).

I dedicate this thesis to God my Father and my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who made it possible for me to complete this mammoth task. He gave me the strength and wisdom to engage with my research topic, which led to the production of this PhD thesis. I would not have made it without God, He made this possible for me. I can safely say; ALL things are possible with God. I thank the Holy Spirit for giving me the help I needed in completing my PhD. The Holy Spirit, my helper and comforter, was a friend and pillar of support in this journey, and I could not have done this without the Spirit of the Living God. Indeed, He did not leave us alone but gave us the Helper who teaches us all things (John 14:26). Thank you, Lord.

I also thank the Lord for blessing me with a mother who gave up her life and worked so hard for me to get the education she did not have. My mother, Thembisile Gladness Sibisi, was uneducated, a single parent, who worked day and night shifts at a farm for me to be educated. She encouraged me to study and always said “do it mtanami” each time I told her about my study desires. She believed in me and did all she could for me to get an education. Though she left us to be with the Lord in August 2018, she left an indelible mark in my life, which I will pass on to the next generation in our family. The legacy of my queen Mahlase, Bhovungane shall live on. I know she is resting in peace in the Lord. This work is dedicated to her love and the sacrifices she made for me.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe this achievement to the Almighty God my Father. I would not have achieved this milestone without Him. “The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; Therefore, my heart greatly rejoices, and with my song, I will praise Him” (Psalm 28:7, NKJV). Lord, my God, thank you for the strength you gave me and the protection as I travelled at night and in the early hours of the morning to and from the library. It would not have been possible for me to complete this PhD without the mental, physical, and emotional strength you gave me. Simakade, mananjalo.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the following persons:

- First and foremost, my supervisor Prof. R. N. (Nylon) Marishane for travelling the research journey with me. Completion of my research would not have been possible without his guidance, advice, and support. Thank you, Prof. Marishane for believing in me and encouraging me – I truly appreciate all you did for me. My God shall indeed continue to bless you.
- The co-supervisor Dr A. Du Plessis for his contribution.
- My mentor, Prof. Maitumeleng A. Nthontho, who played a huge role in helping me to conceptualise my PhD research title in the early stages of my research. She deserves my sincere gratitude, as she has been there for me throughout my research journey, giving me academic advice and support. Dankie Mah.
- My family members for their support and encouragement. My son, who has become my brother and friend Philsande – what a blessing he has been. I thank him for all the understanding, love and support during my study years. I was at ease knowing that he understood when I could not be home because I was studying. Ngyabonga mtanami. I thank God for you, you are truly a blessing. My lovely little sister Zanele, for supporting and encouraging me to complete my studies. She always wanted to know when I was finishing and when she asked this, I was encouraged to press on. Thank you mntase. Also thank you for being at home with my son when I could not. I truly appreciate your support.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Most importantly, I acknowledge the contribution made by my late mother, Ms Thembisile Gladness Sibisi in my life and studies. The sacrifices she made for us to get a better life. Despite all the odds, we made it. It is sad that she went to be with the Lord before she could witness this achievement, but I am thankful to God that He gave me such a supportive mother. I will always be grateful and thankful; I will pass on her legacy to all generations through exemplary conduct.

- All the participants who willingly shared their experiences with me – this study would not have been possible without you. A big thank you to you all.
- My Master of Education research supervisor, Prof. Inba Naicker from the University of KwaZulu-Natal – I appreciate all that you taught me about research. I still draw from that knowledge even today.
- All my colleagues who contributed to my study and gave guidance, and the critical readers who helped shape my research ideas – thank you. Most importantly, the shut-up-and-write cohort for the shut-up-and-write sessions. Thank you winning team. A special appreciation to Dr Blose who initiated this community of practice. The writing sessions contributed greatly to the completion of my study. A luta continua.
- Appreciation to my academic friends (Dr Nosipho Jaca; Miss Sindisiwe Msani), with whom I could share my research ideas – thank you so much. Thank you for always listening to my ideas and encouraging me to press on. Izandla zidlula ikhanda bafethu.
- Prof. Charmaine Williamson who served as my mentor in the University Capacity Development Programme (UCDP) mentorship offered by the Department of Higher Education and Training. She read and gave me feedback on most of my thesis chapters. I thank her for her constructive feedback and guidance that further shaped my ideas.
- The Department of Higher Education and Training for the nGAP initiative that gives young scholars like me an opportunity to further their studies while working in Higher Education Institutions. This really helps.
- The National Research Foundation (NRF) – many thanks for providing financial support for this study through the DSI-NRF Research Development Grants for New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) Scholars.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- The University of Pretoria for making resources available for students to achieve their academic goals. In particular, the research commons and the 24-hour study area. I had my fair share of cross-night days working in the study centre. The result of that is the completion of this research in the expected minimum period.
- Pastors of the Mount Zion Christian Center, Bishop K.T. Mkhize and mamawezizwe Pastor V. Mkhize, – thank you for the seed you planted in my life about the importance of education. I furthered my studies from a Bachelor of Education to a Bachelor of Education Honours and Masters because of your teachings and encouragement to the youth concerning studying. That was a seed towards this qualification (PhD). I want to say, “you are truly doing the most for township youth, I am a product of your teachings”. Ngyabonga.
- Blessed Generation Church Pastors Kenny and Tsepile Mokoena. My sincere appreciation to you. The monthly prayer and fasting weeks challenged me to stay in prayer and remain in faith throughout my study period. This assisted me greatly to stay positive and motivated, knowing and “being confident that He who begun a good work in me would complete it” (Philippians 1:6, NKJV). I thank the Lord for blessing me with parents of prayer and strong faith. You are a blessing.
- Isabel Classen, the language editor who read and edited my thesis. Thank you.
- Everyone who contributed to my life and studies in any way – thank you.



ABSTRACT

Underrepresented of women in leadership positions persist, more so in senior positions. This reality exists in many sectors, including the Higher Education sector globally. Many factors leading to this have been identified, including lack of support, patriarchy, and limited suitable development and mentorship for women. Despite these drawbacks, however, there are enablers noted to contribute to women's leadership success. Mentoring is among such and has been acknowledged as one of the strategies that could be used to challenge the *status quo* and prepare more women leaders to break the ceiling and advance to senior positions. However, despite such recognition, very little is known about the process of mentoring women leaders towards their advancement to senior positions, especially in South African higher education institutions. The purpose of this study was therefore to explore mentoring experiences of women leaders during their advancement to senior positions at a South African university. It has contributed to the limited body of knowledge that presently exists on this research phenomenon.

The study involved purposively sampled women leaders occupying senior leadership positions – from the lowest level of Head of Department to the senior level of Dean in nine faculties of one South African university – who shared their mentoring experiences. In addition, the study included five mentors who shared valuable information about their role in developing these women leaders. They were selected through snowball sampling. The study was located within an interpretivist research paradigm utilising a case study design. One public university in South Africa was therefore sampled. Data was generated through semi-structured interviews and the analysis of mentorship policies, which was thereafter analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis. The study found mentorship to result in women leadership development, encouragement, and improved confidence due to the support that women receive. It also opened leadership opportunities, and thus enabled women to advance to senior positions. This study has proposed a model for mentoring women towards leadership in higher education from the findings. This bridged the knowledge gap on how mentorship for women leaders should be conducted.

Key words: women leadership, mentoring, advancement, senior positions, higher education institution.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

LANGUAGE EDITOR

DECLARATION

I herewith declare that I,

Isabel M Claassen (APSTrans (SATI)),

full-time freelance translator, editor and language consultant

of

1367 Lawson Avenue, Waverley, Pretoria
(cell 082 701 7922)

and

accredited member (No. 1000583) of the South African Translators' Institute (SATI)

completed the language editing* of the mini-dissertation entitled

MENTORING EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN LEADERS IN ADVANCING TO SENIOR POSITIONS AT A SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

which had been submitted to me by

Nonjabulo F. Madonda

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

**PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR
in the**

Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

Faculty of Education

University of Pretoria

E-mail: nonjabulo.madonda@up.ac.za

Date completed: 22-11-2022

****Please note that no responsibility can be taken for the veracity of statements or arguments in the document concerned or for changes made subsequent to the completion of language editing. Also remember that content editing is not part of a language editor's task and is in fact unethical.***



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAMP	Accelerated Academic Mentoring Programme
ACE	American Council on Education
ACE/CPRS	American Council on Education and the Centre for Policy Research and Strategy
AU	African Union
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
ECAs	Early Career Academic/s
EMPS	Education Management and Policy Studies
GE	Gender Equality
HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HOD	Head of Department
MT	Mentor
NAP	National Action Plan
NGCP	National Gender and Children's Policy
PASDEP	Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
RCT	Relational Cultural Theory
RTA	Reflexive Thematic Analysis
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and math
STEMM	Science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine
SWAN	Science Women's Academic Network
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNISA	University of South Africa
USA	United States of America



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

USB	Universal Serial Bus
WL	Woman Leader/s
WP	Women Empowerment



LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figures

Figure 1.1: Theoretical framework of the study	25
Figure 3.1: The theoretical framework of my study.....	96
Figure 7.1: Model for mentoring women towards leadership in higher education	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Tables

Table 4.1: Profile of research sites (faculties) at Green University, based on the university website	111
Table 4.2: Biographical information of the participants (WL)	113
Table 4.3: Biographical information of the mentors (MT).....	114
Table 5.1: Research questions, themes and sub-themes	133



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY	i
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE.....	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT	vii
LANGUAGE EDITOR	viii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	ix
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES.....	xii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	xii
CHAPTER 1 CONTENTS	1
CHAPTER 1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY	2
1.1 Introduction	2
1.2 Background to the study	4
1.3 Problem statement.....	7
1.4 Rationale for the study	8
1.5 Statement of purpose and objectives of the study	10
1.6 Research questions	11
1.6.1 Main question.....	11
1.6.2 Secondary research questions.....	11
1.6.2.1 How do women leaders occupying senior positions at a South African university understand mentoring?	11
1.6.2.2 Why is mentoring important in developing women leaders for senior positions?	11
1.6.2.3 How is mentoring used to prepare women leaders for senior leadership positions in the higher education sector?	11
1.6.2.4 What are the constraining factors encountered in mentoring women leaders for advancement to senior positions?	11
1.6.2.5 What mentoring strategies can be utilised for the effective mentoring of women leaders?.....	11
1.7 Significance of the study	11
1.8 Prominent debates in the literature	12
1.8.1 Representation of women leaders in senior positions in the HE sector....	12



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

1.8.1.1	Internationally.....	13
1.8.1.2	On the African continent.....	13
1.8.1.3	South Africa.....	14
1.8.2	Legislation aimed at addressing gender gaps in the workplace	14
1.8.3	Barriers preventing women leaders from advancing to senior positions in HEIs	16
1.8.3.1	Gendered institutional culture.....	16
1.8.3.2	Lack of suitable development.....	16
1.8.3.3	Lack of support.....	16
1.8.3.4	Gender stereotypes and discrimination	17
1.8.3.5	Having a balance between family–work life.....	17
1.8.3.6	Limited mentoring and lack of suitable mentors	18
1.8.4	Enablers for women to leadership and senior positions	18
1.8.5	Mentoring women leaders in HE	19
1.8.5.1	Conceptualisation of mentoring.....	19
1.8.5.2	Importance and benefits of women having a mentor.....	19
1.8.5.3	The role and contribution of mentorship in the advancement of women leaders to senior positions in HE	20
1.8.5.4	Constraining factors in the mentorship of women leaders in HE	21
1.8.5.5	Approaches to mentorship	22
1.9	Key concepts	22
1.9.1	Mentoring	22
1.9.2	Leadership	22
1.9.3	Women leaders	23
1.9.4	Underrepresentation	23
1.9.5	Higher Education Institutions.....	24
1.9.6	Glass ceiling.....	24
1.10	Working assumption	24
1.11	Theoretical framework	25
1.11.1	Relational-cultural theory.....	25
1.11.2	Transformational Leadership Model.....	26
1.11.3	Gendered Organisation Theory.....	26
1.12	Research methodology	27
1.12.1	Research paradigm.....	27



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

1.12.2	Research approach.....	27
1.12.3	Case study design.....	28
1.12.4	Sampling of research sites and participants.....	28
1.12.5	Data generation methods.....	29
1.12.5.1	Semi-structured interviews.....	29
1.12.5.2	Document analysis.....	30
1.12.6	Data analysis.....	30
1.13	Enhancing the quality of the study.....	30
1.13.1	Credibility.....	31
1.13.2	Transferability.....	31
1.13.3	Dependability.....	31
1.13.4	Confirmability.....	31
1.14	Ethical considerations.....	32
1.15	Limitations of the study.....	32
1.16	Delimitation of the study.....	33
1.17	Outline of thesis Chapters.....	33
1.18	Chapter Summary.....	35
CHAPTER 2 CONTENTS.....		36
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....		37
2.1	Introduction.....	37
2.2	Representation of women leaders in senior positions in the HE sector ...	37
2.2.1	Women’s representation in senior positions of HEIs: Internationally.....	38
2.2.2	Women’s representation in senior positions of HEIs: On the continent of Africa.....	43
2.2.3	Women’s representation in senior positions at South African HEIs.....	44
2.3	Legislation aimed at addressing gender gaps in the workplace.....	45
2.3.1	International legislation.....	45
2.3.2	Legislation on the African continent.....	47
2.3.3	South African legislation.....	48
2.4	Barriers/challenges preventing women leaders from advancing to senior positions in HEIs.....	49
2.4.1	Gendered institutional culture.....	50
2.4.2	Lack of suitable development.....	51
2.4.3	Lack of support.....	51



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

2.4.4	Gender stereotyping and discrimination	52
2.4.5	Balance between family–work life	53
2.4.6	Limited mentoring.....	54
2.4.7	Lack of suitable mentors	54
2.5	Enablers for women to leadership and senior positions.....	55
2.5.1	Networking	55
2.5.2	Mentoring	56
2.6	Mentoring women leaders in HE	56
2.6.1	Conceptualisation of mentoring.....	57
2.6.2	The importance of women having a mentor	59
2.6.3	Benefits of mentorship	59
2.6.3.1	Benefits of mentorship for women leaders	61
2.6.4	Role of mentors in developing women leaders.....	61
2.6.5	Role and contribution of mentorship in the advancement of women leaders to senior positions in HE	62
2.6.5.1	Access to role models	63
2.6.5.2	Suitable professional development	63
2.6.5.3	Mentoring as support for women leaders	64
2.6.5.4	Mentoring for networking skills	65
2.6.5.5	Career progression	66
2.6.5.6	Improved self-confidence	66
2.6.6	Constraining factors in the mentorship of women leaders in HE	67
2.6.6.1	Starting mentorship later in a career	67
2.6.6.2	Shortage of suitable mentors	68
2.6.6.3	Lack of training for mentors.....	69
2.6.6.4	Lack of time for mentorship	70
2.6.6.5	Limited support for the mentorship.....	70
2.6.7	Approaches to mentorship	71
2.6.7.1	Three approaches to mentorship	71
2.6.7.2	Peer mentorship.....	72
2.7	Chapter summary	75
CHAPTER 3 CONTENTS		76
CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....		77
3.1	Introduction	77



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

3.2	Theoretical framework	77
3.3	Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT)	79
3.3.1	Outcomes of Relational-Cultural Theory	80
3.3.1.1	Zest or well-being	80
3.3.1.2	Increased knowledge of self and others	80
3.3.1.3	The ability and motivation to act	81
3.3.1.4	An increased sense of worth	81
3.3.1.5	Desire for more connection	81
3.3.2	Relevance of Relational-Cultural Theory to this study	82
3.3.3	Use of Relational-Cultural Theory	83
3.3.4	Criticism levelled at Relational-Cultural Theory	84
3.4	Transformational Leadership Model.....	84
3.4.1	Main features of the Transformational Leadership Model	85
3.4.1.1	Idealised influence	85
3.4.1.2	Inspirational motivation	86
3.4.1.3	Intellectual stimulation	86
3.4.1.4	Idealised consideration	87
3.4.2	Relevance of Transformational Leadership to the study	88
3.4.3	Use of Transformational Leadership Model.....	89
3.4.4	Criticism levelled at Transformational Leadership	90
3.5	Gendered Organisational Theory	90
3.5.1	Theory of Gendered Organisations	91
3.5.2	Main features of the Theory of Gendered Organisations	92
3.5.2.1	Division of labour.....	92
3.5.2.2	Cultural symbols.....	93
3.5.2.3	Interaction in the organisation	93
3.5.2.4	Individual identities.....	93
3.5.2.5	Organisational logic.....	93
3.5.3	Relevance of the Theory of Gendered Organisations to the study	94
3.5.4	Use of the Theory of Gendered Organisations.....	94
3.6	Theoretical framework of my study	95
3.6.1	Diagrammatic representation of the theoretical framework of my study ...	95
3.6.2	Explanation of the theoretical framework	96



3.7	Chapter summary	98
CHAPTER 4 CONTENTS		99
CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH APPROACH, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....		100
4.1	Introduction	100
4.1.1	Main research question	100
4.1.2	Secondary research questions.....	100
4.2	Research paradigm.....	101
4.2.1	Paradigmatic positioning of the study.....	102
4.2.1.1	Ontology.....	103
4.2.1.2	Epistemology.....	103
4.2.1.3	Methodology.....	104
4.2.1.4	Axiology.....	104
4.3	Research approach.....	105
4.4	Research design	107
4.5	Sampling procedure.....	109
4.5.1	Selection of research sites	110
4.5.2	Selection of participants	111
4.5.2.1	Description of the women leaders (WL)	112
4.5.2.2	Description of the mentors (MT).....	114
4.6	Data generation process.....	115
4.6.1	Data generation instruments	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.6.2	Preliminary exploration.....	115
4.6.3	Data generation methods.....	116
4.6.3.1	Semi-structured interviews	116
4.6.3.2	Document analysis.....	118
4.7	Analysis of data.....	120
4.7.1	RTA first phase – getting to know the data.....	120
4.7.2	RTA second phase – data coding	121
4.7.3	RTA third phase – generating themes.....	121
4.7.4	RTA fourth phase – reviewing themes	121
4.7.5	RTA fifth phase – refining themes	122
4.7.6	RTA sixth phase – reporting findings	122
4.7.7	Advantages and disadvantages of RTA	122



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

4.8	Quality assurance through trustworthiness	123
4.8.1	Credibility	124
4.8.2	Transferability.....	124
4.8.3	Dependability	125
4.8.4	Confirmability	125
4.8.5	Triangulation	126
4.9	Ethical considerations	126
4.10	Limitations of the study	127
4.11	Delimiters of the study	128
4.12	My positionality in the research.....	128
4.13	Chapter summary	129
CHAPTER 5 CONTENTS		130
CHAPTER 5 RESEARCH FINDINGS.....		131
5.1	Introduction	131
5.2	Summary of the data generation process	131
5.3	Presentation of findings	133
5.3.1	Research questions, themes and sub-themes	133
5.3.2	Theme 1: Understanding of mentoring by women leaders occupying senior positions at a South African university	135
5.3.2.1	Sub-theme 1.1: Mentoring as a relationship.....	135
5.3.2.2	Sub-theme 1.2: Mentoring as role modelling.....	139
5.3.2.3	Sub-theme 1.3: Mentoring as support	140
5.3.2.4	Sub-theme 1.4: Identifying potential and nurturing people	140
5.3.2.5	Sub-theme 1.5: Offering career guidance and giving advice.....	141
5.3.3	Theme 2: The importance of mentoring in developing women leaders to senior positions	143
5.3.3.1	Sub-theme 2.1: The importance of having a mentor	143
5.3.3.2	Sub-theme 2.2: The role and contribution of mentoring received to career progression and advancement to senior positions	144
5.3.3.2.1	Receiving career guidance and advice.....	144
5.3.3.2.2	Creating leadership opportunities	145
5.3.3.2.3	Giving encouragement and building confidence	146
5.3.3.2.4	Providing an opportunity for professional development	147
5.3.3.2.5	Leading to career productivity and growth	148



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

5.3.3.2.6	Becoming mentors.....	149
5.3.4	Theme 3: How mentoring was done in preparing women leaders for the senior positions they occupy	150
5.3.4.1	Sub-theme 3.1: Informal mentorship	150
5.3.4.2	Sub-theme 3.2: Identification and development of a successor	152
5.3.4.3	Sub-theme 3.3: Focus areas in mentoring women leaders	153
5.3.4.3.1	Application for funding	153
5.3.4.3.2	Introduction to academic networks	154
5.3.4.3.3	Balancing of career/personal life	155
5.3.4.3.4	Development of soft skills	156
5.3.4.3.5	Development for leading male-dominated departments	157
5.3.4.4	Sub-theme 3.4: Reasons why women leaders were mentored in the manner they received mentorship	158
5.3.4.4.1	Lack of mentorship policy and guidelines	158
5.3.4.4.2	Lack of training for mentors	162
5.3.5	Theme 4: Constraining factors encountered in mentoring women leaders for senior positions	163
5.3.5.1	Sub-theme 4.1: Lack of support and funding for mentorship.....	163
5.3.5.2	Sub-theme 4.2: No training for mentors	164
5.3.5.3	Sub-theme 4.3: Insufficient time for mentorship	164
5.3.5.4	Sub-theme 4.4: Mentor overstepping boundaries	165
5.3.5.5	Sub-theme 4.5: Having a mentor in a different context	166
5.3.6	Theme 5: Proposed strategies that can be used for effective mentorship of women leaders.....	167
5.3.6.1	Sub-theme 5.1: Formal mentorship, informal mentorship, and a combination of both.....	167
5.3.6.1.1	Formal mentorship.....	168
5.3.6.1.2	Informal mentorship.....	169
5.3.6.1.3	Combination of both formal and informal mentoring	170
5.3.6.2	Sub-theme 5.2: Peer mentorship	171
5.3.6.3	Sub-theme 5.3: Flexible mentoring	172
5.3.6.4	Sub-theme 5.4: Having mentorship in all the career stages.....	173
5.4	Chapter summary	174
CHAPTER 6 CONTENTS		175
CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS.....		176



6.1	Introduction	176
6.2	Discussion of research findings	176
6.2.1	Main research question	176
6.2.1.1	Secondary research questions	176
6.2.2	Conceptualisation of mentoring by women leaders occupying senior positions at a South African university	177
6.2.2.1	Mentoring as a relationship	177
6.2.2.2	Role modelling	180
6.2.2.3	Mentoring as support	181
6.2.2.4	Identifying potential and nurturing people	181
6.2.2.5	Offering career guidance and advice	182
6.2.3	The importance of mentoring in developing women leaders for senior positions	183
6.2.3.1	The importance of having a mentor	183
6.2.3.2	Role and contribution of mentorship to career progression and advancement to senior positions	186
6.2.3.2.1	Receiving career guidance and advice	187
6.2.3.2.2	Creating leadership opportunities	187
6.2.3.2.3	Giving encouragement and building confidence	188
6.2.3.2.4	Providing opportunities for professional development	190
6.2.3.2.5	Leading to career productivity and growth	191
6.2.3.2.6	Becoming mentors	192
6.2.4	How mentoring is conducted in preparing women leaders for senior positions in the higher education sector	193
6.2.4.1	Informal mentorship	193
6.2.4.2	Identification and development of a successor	194
6.2.4.3	Focus areas in mentoring women leaders	195
6.2.4.3.1	Application for funding	196
6.2.4.3.2	Introduction to academic networks	197
6.2.4.3.3	Creating a balanced career and work–personal life	198
6.2.4.3.4	Development of soft skills	199
6.2.4.3.5	Development for leading male-dominated departments	200
6.2.4.4	Reasons why women leaders were mentored in the manner they received mentorship	201
6.2.4.4.1	Lack of mentorship policy / guidelines	201



6.2.4.4.2	Lack of training for mentors	202
6.2.5	Constraining factors encountered in mentoring women leaders for senior positions	203
6.2.5.1	Lack of support and funding for mentorship	203
6.2.5.2	No training for mentors.....	204
6.2.5.3	Insufficient time for mentorship	204
6.2.5.4	Mentors overstepping boundaries	205
6.2.5.5	Having a mentor/s in a different context.....	206
6.2.6	Strategies that can be used for effective mentoring of women leaders ..	207
6.2.6.1	Formal/ informal/ a combination of both	207
6.2.6.2	Peer mentorship.....	208
6.2.6.3	Flexible mentoring.....	209
6.2.6.4	Having mentorship during all the career stages	210
6.3	Chapter summary	211
CHAPTER 7 CONTENTS		212
CHAPTER 7 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....		213
7.1	Introduction	213
7.2	Reflective overview of the study.....	213
7.3	Summary of key findings.....	219
7.3.1	Secondary research question 1: How do women leaders occupying senior positions in a South African university understand mentoring?	219
7.3.2	Secondary research question 2: Why is mentoring important in developing women leaders for senior positions?	221
7.3.3	How is mentoring used to prepare women leaders for senior leadership positions in the higher education sector?	222
7.3.4	What are the constraining factors encountered in mentoring women leaders for advancement to senior positions in South African universities?	224
7.3.5	What mentoring strategies can be utilised for the effective mentoring of women leaders?.....	225
7.4	Contribution of the study	226
7.4.1	Methodological contribution.....	227
7.4.2	Contribution to the literature	227
7.4.3	Theoretical contribution: Proposed model for mentoring women to senior positions in higher education.....	228

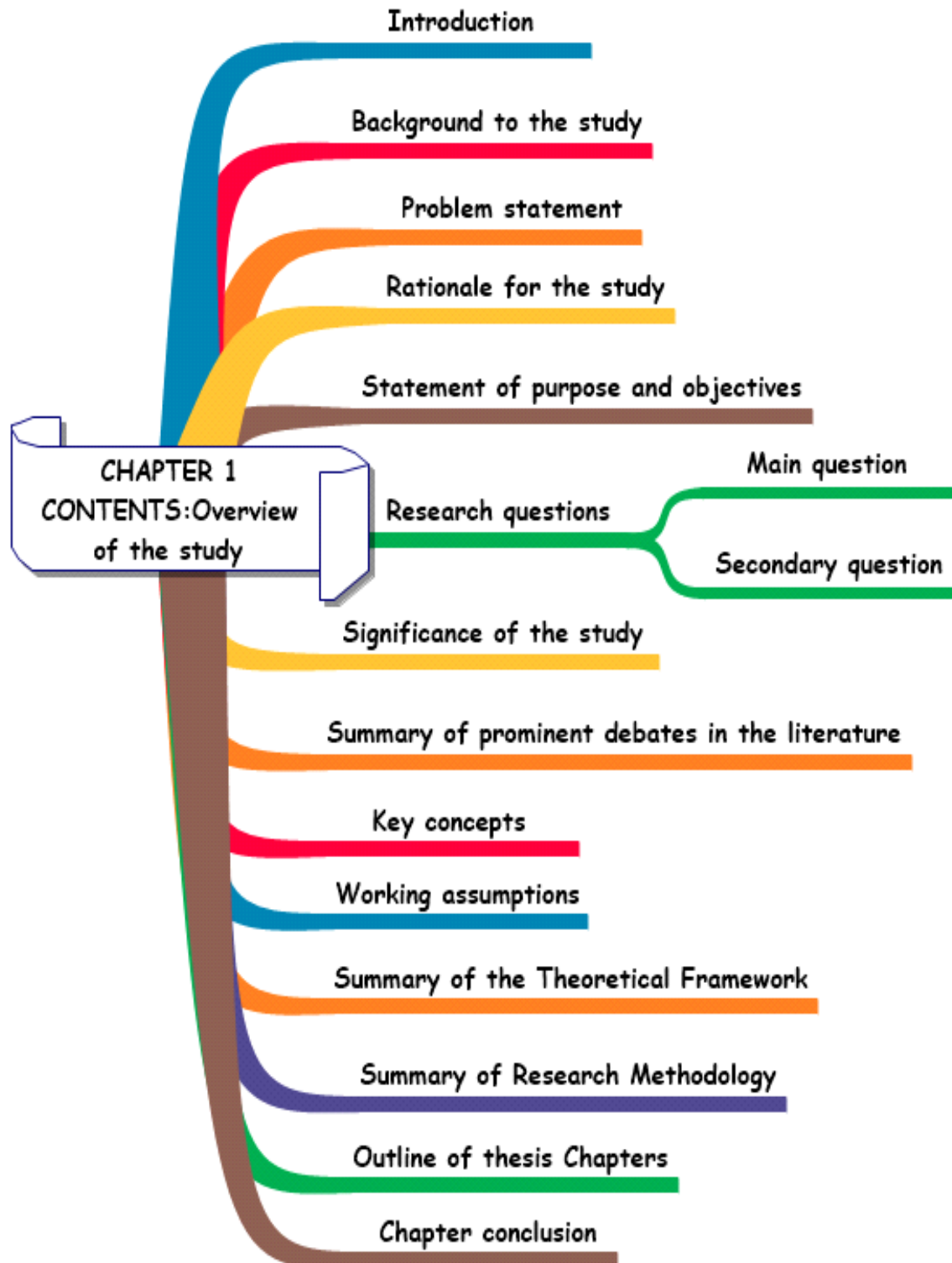


UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

7.4.3.1	Explanation of the model.....	231
7.4.3.1.1	Flexible mentorship	Error! Bookmark not defined.
7.4.3.1.2	Support for mentorship	232
7.4.3.1.3	Mentorship policy.....	232
7.4.3.1.4	Mentorship in all phases of education and career	234
7.4.3.1.5	Mentors.....	234
7.5	Conclusions	235
7.6	Recommendations	236
7.6.1	Recommendation 1	236
7.6.2	Recommendation 2	237
7.6.3	Recommendation 3	237
7.6.4	Recommendation 4	237
7.6.5	Recommendation 5	237
7.7	Suggestions for further research.....	238
7.8	Chapter summary	238
	REFERENCES	239
	Annexure 1: Letter to Faculty Deans seeking permission.....	262
	Annexure 2: Approval letter from the university Registrar	266
	Annexure 3.1: Informed consent by participants (Women Leaders)	267
	Annexure 3.2: Informed consent by participants (Mentors).....	271
	Annexure 4.1: Semi-structured interview schedule (Women Leaders)	275
	Annexure 4.2: Semi-structured interview schedule (Mentors).....	278
	Anneture 5: Document Analysis Guide.....	280
	Anneture 6: Sample of Data Analysis.....	281
	Annexure 7: Ethical approval.....	285
	Annexure 8: Turnitin Originality Report	286



CHAPTER 1 CONTENTS





UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

*“We have not wings, we cannot soar;
But we have feet to scale and climb
By slow degrees, by more and more,
The cloudy summits of our time.*

*The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight;
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night”*

(Longfellow, 1850)

The above extract from an 1850 poem titled “Ladder of St Augustine” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (Steele, 1905) truly reflects how difficult it is for women leaders to reach senior positions in many sectors. It shows women have to toil and persevere to reach the career heights they aspire to. Although the poem is old, it captures the current reality about the slow pace at which women manage to reach senior positions. The struggle for women to access leadership positions is historical, and to this day, they have to battle to advance to the pinnacle of leadership – hence the continued underrepresentation, globally, of women leaders in senior positions in many institutions, including institutions of higher learning (Fitzgerald, 2018; Harford, 2018; Nyoni & He, 2019; O’Connor, 2019; Khwela et al., 2020; Madsen & Longman, 2020; Reis & Grady, 2020). Women have traditionally faced numerous barriers and experienced a lack of support in pursuing strong positions, which results in their generally slow progress to senior positions (Fitzgerald, 2018; Parker et al., 2018).

The underrepresentation of women leaders in senior positions is a challenge, not only to social justice, but also with regard to various benefits associated with diverse leadership and the inclusion of women leaders in senior positions. Research (Elias, 2018; Haidar, 2018; Bărbuceanu, 2019; Madsen & Longman, 2020) has shown that having women leaders in senior positions results in benefits such as improved financial



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

performance, a conducive institutional climate, an enhanced reputation for the institution, as well as improved talent, innovation, and collective intelligence. This shows that the involvement of women leaders in senior positions positively contributes to institutional success. According to Haidar (2018), having women in decision-making positions in the HE sector contributes to improved performance and the success of an institution. Women leaders have been noted to be warm, caring, positive, and committed to their task beyond the call of duty (Bărbuceanu, 2019). Since these are unique and essential characteristics of leadership, having both women and men in senior positions may bring balance to the institution – these leaders contribute different expertise and qualities that complement each other and enhance institutional success. Nonetheless, literature shows that the numbers of women remain fewer than men in senior positions of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) globally. A summary that reflects the underrepresentation of women leaders in these positions is presented in this chapter of this thesis, while detailed evidence of the underrepresentation of women in senior positions in different countries is provided in Chapter two (literature review). I furthermore share some statistics on women who hold senior and professoriate positions, as fewer women than men have also been noted to occupy professoriate positions, globally.

The continued underrepresentation of women in senior positions and the idea that women leaders must be facing obstacles in pursuit of these positions present a challenge. Hence, there is a need to put measures in place to assist them in ‘breaking through the glass ceiling’ and obtaining these positions. One of the recognised enablers and strategies for women’s advancement to senior positions in higher learning institutions is mentoring (Maheshwari & Nayak, 2020). Mentoring has been found to contribute to women’s leadership development and improved self-confidence, thus resulting in their career and leadership success and their advancement to senior positions (Akpey-Mensah & Muchie, 2019; Khumalo & Zhou, 2019; Gandhi & Sen, 2020; Cozza, 2022). This study consequently focused on mentoring as an enabler to women advancing to senior positions at a South African university. Mentoring is commonly described as a developmental relationship that exists between a mentor (usually an experienced person) and a mentee (usually a less experienced person), where the former guides and provides support to the latter (Hill & Wheat, 2017; Orsini



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

et al., 2019). This relationship can be either formal or informal (Joseph-Collins, 2017). In my study, mentoring refers to a professional learning, support-based and developmental relationship between a mentor and a mentee (as well as between peers), which can be either formal or informal.

In this chapter, I lay the foundation for the study by providing the necessary background, the problem statement, and the rationale for the study. This is followed by the purpose and objectives of the study, the research questions, and the significance of my research. Next, I provide a summary of current debates around women leadership and mentoring, the theoretical framework in which the study is grounded, and a summary of the methodology followed in executing the research. I conclude Chapter one by providing an outline of the chapters presented in this thesis.

1.2 Background to the study

The history of South Africa is marked by several years under the apartheid system, which showed traces of racial and gender discrimination against women (Mosomi, 2019). Since women's participation in the labour market was restricted under apartheid, this promoted both gender gaps and patriarchy in the market, resulting in leadership positions being dominated by men—the majority being white (Mosomi, 2019). Jaga et al., (2018) state that, traditionally, leadership positions were dominated by white men in South Africa. The apartheid system left clear evidence of inequalities between men and women in the country, and these gaps are still challenging to close despite the country having celebrated close to three decades of democracy. For example, women remain a minority in the senior positions of Vice-Chancellor, Deans of Faculty, and Heads of Department at South African public universities (Mayer & Oosthuizen, 2019; Kanyumba & Lourens, 2022). Records up to 2019 show that only four women leaders have occupied the Vice-Chancellor position at 26 public universities (Mayer & Oosthuizen, 2019). The University of South Africa (UNISA) recently appointed a female Vice-Chancellor, adding to this number to reach altogether five women Vice-Chancellors at 26 South African public universities.

A 2019 report by the Ministerial Task Team of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) emphasised that women leaders are still fewer than male leaders



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

in South African institutions of higher learning (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019). Bonzet and Frick (2019) also discovered in their research that there is a clear gap between the number of female and male leaders in senior positions at South African Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges. These studies confirm that women still occupy lower ranks in institutions of higher learning in South Africa. Women are also a minority in professoriate positions (Mayer & Oosthuizen, 2019) in the country. This may be one of the factors that perpetuate the underrepresentation of women leaders in senior positions, as holding a professoriate position is required for promotion to senior positions in certain institutions of higher learning.

South Africa's apartheid history may contribute to the country's slow transformation and progress towards equality in terms of gender representation in senior positions at HEIs in the country. However, this is not an excuse, as mandates, legislation and policies are in place to address these past inequalities at work. A prime example is the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996*, which supports and promotes equality, non-discrimination, and non-sexism (Republic of South Africa, 1996), and which means that there should be equal treatment and access to opportunities in the workplace. The country also has the *Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998* in place, which is aimed at promoting equity in the workplace by promoting equal opportunities, removing any discrimination, and putting measures in place to address past inequalities and ensure equal representation in all levels of employment (Republic of South Africa, 1998). However, gender inequalities still persist in the country where fewer women are appointed in senior positions. The *National Plan for Higher Education (2001)* should also be effective to redress past inequalities and increase the number of women in leadership and senior positions in Higher Education (HE) (Ministry of Education, 2001). However, women leaders remain fewer in senior positions in the sector.

Furthermore, South Africa is part of the United Nations (UN), meaning that the country associates itself with the principles and practices of the UN. The charter of the UN shows that it is in favour of the participation of both men and women in any "capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs" (United Nations,



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

1945, p. 4). Thus, the UN supports gender equality in leadership positions. The UN has implemented numerous initiatives to show its commitment to gender equality, such as Article 13 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, promoting equality at work (United Nations, 2015). In addition, the UN's seventeen sustainable development goals for the 2030 agenda includes gender equality (goal number 5) (United Nations, 2018), which aims to end gender discrimination toward women and girls and achieve gender equality through the empowerment of women and girls (United Nations, 2018). All the member countries of the UN are expected to implement these goals. This means that they should take the initiative to empower and support women to achieve gender equality. This may include providing professional development, mentoring, and support for women.

Moreover, as a member of the African Union (AU), South Africa should uphold the value of equality in the workplace in accordance with the AU's Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (African Union, 2003). This protocol promotes equal opportunities for women and men in their careers (African Union, 2003). Despite all these legislative mandates, it remains a struggle for women to acquire senior positions and achieve the envisioned gender equality in the workplace. A list of barriers that hinder the access of women leaders to senior positions has been reported in the literature, and this forms part of the literature review of this thesis in Chapter two. The list includes (but is not limited to) gender discrimination, bias, lack of support, underrepresentation of women at professoriate levels, and lack of mentoring (Waheed & Nishan, 2018; Moyo & Perumal, 2020). It indicates that although women aspire to and qualify for senior positions, barriers make it difficult for them to reach these positions (Ramohai & Marumo, 2016; Jali et al., 2021). Thus, more should be done to support women leaders and capacitate them to overcome these barriers and progress to leadership.

The current study shares findings from the mentoring experiences of women leaders at a South African university who ascended to the senior positions that they presently occupy through the support of mentorship. It sheds light on the role and contribution of mentoring in advancing women leaders to senior positions (senior positions in this



study refer to positions ranging from the Dean of Faculty to the lower positions of Head of Departments in institutions of higher learning).

1.3 Problem statement

Literature (Elias, 2018; Haidar, 2018; Bărbuceanu, 2019; Madsen & Longman, 2020) from across the world not only acknowledges the importance of having women leaders in senior positions, but also shows the underrepresentation of women in these positions in various sectors, including HE. The latter is a global problem where the advancement of women to senior positions is minimal. Statistics from various research in different countries (Ekine, 2018; Nyoni & He, 2019; Semela et al., 2020; Tran & Nguyen, 2020) have made this reality explicit. Because women occupy lower and middle-rank positions, their voices are silent in the critical decisions made by the institutions in which they work. Redmond et al. (2018) raise the concern that women leaders generally reach middle-level leadership, where they get stuck until they leave the profession. This seems to be a persisting matter and gives a clear picture of how difficult it is for women to advance to senior positions in HEIs.

Among the various barriers raised as obstacles in women's leadership advancement to senior positions in HE is discrimination against women (feminine) leadership, in support of masculine leaders. The nature, culture, and networks in HEIs support masculine leadership, resulting in women's leadership being not trusted (Coleman, 2020). Because of this, women leaders who aspire to climb the ladder to break through the so-called 'glass ceiling' and reach senior leadership positions must work double as hard as men to prove their capability (Phakeng, 2015). This, on its own, places colossal pressure and demand on women leaders. Despite all the effort that women leaders make, they still find it difficult to advance to senior positions. Hague and Okpala (2017), as well as Bonzet and Frick (2019) suggest that women leaders who try to advance in leadership eventually get discouraged and opt to resign because of the challenges they encounter in pursuit of these positions. As a consequence, the underrepresentation of women in senior positions results in a lack of women role models who can inspire prospective women leaders (Herbst, 2020). The latter becomes another barrier, as women do not see a reflection of themselves in senior



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

positions and they cannot relate to the possibility of achieving such positions. According to Hill and Wheat (2017), this has been noted as a discouraging factor for women who want to advance to senior positions. In essence, it also reduces the number of women who can serve as mentors of other women, leading to a limited practice of mentorship for women leaders.

Despite its recognised ability to enable women leaders to advance to senior positions, the limited practice of mentoring in many institutions of higher learning, including South African HEIs, has been noted as a barrier to women reaching senior positions. Mentoring remains undervalued and unrealised. Dhunpath et al. (2018) also argue that the implementation of mentoring in South African institutions of higher learning has been relatively uncoordinated, which limits the practicality and effectiveness of mentorship. Additionally, mentoring for women leaders is still under-researched, especially in South Africa – despite evidence showing a positive relationship between mentoring and women’s professional growth and leadership advancement (Elias, 2018; Chitsamatanga et al., 2018; Khumalo & Zhou, 2019). As a result, little is known about the process of mentoring and the experiences of those who have been mentored toward progression into leadership positions. The same sentiment was raised by Dhunapath et al. (2018) who argued that mentoring remains an unexplored phenomenon and there is a lack of knowledge about the effects on those who have experienced mentoring. The limited empirical and published research on the mentoring experiences of women leaders in HE and on effective strategies for the mentorship of women leaders to senior positions therefore represents a gap in the literature. The research in hand aims to contribute to this limited body of knowledge as it proposes mentoring strategies and a model that could be used in mentoring women leaders in HE (see Chapter seven).

1.4 Rationale for the study

My interest in the mentoring of women leaders in HE arose from my personal and professional experience, as well as existing gaps identified in the literature regarding women leaders and mentoring. I have been a university student for eight years, studying for an undergraduate qualification for four years, Honours in Education for



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

two years, and a Master of Education degree for two years. During this time, I noticed that few women were occupying senior leadership positions in HEIs. This concerned me, as more women than men were employed in the institutions I observed, but very few women occupied senior leadership positions.

During my work experience as a lecturer at two HEIs in South Africa, I further observed that men occupied the senior leadership positions, even in departments that were female dominated. In my engagement and conversations with other women academics, I realised that they agree with my observations of women's underrepresentation in senior positions. I also observed and had conversations with some women academics who left the HE sector because they could not get the promotion, though they fully deserved it and were qualified for it. These observations and conversations puzzled me and I began to read about women leaders in HE. I discovered in the literature that women are underrepresented in HEIs globally and that they often experience barriers in trying to advance to senior positions. In reading further, I discovered that mentoring was recommended as 'enabler' to address this challenge. I was therefore motivated to explore how mentoring could help to advance women leaders to senior leadership positions and started studying the mentoring experiences of those women leaders who have been mentored and advanced to senior positions.

The gaps in the available literature also motivated me to conduct this study. Existing research on women leadership in HE (Ekin, 2018; Searby et al., 2018; Nyoni & He, 2019; Alotaibi, 2020; Semela et al., 2020; Tran & Nguyen, 2020; Ali & Rasheed, 2021) seems to focus more on confirming the underrepresentation of women, showing the barriers they encounter, and narrating their experiences as women leaders in general. Very limited research has focused on mentoring as an enabler for advancing women to senior positions through mentoring. I therefore identified a gap in the research on how to overcome barriers and on the enablers for women leaders to break through the ceiling. In South Africa, local research (Moodle & Toni, 2017; Mayer et al., 2018; Bonzet & Fick, 2019; Mayer & Oosthuizen, 2019) deals mainly with gender inequalities and the barriers experienced by women leaders in HEIs. Limited research has been conducted to explore solutions and suggest how these barriers can be overcome. The



lack of empirical research on mentorship and how women can be mentored to senior positions also propelled me to conduct this study.

The current research differs from previous studies in that it explores the mentoring experiences of women leaders who occupy senior positions at a South African university. It is an empirical study that gives a voice to women who had mentoring experience in their career and therefore grew as leaders. My study expanded the limited body of knowledge on mentoring as an enabler to the advancement of women leaders to senior positions in HEIs. Additionally, it contributed to the methodology by using virtual interviews in the data generation process is still underused in qualitative research generally and particularly in research focusing on women leadership and mentoring. A further gap that was identified involved the shortage of developed theories to study the mentorship of women leaders. I could not locate a single suitable theory for this. Research on the mentoring of women leaders draws mostly from feminist theories and other theories deemed to be closely related to mentoring, such as Transformational Leadership. The current study explored three theories (Relational-Cultural Theory, Transformational Leadership Model, and Gendered Organisation Theory) (discussed in detail in Chapter three) to study the mentoring experiences of women leaders. As a result, I propose a model for mentoring women to leadership in HE. More details of this model are discussed later in Chapter seven.

1.5 Statement of purpose and objectives of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore the mentoring experiences of women leaders during their advancement to senior positions at a South African university. From these experiences, the study aimed to uncover and propose mentoring strategies that can be utilised to mentor women leaders in HEIs. The following objectives were envisioned in order to accomplishing the purpose of the study:

- (i) To establish how women leaders occupying senior positions at a South African university understand mentoring
- (ii) To determine the importance of mentoring in the development of women leaders for senior positions



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- (iii) To explore the role of mentoring in preparing women leaders for senior leadership positions in the higher education sector
- (iv) To identify constraining factors encountered in the mentorship of women leaders for their advancement to senior positions
- (v) To propose mentoring strategies that can be utilised for effective mentoring of women leaders who aspire to advance to senior leadership positions in Higher Education Institutions

1.6 Research questions

The study explored a main research question and five secondary questions that emanated from the main question as described below.

1.6.1 Main question

The main research question that this study sought to address was formulated as follows: “What are the mentoring experiences of women leaders in respect of their advancement to senior positions at a South African university?”

1.6.2 Secondary research questions

Five secondary research questions emerged from the main research question:

- 1.6.2.1 How do women leaders occupying senior positions at a South African university understand mentoring?
- 1.6.2.2 Why is mentoring important in developing women leaders for senior positions?
- 1.6.2.3 How is mentoring used to prepare women leaders for senior leadership positions in the higher education sector?
- 1.6.2.4 What are the constraining factors encountered in mentoring women leaders for advancement to senior positions?
- 1.6.2.5 What mentoring strategies can be utilised for the effective mentoring of women leaders?

1.7 Significance of the study

As stated earlier, the study contributes to the limited body of knowledge on women leadership development through mentoring. It shares the lived mentoring experiences



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

of women leaders that emanated from this empirical research. Part of this contribution involves the possible mentoring strategies that could be used to mentor women leaders for senior positions in HEIs to address the underrepresentation of females in these positions. The study also contributed theoretically by proposing a model for mentoring women and preparing them for leadership, as presented in Chapter seven.

1.8 Summary of prominent debates in the literature

Prior to and during the process of this research, I have read extensively about women leadership in HE and mentoring, as well as about the mentorship of women leaders internationally, on the African continent, and in South Africa. I continue to read even to this present day. My intention has been to gain a deeper and more detailed understanding of mentoring and its role in preparing women leaders for senior positions in institutions of higher learning. A detailed literature review that emanated from this intentional and rigorous reading is presented in Chapter two of this thesis.

In this section, I present a brief discussion of the recurring debates in the literature that focus on women leadership and mentorship in HE. I include recurring debates on the representation of women leaders in senior positions in institutions of higher learning, legislation aimed at addressing gender gaps in the workplace, barriers preventing women leaders to advance to senior positions in HEIs, and different enablers for women towards leadership and senior positions. Thereafter, I zoom into the discussion around mentoring as one of the enablers of women leaders' advancement to senior positions. This discussion focuses on the conceptualisation of mentoring, the importance and benefits of women having a mentor, the role and contribution of mentorship in the advancement of women leaders to senior positions in HE, constraining factors in the mentorship of women leaders in HE, and some approaches to mentorship. Summaries of the debates in these key areas are presented below.

1.8.1 Representation of women leaders in senior positions in the HE sector

Though women are slowly becoming more visible in leadership positions at HEIs, they remain a minority compared to their male counterparts in senior positions, globally. The reports on this issue as well as supporting evidence have been widely presented



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

in different countries. Below, I share some evidence of the low representation of women leaders in senior positions at institutions of higher learning internationally, and on the African continent. I also reflect on women leader representation in senior positions at South African HEIs.

1.8.1.1 Internationally

In 2019, women leader representation was reported at 30%, compared to 70 to 74% of men in senior academic and leadership positions at universities and colleges in the United States of America (USA) (Longman et al., 2019). Underrepresentation of women in professorial positions was also recorded, with women as a minority occupying 38% of these positions in 2020 (Kaepfel et al., 2020). Similarly, underrepresentation of women leaders in senior positions was recently noted in Australia where women leaders also hold 30% of the senior positions, compared to men who still dominate these positions (also by 70 to 74%) in local HEIs (Brabazon & Schulz, 2020). Women were reported to hold only 28% of the positions of professor in Australia (Brabazon & Schulz, 2020) – giving a clear indication of male dominance in senior positions. Another country with a low number of women in senior positions is Saudi Arabia, where only one female was appointed as a Vice-Chancellor out of 38 Vice-Chancellor positions at their local universities in 2020 (Alotaibi, 2020; Tran & Nguyen, 2020). This woman Vice-Chancellor was based at a female-only institution (Seeing that this is a recent recording, the underrepresentation of women seems to persist in Saudi Arabia). This international reflection on women's representation in senior positions clearly shows that women are a minority in senior positions in institutions of higher learning. Women still occupy mostly middle and lower leadership positions.

1.8.1.2 On the African continent

Similarly, African countries reflect an equal (if not poorer) reality regarding women's underrepresentation in senior positions. For example, in Nigeria, a report by Ekine (2018) clearly shows male dominance, as only two women served as Vice-Chancellors out of the 40 Vice-Chancellor positions at Nigerian public universities. Men also dominated the 64 Vice-Chancellor positions at private universities in Nigeria, with



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

women leaders occupying only three of the available positions (Ekine, 2018). Ethiopia is among the African countries with very few women in senior positions at its universities. A recent report showed that there was no single female President, while only two women occupied the post of Vice-President from the total number of 15 such positions at three selected universities (Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar, and Hawassa) (Semela et al., 2020). These figures confirm the low representation of women leaders in senior positions at HEIs in African countries.

1.8.1.3 South Africa

South Africa, where the current study was conducted, has fewer women leaders in the senior positions at institutions of higher learning. In the last two years, the country stood at 19% in the representation of women in the Vice-Chancellor position at its 26 public universities (Herbst, 2020). The TVET sector also had fewer female than male principals, with a maximum of 17 women appointed in the 50 principalship positions in 2019 (Bonzet & Frick, 2019). This clearly shows a huge gender gap in TVET leadership. Similarly, fewer women occupy professorship positions in South Africa, and in 2018, only 27.5% of a total of 2218 professorial posts were filled by women (Herbst, 2020).

The above records clearly show the underrepresentation of women leaders in senior positions, despite the fact that more and more countries are introducing legislation and policies, and authorise people in management offices to address inequalities and gender gaps in the workplace. Some of the pieces of legislation from different countries are discussed below to show what measures are in place to meet this challenge. A detailed discussion on such measures is presented in the literature review chapter (see Chapter two).

1.8.2 Legislation aimed at addressing gender gaps in the workplace

Countries such as the United Kingdom (UK), Australia, and the USA follow the Athena SWAN charter that was initiated and established in the UK in 2005 to promote gender equality in academia (Xiao et al., 2020; Westoby et al., 2021). In addition, among the initiatives introduced in Australia, the Sex Discrimination Act was passed in 1984,



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

aimed at improving equality between males and females at work (Mate et al., 2018). It appears that, internationally, countries are mindful of gender inequalities in the workplace and intend to address them through suitable legislation. Despite these efforts, women's representation in senior positions at HEIs has not significantly increased, as would have been expected.

African countries introduced similar initiatives to address gender inequalities in the workplace. For example, Ghana implemented a National Action Plan (NAP) to enhance female leadership and comply with the UN Security Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (Ayentimi et al., 2020). This resolution aims to promote women and reduce gender inequality in leadership positions. In addition, Ghana showed great intentionality on the gender equality agenda by launching the National Gender Policy 2015, aimed at achieving Gender Equality (GE) and Women Empowerment (WE) (Republic of Ghana, 2015). Despite the country's record of few women in senior positions, Ethiopia also established a Ministry of Women's Affairs to ensure commitment to the UN's Millennium Development Goals. It implemented a Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) to provide Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines, and to implement various affirmative actions in the education and employment process (Ademe & Singh, 2016).

Similarly, several legislations that aim to ensure gender equality in the workplace are active in South Africa. This includes the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 108 of 1996* (the country's supreme law), the *Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998*, the *Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997*, and the *Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill, 2013*. All these laws promote equality and non-discrimination in the workplace.

The discussion above shows that African countries have introduced several initiatives to address the recurring gender inequalities that discriminate against women leaders. Nonetheless, women remain a minority in senior positions, which implies that there must be barriers that make it difficult for women leaders to advance to these positions despite all intentional initiatives.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

1.8.3 Barriers preventing women leaders from advancing to senior positions in HEIs

A number of barriers that pose a challenge to women's advancement to senior positions in HE has been identified in the literature. Among these are gendered institutional culture, the lack of suitable development, a lack of support, gender stereotypes and discrimination, the difficult balance between family–work life, limited mentoring opportunities, and a lack of suitable mentors.

1.8.3.1 Gendered institutional culture

HEIs are noted as gendered institutions because of the culture that portrays male dominance in positions of power and favours masculine leadership practices (Mate et al., 2018). Men in these institutions have traditionally been regarded as the appropriate leaders, leading to gender bias against women leaders (Coleman, 2020; Herbst, 2020). Women are suppressed and they remain a minority in these positions, as the prevailing institutional culture is not conducive to their thriving in a male-dominated culture.

1.8.3.2 Lack of suitable development

Women leaders generally do not receive the necessary professional development to prepare them for senior positions. As presented in the literature, there is still limited suitable geared to assisting them to overcome barriers and succeed in senior positions (Parker et al., 2018; Alghofaily, 2019; Mate et al., 2019). The resultant unpreparedness of women leaders for these positions poses a big challenge for them to succeed without having undergone the necessary development.

1.8.3.3 Lack of support

Another prominent barrier to women succeeding and progressing to senior positions is inadequate support. Literature (Waheed & Nishan, 2018; Longman et al., 2018; Moyo & Perumal, 2020) shows that women often do not receive the support they require to succeed in a leadership role from stakeholders or from the institutions where

they are based. This contributes to limited success in this role, making it difficult for them to progress to higher levels in their career.

1.8.3.4 Gender stereotypes and discrimination

Some of the stereotypes that lead to discrimination against women leaders and hinder them from reaching senior positions involve perceptions that women are soft, emotional, feminine, weak and ineffective, and less capable than men (Maheshwari & Nayak, 2020; Mankayi & Cheteni, 2021). This may cause them to have low self-esteem or suffer from a lack of confidence, thus restraining them from attempting these positions (Turner-Moffatt, 2019; Moyo & Perumal, 2020). Some women, because of these stereotypes, put pressure on themselves and work twice as hard as their male counterparts to prove themselves and get approval and respect (Maheshwari & Nayak, 2020; Mankayi & Cheteni, 2021). The discriminatory labels attached to women leaders put unnecessary pressure on those who want to succeed as leaders to prove their suitability for senior positions. Hence, they are a barrier to women's leadership success.

1.8.3.5 Having a balance between family–work life

The success of women leaders in academia is often hampered by difficulties to strike a balance between home responsibilities and office duties. In addition to meeting the many demands of their personal life, such women have to fulfil academic commitments including high-level teaching duties, research, and the supervision of postgraduate students (Brabazon & Schulz, 2018; Waheed & Nishan, 2018; Maheshwari & Nayak, 2020). As evidence of this, the findings of Maheshwari and Nayak (2020) showed that one of the biggest challenges that women in the study had to overcome was to balance work and family responsibilities. As could be expected, the latter was found to negatively impact their productivity in research and thus limited their career progression (Maheshwari & Nayak, 2020).



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

1.8.3.6 Limited mentoring and lack of suitable mentors

The lack of suitable mentors and mentoring opportunities were noted as barriers to women's leadership success and progression. Mentoring practice is still limited in many institutions of higher learning in many countries (Chitsamatanga et al., 2018; Elias, 2018), hence depriving women leaders of benefiting from it. Literature shows that mentorship of women leaders has so far remained no more than a theoretically good strategy. Studies conducted in the US (Espino & Zambrana, 2019) and in South Africa (Chitsamatanga et al., 2018) reported similar findings regarding the mentorship of women leaders, as the women in both studies indicated that they had only limited opportunities for practical mentorship. Only a limited number of mentors available and willing to mentor them, probably because only a few women hold adequately high senior positions and were able to mentor and serve as role models to women leaders (Taylor, 2019).

In contrast to the barriers discussed above, the enablers for women's leadership success are discussed below.

1.8.4 Enablers for women to leadership and senior positions

Developmental relationships such as mentoring, networking, coaching, and sponsorship are among the identified enablers that succeed in advancing women leaders to senior positions (Davidson, 2018; Scheepers et al., 2018; Awung & Dorasamy, 2019; Madsen & Longman, 2020). The most recognised of these enablers are networking and mentoring.

Networking allows women leaders to learn and improve their administrative skills, gain tenure, and advance their careers (Ali & Rasheed, 2021). It also assists them to overcome isolation in the mainly masculine leadership cultures as they are introduced to wider academic networks in their field (Bridges et al., 2021). The exposure provided through networking contributes to women's career growth and is recognised as an enabler for women leaders.

On the other hand, *mentoring* leads to increased self-confidence, personal satisfaction, and improved competence, resulting in the greater productivity of these women (Banwell et al., 2019; Koontz et al., 2019) and their career and leadership



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

success. A more detailed discussion on the contribution of mentoring to women's leadership follows below, since my study focused on the mentoring of women leaders.

1.8.5 Mentoring women leaders in HE

The role of mentoring and its contribution to women's leadership growth, success, and advancement to senior positions in HE are summarised below. As it is defined differently in the literature to mean various things, I start off by clarifying the concept of mentoring to give clarity and relevance to the concept and its use in my study.

1.8.5.1 Conceptualisation of mentoring

Despite the various definitions of mentoring, the prominent discussion shows that mentoring is a developmental relationship between a more skilled and experienced individual who assists a novice or less skilled colleague in developing their career (Chitsamatanga et al., 2018; Crisp & Alvarado-Young, 2018; Disch, 2018; Mondisa, 2018; Briscoe & Freeman, 2019; Bărbuceanu, 2019; O'Connor, 2019). This is a common definition of mentoring in the literature. In addition, mentoring is categorised as either formal or informal. Formal mentoring in the main involves institutional support, regular meetings, orientations, training, assigned mentors, and programme assessments (Banwell et al., 2019; Palmer & Jones, 2019; Ali & Rasheed, 2021). On the other hand, informal mentorship happens without intervention, arrangements, or support of the institution, meaning that it happens as the mentor and mentee engage with one another (Banwell et al., 2019; Bărbuceanu, 2019). In this study, mentoring was understood to mean a formal or informal professional learning relationship between a mentor and mentee (woman leader), including peers, which leads to professional development, career growth, success, and advancement to a senior position.

1.8.5.2 Importance and benefits of women having a mentor

A number of benefits associated with mentoring women leaders have been identified, such as assisting women leaders to tackle challenging activities in their career and



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

leadership; better understanding of the workplace norms and expectations; emotional, career, and psychological support; and providing professional development (Stuckey et al., 2019; Read et al., 2020). This shows that mentorship gives women the necessary skills and support they need to prosper in their careers and leadership. The importance of mentoring women leaders is emphasised in a study by Calinaud et al. (2021), who recognise that having a mentor has been a big contributor to their success. Women presidents in a study by Briscoe and Freeman (2019) agreed and admitted that they associate their career and leadership success with mentoring. Thus, mentorship contributes positively to the career and leadership growth of women leaders.

1.8.5.3 The role and contribution of mentorship in the advancement of women leaders to senior positions in HE

Mentoring allows women leaders to have *access to role models*. The latter are the people who serve as their mentors and sometimes end up being their role models (Crisp & Alvarado-Young, 2021). Having their mentors as role models creates leadership opportunities that contribute to leadership growth for the women leaders (Delgado & Allen, 2019). Mentorship facilitates the *suitable professional development* of women leaders, and mentors equip women leaders with the necessary skills for their career success in respect of teaching and research (Akpey-Mensah & Muchie, 2019). Two recent studies (Banwell et al., 2019; Calinaud et al., 2021) reveal that, through mentoring, women leaders learn to better manage their work and personal life, and to communicate effectively. According to Calinaud et al. (2021), these skills have been noted to contribute to the career success of women leaders.

Through mentorship, women leaders *receive support* gives them confidence in their leadership and pursuit of senior positions (Banwell et al., 2019; Briscoe & Freeman, 2019; Cozza, 2022). Furthermore, they are able to *access key networks* in their fields through the guidance of their mentors. Networking is important in academia, and having proper networks contributes greatly to women's success in leadership. Mentoring has also been noted to play a significant role in the *career progress* of women leaders. As was suggested in the literature (List & Sorcinelli, 2018; Khumalo



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

& Zhou, 2019; Taylor, 2019; Cozza, 2022), women who are mentored progress in their careers, they are promoted, they become successful leaders and they advance to senior positions – in contrast to those who have not had the benefit of mentorship. To conclude, mentoring contributes to women leaders having more *self-confidence*. It is through such confidence that women leaders gain the courage to pursue higher leadership positions (Long, 2018; Turner-Moffat, 2019).

The discussion above shows that mentoring contributes to women leaders' academic and career success, and this gives them access to leadership and senior positions. Besides the listed positive contributions of mentorship, there are some factors that constrain the mentorship benefits of women leaders.

1.8.5.4 Constraining factors in the mentorship of women leaders in HE

The mentoring of women leaders in HE is often restricted when *mentorship is started late in a career*, and this is associated with limited success of the mentorship. Evidence from research by Read et al. (2020) shows that people who start mentorship late in their career struggle with commitment to the mentorship. This obviously limits the positive impact of the mentorship for them. The *shortage of suitable mentors* for women leaders also contributes to the limited success of mentorship. Women leaders find it difficult to get suitable female mentors, mentors who are willing to mentor them, or mentors who have the necessary skills (Dhunpath et al., 2018; Palmer & Jones, 2019; Read et al., 2020; Cozza, 2022). This may be because of a *lack of training for mentors*, which is another notable barrier to the success of mentorship of women leaders. There appears to be no training for mentors to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge for their role. This leads to a limited understanding and knowledge of mentoring (Dhunpath et al., 2018), which causes its ineffectiveness. Mentoring also requires time (Lucey et al., 2018) for mentor and mentee engagements. However, the demands of an academic career leave insufficient time for and limit the success of the mentorship (Banwell et al., 2019). This situation becomes problematic to resolve, due to *limited involvement in and support from*



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

institutions of higher learning for mentorship, which is a significant barrier to the mentorship of women leaders.

1.8.5.5 Approaches to mentorship

Prominent discussions in the literature show that mentorship for women leaders in HE is mainly conducted informally (Bodilenyane & Mooketsana, 2019; Roets et al., 2019; Reis & Grady, 2020), with some traces of peer mentorship (List & Sorcinelli, 2018). Mondisa (2018) shares three approaches that may be used in mentoring and that were used by African American mentors to help their African American undergraduate mentees persist and succeed in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. The three approaches are the *familial mentoring* approach, *mentors giving guidance and assistance to the mentee* to obtain the resource, and the *empathic approach*. A detailed description of each approach is presented in Chapter two.

1.9 Key concepts

Key concepts used in this study include mentoring, leadership, women leaders, underrepresentation, higher education institutions, and the glass ceiling. These concepts are defined below to bring clarity to their use in this study.

1.9.1 Mentoring

Mentoring is a main key concepts in this study. It has been discussed to some extent in Section 1.8 above and in Chapter two (literature review). To avoid repetition, mentoring shall be defined in this study as already presented in Section 1.8.5.1 (summary of the concept).

1.9.2 Leadership

There are various definitions of leadership. However, leadership is commonly defined as the process of influence for the achievement of a common goal of an institution (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018; Daniëls et al., 2019; Northouse, 2019). What is prominent in most definitions of leadership is that the people appointed in the leadership positions



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

influence their followers. Hence, a definition of leadership as a process of persuasion and inducing a person or a group of people is also applicable (Ngcobo & Mestry, 2018). This means that leaders use certain skills and expertise to influence people under their leadership to work towards attaining the goals of an institution. In this study, leadership was used to mean the process of women leaders' influence towards achieving the goals of a higher education institution.

1.9.3 Women leaders

In my search of the literature, I realised that there is a dearth of sources that define woman/female leaders; many give a description of leaders/leadership which is regarded as the process of influence (Hajase et al., 2013). The limited description of “women leaders” as a concept gives an indication of the need to expand and advance research on this concept. I did however gather a sense that women leaders may be regarded as women holding positions of power (Mayer & Oosthuizen, 2020). In this study, the concept of women leaders is used to refer to women holding positions in HEIs such as Head of Department, Head of Unit, Faculty Manager, Deputy Dean, and Dean of the Faculty.

1.9.4 Underrepresentation

The concept “underrepresentation” is widely used in the literature around women to show in the main that fewer women than men occupy certain positions, especially leadership positions. Stewart (2021) uses underrepresentation as a concept to argue that there are fewer women leaders STEM education. Similarly, various scholars (Ekine, 2018; Nyoni & He, 2019; Alotaibi, 2020; Semela et al., 2020; Tran & Nguyen, 2020; Ali & Rasheed, 2021) in the area of women leadership in HE have used the concept in arguing the low representation of women (compared to men) in senior positions. Underrepresentation means having fewer women in leadership positions, and the concept is therefore used in this study as such.

1.9.5 Higher Education Institutions

The *South African Higher Education Act of 1997* describes HEIs as institutions that offer higher education either on a full-time or part-time basis, or in distance mode (Republic of South Africa, 1997). HEIs comprise universities and colleges and their focus is on teaching students to acquire higher education qualifications (Mishra, 2007). HEIs is therefore used in this study to refer to institutions of higher learning such as universities and colleges.

1.9.6 Glass ceiling

The so-called glass ceiling is described as comprising invisible barriers that are making it difficult for women leaders to reach the top leadership positions occupied by their male counterparts (Singh, 2007). Bertrand (2017) agrees and defines the glass ceiling as an obstacle to women in reaching upper positions and earning high payments. I used the concept “glass ceiling” to mean the same in this research.

1.10 Working assumption

The assumption that I held prior to the execution of this research was that, if women leaders in HEIs receive effective mentoring, they are likely to break through the glass ceiling and advance to senior leadership positions. I assumed that, through mentoring, women leaders would develop and get the necessary support and encouragement to fulfil their specific needs and acquire the necessary skills to reach senior leadership positions. Through mentoring, they would benefit from the professional learning offered by an experienced leader who guides, supports and develops them. Such support results in enhancing the courage, motivation, and self-confidence of women leaders and increases their chances of advancing to senior positions. As per this assumption, the findings of the study (in support of the literature reviewed) revealed that women leaders indeed learn from and are developed by their mentors during mentorship and that this leads to their leadership growth and advancement to senior positions. Evidence of the findings is provided in Chapters five and six.



1.11 Summary of the Theoretical Framework

The present study was framed by three theories that are discussed in detail in Chapter four of this thesis: the Relational-Cultural Theory; the Transformational Leadership Model, and the Gendered Organisation Theory. Based on these theories, I developed Figure 1 as the theoretical framework of the study by drawing elements from the three theories. The diagram used to represent the theory was in line with the assumption discussed in Section 1.10, namely that if women employed in gendered institutions are mentored, they are likely to grow as they learn from expert transformational leaders who serve as their mentors. They are therefore likely to advance to senior positions.

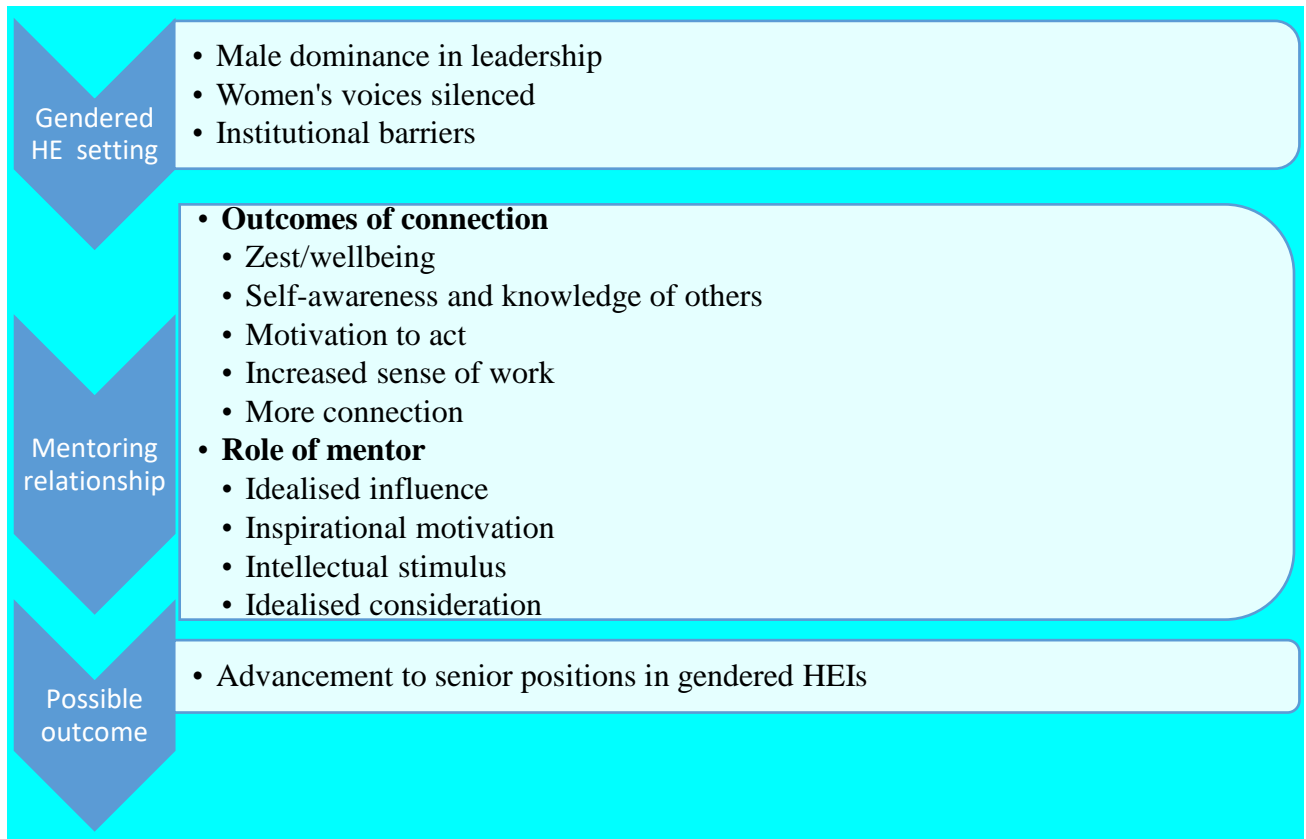


Figure 1.1: Theoretical framework of the study

1.11.1 Relational-cultural theory

In the context of this study, the relational-cultural theory of Miller (1986) was used to study and understand the growth and development of women leaders through working



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

with their mentors in a developmental relationship. According to this theory, developmental relationships result in five outcomes, namely *zest or well-being, increased knowledge of self and others, ability and motivation to act, increased sense of worth, and a desire for more connection* (Jordan, 2008; Lewis & Olshansky, 2016). These possible outcomes (indicated in Miller's relational-cultural theory) result from mentoring relationships, which are discussed in detail in Chapter three. The theory helped me to understand mentoring as a developmental relationship for women leaders, yet it was limited in providing an understanding of the role played by the mentor in this relationship. To address this shortcoming, I included and drew from the Transformational Leadership Model and thus bridged this gap.

1.11.2 Transformational Leadership Model

The Transformational Leadership Model (Bass, 1985) was used to understand the role played by mentors in a mentoring relationship. I used its four dimensions, namely *idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and idealised consideration* (Bass & Avolio, 1990) in understanding the role of a mentor. Mentors in this research played a transformational leadership role as they mentored women leaders. The Transformational Leadership Model are discussed in more detail in Chapter three.

1.11.3 Gendered Organisation Theory

Acker's (1990) Theory of Gendered Organisations was used to understand the HE context and its gender practices that make it difficult for women leaders to advance to senior positions in these institutions. This is because my study was conducted at a university in South Africa and explored the mentoring of women leaders based at this higher education institution. I used three components from the theory namely *division of labour, interaction in the organisation, and organisational logic* (Acker, 1990; Acker, 1992).

Division of labour in this study shows that senior positions are dominated by men in HEIs. *Interaction in the organisation* relates to the fact that decision making is dominated by men, which silences the voices of women and promotes male



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

dominance in the process. *Organisational logic* relates to the promotion of hierarchical structures in HEIs, which endorses gender imbalances in employment levels and payments. The three components helped me to identify the areas of gender imbalance that are manifested in institutions of higher learning and that pertain to the advancement of women leaders to senior positions. A more detailed discussion of Acker's theory is presented in Chapter three (theoretical framework).

1.12 Summary of the Research methodology

1.12.1 Research paradigm

The interpretivist research paradigm that was used in this research is commonly used by researchers who believe in multiple realities that are socially constructed (Van Wyk, 2017). Ontologically, as a researcher, I also believe in studying multiple realities that are socially constructed – from various participants, and of a particular situation or phenomenon. In using this paradigm, I was able to examine the realities faced by women leaders involved in this study, specifically their experiences of mentoring in their advancement to senior positions. The realities came from different participants who had differing lived mentoring experiences, hence multiple realities were constructed. Epistemologically, I believe in studying the realities of people through interacting and engaging with them in their natural settings. I am of the view that it is through such interactions that people can open up and speak freely about their lived realities. Hence, the use of an interpretive paradigm allowed me to interact with participants, namely women leaders and their mentors. Our interaction subsequently enabled me to get an account of their lived experiences of mentoring.

1.12.2 Research approach

A qualitative research approach was applied in this study. Qualitative researchers engage with participants in their natural context/setting – whether it is their home, place of work, or church – in the construction of knowledge and a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Creswell, 1994). Through this interaction, they are able to study and understand the research phenomenon, based on the meaning that participants make of their lived experiences,



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

from their own perspective (Gunbayi & Sorm, 2018). This means that the researcher can interact with participants to gather their lived experiences from their shared stories. In my study, the qualitative research approach allowed me to gather lived mentoring experiences of women leaders in their advancement to senior positions, as seen from their own perspective. I was able to generate detailed and descriptive findings from such engagement.

1.12.3 Case study design

A case study research design was applied in the study, which allowed me to study in detail and produce descriptive data on the mentoring experiences of women leaders in the study context (Creswell, 1994; Yin, 2018). It also allowed me to focus on the case of a single university in South Africa (which is permitted in a case study) (Seabi, 2012; Flick, 2018). I was therefore able to study and gain rich insight into this case by focusing on the mentorship experiences of this specific group of women leaders (Yin, 2018).

1.12.4 Selection of research sites and participants

Convenience sampling was used in to select one public university in the Gauteng province out of the 26 public universities in South Africa. Convenience sampling allows for selecting research sites and participants based on their accessibility in terms of location, time, cost of the research, and availability of the research sites (Merriam & Tindell, 2016). Since I work in one of the faculties at this university as a junior academic, I chose it because it was easily accessible to me. I sampled nine faculties in the university and used pseudonyms to refer to these faculties for confidentiality purposes.

Purposive sampling was used to sample women leaders to participate in the study. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to deliberately choose participants with certain features who can contribute to the research (Taherdoost, 2016). I therefore purposively selected women leaders who occupied senior leadership positions – from the position of Head of Department to the senior position of Dean of the Faculty – in each of the nine faculties. I also purposefully chose women who have had mentorship



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

experience in their careers and leadership journey. As I was guided by data saturation to terminate sampling, the process was ended once information redundancy was reached (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As a result, I stopped sampling when I had finished interviews with ten women leaders and felt I was receiving similar responses (data saturation). I also sampled five mentors of women leaders involved in the study through snowball sampling. I was directed to these five mentors by the mentees (i.e. women leaders) involved in the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

1.12.5 Data generation methods

Data was generated through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews involved the ten women leaders who held senior positions and participated in this study, as well as five of their mentors. The documents analysed were requested from participants (women leaders and their mentors) and retrieved from the institutional website. The only documents obtained were mentorship policies from two HEIs in South Africa.

1.12.5.1 *Semi-structured interviews*

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants on virtual platforms such as Blackboard Collaborate, Zoom, and Google Meet due to Covid-19 restrictions. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to engage with participants using open-ended questions and allowing them to share detailed descriptions of their mentorship experiences (Alsaawi, 2014; Braun et al., 2016; Evans & Lewis, 2018). Though I used interview schedules to lead the discussion, I was able to probe and ask for clarity and more details (semi-structured interviews allow this) (de la Croix et al., 2018; Patten & Newhart, 2018). Probing served as a way to trigger the participants' memory where they had forgotten to mention valuable information, and it allowed me to gather more descriptive data.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

1.12.5.2 Document analysis

For this study, I analysed the mentorship policies of two institutions – the one where the study was conducted, and the other a university where one of the mentors was based. The mentorship policies that were retrieved from the two institutions' websites contributed to the data and served to triangulate some of the responses from the semi-structured interviews. The use of document analysis in generating data is acceptable in qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

1.12.6 Data analysis

On completion of the semi-structured interviews with ten women leaders and five mentors, I transcribed each interview verbatim. The transcripts were then shared with participants for verification. One woman leader withdrew her participation after reviewing the transcripts, since she felt that what she had shared might reveal her identity. Her transcript was consequently removed from the findings. Data from the remaining fourteen transcripts was analysed using thematic analysis. In that, I followed the six phases of thematic analysis recently proposed by Braun and Clarke (2022) as part of the Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) approach. I first carefully read the transcripts various times to familiarise myself with the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2022). In phase two, once I knew the data, I coded the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). From there, I went on to the third and fourth phases where I generated initial themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022) and continuously reviewed and revised them. These themes and sub-themes were then used to present the findings (see Chapters five and six) as part of phase five. The last phase involves the presentation of this thesis where I show the reader how research questions were answered (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

1.13 Enhancing the quality of the study

The process of trustworthiness, by means of which the researcher assures quality in qualitative research, was used to ensure rigour in this study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I adhered to the four commonly accepted quality criteria (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) as proposed by Lincoln



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

and Guba (1985) (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). As discussed below, all four components were observed to enhance the quality of my research.

1.13.1 Credibility

Credibility looks at how believable the findings are (Niewenhuis, 2020). The credibility of the data gathered in this research was strengthened by member checking (Fabio & Maree, 2012; Niewenhuis, 2020). In other words, the verbatim transcripts that had been made of the interviews were taken back to the participants to verify if the data was a true reflection of their shared stories. This process was repeated until all participants were satisfied and could confirm that the transcripts were a true reflection of what they had shared. Credibility was furthermore confirmed as two different data generation methods (semi-structured interviews and document analysis) were used to triangulate data (Fabio & Maree, 2012).

1.13.2 Transferability

A detailed description of the participants and the research process (Shenton, 2004) was provided to let the reader decide if the findings could probably be transferred to their own setting. This process allows readers of the data to make a judgement looking at the findings if they can be transferred to their setting (Niewenhuis, 2020).

1.13.3 Dependability

To ensure the dependability of this research, I explained every step of data collection and analysis by keeping notes of the process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I was consistent in the process of data generation and analysis. An independent critical reader as well as my supervisor also checked and ensured that a clear link existed between data collection, my findings, and data analysis.

1.13.4 Confirmability

To ensure confirmability of my findings, I kept an audit trail with a full description of all research information gathered and processes followed. This also allowed for scrutiny



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

of the research design (Korstjens & Moser, 2018) and provided a clear record of the research path that had been taken in conducting this study.

1.14 Ethical considerations

All ethical principles relating to qualitative case study research were observed in this study. Ethical clearance to conduct the research was obtained from the Ethics Committee in the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria (see Annexure 5). Permission to access the nine faculties of the sampled university was acquired from the University Registrar (see Annexure 2). I furthermore ensured that participation in the study was voluntary. All participants consented to participation in the interview and document analysis. Participants' signed consent was received and kept in a safe space in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies (EMPS) (see example, Annexures 3.1 and 3.2). Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by using pseudonyms and by not revealing either the identities of participants or of the faculties in which they were based. In other words, in this report, the nine women leaders are referred to as WL, numbered from 1 to 9, and the five mentors are referred to as MT1 to 5. No harm was caused to participants. Interviews were conducted on online platforms with which participants were comfortable. The study not only addressed social injustices and the underrepresentation of women in senior positions, but also added value to the development of other women leaders through mentoring them for senior positions.

1.15 Limitations of the study

From the 26 public universities in South Africa, my study sampled one institution and it was situated in the Gauteng province. Since the focus was on a single case study and I sampled only a small number of participants, the generalisability of the study findings is quite limited (Rule & John (2011)). However, the purpose of the study was not to generalise the findings but to study the mentorship experiences of women leaders in detail. Therefore, the case study design was highly relevant for use in my qualitative research.

1.16 Delimitation of the study

Only one public university in the Gauteng province (from the 26 public universities in South Africa) was sampled for the study. The study focused only on women leaders in senior leadership positions, from the most senior position of Dean of the Faculty to the lowest position of Head of Department in nine faculties of the sampled public university. Furthermore, the focus was on women leaders who have experienced mentoring in their advancement to senior positions. The study was also only limited to five mentors of the women leaders who were involved in the study. The minimum number of participants was fifteen. Data was generated over a period of six months, from June to November 2021.

1.17 Outline of thesis Chapters

This thesis comprises seven chapters, organised as follows:

Chapter 1: Overview of the study

The overview in Chapter 1 includes a brief introduction and background to the study. This is followed by the problem statement, rationale, research questions, summary of key debates in the literature and a theoretical grounding for the study. A summary of methodological practices adopted in the study is articulated next. Followed by strategies for ensuring the credibility of the study, ethical considerations, and the significance of the study.

Chapter 2: Review of literature

Chapter 2 discusses the reviewed literature on the current state of women leaders in HEIs, challenges encountered by women leaders in trying to advance to senior positions in institutions of higher learning, mentoring practices and opportunities, and the role of mentorships in preparing and developing women leaders for senior positions in HEIs. The literature covered international, continental, and local debates.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

Chapter 3 discusses the theoretical framework and grounding of the study which drew from three theories, the Relational-Cultural Theory, the Transformational Leadership Model, and the Gendered Organisation Theory. These were integrated and applied in the study to explore the mentoring experiences of women leaders in their advancement to senior positions.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

Chapter 4 gives a detailed description of how the study was executed. It presents and gives an account of the research paradigm, research approach, research design, sampling, data generation methods and analysis. Moreover, the chapter discusses the principles of ensuring rigour for the study and the ethical principles that were followed in the study.

Chapter 5: Presentation of research findings

Chapter 5 presents the findings of the study according to relevant themes and sub-themes, and also reports my interpretation of the findings that were generated through semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

Chapter 6: Discussion of findings

Chapter 6 deals with the discussion of findings based on the study questions and in comparison with the literature review and theoretical framework of the study.

Chapter 7: Summary of findings, recommendations, and conclusion

The last chapter summarises the key findings, their contribution to the existing body of knowledge, as well as the conclusions reached in the study and the recommendations made.



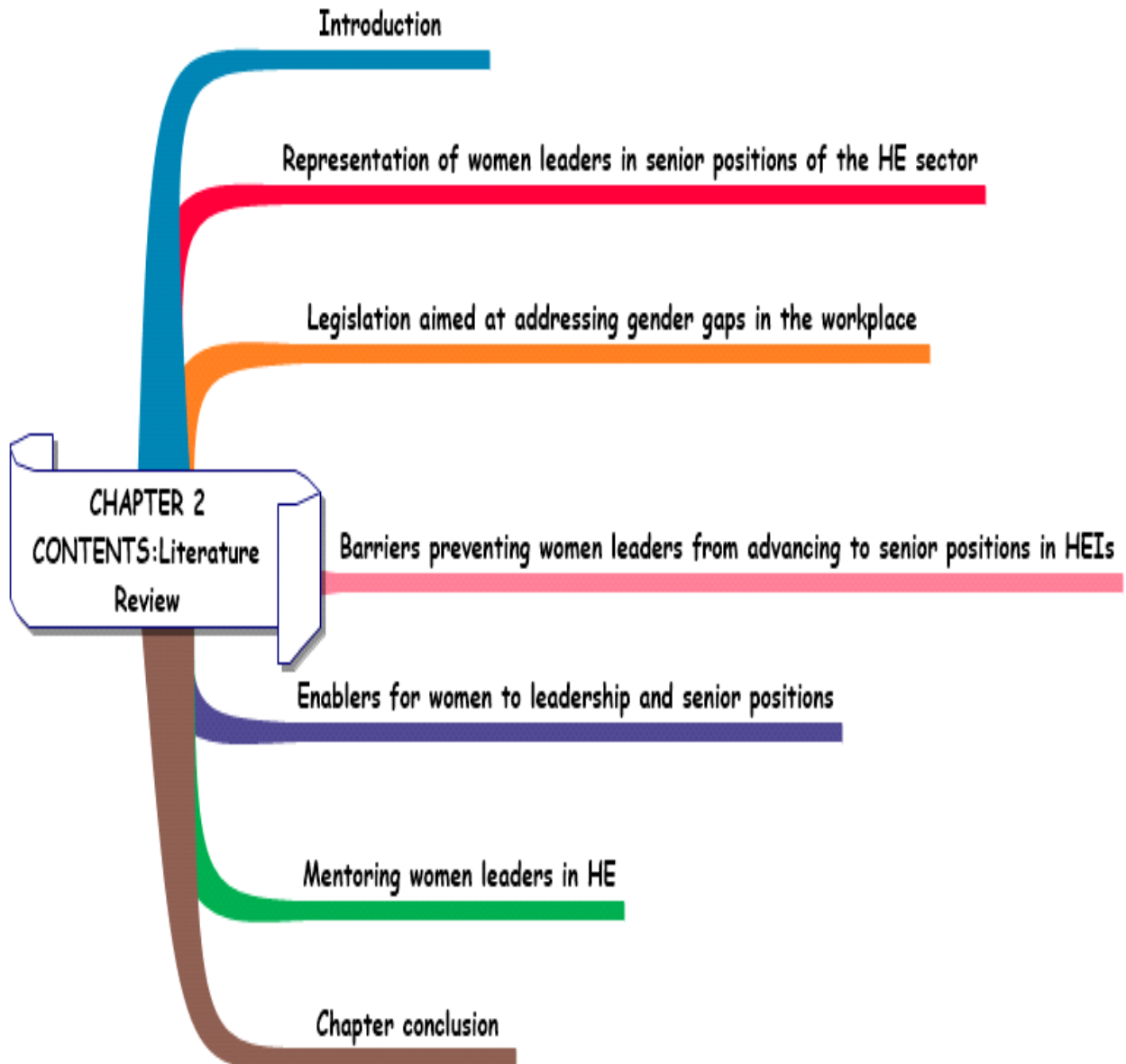
UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

1.18 Chapter conclusion

Chapter 1 presented the introduction and background to the study. It also provided the rationale, purpose and objectives of this research and presented the research questions guiding the study. Moreover, it summarised the key debates in the literature on women leadership and mentoring, the theoretical framework, and the methodology that was followed in the study. In Section 1.17, I shared the chapter organisation in the form of outlines of the study. All these elements provided the focus of the study and how it was conducted. In the next chapter, I discuss the literature as relevant to the phenomenon explored in this study.



CHAPTER 2 CONTENTS





UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter gave an overview of the study. The aim was to show an outlook of the study, as a result, the issues presented in the chapter included the introduction and background to the study, the rationale, purpose, main, and sub-questions of the study. Subsequently, Chapter one gave a detailed summary of critical debates in the literature, the theoretical framework and research methodology, and discussed the quality criteria (trustworthiness) and research ethics that were observed. The chapter concluded with an outline of the study.

Chapter two now focuses on prominent and current debates (mainly over the past five years) in the literature on women leadership and mentoring in HE. The literature review also shows how mentoring contributes to women advancing to senior positions in institutions of higher learning. To present a balanced review, international, continental and local discussions are presented in the form of themes and sub-themes. Three broad themes comprise the current state of women leader representation in HEIs, challenges encountered by women leaders in trying to advance to senior positions in institutions of higher learning, as well as mentoring and its role in developing women leaders for senior positions. Sub-themes under the theme of mentoring include the conceptualisation of mentoring, the importance of mentoring in developing women leaders, the role and contribution of mentorship in advancing women leaders for senior positions, and constraining factors encountered in the mentorship of women. The literature reviewed under these themes and sub-themes relates to the research questions outlined in Section 1.6.

2.2 Representation of women leaders in senior positions in the HE sector

This section contains an overview of the underrepresentation of women leaders who occupy senior positions in various international, continental and local institutions of higher learning. The purpose of the overview is to show that though there has been some improvement and an increase in the participation of women in leadership positions at HE institutions, women continue to be a minority in senior positions



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

globally. There is, however, slow progress globally in the promotion of women leaders to senior positions. In some countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Tanzania, and Nigeria, women's representation in the senior position of Vice-Chancellor has been very low, ranging between one to three, or no representation at all (Ekine, 2018; Nyoni & He, 2019; Alotaibi, 2020; Semela et al., 2020; Tran & Nguyen, 2020; Ali & Rasheed, 2021). This is currently the reality in many countries. Hence, a substantial portion of current literature (Cavanaugh, 2020; Gandhi & Sen, 2020; Howard et al., 2020; Madsen & Longman, 2020; Madsen et al., 2020; Tran & Nguyen, 2020; Cozza, 2022) confirms the continued underrepresentation of women in senior positions at HEIs globally. These recent studies indicate that the challenge of underrepresentation of women in senior positions is still pretty much in place and that serious obstacles prevent women from reaching these positions – despite a global awareness of the importance of having women in such senior positions.

The presentation and discussion of the first sub-theme portrays the existing situation of women who occupy senior positions to share the reality of the underrepresentation of women in senior positions at HEIs. The discussion could obviously not capture all countries and therefore focuses on a few selected countries abroad where this phenomenon is experienced, such as the USA, the UK, Australia, Vietnam, India, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. On the African continent, the focus is on Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and South Africa. I furthermore highlight the underrepresentation of women in professoriate positions as there is a gender imbalance between female and male professors. This may be one of the contributing factors to fewer women advancing to senior positions, as a professorship is one of the requirements for advancing to senior leadership in many HEIs.

2.2.1 Women's representation in senior positions of HEIs: Internationally

Literature shows that fewer women than men occupy senior positions such as those of Vice-Chancellor, Dean or Head of Department in many countries and women's progress to such positions remains slow. An analysis of women who hold senior positions at universities in two North American countries, namely the USA and Canada, shows that women are significantly underrepresented in these positions



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

(Azizi et al., 2022). The analysis involved fifty universities (45 in the USA and five in Canada), with 2977 men and 2829 women participating (Azizi et al., 2022). The results revealed that only 36.3% of women occupy a deputy president position, compared to 63.7% of men (Azizi et al., 2022). Only 38.5% of women held the position of Dean, while men occupied 61.5% of the available positions. Interestingly, the analysis revealed that there were more women further down the leadership hierarchy at these two institutions. Women held 48.2% of the positions of Deputy Dean, while men occupied 51.8% (Azizi et al., 2022). Similarly, there were more women in the position of Assistant Dean, where women occupied 63.8% of the available posts compared to 36.2% of men (Azizi et al., 2022). The study by Azizi et al. (2022) concludes that women occupied fewer high-rank positions and more posts at middle to lower leadership levels in these institutions. I found this surprising for developed countries like the USA and Canada and expected that they would have been closer to gender equality and equal representation of women and male leaders in senior positions. I assumed that developed countries would be more advanced in transformation and progress; however, research shows that such countries still have improvements to make regarding gender equality.

Further engagement with the literature led to the discovery that the slow progress of women to senior positions is a historical reality in the USA. Reports demonstrate that there has been plodding progress regarding women's promotion and advancement to senior positions in the countries' universities and colleges. The 2016 report by the American Council on Education and the Centre for Policy Research and Strategy (ACE/CPRS) showed the average representation of women leaders at 27% in universities and colleges of US universities and colleges since 2011 (Madsen & Longman, 2020). This data covered both public and private higher education institutions. In public institutions, 29.1% of presidents were women, while in private institutions the corresponding figure of women presidents was 24.1% (Madsen & Longman, 2020).

Minimal progress was made between 2011 and 2017, as the report that the American Council on Education (ACE) released in 2017 showed that women presidents in all American universities and colleges stood at 30% (Reis & Grady, 2020). The ACE



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

report thus indicated a very slight rise over the six-year period. The position of Dean in these institutions also reflected a similar trend of women's underrepresentation. For instance, the 2017 report released by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) put the representation of women in the position of Dean at 33% in 2001, with this figure slowly increasing to about 40% in 2016 (Madsen & Longman, 2020). Some improvement occurred, but this was over a long period of time, indicating that improvement was very slow. Limited progress continued between 2016 and 2019, and Longman et al. (2019) reported that men continued to dominate senior positions (70%–74%) among academics and higher education leaders, meaning that women's representation remained at 30% after two years. The progress of women leaders to senior positions remained virtually stagnant.

According to Kaepfel et al. (2020), women professors in the US are fewer than men as they account for only about 38% of professors. As indicated earlier, this may contribute to fewer women who advance to senior positions in the country, as incumbency in a professorship plays a role in such promotions (Vaughn et al., 2020). The report on women's representation in senior and professoriate positions at institutions of higher learning in the USA shows that although the country is making some progress in advancing women leaders, the progress is slow; hence women remain underrepresented in these positions (Kaepfel et al., 2020).

Similarly, there is slow progress toward increasing the representation of women leaders in senior positions at HEIs in the UK (Davies & Healey, 2019), which may be the rationale behind the UK's ranking as eleventh out of eighteen countries for gender equality in the workplace (Calinaud et al., 2021). Records reveal that women occupy 38% of the senior positions in institutions of higher learning in the UK (Westoby et al., 2021). Additionally, women professors account for only 18.7% and 20% in the research-intensive universities in the country (Kaepfel et al., 2020; Westoby et al., 2021), which shows the gender gap in senior and professor positions in the UK. This is despite the high status of the UK in the World University Rankings 2020, which recognises that the country hosts nine of the top 25 universities in the world (World University Rankings 2020; Westoby et al., 2021). The expectation is that UK HEIs would be exemplary in all their operations, including gender equality in their



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

leadership. However, as it stands, the UK is also grappling with gender inequality in senior positions.

Australia is also not immune against the underrepresentation of women leaders in senior positions in its local higher learning institutions (Fitzgerald, 2018). Women occupy around 30% of the senior positions, and men still dominate these positions by between 70-74% (Brabazon & Schulz, 2020). Men also hold more professor positions as they account for 67.7% of associate professors and 72.7% of full professors (Brabazon & Schulz, 2020), thus leaving women at about 26% in these positions.

The same challenge is reported in Vietnam. An analysis of the country shows that fewer women compared to men are in higher education leadership positions (Maheshwari & Nayak, 2020). This is despite the high ranking of Vietnam (79%) based on having more women participating in the marketplace and seeking employment (Maheshwari & Nayak, 2020). Women's participation in the marketplace clearly does not translate into them progressing and being promoted to leadership positions, as fewer women are in leadership and senior positions. Current reports show that Vietnam has 357 public universities and colleges and 88 private higher education institutions in which the underrepresentation of women in senior positions is evident (Maheshwari & Nayak, 2022). The report by Tran and Nguyen (2020) reveals that women are underrepresented from the most senior position to the lowest position of dean of faculty, as there were only 7.6% women presidents compared to 92.4% men (Tran & Nguyen, 2020). Similarly, women occupied only 14.6% of the positions of vice-president (Tran & Nguyen, 2020). Further down the ladder, at the position of faculty dean, women leaders held 22.2% of the positions (Tran & Nguyen, 2020) – clearly an underrepresentation of women leaders in all the senior positions in Vietnam. Although more would have been expected from developed countries when it comes to gender equality in the workplace, these records show that the matter of women underrepresentation in senior positions is a global issue.

Other countries that have a low number of women in senior positions are India, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. A recent report by Gandhi and Sen (2020) shows only 13 women have so far reached the position of Vice-Chancellor at a total of 725 recognised universities (public and private) in India. The report attests to the ranking of India as



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

lowest in terms of gender diversity for Asia in 2014 and the 2017 Global Gender Gap Report for the World Economic Forum (Gandhi & Sen, 2020). The poor ranking was based on women's representation in senior positions and gender equality (Gandhi & Sen, 2020). A similar picture, if not worse, emerges in Saudi Arabia, where only one female has so far occupied the Vice-Chancellor seat at any of the country's universities (Alotaibi, 2020; Tran & Nguyen, 2020) (in other words, males occupy 37 out of 38 Vice-Chancellor positions at Saudi universities). Of importance is that the university led by this one-woman Vice-Chancellor is a female-only institution (Alotaibi, 2020; Tran & Nguyen, 2020), which reflects the situation of women leaders and the limited trust in their leadership in this senior decision-making position. Pakistan is another example of a country with very few women in senior positions in their institutions of higher learning. Ali and Rasheed (2021) report five women Deans and no Vice-Chancellor in the three public and private universities in the Islamabad Capital Territory of Pakistan. This could be expected, as the country has a low woman labour force. In 2018, Pakistan's labour force figures stood at 22% women and 67.8% men (Khokhar, 2018). In 2019, the representation of women was at 20.1%, compared to 68.0% of men in the marketplace (Ayub et al., 2019). This shows a slight drop in women participating in the labour market, which by default reduces the number of women who can reach senior positions if only so few are active in formal jobs. A possible contributory factor to the small female representation in Pakistan's labour force and leadership is the country's identity as the Islamic Republic, where all knowledge and practices are guided by religious beliefs drawn from the Quran and the Hadith (Khokhar, 2018). According to Khokhar (2018) these religious beliefs can limit women's participation in the workplace and restrict leadership positions to men. Ali and Rasheed (2021) add that women are excluded from positions of power due to the patriarchal social structure in Pakistan. These may be contributors to the fact that Pakistan has such a low number of women in senior positions.

This overview of women's representation in senior positions internationally clearly shows that slow progress is made in their advancing advancement to senior positions in the HE sector. Women remain a minority in senior positions in many countries. African countries follow suit, as will become apparent below.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

2.2.2 Women's representation in senior positions of HEIs: On the continent of Africa

Many African countries have very few women in senior and professoriate positions in their HEIs. For example, Nigeria, a country with the biggest higher education system and hosting millions of students (Jacob et al., 2020), has a low representation of women in senior leadership positions at its universities. In fact, Ekine (2018) reports the appointment of only two women Vice-Chancellors, compared to 38 male Vice-Chancellors, in 40 public universities. Also, only three women (and 58 men) served as Vice-Chancellors in 61 private universities of Nigeria (Ekine, 2018). This points to a massive gender gap between leaders in this senior position and clearly shows that men still dominate positions of influence in Nigerian universities.

Women's underrepresentation in senior positions is equally prevalent at the University of Ghana. The reports of 2018 showed that only seven women were full professors out of 80 professorship positions, while only 38 women held the 150 associate professor positions (Boateng, 2018). Furthermore, women leaders held 85 of the 420 senior lecturer positions (Boateng, 2018), which implies that women struggle to advance to senior positions in Ghana. A similar scenario was noted in two countries in Eastern Africa: Tanzania and Ethiopia. A recent study by Nyoni and He (2019) shows that there was not yet a single female Vice-Chancellor in any Tanzanian public university and only one female Deputy Vice-Chancellor. Hence, they argue that women in Tanzania continue to experience obstacles that prevent them from reaching senior positions – despite their suitability and qualifications (Nyoni & He, 2019).

Ethiopia also has a low number of women in senior positions in local HEIs. The evidence of 5.3% women leaders is based on research focusing on the representation of women leaders in three selected universities in Ethiopia, namely – the Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar and Hawassa Universities (Semela et al., 2020). From the total number of 15 positions (three Presidents and 12 Vice-Presidents) at these three universities, there was no female President and only two women serving as Vice-Presidents (Semela et al., 2020). This confirms a vast gender gap between leaders in senior positions at Ethiopian universities.

The above records of women leaders in the rest of Africa echo the situation in the international context and give evidence of the underrepresentation of women in senior



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

positions at HEIs. In some African countries, the most significant contributory factor may be cultural and patriarchal beliefs that limit women's career growth and leadership opportunities (Ekine, 2018; Nyoni & He, 2019; Moyo et al., 2020). For example, African women are expected to take care of and raise children while performing all domestic roles at home, which may hamper their career growth. South African women are also victims of such expectations, and this probably contributes to the low number of women who reach senior positions in institutions of higher learning in the country. More about women leader representation in South Africa is discussed next.

2.2.3 Women's representation in senior positions at South African HEIs

South Africa is not exempt from the underrepresentation of women leaders in senior positions in the country's HEIs. Though the number of women leaders is slowly increasing in these institutions, fewer women than men hold senior leadership positions. Various researchers (Bonzet & Fink, 2019; Mayer & Oosthuizen, 2019; Herbst, 2020; Mankayi & Cheteni, 2021) who study women leadership in HE have raised and recorded this. The senior role of Vice-Chancellor, in particular, is still dominated by male leaders. In 2019, women leaders 15% of Vice-Chancellor positions at South African public universities (Khumalo & Zhou, 2019). By 2020, about 19% of women were in this position (Herbst, 2020), showing a slight but still insignificant increase. The TVET sector, which forms part of HEIs in the country, also experiences male dominance in their leadership. A study by Bonzet and Fink (2019) which reported 17 female principals nationally out of possible 50 TVET principals. clearly shows a gender gap in TVET leadership in the country in 2019. Literature also shows that fewer women are in professor positions in South Africa. In 2018, women professors occupied only 27.5% of a total of 2218 professor positions (Herbst, 2020). This is a big gap. Hence, the existing gender gaps in senior positions at many universities in South Africa are indirectly responsible for female underrepresentation, as a professorship is required as part of the promotion requirements to a leadership position.

The above statistics on the representation of women leaders in senior positions show a clear gap between male and female leaders in institutions of higher learning, globally. This means that women remain in the lower and middle leadership ranks,



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

which is a challenge and a sign of inequality in the workplace. A similar concern was raised by Khwela et al. (2020), who argue that women still occupy the lower and middle levels in institutions of higher learning. This is despite their desire for these positions and the effort they have made to improve their capabilities to qualify for senior positions. For example (as discussed previously), although many women in the USA have improved their qualifications to be considered for promotion to senior leadership (Longman et al., 2019; Cavanaugh, 2020), they remain at the lower levels of leadership. Most countries have however implemented measures to improve female representation and gender equality at work. They have introduced and put in place legislation and policies to challenge the status quo. Next, I discuss some of these pieces of legislation from a number of selected countries.

2.3 Legislation aimed at addressing gender gaps in the workplace

This broad theme deals with measures in terms of legislation and policies to address gender gaps and promote women leaders in some of the countries discussed under the previous theme. It shows that though these countries battle with gender equality in senior positions at HEIs, they have put measures in place to address this challenge.

2.3.1 International legislation

The UK, Australia, and Vietnam are among the countries with measures/policies in place to promote gender equality at work. One of the established initiatives in these countries, the Athena SWAN (Scientific Women's Academic Network) Charter (O'Connor, 2019), was initiated in the UK in 2005 and aims at promoting gender equality in academia (Xiao et al., 2020; Westoby et al., 2021). Practices in line with this Charter have also been adopted by other countries such as Ireland and Australia (Suresh et al., 2018). The Athena SWAN Charter serves as a mechanism for HEIs to commit themselves to the advancement of women's careers in academia (Westoby et al., 2021). Though initially the focus was on women's academics in STEMM (science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine) subjects, the practice of the Charter has since extended to all disciplines, including non-academic careers, and now aims at advancing and progressing women in their career and leadership (O'Connor, 2019;



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Bhopa, 2020). The Athena SWAN requires HEIs to commit themselves to ten principles for supporting, empowering and enabling women (Suresh et al., 2018). As part of this initiative, institutions that demonstrate progress in women's career advancement are awarded gold, silver or bronze status (Bhopa, 2020). This encourages them to be intentional about promoting gender equality. Though the Charter is a good initiative and a sign of dedication towards women leadership, its principles have not been reached as there are still fewer women than men in senior positions in countries that support this initiative (the UK and Australia) (see Section 2.2). This means that, despite positive progress, the initiative has not materialised as expected in advancing women to senior positions.

In addition to Athena SWAN, Australia also passed the Sex Discrimination Act in 1984, in order to improve equality between males and females at work (Mate et al., 2018). Implementation of the Act resulted in women getting recognition in terms of opportunities and receiving services that they had not received before the passing of the Act, according to Mate et al. (2018). The services included better access to contraception, healthcare, education and support for working mothers (e.g. child care and flexible working arrangements) (Mate et al., 2018). Although the Act resulted in some improvements, it has not led to women receiving equal leadership and the same senior position opportunities as men. According to Mate et al. (2018), women remain a minority in these positions. Moreover, Australia has introduced Gender Mainstreaming, a conceptual framework for existing policy approaches in local HEIs (O'Connor, 2019) that requires HEIs to put in place a Working Group for Equal Opportunity (O'Connor, 2019). All these initiatives show that countries are aware of gender inequalities in the workplace and have intentions and measures to address them.

Vietnam also has laws to reduce gender inequality in its higher education institutions. For example, the Gender Equality Law, passed by the government in 2006 and having taken effect in July 2007 (Maheshwari & Nayak, 2020), intends to improve gender equality, promote equal opportunities between women and men, and advance women in the workplace (Maheshwari & Nayak, 2020). Though this legislation has resulted in

positive results and an increased representation of women in leadership, women remain fewer in senior positions in Vietnam (Maheshwari & Nayak, 2020).

2.3.2 Legislation on the African continent

In Africa, countries have apparently taken similar initiatives as the international countries discussed above to address gender gaps in the workplace. They adopted legislation or policies, and designated people in certain positions to fight gender inequality at work. For example, Ghana implemented several initiatives to address gender gaps in the workplace. This includes the establishment of a Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs in 2001, which was tasked with planning and coordinating policy aimed at supporting women and children, and monitoring progress on this (Ayentimi et al., 2020). In 2004, Ghana established a National Gender and Children's Policy (NGCP) to further strengthen the national development process by focusing on improving women's and children's economic, social and political conditions (Ayentimi et al., 2020). In 2015, the country formulated a National Gender Policy aimed at achieving gender equality and women empowerment (Republic of Ghana, 2015). This policy provides broad guidelines, strategies and the required institutional framework for achieving gender equality and introducing mechanisms for women's empowerment (Republic of Ghana, 2015). Moreover, Ghana has a National Action Plan (NAP) in place to enhance women's leadership and comply with the UN Security Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (Ayentimi et al., 2020). These initiatives show the extent to which the country has gone in trying to support women and improve gender equality. However, despite these intentional and extensive initiatives, Ghana – like most sub-Saharan countries – still has fewer women than men in senior and professoriate positions. Ghana was recently ranked number 10 out of 30 Sub-Saharan countries in Africa for successfully reducing the Gender Equity gap (Ayentimi et al., 2020). This suggests a considerable improvement with regard to women advancing to senior positions in Ghana; yet, regardless of all the initiatives, women's representation in senior positions in the country remains a challenge.

The Ethiopian government also put various national, regional and international initiatives and policies in place to improve gender equality in the workplace and



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

eliminate gender gaps (Ademe & Singh, 2016; Semela et al., 2020). This includes the establishment of a Ministry of Women's Affairs to promote Ethiopia's commitment to the UN Millennium Development Goals, its Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP), its Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines, and the implementation of various affirmative actions in education and employment (Ademe & Singh, 2016). These measures focus on opening more opportunities for women's employment and political participation by 2015, thus reducing gender inequality in education (Ademe & Singh, 2016). Ethiopia furthermore adopted an affirmative action programme as part of its initiative to fight gender inequality and discrimination against women. This strategy is applied during the recruitment, selection, employment, and promotion of academic staff members (Semela et al., 2020). According to Semela et al. (2020) Ethiopian women have noted the positive contribution of this affirmative action in their appointments and the fact that it gives them a slight advantage (5%) during application for employment in competitive positions. This is a minor but welcomed positive impact. However, a challenge remains as women occupy fewer senior positions in Ethiopia, as presented in Theme 1 in Section 2.2.2. Ademe and Singh (2016) argue that contributors to poor women leader representation in Ethiopia involves the various roles and responsibilities of women, violence against women, lack of education, etc.

2.3.3 South African legislation

South Africa has introduced several initiatives to address gender inequality and establish equal opportunities in the workplace. This includes the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (108 of 1996)*, which is the supreme law of the country, and other legislations/acts such as the *Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998)*, the *Higher Education Act (101 of 1997)*, and the *Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill (2013)*. The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (108 of 1996)* rebukes unfair treatment and discrimination of any sort and promotes equality. The Constitutional values include achieving equality, non-racialism and non-sexism (Republic of South Africa, 1996). This means no one should be discriminated against based on gender for any position, including leadership. Also, everyone should get equal opportunities and be treated fairly in pursuit of those opportunities.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

To support these Constitutional values, the country has the *Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998*, which also promotes equality, equal opportunities, and fair treatment in the workplace (Republic of South Africa, 1998). The government earlier introduced the *Higher Education Act (101 of 1997)*, aimed at addressing and redressing past discrimination and ensuring equal access to and representation in the HE sector (Republic of South Africa, 1997). Lastly, the *Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill of 2013* is in place to ensure the implementation of measures aimed at achieving 50% representation and meaningful participation of women in positions of power (Republic of South Africa, 2013).

Although these initiatives show that South Africa has measures to empower women and promote equal gender representation at work, many sectors, including the HE sector, are still far from having 50% women representation in senior positions. This means that, though these laws have brought about some transformation (Bonzet & Frick, 2019), not much has materialised towards addressing the issue of women's progression to senior leadership positions. Men remain the majority in senior positions in South African institutions of higher learning (Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021).

The overall picture is that many countries have measures in place and show commitment to women's empowerment and addressing gender inequalities in the workplace and leadership. However, in practice, the struggle against gender inequality persists. This implies that there are certain barriers making it difficult for women to acquire senior positions. Some of the identified barriers are the lack of support for women leaders, the absence of role models, a lack of mentoring, and the prevalence of a gendered organisational culture. These factors have been noted as limiters to women's advancement to higher leadership positions in HE sector. Further discussion on these barriers follows in the next theme.

2.4 Barriers/challenges preventing women leaders from advancing to senior positions in HEIs

Various barriers that have made it difficult for women leaders to advance to senior leadership positions are documented in the literature. I will limit my discussion to seven barriers that touch on internal and external factors. Some are common barriers



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

experienced by women globally, with exceptional additions in African countries where patriarchal beliefs prescribe distinct gender roles and limit the expectations of women in those countries.

2.4.1 Gendered institutional culture

A gendered institutional culture in favour of masculine leadership and resulting in unequal treatment between male and female leaders has been noted as a barrier to women progressing to senior positions. Researchers (Mate et al., 2018; O'Connor, 2019; Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021; Cozza, 2022) argue that the culture and practices in certain institutions are not in favour of women and as a result affect and hinder the progress of women to leadership and senior positions. These institutions are referred to as gendered because they show unequal treatment to different genders, in favour of men. Mcilongo and Strydom (2021) therefore argue that inequality in gendered workplaces results in the unequal and unfair treatment of women. HEIs are also known as gendered institutions because of the culture that still shows male dominance in positions of power (Mate et al., 2018).

The culture and practices in HEIs favour masculine leadership and practices, leading to gender bias against women leaders (Coleman, 2020; Herbst, 2020). This culture and practice may result in women leaders feeling unqualified for such positions or pressured to borrow masculine practices so that they may be accepted and fit into the masculine culture. It may also compel women leaders to adopt a false identity when coming to the workplace, thus putting unnecessary pressure on them. Furthermore, some women feel pressurised to work twice as hard as their male counterparts to prove themselves and earn approval and respect (Maheshwari & Nayak, 2020; Mankayi & Cheteni, 2021). According to Madsen and Longman (2020), the lack of women's advancement to leadership and senior positions in many institutions is a result of the prevailing organisational culture. Working in gendered institutions therefore remains a challenge for women leaders. This confirms the view of Chitsamatanga et al. (2018) who suggested that institutional culture can be a disadvantage to women.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

2.4.2 Lack of suitable development

One of the most notable barriers to women leaders' advancement to senior positions is the lack of suitable development. Women leaders do not receive the necessary preparation and training that will assist them to master the skills and knowledge that are necessary for them to advance to senior leadership positions. The literature suggests that there have been very limited opportunities aimed at the development of women leaders (Waheed & Nishan, 2018). This lack of leadership development then leaves women unprepared for leadership and struggling to progress to senior positions. Jernigan et al. (2020) agree that the lack of appropriate leadership development could result in career stagnation and women's lack of progress in the institution. In addition to the lack of development, HEIs do not have policies that are focused on, mandate, guide, and promote development for women leaders (Nyoni & He, 2019; Gandhi & Sen, 2020). This means that the development of women leaders is not given the special attention that it deserves. The absence of policies geared toward women's leadership development further limits their chances to advance to senior positions, as such policies could play a significant role in mandating the preparation and development of women to such positions (Nyoni & He, 2019).

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that some countries like Saudi Arabia, Vietnam and Australia have introduced training and workshops for women (Parker et al., 2018; Alghofaily, 2019; Mate et al., 2018). Unfortunately, these workshops do not focus on how women can overcome barriers and reach senior positions. As a result, the lack of suitable development remains a barrier that hampers women's progression in career leadership.

2.4.3 Lack of support

Research shows that women leaders do not receive the necessary support in and outside their institutions, which hinders their progress to senior positions. Various scholars (Waheed & Nishan, 2018; Longman et al., 2018; Moyo & Perumal, 2020) have raised this as a barrier to women leaders' career growth and advancement in leadership. Longman et al. (2018) also reported limited support for women leaders in HE, based on the views of study participants who indicated a lack of support for women aspiring to leadership positions in HEIs. This barrier that women face has even led to

some losing courage for leadership in these institutions (Longman et al., 2018). This is a challenge because women leaders need people who will guide, support and encourage them as they pursue senior positions. Coleman (2020) argues that a supportive work culture inspires and encourages women who aspire to leadership and senior positions. The lack of such culture therefore discourages them from pursuing leadership positions and thus reduces the number of women in these positions.

2.4.4 Gender stereotyping and discrimination

Gender stereotyping emerges from the literature as one of the main barriers preventing women to succeed in leadership. Literature (Saleem & Ajmal, 2018; Coleman, 2020; Mankayi & Cheteni, 2021) suggests that gender stereotyping and discrimination against women impede women's leadership success. Moyo and Perumal (2020) agree that gender stereotyping restricts women's growth and advancement in their careers, while Khwela et al. (2020) claim that gender discrimination and stereotyping hinder the progression of women to senior positions. There seems to be consensus on the view that women face gender stereotypes and discrimination because of their gender.

Some of the discrimination against women leaders (based on the stereotypes) is that they are soft, emotional, feminine, and less capable than men (Maheshwari & Nayak, 2020; Mankayi & Cheteni, 2021). The findings by Mankayi and Cheteni (2021) reveal that women are seen as weak and ineffective, while Bonzet and Frick (2019) add that women are seen as too emotional to handle leadership positions. These unproven stereotypes negatively affect them by creating false ideas about women leaders. It contributes to some women leaders' lack of self-confidence and even being discouraged to pursue senior positions (Herbst, 2020). Actually, low self-esteem and lack of confidence have been noted as factors that reduce the number of women who attempt senior positions (Turner-Moffatt, 2019; Moyo & Perumal, 2020). Hence, this is one of the contributors to the low number of women represented in senior positions.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

2.4.5 Balance between family–work life

Maheshwari and Nayak (2020) and Mankayi and Cheteni (2021) agree that women in academia find it difficult to strike a balance between their work and personal life, and this hinders their career success. The demanding duties of an academic career, including high teaching, research, postgraduate student supervision, and leadership (Brabazon & Schulz, 2018; Waheed & Nishan, 2018; Maheshwari & Nayak, 2020) must be balanced with house chores and responsibilities. A challenge in balancing the demanding duties of work and personal life is quite understandable, as many academics – also men – struggle to balance the many demands of their career (teaching, supervision, research, and community service) (Nicklin & Segool, 2022). In their personal lives, women often have to cope with additional demands and perform certain roles as they are trusted with domestic and family responsibilities at home. Some of these responsibilities, especially for married women, are childcare and household activities (Nyoni & He, 2019; Nicklin & Segool, 2022). Single women may have just as many family responsibilities, as some are heading families as single women. These challenges can affect females in their career achievements as they have to divide their attention between demanding household duties and career responsibilities.

The study by Maheshwari and Nayak (2020) shows that balancing work and family responsibilities was one of the biggest challenges that women in their study had to overcome. These women were found to be not productive, and as expected, this resulted in limited career progress (Maheshwari & Nayak, 2020). It is a challenge for women to satisfy all the demanding areas of their life, their career, and family, as all these demand time for success. Hence, most women find it difficult to succeed in their careers while also having a healthy family life (Parker et al., 2018). A significant hindrance for women in Africa and South Africa results from a patriarchal culture that places a huge demand on women to perform their house duties. Mankayi and Cheteni (2021) argue that work–home conflict is a common challenge faced by women in leadership in Africa, where women are expected to fulfil many family responsibilities. This may hinder their career success and leadership achievements. For some women, this negatively affects both work and personal life (Nicklin & Segool, 2022), meaning that none of the two succeeds or is healthy. Hence, there is a need to intervene and

support women leaders so that they can have both – a successful work life and a healthy personal life.

2.4.6 Limited mentoring

An important barrier to women's success in their careers and leadership is the lack of or limited mentorship. It seems that mentoring for women leaders merely exists on paper and is limited in practice at many institutions of higher learning (Chitsamatanga et al., 2018; Elias, 2018). Cahill (2021) suggests that there is a lack of mentorship and positive role models for women leaders. Additionally, Espino and Zambrana (2019) discovered that the women involved in their study (conducted in the US) were not receiving any form of mentorship in practice and that the absence of such support limited the career progress of these women.

A study conducted at a South African university revealed a similar lack of practical mentoring for women. This study conducted by Chitsamatanga et al. (2018) focused on mentoring for senior and junior female academics in this university and found that most of the women who participated in the study were not mentored in a practical sense. This indicates limitations when it comes to the implementation of mentoring at South African universities. The limited practice of mentoring despite all its noted benefits for women's leadership development is a challenge, as this hinders the progression of women to senior leadership positions (Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2019; Khwela et al., 2020).

2.4.7 Lack of suitable mentors

The lack of suitable mentors available to mentor women leaders remains a big challenge. Since there are few women leaders in senior positions who can mentor and be role models to other women who aspire to these positions, the vicious circle is simply perpetuated (Bărbuceanu, 2019; Coleman, 2020). As has repeatedly been found in the literature, the underrepresentation of women in senior leadership results in too few women who can serve as role models and be mentors for other women leaders (Taylor, 2019). In other words, the underrepresentation of women leaders in senior positions reduces the number of women who have travelled the journey and

succeeded, and who can share their experiences and expertise with those who aspire to reach the same level. Hence, HEIs need to consider the opening of positions of senior leadership to women leaders, as they will serve as role models for other women leaders who will be encouraged and motivated as they see a possibility of themselves reaching that level (Longman, 2018). Adopting such a strategy is crucial in the struggle to address gender imbalances in senior leadership at HEIs.

All the barriers experienced by women leaders and those pursuing senior positions in HE cannot be discussed in this chapter due to the limited scope of this thesis. They include challenges such as women's leadership resistance, lack of appropriate networks, and lack of motivation, as raised by various scholars (Waheeda & Nishan, 2018; Bonzet & Frink, 2019; Taylor, 2019; Toni & Moodle, 2019; Gandhi & Sen, 2020; Herbst, 2020; Maheshwari & Nayak, 2020; Moosa & Coetzee, 2020). These barriers perpetuate the culture of male dominance in senior leadership positions. Women leaders may end up losing hope and stop trying for these positions, due to repeated discouragement (Bonzet & Frink, 2019).

Nonetheless, despite all the odds, there are still some women who succeed in leadership and senior leadership positions. Next, I discuss two enablers of women leaders.

2.5 Enablers for women to leadership and senior positions

Different enablers that assist women leaders to reach leadership and senior positions include sponsorship, social identity, networking and mentoring (Scheepers et al., 2018; Ayyala et al., 2019; Coleman, 2020). Among these, the two notable enablers for women's leadership access and success in academia are networking and mentoring.

2.5.1 Networking

Networking has been recommended in the literature as one of the strategies that enhance the career of women leaders in academia. It seems that academic networks open opportunities for women leaders to grow and succeed in academia. Madsen and Longman (2020) argue that both internal and external networks contribute positively to women's career progression and success. Networking also allows women leaders



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

to learn and improve their administrative skills, gain tenure, and advance their careers (Ali & Rasheed, 2021). Additionally, women can overcome isolation in masculine cultures as they are introduced by their mentors to academic networks in their field (Bridges et al., 2021). These networks serve as a safe space for women leaders to receive emotional and professional support (Coleman, 2020). Furthermore, women support one another through the peer networks they develop and so they get access to other support structures. Women leaders are also developed professionally through networks (Coleman, 2020), as they learn from the experienced and knowledgeable people they encounter in such network. The contribution of networking towards the growth of women leaders is notable, and hence networking is considered a recognised enabler for women leaders. Nonetheless, according to Gandhi and Sen (2020), women find it difficult to access male networks and in most cases, mentors have to assist women to access these networks. Mentoring is therefore regarded as an important enabler of women's leadership success and it is briefly discussed below.

2.5.2 Mentoring

Mentoring has been noted to be particularly beneficial to women in assisting them to succeed in their careers and leadership (Coleman, 2020; Maheshwari & Nayak, 2022). This may be because mentoring contributes to increased self-confidence and productivity, and also builds competence in women (Banwell et al., 2019; Koontz et al., 2019). Hence, its recognition as an enabler for women's leadership success. More about mentoring and its contribution to women's career and leadership success is discussed in the next theme.

2.6 Mentoring women leaders in HE

In this section, I discuss key debates around the mentorship of women leaders and the role and contribution of mentorship in the advancement of women to senior positions in HEIs. I also present factors that constrain the mentorship of women and some approaches to mentorship. I do however start by sharing how mentoring is understood and defined in the literature in order to bring clarity to the concept and its use.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

2.6.1 Conceptualisation of mentoring

There is no single agreed-upon definition of mentoring. Different scholars have conceptualised mentoring in various ways. Hence, Crisp and Alvarado-Young (2018) suggest that there may be as many definitions of mentoring as the number of studies that have been conducted on this phenomenon. Nonetheless, despite several explanations of what mentoring is, in the main, the common understanding is that it is a developmental relationship between a more skilled and experienced individual (mentor) who assists a novice and a less skilled colleague (mentee or protégé) in developing their career. I gathered this understanding by referring to different scholars (Chitsamatanga et al., 2018; Crisp & Alvarado-Young, 2018; Disch, 2018; Mondisa, 2018; Briscoe & Freeman, 2019; Bărbuceanu, 2019; O'Connor, 2019) whose similar definitions of mentoring could be consolidated in this manner. For example, Yip and Walker (2021) described mentoring as a relationship between an experienced person who assists a less experienced person to develop, grow and advance in their career. Bărbuceanu (2019) explained mentoring to mean a developmental relationship involving an older, more experienced adult and a younger protégé where the more experienced provides ongoing guidance. O'Connor (2019) shared the same sentiment in defining mentoring as a relationship between a more experienced mentor and a younger, less experienced individual, who helps the younger person to develop their career. All these definitions have a similar take on what mentoring is and clearly show that the focus and the emphasis are on the development of a novice colleague by an experienced colleague.

These various definitions of mentoring seem to focus on the explanation of mentorship based on the development of a junior person, yet mentoring also applies to the development of senior academics. This may be because mentoring is usually provided to novice academics/early career academics (ECAs) (Lunsford et al., 2018). Looking at mentorship from a leadership perspective, Khumalo and Zhou (2019) defined mentoring as a relationship between two or more people in which the mentor is having sufficient experience and provides all kinds of support needed by the person who has the insufficient experience but high potential to become a good leader. The latter definition is more applicable to this study as it focuses on the mentorship of leaders.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

However, Khumalo and Zhou (2019) make no specifications for women leaders in particular.

Another common understanding of a mentorship relationship in the literature is that it can be formal or informal. Various authors (Banwell et al., 2019; Bărbuceanu, 2019; Espino & Zambrana, 2019; Palmer & Jones, 2019; Roets et al., 2019; Bhopa, 2020; Ali & Rasheed, 2021) suggested that a mentoring relationship can be formal or informal and described what each type of the mentorship relationship means. Ali and Rasheed (2021) added that the formal mentorship has some level of institutional involvement and support. A similar notion was shared by Banwell et al. (2019) who argued that formal mentoring is planned and receives institutional support. This type of mentorship will then be carefully planned and structured, and involve planned activities and mentorship programmes. These may include regular meetings, training sessions and assigned mentors, followed by reflection on the mentorship (Palmer & Jones, 2019). The views of the different scholars show a similar understanding of formal mentorship.

Informal mentorship on the other hand has been noted as a relationship that happens without intervention, arrangements and the support of the institution (Bărbuceanu, 2019). It is the opposite of formal mentorship and suggests that the relationship just happens organically – there are no programmes or follow-up on this mentorship. Banwell et al. (2019) therefore define informal mentorship as a relationship that happens accidentally between people who meet through informal engagements and who have mutual interests.

At this stage, there is no agreement in the literature on which of the two mentoring relationships (formal and informal) is more beneficial and impactful. However, there is an agreement in terms of understanding mentoring relationships as either formal or informal, and that both in their way have a positive impact on developing women leaders (Ali & Rasheed, 2021). In my study, mentoring was used to mean a formal or informal professional learning relationship between a mentor and mentee (woman leader), including peers, leading to professional development, career growth, success and advancement to senior positions. This is the definition that drove this research.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

2.6.2 The importance of women having a mentor

Definitions of mentoring in Section 2.6.1 make it clear that mentoring is a relationship in which there occurs some empowerment of the mentee by the mentor, leading to career growth. This endorses the importance of having a mentor. Actually, the importance of mentoring and of women having mentors has repeatedly been recognised and raised in the literature (Chitsamatanga et al., 2018; Briscoe & Freeman, 2019; Khumalo & Zhou, 2019; Calinaud et al., 2021). The findings of a study by Calinaud et al. (2021) show that women leaders acknowledge the role of a mentor in their careers. Many of their study participants attested to the fact that having a mentor who motivates and acts as a critical friend played a pivotal role and made a positive contribution to their professional and personal development (Calinaud et al., 2021). Thus, women leaders learn from their mentors and receive the necessary support and guidance, which empowers them for their career growth and progress. Briscoe and Freeman (2019) also found that participants saw the role of a mentor in their career as a crucial element that contributed to their growth and success in leadership careers. Participants involved in their study acknowledged mentoring as having played an important role in their preparation for and attainment of the position of president (Briscoe & Freeman, 2019). These findings clearly show similar views and acknowledge the important role of mentors in the career and leadership success of women leaders. To conclude, Khumalo and Zhou (2019) argue that mentors play a key role in the career of women pursuing leadership positions in higher education, as they can assist women to venture out of their comfort zone. Mentorship indeed benefits and contributes positively towards the development and growth of women leaders in their careers and leadership.

2.6.3 Benefits of mentorship

Mentorship holds several recorded benefits for the mentor, the mentee, as well as the institution where these individuals are based. Some benefits associated with mentoring for the mentee include greater career satisfaction, a better fit in a career specialisation, planning and achievement of specific career goals, improved productivity, a better balance between personal and professional life, and impactful professional development (Disch, 2018; Bhopa, 2020). This emphasises how



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

beneficial mentorship is for women. The benefit of learning to balance work and personal life is an important contribution of mentorship, because a lack of balance between work and personal life has been raised as one of the major barriers to women's success in their careers and leadership. Furthermore, through mentorship the mentees are led to develop new networks and contacts, while gaining access to resources, increased confidence, a better understanding of organisational politics, a higher promotion rate, and access to role models (Disch, 2018; Bhopal, 2020). These are important benefits, as some of these elements have been raised as barriers to the success of women leaders. This means that mentoring empowers women to overcome the barriers that impede their success.

For the mentor, some benefits include becoming recognised as an expert and leader in the field, gaining exposure to new ideas and skills, reflecting on own goals to further advance their career, and developing leadership and communication skills (Abdelhamid et al., 2020). In addition, literature shows that mentors gain creativity, more enthusiasm for their careers, recognition, and feelings of fulfilment from mentoring others (Banwell et al., 2019). This shows that the mentorship relationship is a two-way street that leads to learning for both the mentor and mentee. It attests to the belief held by Turner-Moffat (2019) and Dorner et al. (2020), namely that both the mentor and mentee learn and grow from each other as they engage in the mentorship relationship.

The institution also benefits from the mentorship taking place within its parameters by having employees who are more satisfied and productive, enjoying improved staff retention and greater collaboration among employees, and gaining a better reputation (Disch, 2018; Bhopa, 2020). These benefits clearly show that it is not only the mentee who profits from being mentored, but the mentor and the institution positively gain from the mentorship. However, for the mentorship relationship to be effective and beneficial, both the mentor and mentee have to contribute to the relationship and support each other's growth. Both parties must show commitment, trust, loyalty, and respect for successful mentoring to take place (Briscoe & Freeman, 2019; Kaplan, 2019; Dorner et al., 2020). The success of mentorship is clearly reliant on the contribution of those



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

involved, and from this team effort mutual learning occurs (Dorner et al. 2020), leading to mentorship benefits.

2.6.3.1 Benefits of mentorship for women leaders

Mentorship for women leaders has been highly recognised and recommended. This is based on the numerous benefits that it has for their career and personal growth and success. These include success in challenging assignments, a better understanding of workplace norms and expectations, and emotional support (Read et al., 2020). Moreover, mentoring provides professional development, and career and psychosocial support for women (Stuckey et al., 2019). Psychosocial support may include helping women to cope with stress in their roles and encouraging them to persevere (Li et al., 2018). This is important for women as they are regarded as emotional beings who struggle with a lack of emotional intelligence.

According to Banwell et al. (2019), women who are mentored receive promotions in their careers as well as higher salaries, and they report less stress and greater career satisfaction. They also interact, learn and support each other (Durbin et al., 2020). Moreover, mentorship can help prepare women to lead in masculine organisational contexts, while it also empowers them to overcome gender stereotypes about their leadership (Dashper, 2019; McGowan & Gil, 2022). These benefits show the substantial role that mentorship and mentors play in the career and leadership development of women. As a result, the contribution of mentorship to developing women leaders is of great value.

2.6.4 Role of mentors in developing women leaders

The role played by mentors in the development of women leaders cannot be overemphasised. Ferris and Waldron (2022), for instance, report a huge investment by mentors in supporting and developing women leaders. Some of the roles of mentors of women leaders include helping women to find effective methods of dealing with issues specific to gender, informing them about organisational politics of the academic environment and affirming their worth (Stuckey et al., 2019). They also provide emotional support and advice, nurture and give guidance on career plans, and help



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

solve personal life issues (Chitsamatanga et al., 2018; Mondisa, 2018; Bărbuceanu, 2019). Moreover, mentors develop their female mentees and provide feedback to them, which contributes to their career growth (Chitsamatanga et al., 2018).

Most importantly, mentors of women leaders serve as role models (Joo et al., 2018; Bărbuceanu, 2019), which means that women leaders have someone to look up to as they work on building their leadership. In essence, this also means that a mentor must be a seasoned individual who is/has been successful in their career themselves and thus will have the skills and knowledge to share with the mentee. This clearly associates the mentoring role with transformational leadership as argued by Bodilenyana and Mooketsane (2019), who indicate that successful mentoring is associated with transformational leadership. The argument is that mentors engage in transformational leadership behaviour and practices as they mentor their mentees. Hence, they lead by example, motivate their followers and challenge them to work towards the achievement of their goals – which are some principles associated with transformational leadership. A more detailed discussion on transformational leadership is presented in Chapter three as part of the theoretical framework for this research.

2.6.5 Role and contribution of mentorship in the advancement of women leaders to senior positions in HE

In this section, I discuss how mentorship contributes to the advancement of women leaders to senior positions in HEIs. Mentorship has been widely noted as one of the successful strategies used to assist women to break through the glass ceiling (Briscoe & Freeman; 2019; Dashper, 2019; Banwell et al., 2019; Cozza, 2022; Ferris & Waldron, 2022), as it enables more women to progress to senior management positions. Reis and Grady (2020) argue that a mentorship is a helpful tool in supporting women who pursue senior positions. Additionally, research by Khumalo and Zhou (2019) proves that mentoring significantly contributes to the advancement of women to senior positions, both in public and private institutions. Below I discuss six



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

components of mentorship that contribute to women's advancement to senior positions in HE.

2.6.5.1 Access to role models

Women leaders who have been mentored have someone to look up to as a role model. This means that they have role models who serve as mentors and vice versa. These mentor role models help them to navigate academia and leadership in the HE sector. Crisp and Alvarado-Young (2021) agree and argue that mentoring for leadership development involves a long-term, one-on-one process of role modelling. Reis and Grady (2020) also suggest that mentors help mentees negotiate career decisions; in other words, they guide women to structure their career goals and support them in the achievement of those goals. This shows role modelling.

The findings of a study by Delgado and Allen (2019) also attest to the fact that mentors serve as role models to their mentees, as women participants in the study had mentors who served as their role models. These role models supported them, opened up leadership opportunities, and portrayed suitable professional conduct (Delgado & Allen, 2019). This facilitated their career growth and advancement to senior positions (Delgado & Allen, 2019), and shows that mentors generally serve as role models to women leaders and guide them to senior positions. Keeping the role model mentor in the eye helps women leaders to navigate their career and access leadership opportunities.

2.6.5.2 Suitable professional development

The underlying reality of women's underrepresentation in senior leadership across the globe introduces a crucial need to capacitate women for leadership to enable their advancement to senior positions. Elias (2018) and Coleman (2020) suggest that the development of women leaders should be facilitated, especially for women who have a desire for and are pursuing senior positions, since it enables their growth and professional learning from more experienced leaders. Chitsamatanga et al. (2018) and Akpey-Mensah and Muchie (2019) argue that mentoring allows for women's relevant and individualised professional development, based on their needs. This may be



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

because women who have mentors are developed by experts who know and understand them and provide relevant development. Such tailor-made professional development by mentors can assist, support and guide women leaders in academia on where to improve their practice, and it can equip them with knowledge and skills for teaching and research (Chitsamatanga et al., 2018; Akpey-Mensah & Muchie, 2019). This is important as these components form part of the features of a successful academic career. Mentoring is therefore recognised as one of the effective strategies in developing women leaders for senior positions and successful careers and leadership.

International studies in different sectors confirm that mentoring leads to the professional and leadership development of women. For example, findings of a study by Briscoe and Freeman (2019) showed mentoring as a contributory factor to women's leadership development. Their research, which explored the role of mentoring in developing and preparing women leaders for the position of presidency in the US (Briscoe & Freeman, 2019), revealed a positive contribution of mentoring to women's leadership development. With similar findings, a study conducted in Canada by Banwell et al. (2019) on the role of mentorship in developing and advancing women as sports coaches, showed that through mentorship, women learn work-life balance, effective communication, self-awareness, and an increased sense of competence as a leader. This speaks to women learning more about their career roles and improving their practice. Lastly, research focusing on women in the hospitality industry also confirmed the role of mentorship in their professional development as the female participants learned to balance work and family, which contributed to their positive career advancement (Calinaud et al., 2021). To summarise, mentoring can be used for the development of women in different sectors, and it has a positive impact on women's professional development.

2.6.5.3 *Mentoring as support for women leaders*

Mentoring has been acknowledged as the most effective way to support women leaders. This is very important, as women need support in their leadership journey to grow and advance towards senior positions. Without support, it is difficult for women



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

to achieve success. Mentorship thus opens an opportunity for women leaders to be supported by experienced advisors. Hence, Abalkhail (2019) points out that mentoring is a support strategy for women leaders through which they can receive the required assistance. Banwell et al. (2019) argue that mentoring provides women with support in their career, as well as psychologically and socially. Thus, without support, women may be reluctant to pursue senior leadership positions (Abalkhail, 2019). To rephrase, mentoring plays a crucial role in supporting and encouraging women to normalise ownership of senior leadership, which should then be encouraged in their leadership practice. Evidence from research (Briscoe & Freeman, 2019; Cozza, 2022) shows that women leaders who were successful and advanced in leadership had received support through mentoring. Thus, Cozza (2022) argues that no matter how successful women may be in academia, they still find it difficult to climb the ladder to senior leadership if they do not have support. This shows the importance of the support that women leaders receive through mentorship and suggests that a lack of such support is a barrier to women's growth and progression.

2.6.5.4 *Mentoring for networking skills*

An important skill that women learn through mentoring is networking. They learn to create effective and beneficial networks for their career and leadership growth (McGowan & Gil, 2022). Networking plays a crucial role in the academic career and leadership, and it contributes to successful leadership. As argued by Turner-Moffat (2019), mentorship allows women leaders to build the necessary networks, which contribute greatly to their success in leadership and advancement. This shows the importance of this skill for the success of women leaders in HE, as mentoring equips them with the necessary skills to establish strategic networks that will have a positive impact on their leadership practice. Mentors also introduce women leaders to their own networks and to other important networks in the HE field. This has been noted and raised by Dashper (2018) and Reis and Grady (2020) who agree that women who have mentors gain access to key networks that enhance their career success.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

2.6.5.5 Career progression

Mentorship has been identified as an enabler for career progress and advancement of women leaders to senior leadership positions. Moreover, mentoring in academia often leads to improved performance and productivity at full potential (Chitsamatanga et al., 2018), which subsequently leads to career success and progression. Research conducted in different countries (List & Sorcinelli, 2018; Khumalo & Zhou, 2019; Taylor, 2019; Cozza, 2022) shows that women leaders who are mentored are likely to progress in their career, receive a promotion, be successful in leadership and advance to senior positions. This may be a result of capacity development and support that occurs during mentorship. The women leaders are likely to gain the necessary skills through mentoring, as they work with a skilled mentor who trains and develops them for senior leadership in their areas of need. Cozza (2022) argues that mentoring assists women to overcome barriers and to progress to senior positions. Reis and Grady (2020) who investigated mentoring experiences of eight women presidents in the US, established that women who are mentored progress in their careers, they can overcome barriers and advance to senior positions. The women presidents acknowledged and mentioned mentoring as a tool that assisted them to succeed in leadership (Reis & Grady, 2020). What is also noteworthy is that women who have been mentored continue to perform well, even long after their mentorship has ended (Dashper, 2019). This means that mentorship has long-lasting positive outcomes.

2.6.5.6 Improved self-confidence

According to Carter et al. (2020), some women fear pursuing senior positions and promotion to professoriate positions because of their lack of self-confidence. Through mentorship, women gain the confidence they need to pursue these positions. They also gain courage and see themselves as capable of assuming higher leadership positions (Long, 2018; Turner-Moffat, 2019). This suggests that since women leaders improve their abilities through the development and support of the mentor, their self-confidence is enhanced. Dashper (2018) attests to this in a study where she found that women involved in a formal mentorship programme gained confidence and improved their networking abilities, leading to several promotions, new jobs, and new businesses. A similar study in South Africa, Sibiya (2019) found that women leaders



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

at an HEI who had been involved in a local mentorship programme called the Accelerated Academic Mentoring Programme (AAMP) were more effective in their duties, they acquired leadership skills, and they progressed in their career and leadership positions after the mentoring. These findings reflect not only the importance of support for women leaders to grow and advance in leadership, but also the contribution of mentoring to the advancement of women leaders to senior positions.

The discussion above clearly shows that mentoring contributes to women's leadership development, support, and self-confidence, leading to career productivity and success and thus advancement to senior positions. In addition to the six outcomes discussed above, mentoring also enables women to have access to needed resources, empowers them to function effectively in a masculine-oriented institution, and promotes their well-being and professional identity (Dashper, 2018; Briscoe & Freeman, 2019; Stuckey et al., 2019). Although the importance of mentoring women leaders is indisputable and holds many benefits, there is still a limited practice of mentoring in many HEIs (Calinaud et al., 2021). Where mentorship of women leaders in HE does exist, numerous challenges are associated with it, and these are discussed next.

2.6.6 Constraining factors in the mentorship of women leaders in HE

The constraining factors associated with mentoring women leaders in HEIs that are discussed below include resuming mentorship later in a career, the shortage of suitable mentors for women leaders, the lack of training for mentors, limited time for mentorship, and limited support for mentorship.

2.6.6.1 *Starting mentorship later in a career*

Starting with mentorship later in a career is noted as one of the barriers to women advancing to senior positions. Hence, it is recommended in the literature (Lunsford et al., 2018; Goerisch et al., 2019) that mentorship should start early and be part of all career stages. In support of this proposal, participants in the study by Read et al. (2020) reported being mentored later in their careers as a shortcoming of their mentorship. They associated the limited impact of their mentoring with their failure to commit to mentorship earlier in their career. They shared that this created problems



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

for them when they had to be part of and commit to a mentorship relationship late in their career (Read et al., 2020). Stuckey et al. (2019) attested to this and found that effective mentoring throughout an academic career was critical for it to be successful. These findings show the need of involving women in mentorship early in their careers and extending this to their senior career stages. This view is supported by Lunsford et al. (2018) who recommended that mentoring should involve those in senior positions also. Thus, mentoring should start from junior career stages and continue to senior levels. However, the limited availability of mentors may be a challenge to providing mentorship for women in all their career stages. This has been noted as one of the barriers to the mentorship of women leaders as is discussed next.

2.6.6.2 Shortage of suitable mentors

The lack of availability of enough mentors for women leaders has been presented in the literature as a barrier to women's leadership and advancement to senior positions (Bărbuceanu, 2019; Taylor, 2019; Mankayi & Cheteni, 2021). Researchers argue that too few mentors are available, suitable and willing to mentor other women (Bărbuceanu, 2019; Calinaud et al., 2021). Therefore, women struggle to have access to mentors – especially female mentors – as there are not enough women in senior positions who can serve as mentors. The research by Read et al. (2020) proves this, as women participants in their study reported that it is difficult to secure mentors in male-dominated sectors. Literature (Dhunpath et al., 2018; Palmer & Jones, 2019; Read et al., 2020; Cozza, 2022) shows that women experience challenges in locating mentors due to the limited number of women in senior positions at HEIs. This is a challenge, especially because having the right mentor determines the success and impact of mentorship. As argued by Abdelhamid et al. (2020), one of the crucial requirements for effective mentorship is finding the right mentor. If this fails, mentoring is likely not to be successful and beneficial.

Due to the scarcity of female mentors, a situation arises where women have either no mentors or largely male mentors (not that there is anything wrong with men mentoring women, as men can contribute much to the growth of women leaders). However, it seems that women are more comfortable with women mentors and can benefit more



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

from them, as the mentors are likely to have had similar experiences in their leadership journey (Palmer & Jones, 2019). It is assumed that women mentors will be in a better position to share with other women how to overcome the challenges they encounter in their attempt to reach senior positions (Abdelhamid et al., 2020). Having a male mentor might be limiting, as men probably had differing experiences in their journey towards senior positions. Taylor (2019) therefore argues that mentoring by male mentors has shortcomings and allows for limited role modelling.

There do, however, remain differing views in the literature as to who are more suitable mentors – males or females. Some authors argue that women-to-women mentoring is better and more beneficial for other women (Palmer & Jones, 2019; Abdelhamid et al., 2020) while others believe that male mentors are in a better position to support women to navigate the masculine context. Elias (2018) suggests that men should be included in mentoring women leaders as men occupy the space in senior positions and might be better positioned to help women navigate the system. Turner-Moffatt (2019) supports this view by arguing that the choice of a suitable mentor should not be based on gender. Mentors – whether male or female – should be empowered proper mentoring of women leaders regardless of gender differences. This may be a challenge though, because a lack of training for mentors is another impediment to mentorship.

2.6.6.3 Lack of training for mentors

The lack of training for mentors is among the barriers to effective mentorship. It gives rise to mentors having limited understanding and knowledge of mentoring, which results in poor mentorship. As stated by Mondisa (2018), mentors may be ineffective due to a lack of training in effective mentoring strategies. Thus, the need for training of mentors is imperative because, according to Dhunpath et al. (2018), mentoring is not inherited but a skill that needs to be learned, cultivated, and internalised. The training of mentors is therefore highly recommended (Lucey et al., 2018; Read et al., 2020). However, it remains unclear as to who should conduct the training and how it should be conducted, as there is limited discussion on this topic in the literature.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

2.6.6.4 Lack of time for mentorship

Academia in particular is demanding in nature as it comes with duties such as a high teaching load, postgraduate supervision, and regular research outputs. Adding mentoring duties to such a load may be seen as a burden to experienced academics who are expected to serve as mentors (Roets et al., 2019). Mentoring is also a time-consuming activity (Lucey et al., 2018) that requires much engagement between the mentor and mentee. As a result, time constraints will limit the effectiveness of the mentorship (Banwell et al., 2019). A study by Lachter and Ruland (2018) on the mentorship of students found that scheduling mentor-mentee meetings was difficult and mostly unfruitful. Finding suitable times for meetings between mentors and mentees proved to be a challenge. To address this barrier, e-mentoring was used where meetings occurred via online platforms such as texting, phone calls, email and Facebook (Lachter & Ruland, 2018). Since using these strategies has its own obstacles, meeting and having time for mentorship remain a challenge. A factor that contributes to this may be a lack of involvement and support from HE institutions, since there are no designated times allocated for the mentorship. This leaves those involved with no choice but to make time for their mentorship engagements.

2.6.6.5 Limited support for the mentorship

The lack of involvement, coordination and financial support by institutions limits the success of mentorship. Too little effort is made on the part of HEIs in encouraging and facilitating mentor-mentee relationships and sponsoring mentorship (Read et al., 2020). This limited support results in uncoordinated mentorship and haphazard allocation of mentors to the mentee. Thus, by default, any senior employees are taken as mentors, and so novices and women wrongly end up in the hands of senior employees who may have a negative attitude towards work and life (Bodilenyane & Mooketsane, 2019). This may result in unfruitful mentorship that does not consider the advancement of women leaders as a priority.

Other challenges associated with women mentoring for senior positions (besides those discussed above) include a lack of understanding between those involved, a lack of effort in the mentoring relationship, and different interests and characteristics of the persons involved in the mentorship relationship (Bodilenyane & Mooketsane,



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

2019; Read et al., 2020). All of these may lead to unsuccessful mentorship. Nonetheless, studies in different industries – including the HE sector – have found that mentoring contributes positively to women’s career growth, success and advancement to senior positions, despite such challenges. It remains unclear though as to how exactly women should be mentored. Below I share some of the suggested approaches to mentorship, but these are not necessarily specific to women.

2.6.7 Approaches to mentorship

My engagement with the literature led me to conclude that women are generally mentored informally (Bodilenyane & Mooketsana, 2019; Roets et al., 2019; Reis & Grady, 2020) and through peer mentorship. I therefore discuss three approaches to mentorship and peer mentorship as a form of mentoring.

2.6.7.1 Three approaches to mentorship

Mondisa (2018) suggests three mentoring approaches that African American mentors used to help their African American undergraduate protégés to persist and succeed in the STEM) fields. These approaches can also apply to other fields, including the mentorship of women leaders.

The first approach was *the familial mentoring approach* for advising the mentee. In this approach, African American mentors advised their mentees in the same manner that they would advise family members (Mondisa, 2018). Regarding the mentorship of women leaders, this means that mentors would advise women as if they were advising their family members – with their best interests at heart. In the second approach, mentors *give guidance and assist the mentee to obtain resources*. In this approach, mentors help their mentees understand the importance of developing a plan for their career, and they also direct them to resources that they may need for success in their academic career (Mondisa, 2018). This may include applying for and sourcing research funds for projects. This role is similar to transformational leadership where the leader challenges the mentee to have career goals and supports them to work toward the achievement of those goals. The third approach is *the empathic approach in relating with the mentee*, in which mentors use listening skills and empathy in



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

engaging with their mentees and pay attention to the individual needs of the mentee (Mondisa, 2018). Using this approach to mentor women leaders will imply that women are developed and assisted based on their individual needs. This practice also relates to transformational leadership where the mentor offers individualised attention and development to the mentee. (Transformational leadership is discussed in detail in Chapter three).

2.6.7.2 Peer mentorship

Peer mentorship emerges strongly from the literature as a strategy used in the mentorship of students and women leaders. A study by Ganfi Lachter and Ruland (2018) recorded the findings of peer mentorship of students by other students. The mentorship involved occupational therapy students who were involved in leadership development for a semester (Ganfi Lachter & Ruland, 2018). Students were matched with their mentors, they signed an agreement to participate, and were involved in mentorship activities for a semester (Ganfi Lachter & Ruland, 2018). The findings showed positive results of the mentorship and benefits for the mentor. There were significant enhancements in mentors' leadership skills, improved skills in building relationships, and greater desire and fulfilment in helping others (Ganfi Lachter & Ruland, 2018).

Peer mentorship can also be effective and beneficial for women leaders in that they may empower each other to be resilient in male-dominated sectors (Lane & Cobb-Roberts, 2022; McGowan & Gil, 2022). They may also share with one another strategies they have used to overcome barriers in their leadership and support one another to persist in leadership roles (Lane & Cobb-Roberts, 2022; McGowan & Gil, 2022). The results of a study on peer mentorship that involved six women leaders in academia showed leadership development, support and feedback, and career progress among these women (List & Sorcinelli, 2018). Thus, peer mentorship is one of the strategies used in the mentorship of women and it contributes towards women's leadership growth.

Research on women's leadership in HE, both internationally and in South Africa, continues to focus on the issue of underrepresentation of women in leadership, the



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

challenges that women experience as leaders, and the barriers that hamper them when trying to advance to senior leadership (Waheeda & Nishan, 2018; Nyoni & He, 2019; Gandhi & Sen, 2020; Moosa & Coetzee, 2020; Semele et al., 2020; Kuzhabekova & Almukhambetova, 2021). Limited research (Elias, 2018; Reis & Grady, 2020; Ferris & Waldron, 2022) has been conducted into strategies that are effective in assisting women to overcome these obstacles to succeed in their careers and leadership. In South Africa, where I conducted my study, research on women leaders has been noted to focus more on the challenges encountered by women leaders, their experiences, and their journey to leadership (Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2019; Khumalo & Zhao, 2019), with limited research on possible solutions to address such challenges. There is a clear gap in the literature on how women leaders can overcome these challenges and advance to senior positions in the country. This shortcoming was raised by Moosa and Coetzee (2020), who argue that the advancement of women in the higher education sector of developing countries is under-researched. The current study therefore aims to expand this limited body of knowledge. In addition, strategies that could be used in the mentorship of women leaders are shared.

So far, only a few studies have been conducted internationally and in South Africa on the mentoring experiences of women leaders. This concern was raised by Chitsamatanga et al. (2018) and Reis and Grady (2020) who argue that there is scant research on mentoring aimed at developing and advancing women leaders in leadership. Since most studies on mentorship have looked at the mentorship of students and early career academics, there is adequate evidence of research on that topic (Crisp & Alvarado-Young, 2018; Mondisa, 2018; Schriever & Grainger, 2019). However, this leaves room for more research focusing on the mentorship of women leaders. Some attempts in South Africa in this area focused on the influences and impact of mentoring, how mentoring can help women, and perceptions around mentoring (Chitsamatanga et al., 2018). Women's own narratives about their experience of mentorship are scarce. This study therefore shares the mentoring experiences of women leaders who occupy senior leadership positions at a South African university. It echoes the voices of these women leaders who have progressed in their leadership careers to senior positions through the support of a mentor. The



findings of my study add to the limited body of knowledge currently available about mentoring experiences as shared by women leaders in senior positions at South African universities.

Regarding methodology, limited research has been shared that made use of virtual interviews as part of qualitative research. This is because only few scholars (Ferris & Waldron, 2022) utilised virtual interviews to generate data for research focusing on women leaders and mentorship. In South Africa, where this is still a huge shortcoming, my study addresses the literature gap on research conducted with virtual interviews on online platforms such as Blackboard Collaborate, Google Meet, and Zoom Meetings. The interviews gave voice to the women leaders to express themselves as they narrated – from a personal perspective – the stories of their mentoring journey toward senior positions in a South African university. My study contributes to the literature on qualitative research where online platforms were used to conduct interviews for data generation purposes.

Moreover, the current study contributes theoretically to the literature. Due to the limited development of theory on the mentorship of women leaders, there remains a shortage of developed theories to study mentoring in women's leadership advancement to senior positions in HE. As a result, the study of women's leadership and mentoring is based on feminist theories; transformational leadership theory; Zachery's Four Phases of Mentoring; Relational Cultural Theory (RCT); liberal feminist theory; and the framework of social justice (Block & Tietjen-Block, 2016; Chitsamatanga et al., 2018; Briscoe & Freeman, 2019; Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2019). In South Africa, Dhunpath et al. (2018) proposed a model of mentorship. However, it was not designed for the mentorship of women and women leaders, but rather for early career academics. The current study had to borrow from three theories (Relational-Cultural Theory, Transformational Leadership Model and Gendered Organisation Theory) to study the mentorship of women leaders, as there are no theories designed specifically for that. As such, my study contributed theoretically by developing a model to study the mentoring of women leaders in higher education. This model is later presented and discussed in Chapter seven.



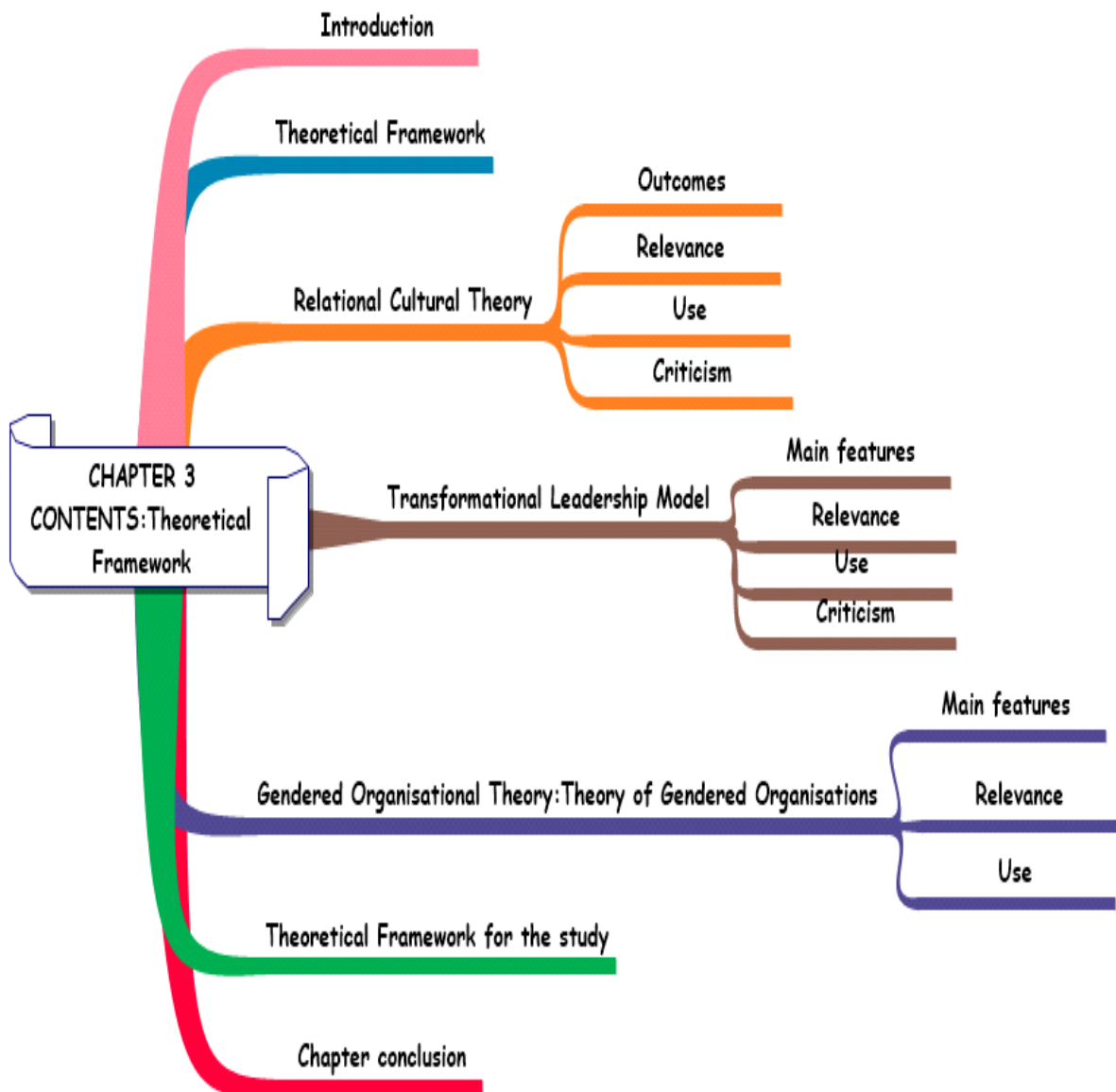
UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

2.7 Chapter conclusion

Chapter two presented a literature review on the role of women leadership and mentorship in advancing women leaders to senior positions in HE. This provided an international, continental, and local perspective on women's leadership and mentoring in HE. The literature indicated a significant role and contributions of mentoring in advancing women leaders to senior positions in institutions of higher learning. Chapter three presents theoretical lenses through which to explore the mentoring experiences of women leaders in this study. Since mentoring has been associated with transformational leadership (Early, 2020), one of the theories discussed in the next chapter is the Transformational Leadership Model.



CHAPTER 3 CONTENTS





UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented and discussed the literature review relevant to the study. This discussion included national, continental, and international literature. The focus of this literature review was on the representation of women leaders in the senior positions in HE, barriers women encounter in trying to advance to a senior position, and enablers that facilitate the advancement of women leaders to senior positions. Mentoring as an enabler was discussed in detail. The discussion included the conceptualisation of mentorship, the role and contribution of mentoring in advancing women to senior positions, and some strategies that could be used in mentorship. Toward the end of the chapter, I shared literature gaps and the contribution of this study to the existing body of knowledge.

The current chapter deliberates on and provides a discussion and analysis of the theoretical framework that underpins this study. The theoretical framework drew from three theories – the Relational-Cultural Theory, Transformational Leadership Model, and Gendered Organisation Theory – which are first discussed separately and then integrated into a theoretical framework for my study. For the sake of clarity, I start off by explaining what a theoretical framework is.

3.2 Theoretical framework

According to Osanloo and Grant (2014), a theoretical framework is a research lens used by the researcher to study a research phenomenon and it consists of existing theory/theories that have been “tested and validated by others” (Osanloo & Grant, 2014, p. 16). A theoretical framework is an important element of a research study because it foregrounds research and must feature in all aspects of the research, including research questions, literature review, and data generation and analysis (Osanloo & Grant, 2014; Kivunja, 2018). All decisions made in the study must be in accordance with its theoretical framework, as the latter serves as a guide on which research is structured and conducted. To explain and emphasise the importance of the theoretical framework of a study, Osanloo and Grant (2014) compare this theoretical framework to a house plan, without which a house will not have an



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

appropriate foundation and structure. Similarly, research cannot be conducted without a theoretical framework that guides its direction (Osanloo & Grant, 2014). It is therefore important for the researcher to choose suitable and appropriate theories to underpin the research, as well as to define elements of theories that may form the theoretical framework (Osanloo & Grant, 2014).

It worth reflecting and noting that the chosen theories for the current study came after a process of review of a number of theories that seemed to have potential in studying the growth and development of women through relationships in professional settings. Among the theories that were under consideration in relation to this study include Barunda's Social Learning Theory, Feminist Theory, Liberal Feminist Theory, and the Framework of Social Justice. In looking at the role of a mentor, some of the theories that showed potential included Zachery's Four Phases of Mentoring and Kram's (1985) Mentor Role Theory. However, the three theories that were deemed better suited for the study which form a theoretical framework of the study as stated earlier are – Relational-Cultural Theory, Transformational Leadership Model, and Gendered Organisation Theory – discussed in sections below. Section 3.3 deals with the Relational-Cultural Theory. I found reference to this theory critical for my understanding of a mentor-mentee relationship in the mentorship of women leaders. Section 3.4 focuses on the Transformational Leadership Model, as it shaped my understanding of the role of a mentor in the mentorship of women leaders. Section 3.5 presents a discussion of the Gendered Organisation Theory. Reference to this theory brought an understanding of biases regarding women leadership in gendered HEIs, as my study took place in the HE context. It was therefore important to bring in a theory that shows the contextual factors in such institutions. In Section 3.6 these theories are assembled into a theoretical framework for the study which served as a theoretical lens that shaped my understanding of mentoring experiences of women leaders in their advancement to senior positions at a South African university.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

3.3 Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT)

RCT is a theory of human development that was developed in the 1970s by psychologists and psychiatrists affiliated with the Stone Center at Wellesley College in Massachusetts – Jean Baker Miller and her colleagues Irene Stiver, Judith Jordan, Janet Surrey, and Alexandra Kaplan (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007; Alvarez & Lazzari, 2015; Lewis & Olshansky, 2016). This group of women, led by key contributor Jean Baker Miller (1976), worked on finding ways to assist women clients in the psychology field when the idea of the theory surfaced unintentionally and through informal engagements (Jordan, 2017). Hence, RCT is rooted in and emerged from the groundbreaking work of Baker Miller, who proposed a new understanding of human development in her 1976 book *Toward a New Psychology of Women* (Jordan et al., 2008; Alvarez & Lazzari, 2015; Jordan, 2017). Initially, the theory was called *self-in-relation theory* and focused on interpersonal relationships as a key factor in the process of psychological growth (Lewis & Olshansky, 2016). From there it developed and extended to other disciplines to study human experiences and received the name tag, *Relational-Cultural Theory*.

RCT is known as the theory of counselling and human development (Comstock et al., 2008). Alvarez and Lazzari (2015) defined RCT as the theory of human development through connection and interaction with one another, where the individuals involved learn and grow from this connection. Thus, the theory proposes that people grow as they interact and connect with each other in mutual, developmental relationships from which they benefit through sharing their expertise. It discourages the concept of 'disconnection' from others and working in isolation. RCT therefore assumes that those involved in the developmental relationship work together by sharing knowledge and expertise (Jordan, 2017). This removes the idea of one person being the owner of knowledge and skills and suggests that the growth of those involved depends on all parties equally investing in the relationship (Ticknor & Averett, 2017). RCT is relevant to mentorship relationships as it provides an important framework for thinking about the significance and dimensions of work relationships for women (Fletcher, 2007; Jordan, 2010; Davidson, 2018). The theory also argues that human development takes place at all levels of life, and that there is no stage where growth in connection



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

is not needed (Comstock et al., 2008; Jordan, 2017). This in itself supports the growth of women leaders through mentorship at all career levels.

RCT is of the view that people who are engaged in developmental relationships are happier and show well-being that results from their growth in this relationship (Lenz, 2016). However, for this positive outcome to be realised, certain key factors are important in the developmental relationship according to RCT. The relationship should reflect mutuality, authenticity, reciprocity, empathy, and connectedness (Lewis & Olshansky, 2016). Baker Miller presents five positive outcomes from connectedness in the relationship, which she refers to as the “five good things” (Comstock et al., 2008, p. 283; Lenz, 2016, p. 415; Lewis & Olshansky, 2016; Davidson, 2018). These outcomes are discussed next.

3.3.1 Outcomes of Relational-Cultural Theory

3.3.1.1 Zest or well-being

The first of the five outcomes of RCT includes *zest* or *well-being*, which is a positive feeling about the relationship and where those involved in the relationship give each other some sort of purpose in their lives (Jordan, 2008; Lewis & Olshansky, 2016). In other words, those involved in the relationship give each other a sense of meaning in what they are doing and emphasise the importance of the relationship they are involved in. Apparently, this results in increased positive attitude and energy for work and life (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007; Comstock et al., 2008). Davidson (2018) agrees that the interpersonal connection gives members a sense of increased energy and vitality.

3.3.1.2 Increased knowledge of self and others

The second outcome of interpersonal and developmental relationships is *increased knowledge of self and others*, where the relationship results in a more accurate understanding of the self and other people (Comstock et al., 2008; Jordan, 2008). Self-awareness emerges from practices such as self-reflection and feedback from those involved in the relationship (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). It is from this practice that the mentor and mentee get to know their own strengths and weaknesses. This is very important, as better knowledge of the self will alert both the mentor and mentee of their shortcomings and guide them to develop each other and themselves accordingly



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

(Lewis & Olshansky, 2016). Increased knowledge of self is also likely to lead to increased abilities and confidence.

3.3.1.3 *The ability and motivation to act*

The third outcome of developmental relationships is the *ability and motivation to act*, where those involved in the relationship feel positive and make necessary changes in their lives (Lewis & Olshansky, 2016), thanks to the empowerment (Jordan et al., 2008) that takes place during the development. Empowerment gives courage, ability, and motivation to the people involved to act toward whatever they want to achieve and put into practice what they have learned (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007; Comstock et al., 2008). Davidson (2018) remarks that parties involved in a relationship are motivated to put into practice some of what was learned or experienced in their interaction. This means that the mentor and mentee motivate and inspire each other to pursue their goals and take decisions that will enhance the possibility of their achievement of career goals.

3.3.1.4 *An increased sense of worth*

The fourth outcome is an *increased sense of worth*, which refers to increased self-confidence or self-value (Jordan et al., 2008; Lewis & Olshansky, 2016). The people involved in the relationship feel an increased sense of worth as they are able to perform to expectation (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007; Comstock et al., 2008). Encouragement and empowerment in the relationship lead to increased abilities and capability. These are likely to increase self-confidence, which may be prompted by learning new knowledge from the other person (Davidson, 2018).

3.3.1.5 *Desire for more connection*

Lastly, there is a *desire for more connection*, in other words to continue with the current connection or pursue other similar connections (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007; Jordan, 2008; Lewis & Olshansky, 2016; Davidson, 2018). This desire may emanate from having had a positive experience of the relationship and acknowledging the benefits and impact it had. It may also be as a result of feeling a greater attachment to the other



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

person and desiring to connect with other people in a similar manner (Comstock et al., 2008). Being in a connection or relationship where there is growth and development makes one yearn for more similar connections and, as a result, leads to actions that could establish or culminate in more connections.

3.3.2 Relevance of Relational-Cultural Theory to this study

Since RCT is relevant to the study of human growth and development through relationships, the theory was relevant to my study. Its view that human development takes place as people engage with others in a developmental relationship is consistent with my assumptions that women leaders develop as they engage in a developmental relationship with their mentors. As a result, my study focused on women's mutual development and growth through mentorship relationships. Women leaders as mentees learn and grow as they interact with their mentors. RCT similarly yields five outcomes of development through connection and interaction (i.e. *zest or well-being, increased knowledge of self and others, ability and motivation to act, increased sense of worth and desire for more connections*).

The *zest/wellbeing* of women leaders is increased as they work with their mentors who motivate and encourage them. This support helps them to become purposeful, to feel positive about their leadership and to apply for senior positions. *Increased knowledge of self and others* happens as and when women leaders engage with their mentors who give them feedback on their practice. When women leaders get to know their weaknesses, they are able to work on them and achieve an improved performance. *Ability and motivation to act* occurs when women are motivated by their mentors. The motivation leads to and encouraged to take desired actions towards their career growth. *An increased sense of worth* happens when women leaders grow in their abilities, thus gaining self-confidence and an increased sense of self-worth. This is very important for women leaders who aspire to advance to senior positions as women's lack of self-confidence has been raised as a barrier to attempting such positions (Turner-Moffatt, 2019; Moyo & Perumal, 2020). There is a *desire for more connection* when women see the value of mentorship in their career growth and feel

the need to continue the mentorship, develop new relationships, or mentor other women people who want to grow their careers.

RCT is relevant to my study and helped me to understand the role of mentoring and its contribution to women leaders' growth during the mentorship. I believe that the mentorship in which women leaders in my study had been engaged resulted in the five outcomes of RCT.

3.3.3 Use of Relational-Cultural Theory

Although RCT is mostly used in therapeutic and psychology fields (Ticknor & Averett, 2017), its use has extended to other fields such as health, education, the study of women's leadership, and mentorship (Lewis & Olshansky, 2016; Ticknor & Averett, 2017). For example, Ticknor and Averett (2017) used RCT in a study of teacher education in the USA. Their findings revealed positive outcomes of RCT in teacher education (Ticknor & Averett, 2017), which implies that the theory was tested in teacher education and found to yield the expected outcomes. Similarly, Davidson (2018) used RCT in a qualitative study on the developmental relationships of women leaders in the USA. The women participants held senior positions in HEIs. Ten of the women were deans, two were part of the executive teams, one woman was an associate dean, one was a department chair, and one was a programme director (Davidson, 2018). This shows that the women were in universities' senior positions. The findings of the study showed that RCT was a suitable theory to study women leaders and the role of developmental relationships in their leadership (Davidson, 2018). From this study, Davidson (2018) concluded that professional relationships improve women's leadership.

RCT has also been used to study mentoring in general and mentoring of female leaders in particular (Block & Tietjen-Smith, 2016; Lewis & Olshansky, 2016). Furthermore, relationships allow for development and growth, and lead to the positive development of women, which happens through connections in developmental relationships (Davidson, 2018). Such relationships have also been found to contribute to well-being and a sense of safety for those involved (Jordan, 2008). This may be ascribed to a sense of comfort experienced and shared with others in a relationship.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

With mentoring, people also grow as they interact and learn from their mentors. The application of RCT to the study of mentoring has yielded various benefits, such as success in an academic career, career growth and productivity, and improved collaboration (Lewis & Olshansky, 2016). These are clear positive contributions and outcomes of the application of the theory in mentorship in academia. Hence, the RCT has been used to study the role of relationships in assisting women to survive and thrive in academia (Alvarez & Lazzari, 2015; Kaepfel et al., 2020).

3.3.4 Criticism levelled at Relational-Cultural Theory

A criticism against RCT is that developing connections that lead to human development are not easy and sometimes may be ineffective (Jordan, 2017). Another limitation of the theory is that developmental relationships may sometimes lack authenticity, mutuality and trust (Jordan, 2017). The lack of these features in a developmental relationship compromises the effectiveness of the relationship and limits its value. It also limits growth and affects the well-being of those involved in the relationship. The criticism also applies to mentorship relationships, as they rely on trust between the mentor and mentee.

RCT was useful in my study as it helped me to understand the role of mentorship in the development of women leaders. However, the theory was limited in helping me understand the role and contribution of a mentor in the mentorship relationship. Hence, I drew from the Transformational Leadership Model to understand the role of a mentor in a developmental relationship with a woman leader.

3.4 Transformational Leadership Model

This study drew from the Transformational Leadership Model of Bernard Bass (1985) and I made use of its practices and the behaviour needed for effective mentoring by a mentor. The stance taken in this study was that leadership can take place at different levels and does not only apply to those who hold management positions. This view is supported by Tafvelin (2013), who states that leadership can occur at any level and be practised by anyone. In the context of this study, mentors play a leadership role in



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

mentoring women leaders. In particular, they engage in transformational leadership practice to motivate and develop the women they mentor.

The transformational leadership model was first proposed by James McGregor Burns (1978) to study political leaders in the US (Tafvelin, 2013) and to review the roles of leaders and followers (Northouse, 2019). The approach has since been improved through the contributions of theorists such as Bass (1985), Bennis and Nanus (1985), Sashkin (1988), Tichy and Devanna (1986), Leithwood (1994), Slocum and Hellriegel (2007), and Tengi et al. (2017). Though various contributions have been made to transformational leadership model (Tafvelin, 2013), Bernard Bass (1985) remains the most notable theorist who contributed to this approach. He advanced the work of Burns (1978) by refining and expanding it, placing the focus on the follower, not the leader, and adding the sub-dimensions of transformational leadership (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004; Northouse, 2019). These sub-dimensions describe the behaviour of transformational leaders and constitute the main features of the model.

3.4.1 Main features of the Transformational Leadership Model

The proponents of the transformational leadership model argue that leadership involves performing a set of leadership actions, grouped into four dimensions and famously called the 4Is of transformational leadership. These dimensions include *idealised influence*, *inspirational motivation*, *intellectual stimulation*, and *idealised consideration* (Bass & Avolio, 1990; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Northouse, 2019).

3.4.1.1 Idealised influence

Idealised influence relates to the view that transformational leaders usually become role models to their followers because their behaviour is worth emulating. Their work ethic, care and leadership behaviour positively influence their followers and their conduct is so exemplary that followers want to emulate their practice (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Northouse, 2019). Hence, Abazeed (2018) argues that the idealised influence of a leader is felt when a leader projects to followers an image of a role model whose conduct is beyond reproach. These leaders behave in a firm, consistent, dignified and ethical manner in the eyes of their followers, thus earning

their trust and respect (Northouse, 2019). They are prepared to risk taking unpopular decisions, as long as those decisions are in the best interests of their followers.

3.4.1.2 Inspirational motivation

Inspirational motivation involves the view that transformational leaders believe in the growth and development of their followers. As a result, they have high expectations and share them with their followers. Thus, they motivate, help and guide their followers to work toward the achievement of those expectations and goals (Northouse, 2019). Cavazotte et al. (2013) furthermore argue that transformational leaders assist their followers to develop their own goals, and thereafter they motivate and inspire them to work towards the achievement of those goals. Such a leader encourages followers to be future-oriented and to be passionate about the possibilities that lie ahead. This motivation assists the followers to think ahead and to work towards their career growth. The transformational leaders motivate their followers to aspire to success and to achieve more in their careers. Korejan and Shahbazi (2016) suggest that transformational leaders challenge their followers to do more than required by their job description by going the extra mile. They motivate their followers to perform better than expected and as a result to grow and progress in their careers.

3.4.1.3 Intellectual stimulation

Intellectual stimulation involves the view that transformational leaders stimulate their followers' intellectual creativity. They encourage them not to accept everything leaders say or do without questioning, but to challenge and critique their assumptions, dispositions and beliefs without fear or favour. This means that they elicit critical thinking and creativity in their followers (Northouse, 2019), which are two of the key requirements in many positions, including leadership positions. As argued in the literature (Jiang et al., 2017; Bodilenyane & Mooketsane, 2019), followers of transformational leaders are challenged to be critical in finding ways to resolve difficult situations on their own or through consultation with other people. In other words, followers are inspired to become critical thinkers and problem solvers who are able to thrive in challenging situations that require critical thinking and problem solving.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Followers' intellectual growth within the organisation is stimulated as they become courageous, creative and innovative in facing challenges rather than avoiding them. While they take ownership of their intellectual growth, the leaders are there to guide and empower them in this process of growth and creativity (Bodilenyane & Mooketsane, 2019).

3.4.1.4 Idealised consideration

Idealised consideration refers to an intentional focus on followers' individual needs. Thus, transformational leaders give individualised attention to their followers and their developmental needs by taking note of their individual needs and offering the support and training that might be needed for their growth. According to Northouse (2019), they listen and offer support to address the individual needs of their followers. Transformational leaders treat each follower as an individual and provide coaching, mentoring and growth opportunities (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Furthermore, they invest time in the development of their followers for growth and progress in their careers. Abazeed (2018) states that transformational leaders attend to the development of their followers by acknowledging their unique needs and offering the necessary training and capacitation. This type of individual attention and development is recognised as important for the growth of followers and is offered through mentoring (Bodilenyane & Mooketsane, 2019). The leader works together with the followers in a mentorship relationship, and guides and develops them in their areas of need. Idealised consideration is beneficial to the mentee because it involves a response to the individual's specific developmental needs. Transformational leaders acknowledge the indisputable fact of life that no one wants to fail and therefore they support and pay attention to their individual followers.

It is furthermore important to note that transformational leadership is not restricted to an institution internally; it can be conducted outside the institutional context. This means that a leader and a follower may be from different institutions – as in the case of my study where some mentors were not in the same institution as their mentees. Bodilenyana and Mooketsane (2019) agree and suggest that transformational leadership goes beyond institutional boundaries.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

3.4.2 Relevance of Transformational Leadership to the study

Transformational leadership components represent leadership practices that are needed in the mentorship of women leaders. These transformational leadership practices correspond with the role of a mentor in a mentoring relationship. Hence, in the literature, transformational leadership behaviour has been found to be appropriate for mentors as they develop their mentee holistically and so achieve successful mentorship (Bodilenyane & Mooketsane, 2019). In the case of this study, the mentors utilised practices of transformational leadership in mentoring the women leaders involved. They adopted transformational leadership characteristics and behaviours in leading and developing the women during the mentorship. I consequently used the four dimensions of the Transformational Leadership Model (*idealised influence*, *inspirational motivation*, *intellectual stimulus* and *individualised consideration*) because they suited my study of the role of mentors of women leaders.

With regard to *idealised influence*, mentors of women leaders served as admirable role models who influenced them through admirable behaviour. In terms of *inspirational motivation*, the mentors challenged women leaders to be future-oriented and to have goals and they inspired them to work towards the achievement of those goals. Regarding *intellectual stimulus*, the mentors encouraged critical thinking and challenged women leaders to think creatively and critically in solving the problems they encountered. *Idealised consideration* came to the picture when mentors paid attention to the women leaders' needs by mentoring and developing them based on their individual development and growth needs.

Transformational leadership has been associated with mentoring and thus I used it to study mentoring practices and the role of mentors as transformational leaders (Howard et al., 2017; Shaw et al., 2018; Bodilenyane & Mooketsane, 2019; Early, 2020; White, 2020). A significant finding was that transformational leaders contribute to follower growth, motivation and development (Boamah et al., 2018; Bodilenyane & Mooketsane, 2019; White, 2020). I also considered transformational leadership as fitting to study the role of mentors of women leaders in my study.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

3.4.3 Use of Transformational Leadership Model

The Transformational Leadership Model has been widely used to study practices in school leadership, mentoring, mentorship of women in different fields, management, education, engineering, nursing, social psychology, leadership, and banking (Northouse, 2019; Magasi, 2021). This shows that transformational leadership is applicable in many fields and specialisation areas. Research conducted on transformational leadership shows that such leadership has a positive effect on followers. Lee (2014) and Jyoti and Bhau (2015) found that transformational leadership results in improved performance by employees in different sectors and contexts. According to Jyoti and Bhau (2015), transformational leaders display motivational behaviour that inspires followers to achieve organisational goals. Research conducted in Brazil by Cavazotte et al. (2013) about the relationship between transformational leaders and employee performance shows that transformational leaders enhance the levels of employee performance. Additionally, research that Abazeed (2018) conducted in Jordan revealed a positive contribution of transformational leadership that leads to improved institutional performance.

Further research also found that transformational leaders contribute to employees' improved performance, increased self-confidence, and positive attitude towards work (Abazeed, 2018). In China, an investigation by Jiang et al. (2017) focusing on project managers and their subordinates showed a positive relationship between transformational leaders and positive employee relationships. Employees led by transformational leaders achieved sustainable performance and experienced an increased feeling of belonging (Jiang et al., 2017). In South Africa, a study conducted by Ndlovu et al. (2018) demonstrated a positive influence of transformational leadership on employees' commitment to their work and towards the institution. Moreover, transformational leadership has been noted to contribute to employee creativity, job and life satisfaction, and improved teacher performance in different contexts and sectors (Andriani et al., 2018; Mahmood et al., 2019; Bernarto et al., 2020).

Despite the generally positive results of transformational leadership, some authors argue that transformational leadership did not have a significant impact on employee and leadership performance. Examples are the findings of research by Eliyana and Ma'arif (2019) which showed no significant impacts by transformational leadership on employees of a state-owned company in Indonesia. They consequently argued that transformational leadership as the only variable in improving performance is not enough (Eliyana & Ma'arif, 2019).

3.4.4 Criticism levelled at Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is criticised for the fact that transformational leaders may abuse their power and mistreat their followers (Hay, 2006; Asbari et al., 2020). This may be a result of the influence they have on their mentees as they also serve as role models. The followers may fear questioning practices or instructions with which they are not comfortable.

The mentoring of women leaders who participated in my study took place at a HE institution that is generally considered a gendered institution. As a result, I also drew from the theory of gendered organisations to understand the context in which my study took place.

3.5 Gendered Organisational Theory

Many workplace sectors, including the Higher Education (HE) sector, are generally gendered in terms of leadership and staff's progression to senior positions (Bonzet & Frink, 2019; Herbst, 2020). Such gendered institutions are characterised by differentiated treatment of men and women in the workplace, especially when it comes to accessing leadership and senior leadership positions. As Hammer et al. (2014) succinctly put it, work environments are gendered and women and men are treated differently. Gendered treatment leads to women finding it difficult to access senior leadership positions, as these positions are dominated by men. Williams et al. (2012) state that even after so many years, jobs continue to be assigned and occupied based on gender. Men still occupy the positions of power despite many initiatives that have been put in place to address the problem and advance women leaders to leadership

positions. Gendered organisation theories expose these imbalances, inequalities, biases, and discriminations that exist in many organisations (Fishman-Weaver, 2017). For this reason, I used the *Theory of Gendered Organisations* by Acker (1990) (which is one of the prominent gendered organisation theories) as an extra point of reference. The theory was used to understand the reality of gendered institutions of higher learning and its effect on women leadership in South Africa. I used it to show how the structure of these institutions restricts women leaders from reaching senior positions. Acker's theory further explains how work processes in organisations continue to reproduce gendered structures that benefit men but constitute barriers to the success of women (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016). My use of the theory seemed quite appropriate as the study is guided by the same beliefs.

3.5.1 Theory of Gendered Organisations

Acker (1990, p. 146) defines gendered organisations as those organisations where “advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine”. Such organisations promote gender imbalances in favour of men rather than women, which contributes to male dominance in leadership positions. Acker (1990) developed the Theory of Gendered Organisations to study the existing gender imbalances and their impact on organisations. According to Alobaid et al. (2021), this was necessary because existing theories on gender could not give detailed information on gendered organisations and their impact. The theory managed to give a clearer account of how gendered organisations operate and what their impact is, seeing that women are presented as the inferior group. The theory of Gendered Organisations is mainly used to study and understand gender inequalities perpetuated in the workplace (Williams et al., 2012; Sayce, 2012), and I found its principles and assumptions relevant to this study.

In developing her theory, Acker (1990) identified five factors that determine gendered institutions. These are the actual practices that show that the institution is gendered. Her factors/assumptions are explained below. In 1992, Acker reduced the factors to four sets of gendered organisation processes that are now considered as the four



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

principles of the theory (Alobaid et al., 2021). Williams et al. (2012) also reviewed and revised Acker's theory (1990). The current study is based on principles of the original theory presented by Acker (1990), as they best describe the existing reality in the HE context when it comes to leadership and gender imbalances. Acker's original theory (1992) and her reviewed theory (2012) share similar ideas. For this reason, I used the original theory as a point of reference. Acker (1990) was recognised and applauded for having come up with a theory that focuses broadly on the organisation and gender practices, while existing theories only look at gendered issues relating to individuals (Briton & Logan, 2008).

3.5.2 Main features of the Theory of Gendered Organisations

The theory is based on five assumptions relating to where and how gendered practices and processes may occur, thus it reproduces gendered structures and cultures in organisations. These practices favour men and suppress women in the workplace, thus increasing the gender inequality gap. The five assumptions are *division of labour*, *cultural symbols*, *interactions in the organisation*, *individual identity* and *organisational logic*.

3.5.2.1 Division of labour

The distribution of labour in gendered organisations is based on gender and power, with more men than women occupying senior positions (Acker, 1990; Acker, 1992). This means that organisational structures are not gender-neutral, but rather represent gendered structures with gender inequalities in favour of men – which contribute to the underrepresentation of women in leadership and senior leadership positions. Unfortunately, this practice is perpetuated in many organisations that still promote the culture of male dominance. Acker (1990) concurs with this view and states that management decisions and practices in organisations continue to promote male dominance in leadership and in positions of power. Her theory supports the view that gendered structures in organisations restrict women's leadership growth and career advancement. Since a gendered culture persists in the workplace, there is very slow progress in women's advancement to senior positions.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

3.5.2.2 Cultural symbols

The theory assumes that cultural symbols in gendered organisations promote masculinity in leadership, which then promotes and reinforces gendered practices (Acker, 1990). Symbols and images associated with successful leadership present masculine leadership as the most effective leadership. In other words, successful and effective leadership is portrayed as strong, forceful and masculine (Acker, 1990; 1992). The promotion of a masculine character in leadership automatically brings negativity to feminine leadership, portraying it as less capable and consequently fostering discrimination against women's leadership. According to Davidson (2018), bias and gender stereotypes experienced by women in leadership generally remain entrenched in different sectors. Such practices lead to fear and self-doubt among women leaders.

3.5.2.3 Interaction in the organisation

The workplace interactions in gendered organisations allow for male dominance and women submission (Acker, 1990). The situation is often aggravated through decision making that represents male voices, as they are the majority in senior positions and therefore the ones who make the decisions in these organisations. This results in the dominance of men's voices and the smothering of women's.

3.5.2.4 Individual identities

Since individual identities – such as choice of appropriate work, language use, clothing, and expected representation in gendered institutions – determine acceptable practices for women, they often promote gender bias (Acker, 1990). To rephrase, women are expected to act and behave in certain acceptable ways, by virtue of being women. These expectations do not apply to their male counterparts, but usually lead to women accepting the assigned identities and behaviour.

3.5.2.5 Organisational logic

This assumption draws attention to the organisations that recognise and promote a hierarchical structure (Williams et al., 2012), in other words a structure that promotes gender differences and inequality between males and females in the workplace. As suggested by Acker (2012), men dominate the high positions in the hierarchy of



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

organisations, which implies that women fill the middle and lower ranks. The organisational logic affects the work rules, job descriptions, pay scales and job evaluations that govern these bureaucratic organisations and that employees have to abide by (Williams et al., 2012). Taking pay scales as an example of promoting gender imbalance in the workplace, men in high positions are paid more than the women who occupy lower positions.

3.5.3 Relevance of the Theory of Gendered Organisations to the study

I explored three components of Acker's Theory of Gendered Organisations, namely *division of labour*, *interaction in the organisation*, and *organisational logic*, because they related to my quest to understand women's leadership in gendered institutions of higher learning. *Division of labour* in this study shows senior positions being dominated by men in HEIs. *Interaction in the organisation* relates to decision-making dominated by men, silencing the voices of women while promoting male dominance in the process. *Organisational logic* relates to the promotion of hierarchical structures in HEIs, which promote gender imbalances in employment levels and payments. The components helped me to identify the areas of gender imbalance that manifest in institutions of higher learning and to study women's leadership experiences in their advancement to senior positions at an HEI in South Africa.

3.5.4 Use of the Theory of Gendered Organisations

This theory has been used mainly in the study of women in gendered organisations (Acker, 2012; Williams et al., 2012). Alobaid et al. (2020) also recently used the theory to conduct a literature review of previous studies that focused on challenges that Saudi female paramedics face in the workplace and how these challenges can be reduced through policy changes and the provision of equal opportunities in emergency medical services. Williams et al. (2012) used the gendered organisations theory in research focusing on women geoscientists in the oil and gas industry by looking at organisational logic in this sector. It was from this research that they analysed and extended Acker's (1990) version of this theory (Williams et al., 2012).



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

3.6 Theoretical framework of my study

In this section I assemble the three theories that were used in framing this study, namely the Relational-Cultural Theory, the Transformational Leadership Model and the Theory of Gendered Organisations. It is worth noting that the study was based on the assumption that, if women leaders in HEIs were to receive effective mentoring, they would be able to break through the glass ceiling and advance to senior leadership positions. This is because mentoring allows for women leaders to receive the necessary support, encouragement and development for their specific needs and so to acquire the necessary skills for senior positions. They should ideally learn professionally from an experienced leader (mentor) who guides, supports and develops them through mentoring. This instils a sense of courage, motivation and self-confidence in women leaders, which increases the possibility of their advancement to senior positions.

The above assumption was proven correct in this study's findings, as presented and discussed in Chapters five and six of this thesis. The findings show that mentoring indeed contributes to women reaching senior positions, owing to its positive effects on their career and leadership. The theoretical framework presented below therefore helped me to study and understand the mentoring experiences of women leaders in their advancement to senior positions at a South African university.

3.6.1 Diagrammatic representation of the theoretical framework of my study

Figure 3.1 provides a diagrammatic representation of the assemblage and integration of the three theories that framed the study. A brief explanation of the theoretical framework follows.

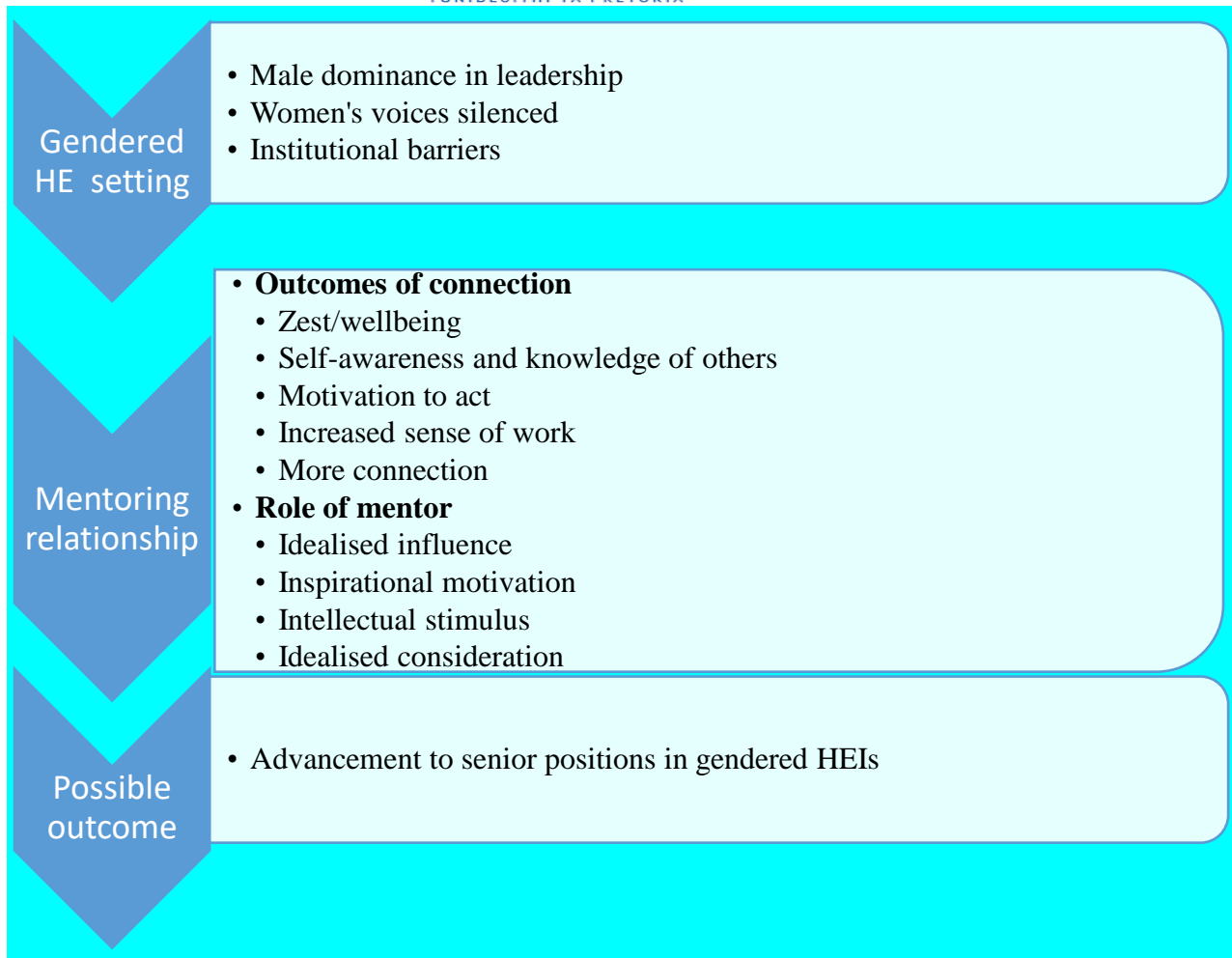


Figure 3.1: The theoretical framework of my study

3.6.2 Explanation of the theoretical framework

The phenomenon of underrepresentation of women leaders in leadership, particularly in senior positions, persists in HEIs, despite deliberate measures to eradicate it. The barriers that continue to hinder the growth and career progression of women leaders contribute to the stifling of women's progression to senior positions in institutions of higher learning, leading to their underrepresentation in these institutions (Fitzgerald, 2018; Mayer & Oosthuizen, 2019, Herbst, 2020). The participation and role of women leaders in these institutions remain skewed in favour of masculinity, as is shown by male domination in positions in the higher echelons of the leadership hierarchy that restrict women to the middle and lower levels. The support of masculinity promotes male voices in decision making and silences female voices, thus leading to manifest



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

discrimination against female leadership. Mentoring has been recommended as one of the strategies that can be used to address this problem, as it has the ability to capacitate women with the necessary skills for senior leadership and so enable more women to advance to senior positions. Research (Davidson, 2018; Scheepers et al., 2018; Awung & Dorasamy, 2019; Nakitende, 2019) also shows that relationships embedded in mentoring enhance women's leadership growth, which may, in turn, lead to more women succeeding in leadership. Mentoring relationships give hope by creating opportunities for the advancement of women leaders to higher positions.

Looking at mentoring from the view of Relational-Cultural Theory brought an understanding of mentoring as a connection that has the ability to lead to the growth of people as they interact with one another, thus leading to outcomes such as empowerment, increased self-esteem, learning new knowledge and a desire for more connections (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007; Lewis & Olshansky, 2016; Davidson, 2018).

From our earlier discussions, it emerges that mentoring as an enabler and a critical element in advancing women leaders to senior positions involves theory-based concepts of *zest/well-being; increased knowledge of self; inspirational motivation; increased sense of worth; desire for more connections; idealised influence; inspirational motivation; intellectual stimulus; and idealised consideration*. This occurs when mentors inspire and motivate their followers to achieve more by helping them to plan their future goals and to work towards their achievement. *Intellectual stimulus* emerges when mentors challenge their followers to think creatively and critically. It encourages the followers to solve problems and meet challenges as and when they encounter them. Mentors also recognise the *individual needs* of their followers and seek to satisfy them through coaching and mentoring (Korejan & Shabhazi, 2016; Abaheed, 2018). In this way, they offer the necessary development and support tailored to the individual needs of their mentee.

Mentoring also leads to empowerment, where women leaders are developed and motivated to practise what they learnt during the mentoring relationship (Davidson, 2018). Through motivation, they are able to *take decisions and actions* that will lead to their career growth. In addition, mentoring brings about improved *self-knowledge and self-awareness*, as the mentor and mentee provide positive feedback to each



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

other, based on their mutual engagement in the mentoring relationship. This feedback gives the mentee, as a follower, an *increased sense of worth* (Davidson, 2018). Mentoring that considers all practices and principles has the potential to lead to the advancement of women leaders to senior positions in HEIs.

The transformational leadership theory focused on the possible outcomes of the mentorship and placed a limited focus on the role that is played by the mentor during the mentorship. A mentor as a transformational leader acts as a role model to their followers, inspires and motivates them, promotes creativity and innovation in problem solving and develops their followers in accordance with their individual developmental needs (Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016; Northouse, 2019).

Drawing from the three theories and integrating the practices adopted by each led to my better understanding of mentoring of women leaders and the role of mentors in the HE context. Components of the three different theories were assembled based on the theoretical limitation of theories that had been developed to study the mentorship of women leaders in HE.

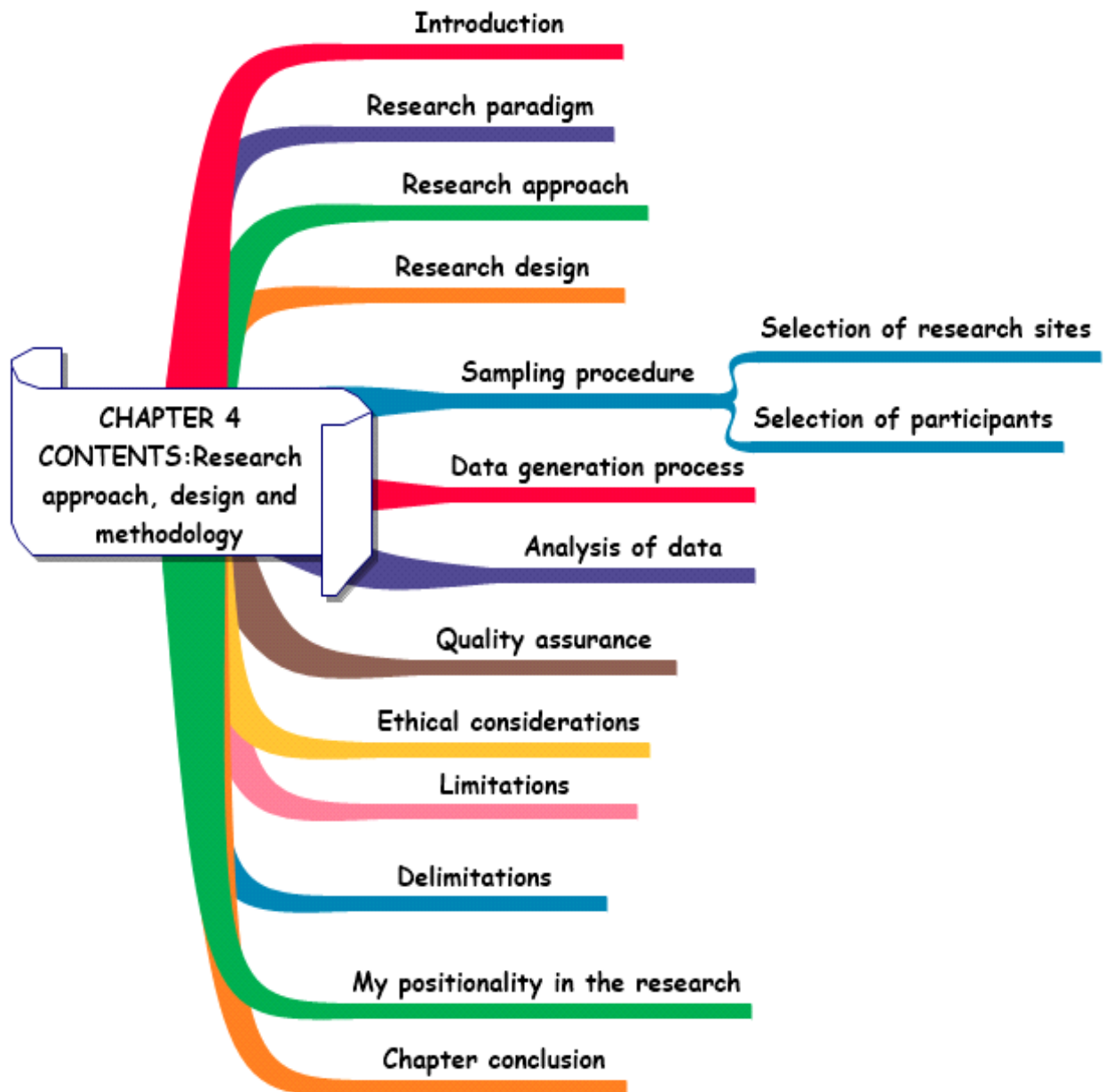
3.7 Chapter conclusion

Chapter three discussed three theories that were used to understand mentoring experiences of women leaders at a South African university. The discussion covered Relational-Cultural Theory, which guided my understanding of the mentoring relationship between women leaders and their mentors. The Transformational Leadership Model shaped my understanding of the role of a mentor during the mentorship, while the Theory of Gendered Organisations guided my understanding of the gendered higher education context. Next, the chapter presented and discussed the theoretical framework by combining the three theories in the form of a diagram.

Chapter four proceeds to share how the study was executed. The discussion mainly touches on the research paradigm, research approach, research design, and methods followed in the study.



CHAPTER 4 CONTENTS



CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH APPROACH, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented the theoretical framework that underpinned the study and discussed three theories – Relational-Cultural Theory, the Transformational Leadership Model, and the Gendered Organisation Theory. These theories constituted the theoretical framework that I used to study mentoring experiences of women leaders. I also presented an integration and explanation of these theories, and subsequently justified their relevance and use in this research.

Chapter four now concentrates on the research design that was adopted and the methodological choices that I made. Key issues discussed include the research paradigm, approach, and design, as well as the sampling procedures, data generation, and analysis methods. The research quality assurance and ethical considerations are also presented towards the end of the chapter.

The underlying procedure followed towards achieving the purpose of the research was to explore the mentoring experiences of women leaders during their advancement to senior positions at a South African university. To this end, the study attempted to answer the key research questions presented in Sections 1.6.2. and to recap, the questions are repeated below.

4.1.1 Main research question

The main research question posed in this study was: “What are the mentoring experiences of women leaders regarding their advancement to senior positions at a South African university?”

4.1.2 Secondary research questions

Five secondary research questions emerged from the main research question:

- (i) How do women leaders occupying senior positions in a South African university understand mentoring?
- (ii) Why is mentoring important in developing women leaders for senior positions?



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- (iii) How is mentoring used to prepare women leaders for senior leadership positions in the higher education sector?
- (iv) What are the constraining factors encountered in mentoring women leaders for advancement to senior positions?
- (v) What mentoring strategies can be utilised for the effective mentoring of women leaders?

4.2 Research paradigm

People have different ways of viewing the world. This worldview, which is referred to as a research paradigm in the research fraternity, represents how a researcher sees the world. Scholars such as Kivunja and Kuyina (2017) and Kankam (2019) explain that the research paradigm also involves the researcher's beliefs, assumptions, perspectives, or ways of thinking. Therefore, it makes sense to suggest that researchers' paradigmatic views shape how they conduct research. Cohen et al. (2018) agree and argue that researchers' worldviews cause them to hold differing opinions about the world – based on their study discipline, communities of research, their mentors, and how they have been initiated into research (Creswell, 1994). Such experiences, exposure and influences may sway the researcher to ascribe to a particular research paradigm. Moreover, choosing the appropriate research paradigm to follow is essential for the researcher as it determines how they conduct research. The research paradigm determines how the researcher should study the phenomenon involved and what theories to be used, and it directs the researcher to adopt specific methodologies and approaches (Bakkabulindi, 2017; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). In other words, a research paradigm not only guides and determines the entire research process to be followed, it also places restrictions on certain practices in accordance with the principles of the particular paradigm.

Among the different paradigms in research there are four that are well-known and commonly used, namely the positivist, interpretivist/constructivist, emancipatory, and deconstruction paradigms (Cohen et al., 2018;). A researcher can conduct research within any of these paradigms, based on their assumptions about the world and the purpose of their research. Furthermore, four philosophical assumptions underpin the



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

research paradigm, namely ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology (Creswell, 1994). I discuss these assumptions against the backdrop of the research paradigm that underpinned my study.

4.2.1 Paradigmatic positioning of the study

The current study is located within the interpretivist research paradigm, also referred to as constructivism (Kivunja & Kuyina, 2017). Interpretivism rejects the idea of one single truth waiting to be discovered and rather embraces the fact that multiple realities are created (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). As a researcher, I believe that social realities are created as people engage with one another in their context. Hence, the interpretivist paradigm is used by researchers who want to understand the world from the perspective of the subjective social realities of study participants (Kankam, 2019). In other words, interpretivists are interested in the views that participants have about their own lived experiences and how they interpret these experiences. As a result, interpretivists dig deeper into the meaning that people attach to their experiences by interacting and engaging with them. Such interaction and engagement become a critical practice in interpretive research, as the researcher wants to understand the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives.

Gunbayi and Sorm (2018) argue that the aim of engaging with participants is to understand the phenomenon through the meaning that participants make of their lived experiences and to see it from their perspective. Thus, knowledge is constructed when the researcher interacts with study participants. Kivunja and Kuyina (2017) agree and suggest that interpretive researchers construct knowledge through their engagement with participants in their natural settings. Interpretivists usually use qualitative research designs such as case studies, phenomenology, and narrative inquiry, because these designs allow for interaction and engagement with participants in their context. They enable the researcher to better understand participants' experiences after engaging with them (Gunbayi & Sorm, 2018). The interpretivist research paradigm was deemed suitable for my study based on the four philosophical assumptions associated with it. Since the ontological, epistemological, methodological, and axiological beliefs were



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

relevant to the study, all four these philosophical assumptions were accepted in this study.

4.2.1.1 *Ontology*

Ontology refers to truth or reality, and some scholars refer to it as what exists in the world (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). In other words, ontology involves the beliefs of what people think is true. Qualitative researchers believe in multiple realities that can be established by sharing the reality of people's experiences of the world through their work, education, social life, and engagements (Van Wyk, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Realities are diverse because all people experience the world differently. This view corresponds with my ontological stand in this study because, as a researcher, I believe in studying the multiple realities of a particular situation or phenomenon that are socially constructed. Using the interpretivist research paradigm, I examined the realities that women leaders involved in this study faced, specifically their mentoring experiences while advancing to senior positions. These realities were narrated by different participants who had differing lived experiences of mentoring; hence multiple realities were constructed.

4.2.1.2 *Epistemology*

Epistemology refers to how researchers construct new knowledge or reality (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Van Wyk, 2017) and it focuses on how what is known is shared with and communicated to others (Cohen et al., 2018; Nieuwenhuis, 2020). It is a philosophical assumption that reflects on how researchers come to the knowledge of what is known and how they share that knowledge with the public. Epistemologically, I believe in studying the realities of people through interacting and engaging with them in their natural settings. I am of the view that it is through such interactions that people can open up and speak freely about their lived realities. This view is consistent with epistemological assumptions in qualitative research, as researchers get closer to the participants they are studying (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). The interpretive paradigm therefore enabled me to interact with participants, namely the women leaders and their mentors who shared their subjective mentoring experiences with me. My interaction



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

with them, which took place virtually through online meetings because of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, enabled me to get an account of their lived mentoring experiences. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), such engagements were meant to understand, describe and interpret participants' experiences for subsequent sharing of the acquired knowledge with the public.

4.2.1.3 Methodology

The methodological assumption in a paradigm deals with how research was conducted and this includes the research approach, design, and methods (Rehman & Alharti, 2016; Bukkabalindi, 2017). In line with the interpretivist research paradigm, I used qualitative case study design to gather participants' realities about their mentoring experiences. The use of an inductive approach gave me a deeper understanding of their shared experiences.

4.2.1.4 Axiology

Axiology ensures that all ethical principles and values are considered in the planning and conducting of research (Cresswell & Poth, 2016). I therefore observed all ethical requirements for qualitative research and case study research, in particular before and during my engagement with the participants. I followed all ethical principles as suggested by Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) by ensuring participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the information they shared. In qualitative research, axiological assumptions include the researcher's acknowledgement of the values, beliefs, biases, meanings, and positionality they hold in research, since these issues may impact the interpretation of their findings (Cohen et al., 2018). As a result, I give an explicit explanation of my positionality as a researcher (see Section 4.12) and how I refrained from any biases in engaging with the data.

It should be noted that there are disadvantages associated with the interpretivist paradigm, for which it has been criticised. One such disadvantage is the involvement of the researcher with participants, which reduces the objectivity of the research (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). The mentoring experiences of women leaders shared in this thesis are based on how I understood and interpreted participants' experiences.

Despite this limitation, the interpretivist research paradigm remains a paradigm that allows for the study of detailed and descriptive lived realities of participants.

4.3 Research approach

Different approaches to research include the quantitative approach, qualitative approach and mixed methods approach (Cohen et al., 2018). A research approach determines how the research process should be carried out. Each approach has specific characteristics that guide the process of collecting, engaging with, and analysing data (Dodgson, 2017). The study in hand followed a qualitative approach and I considered four characteristics that are commonly associated with this type of approach. Particular reference was made to those proposed by Merriam and Tisdell (2016).

The first characteristic is that qualitative research does not focus on the outcome of the investigation only, but on the entire research process, where the researcher pays careful attention to participants' experiences and the meaning that people make of their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Yin (2015) and Okeke (2017) concur and argued that the qualitative approach to research is appropriate for investigating and studying people's meaning making of their experiences, actions, or problems. The qualitative research approach clearly assisted me to understand how women leaders experienced mentoring from their side and the meaning of these experiences.

Secondly, the researcher is a primary instrument and fully involved in the process of qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) by planning the study and executing the processes of data generation and analysis. I was fully engaged in this study and played a vital role as the primary instrument in the research process. I interacted and engaged with participants in discourse that contributed to the depth of this study. I subsequently transcribed and analysed the generated data in order to make sense of the meaning that participants associate with their experiences. This process was in line with what Leavy (2017) suggest, namely that qualitative researchers are allowed to interpret the meaning of the data.

Thirdly, qualitative research can lead to the development of theories, concepts, and new practices (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Its descriptive nature allows for the



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

production of rich and detailed data (Leavy, 2017), which the researcher can use to develop a theory. Qualitative research therefore enabled me to study in depth and produce rich descriptions and interpretations of the role of mentorship in developing women leaders. The detailed data gained from narratives shared by women leaders and their mentors enabled me to develop a model for mentoring women leaders towards senior leadership in HE (see Chapter seven). Furthermore, the study contributed to the existing body of knowledge by sharing suggested mentoring strategies to develop women leaders.

Fourthly, qualitative research leads to the production of descriptive data, and the researcher can use quotations from participants' expressions to support the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For this reason, qualitative researchers often use interviews, narratives, and documents to generate data. These allow for the participants' voices and verbatim quotations to be used later during data presentation. In aligning myself with this characteristic in this study, I described the mentoring experiences and supported my findings with direct quotes from the interview transcripts and some captions from the mentoring policies of two HEIs.

Qualitative research has certain strengths and limitations. One of its strengths is that participants can share their views, perspectives, ideas, interpretations, and the meaning of their own experiences from a personal point of view, without interference from the researcher or any outside source (Azungah, 2018; Patten & Newhart, 2018). This means that qualitative research gives participants the opportunity to voice their experiences. This helps the researcher to better understand the phenomenon being studied, as data is gathered via the participants who have direct experience with such reality. Qualitative research also permits the researcher to work with a small sample of participants, which produces rich data and a deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Azungah, 2018). This is important in qualitative research, since the aim is to describe participants' experiences. Because participants in qualitative research provide answers in their own words, findings are usually shared in a narrative format (Patten & Newhart, 2018). This became an advantage in the current study, as I was able to produce detailed and descriptive data on the mentoring experiences of women involved in the study.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Regarding the limitations of qualitative research, it should be noted that the engagement between a researcher and participants in qualitative research requires extended time and results in a large amount of descriptive data (Patten & Newhart, 2018). In practice, such a requirement may be quite time consuming (Yilmaz, 2013), as it leads to the researcher spending a huge amount of time on data analysis. Since I was aware of the fact that this limitation could eventually delay the completion of the study, I began data generation soon after receiving ethical approval from the university to conduct this research. This early start gave me enough time to analyse data for this research and to complete it in record time.

4.4 Research design

Different designs that are suitable for qualitative research include case study, phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, narrative inquiry, and participatory action research – to name the most commonly used. In my study, I adopted a case study design, which involved an in-depth study of a particular phenomenon, as well as my gathering and producing rich insight into a specific case in context (Yin, 2018). Since the purpose of a case study is to understand and describe an issue in detail (Seabi, 2012; Flick, 2018), I was able to explore in detail the mentoring experiences of women leaders and share descriptive and detailed findings on the case. I drew from the voices of different women leaders and their mentors, which enabled me to present multiple realities, as each individual presented their own subjective experience. This fitted perfectly in a case study, as the design allows for the generation of multiple realities (Van Wyk & Taole, 2017).

Yin (2018) adds that qualitative researchers using a case study design usually focus on answering the questions “how” and “why”. As a result, I explored in detail the mentoring experiences of women leaders by asking how they experienced mentoring, and why women were mentored in the manner they were. Asking the how and why questions allowed participants to elaboratively express themselves as they shared their experiences. This led to me producing a detailed and descriptive record of the mentoring experiences of the women leaders in the study.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Rule and John (2011) argue that using a case study involves identifying a case, gathering information about the issue, obtaining access to individuals or documents, gathering and analysing data, and writing and presenting the data. In line with their argument, I explored a single case (one University) in the Gauteng province to study (case of) the mentoring experiences of women leaders. I did however involve nine faculties of this one University and obtained permission from the Ethics Committee of the University's Faculty of Education to access the faculties where participants were located. I further obtained consent from the participants and engaged with them to gather their mentoring experiences. An analysis of the data generated in this way led to the findings shared in this thesis and published papers.

As mentioned earlier, the use of a case study has its strengths and limitations. The strength of a case study is that it allows for deep insight into a particular situation (Rule & John, 2011). This characteristic benefits qualitative researchers like me who aim to provide detailed and elaborative descriptions of people's experiences and it worked as an advantage to the study. I was able to get descriptive and in-depth information from the participants as they freely (and through elaborative responses) shared their mentoring experiences during our conversation. Furthermore, case study research allows for using multiple data sources, making it possible for the researcher to triangulate data (Yin, 2018). As I was able to have women leaders and their mentors share their experiences, and I could use multiple data sources (i.e. semi-structured interviews and document analysis) to generate data, all of these served the purpose of triangulation.

Despite its obvious benefits, case study research requires an in-depth engagement with the participants (Butina, 2015), which may prove costly and time-consuming. The researcher may need funding for the research, and it may be difficult to determine the end time for research. I managed the first of these shortcomings by obtaining funding from the National Research Foundation (NRF), which helped me to cover the costs of the research (among others, purchasing internet data for conducting virtual interviews). Conducting a case study may also take too long and result in a massive amount of data that can be difficult to analyse (Yin, 2018). To address this challenge, I resumed with data generation process as soon as I received ethical clearance for the



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

study. Thus, I saved time spent on this research and managed to finish in the expected time.

Another limitation of using a case study is that it involves only a few participants (Butina, 2015), which means that generalisation and transferability potential of data is limited. Flick (2018) warns that focusing on one case causes the findings to be not generalisable. Since I used only one case (a university), my findings may not be generalisable to other institutions. However, the purpose of my research was not to generalise the findings, but to share them so that other institutions might learn from the mentoring practices shared in this study. I involved women leaders and their mentors from nine faculties at the university to gain a wider perspective on the phenomenon. In engaging with the participants during the interviews, I probed for more information. I requested documents (such as a mentoring policy) to triangulate data and produced descriptive data to meet the purpose of this research. This resulted in a sizeable volume of descriptive data, which can be daunting for the researcher to analyse – another disadvantage of a case study.

4.5 Sampling procedure

Choosing suitable participants is very important in research as it is impractical to reach all members of a population (Patten & Newhart, 2018). Researchers therefore select a certain number of people from the population to focus on them and thoroughly explore their situation. This means that they choose a sample of interest from the bigger population (Patten & Newhart, 2018). This action, which is referred to as sampling, involves choosing suitable sites and participants from a large population to generate data for a research study (Leavy, 2017). The researcher also decides on the appropriate number of participants through the sampling process. It is impossible to generate data from the entire population, hence the need to sample suitable participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The researcher decisively selects those who can better contribute to the study from a large group of people.

Generally, two primary sampling techniques are used in research: probability and non-probability sampling (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). The former is a type of sampling that affords an equal chance for members of a large group or population to be sampled



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

for research. An example of this is random sampling (Leavy, 2017), where any individual in a population stands a chance to participate in the study as participants are picked randomly. Non-probability sampling is a type of sampling where only a few specific participants stand a chance of being chosen as per the need of the study. Therefore, it affords a limited opportunity for selection (Leavy, 2017). In non-probability sampling, researchers use a criterion to limit sampling to a specific group of people. In my study, I followed the latter technique to restrict sampling to women leaders who occupy senior positions at one university in South Africa, and their mentors. I utilised convenience sampling, purposive sampling, and snowball sampling methods, which all belong to the non-probability sampling technique, because they allow for small-scale studies (Lambadi, 2017).

4.5.1 Selection of research sites

Convenience sampling was used in choosing one public university in the Gauteng province from the 26 public universities in South Africa. It is a sampling method that allows for selecting research sites and participants based on convenience and accessibility in terms of the location, time, costs of research, and availability of the research sites (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The one public university that I sampled was because it was easily accessible to me. I work in one of the faculties at this university as a junior academic, I reside close to the university and most of its faculties, and I was familiar with the different faculty locations. I use a pseudonym to refer to this university as Green University. I eventually sampled nine faculties at this university. I used pseudonyms to refer to the faculties for confidentiality purposes. Faculties are therefore referred to as Faculty A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, and I. The faculties were sampled purposively because they had women leaders holding positions from the Head of Department to Dean of the Faculty. I was granted permission through ethical clearance approval to access the faculties at the university. Table 4.1 contains a summary of the nine faculties and their representation of women leaders.



Table 4.1: Profile of research sites (faculties) at Green University, based on the university website

Faculties	Departments/schools in the Faculty	Leadership positions (Dean, Deputy Dean, Head of Department, Head of Units/Centre)	Women leaders (Dean, Deputy Dean, Head of Department, Head of Unit/Centre)
A	6 Departments	8	2
B	11 Departments	14	7
C	5 Departments	8	4
D	4 Schools	7	3
E	4 Schools	8	4
F	13 Departments	16	11
G	13 Departments	16	8
H	5 Departments	8	0
I	5 Departments	9	4

4.5.2 Selection of participants

I used purposive sampling to choose women leaders for participation in this study. Thus, I purposively chose women leaders based on their leadership positions and prior mentoring experience. In each of the nine faculties, I focused on and sampled women leaders in senior leadership positions, from Head of Department to the senior position of Dean of the Faculty. These were women leaders who occupied senior leadership positions and had experienced mentoring in their advancement to such positions. Choosing participants purposefully based on specific characteristics is allowed in research. According to Taherdoost (2016) and Patten and Newhart (2018), purposive sampling allows the researcher to deliberately choose participants with particular features or directly involved in the issue under study who can contribute to the study. This selection criterion assisted me to focus on a small number of women leaders and



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

mentors who contributed in-depth knowledge on their mentoring experiences and women leadership advancement. To recruit participants, I sent out invitation letters to women leaders occupying senior positions in the nine faculties based on the information provided on the university website.

My research focused on generating in-depth and maximum information on the mentoring experiences of women leaders during their advancement to senior positions. The number of women leaders occupying senior positions at the University of Pretoria determined the sample size. Therefore, the sampling process was guided by data saturation, meaning that sampling was terminated once redundancy of information was reached (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This practice is allowed in qualitative research and is known as “sampling to the point of redundancy” (Butina, 2015, p. 192). Therefore, I stopped sampling once I started receiving similar information from new participants. Sampling was terminated after having engaged with ten women leaders, as I reached data redundancy at that stage. The ten women leaders had mentoring experiences and were willing to participate in the study and share their experiences.

I transcribed data and shared the transcript with each participant to review and verify that it is a true reflection of their experiences. This process helped me to keep track of redundancy in the data and stop sampling. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), such a tracking exercise can monitor the redundancy in the data. After reviewing and sharing the transcript with participants, one woman leader withdrew her participation. She felt that the information she shared could reveal her identity, despite the assurance of anonymity given to her. Thus, the study ended up with the nine women leaders who are described next.

4.5.2.1 Description of the women leaders (WL)

All women who participated in the study had completed a PhD qualification in their field. Seven of them were professors and two were associate professors, since professorship is one of the requirements for one to be promoted to the leadership positions they occupied at Green University. Only one woman leader was not a



professor at the time of the interviews. I used pseudonyms to refer to the women leaders (WL) in this study and numbered them from WL1 to WL9.

Table 4.2: Biographical information of the participants (WL)

Participant	Age category	Experience in higher education	Experience in senior leadership	Current position held at Green University	Years in the position
WL1	46-55	Since 1996	7 years	HOD	7 years
WL2	56-65	Since 2008	4 years	Head of a Unit	2 years
WL 3	35-45	Since 2007	8 years	HOD	1 year
WL 4	56-65	33 years	6 years	HOD	6 years
WL 5	56-65	Since 2005	7 years	HOD	3 years
WL 6	46-55	38 years	5 years	HOD	1 year
WL 7	35-45	Since 2014	5 years	Deputy Dean	1 year
WL 8	46-55	30 years	10 years	Deputy Dean	3 years
WL 9	46-55	Since 1987	16 years	Deputy Dean	5 years

Five mentors of women leaders involved in the study were identified using snowball sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). They were mentors who played a role in developing and supporting women leaders involved in my study by providing mentorship towards their leadership advancement. Only those mentors who were



willing to share their mentoring experiences were involved in the study. Their involvement allowed for more knowledge and data triangulation. I was directed to the mentors by their mentees who were women leaders involved in the study.

4.5.2.2 Description of the mentors (MT)

The study included five mentor – some of whom were situated in different institutions of higher learning, and some retired. They all had a PhD qualification in their research field, were professors, and had work experience in the HE sector. The group comprised three females and two males. I refer to the mentors as MT (pseudonym) and numbered them from MT1 to MT5.

Table 4.3: Biographical information of the mentors (MT)

Mentor	Age category	Gender	Experience in Higher Education	Current position	Mentoring experience of women who hold leadership positions
MT1	46-55	Female	24 years	Professor at an Institution of Higher Learning	Many to count
MT2	56-65	Female	41 years	HOD	Too many
MT3	56-65	Male	Over 30 years	Associate Chair	Over 200
MT4	56-65	Female	25 years	Retired	Many
MT5	66-70	Male	More than 30 years	Retired	More than 15

4.6 Data generation process

Below I give account of the preliminary exploration that occurred prior to the actual data generation process, and thereafter how actual data was generated and analysed.

4.6.1 Preliminary exploration

Before generating data for the study, I conducted a pilot study to prepare myself for the actual research. For this purpose, I tested the data generation instruments, the use of the online platform in conducting interviews and my conduct in the process. The piloting of research instruments allows the researcher to prepare for the actual research, and to check the practicality and feasibility of the study process (Gumbo, 2017). Through this process, the researcher gets the opportunity to do a practice run and then improve the actual study. Piloting helped me refine the questions in the interview guide, identify the strengths and weaknesses of my questioning technique, and practise the use of different online platforms (Zoom, Blackboard Collaborate and Microsoft Teams) where I was to conduct interviews. It also helped me to practise my time management during the actual interviews.

The pilot interviews comprised women leaders in senior leadership positions at another public university – not Green University, where the actual study took place. The participants were two women leaders and one mentor. The pilot interviews were individual semi-structured interviews conducted on three different online platforms: Blackboard Collaborate, Zoom, and Google Meet. The exercise assisted me in becoming familiar with these platforms and learning how to record sessions and interact appropriately. Some questions were not easy to answer as they lacked focus, and I was able to refine them after the pilot interviews. For example, a question focus on how the mentorship was done was improved by rather asking women leaders to share the process of their mentorship. I also requested documents from participants about their mentoring experiences. None of them had any documents to share. This taught me to be more specific about the type of documents I needed when requesting them in the actual interview. I also learned to communicate better with participants by slowing down on the pace I used to ask question, during the course of the pilot study.

4.6.2 Data generation methods

Data in qualitative research can be generated in various ways, such as through interviews, observations, documents, and written stories. Qualitative researchers are interested in giving voice to the participants about a particular situation (Patten & Newhart, 2018). For this reason, semi-structured interviews were used to generate data about the role of mentorship in the leadership progression of women leaders. Additional data was generated from document analysis. The documents analysed (mentorship policies) were requested from participants (women leaders and their mentors) and downloaded from two university websites as these were available for public use. Using more than one source in generating data added value to the research. It gave more information on the mentorship process in selected institutions. The two methods (semi-structured interviews and document analysis) are discussed below.

4.6.2.1 *Semi-structured interviews*

A semi-structured interview is one of the commonly used data generation methods in qualitative research (Braun et al., 2016). However, it is not the only interview method as it forms part of different interviews that could be used in qualitative research, such as unstructured interviews, structured interviews, focus groups, open ended interview, and narrative interviews (Cohen, et al, 2018; Flick, 2018; Niewenhuis, 2018). The various types of interviews allow the researcher to engage with participants through verbal, direct and two-way engagement (Cohen, et al, 2018; Flick, 2018; Niewenhuis, 2018). It is through this process where the researcher generates verbal, descriptive and detailed data on participants' experiences (Flick, 2018; Niewenhuis, 2018). Hence, the use of semi-structured interviews in this research. It allowed me to gather in-depth accounts of lived experiences from the participants (Braun et al., 2016; Evans & Lewis, 2018) in response to open-ended questions (Alsaawi, 2014), as my intention was to understand participants' experiences from their unique and detailed expressions. The semi-structured interview questions made it possible for me to compose rich descriptive data and so gain an in-depth understanding of mentoring in advancing women leaders to senior positions. Though I came prepared with an



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

interview instrument (Interview Schedule, Annexure 4.1 pages 275, and Annexure 4.2 pages 278), I could probe and seek clarity or further elaborations from participants as they shared their experiences. This strategy is allowed in semi-structured interviews, where researchers come with pre-set questions but are entitled to ask follow-up questions to obtain valuable information (de la Croix et al., 2018; Flick, 2018; Patten & Newhart, 2018).

The interviews were individual, took place virtually on an online platform with which each participant was comfortable, and at a convenient time. The initial plan was to have face-to-face interviews with participants. However, COVID-19 restrictions compelled me to conduct virtual interviews because I could not meet with the participants due to the necessity of limited human physical contact. I obviously had to comply with the restrictions, so as to protect and ensure the safety of all involved.

Virtual interviews fortunately allowed me to proceed with data generation during the pandemic. In qualitative research, virtual interviews are permitted for the generation of data when it is impossible to meet in person (Dakwa, 2017; Mason, 2018). Thus, researcher and participants are allowed to exchange questions and answers through online meetings (Flick, 2018) in such situations. In my study, I used online platforms such as Blackboard Collaborate, Zoom and Google Meet, which allowed me to engage with participants and record interview meetings. It is worth noting that data online interviews depend on the technology used and stable connectivity (Cohen et al., 2018). In cases where participants were having a challenge with the internet connection, I waited for them until the connection was stable and was able to capture all the information discussed during the interview. All the recordings and transcripts of the interviews have since been kept safely and confidentially and will be stored for five years at the Department of Education, Management and Policy Studies in the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria.

One of the advantages of using semi-structured interviews is that it allows for a more relaxed and interactional conversation with participants (Mason, 2018). I experienced this in my study, as participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences with me. They were relaxed and free to talk. The flexibility of a semi-structured interview enabled me to raise follow-up questions for clarity, which added value to the study and



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

strengthened the findings that emerged. However, conducting this type of interview and analysing the data gathered was time-consuming (Butina, 2015; Queirós et al., 2017). This is because this type of interview may take too long and involve too many details and descriptions. After the interview, I spent a huge amount of time transcribing (about four months) and analysing the data (about six months). To address the time challenge in this research, I started the process of data generation immediately after getting ethical approval from the university. I also transcribed data instantly after each interview, which contributed much to the smooth process toward research completion.

4.6.2.1.1 Semi-structured interview instruments

In this study, two interview schedules were prepared for generating data. One interview schedule was designed for women leaders, and another was developed for mentors (See Annexures 4.1 pages 275 & Annexure 4.2 pages 278). The questions in the interview schedule were open-ended, as I wanted the participants to share their mentoring experiences freely. I also asked follow-up questions during the semi-structured interviews where I probed for greater clarity and further description from the participants. This practice is allowed in semi-structured interviews, where the researcher seeks for more clarity and prompts elaboration (Whiting, 2008).

4.6.2.2 Document analysis

Document analysis is one of the methods used in generating data for qualitative research. The analysis of documents is a process of systematically reviewing documents that are either in printed or electronic format (Flick, 2018). The documents are usually readily available upon request from people or institutions. Records conventionally analysed in the research include emails, photos, minutes of meetings, or other personal or official documents (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In analysing documents, researchers read the documents to understand, make meaning, and interpret information presented on the research phenomenon. For this study, I analysed mentorship policies that were available from two universities. The policies were requested from participants who referred me to download them from the websites of these universities, as they were available for public use. This means that the



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

documents were purposively sampled. The documents contributed to my generation of data on the existing reality around the mentorship of women in HEIs and to the verification of findings from semi-structured interviews. Information from documents has been noted in the literature to provide qualitative data for use in case study research designs (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), hence the inclusion of document analysis as a strategy in this study. The use of letters, agendas, administrative documents, etc., serves to validate information from other sources such as interviews or observations (Delgado & Allen, 2019) and in this study, the mentoring policies added valuable information to this study.

Using documents for data generation, however, has advantages and disadvantages. An advantage is that the documents are readily available, which means that usually the researcher can access them easily, depending on the willingness of participants or institutions to share them. A further bonus is the limited costs associated with document analysis, such as printing the documents. In my study, I accessed the mentorship policies easily from the university's website. A disadvantage of analysing documents for data generation is that they are not created with a research agenda in mind and may not provide sufficient information related to the study (Bowen, 2009). In other words, the data acquired from the documents might not answer the research questions or speak to the study phenomenon. Thus, the documents might not add value to the research. Nevertheless, since there is always a possibility that valuable information may be retrieved from the documents, I obtained some important information from mentorship policies to answer the research questions posed in this study.

4.6.2.2.1 Document analysis instrument

I restricted my request for documents to records relating to mentoring in the participants' institution. The question referring to this was infused into the interview schedules towards the end (See Annexures 4.1 pages 275 & Annexure 4.2 pages 278). Most participants did not have mentorship documents, frameworks, or policies;

hence I only analysed two mentorship policies. In so doing, Document Analyses guide in Annexure 5, pages 280 was used.

4.7 Analysis of data

Qualitative data analysis involves a continued process of describing the phenomenon under study (Flick, 2018; Nieuwenhuis, 2020), as the researcher steadily studies the data, interprets it, and analyses it until the research questions are answered. Different qualitative research data analysis methods can be used, such as thematic analysis, content analysis, domain analysis, and narrative analysis (Feza, 2017). Thematic analysis, one of the commonly used methods, involves identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data, and analysing and reporting data according to these themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis method helped to arrange the data from semi-structured interviews and document analysis in an organised and manageable manner in this study. The approach that I followed, known as Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), was recently proposed by Braun and Clarke (2022). The approach has six phases, and I followed all six phases. At the same time, I continuously reflected on my assumptions, expectations, choices, actions, values and beliefs in all the analysis phases as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2022). I ensured that my positionality did not influence how I handled, interpreted and analysed data.

4.7.1 RTA first phase – getting to know the data

I familiarised myself with the data set. According to Braun and Clarke (2022), the researcher needs to take time to read and re-read the data until they know it well. In carefully reading the data, the researcher notes key issues and interesting facts in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). These notes become helpful as they start with the analysis. In this phase, I started off by making a verbatim transcription of all interviews held with women leaders and mentors, and then carefully read the data several times to know what it contained to understand it thoroughly. I made notes of all similar ideas that emerged as I was reading the data.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

4.7.2 RTA second phase – data coding

The researcher next identifies exciting segments from the data that answer the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2022). These segments are coded by the researcher, who then collates code labels and compiles relevant segments of data for each code (Braun & Clarke, 2022). In this second phase, I organised the data in a meaningful and chronological manner by arranging segments based on their similarity to each participant's experiences. I coded data sets, placed the data into small units, collated them, and organised relevant data segments for each code. In doing this, I paid particular attention to information that was pertinent to the research questions.

4.7.3 RTA third phase – generating themes

In this phase, the researcher develops initial themes based on the data and research questions. The knowledge and insight of the researcher play an important role here (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Once themes have been developed, the researcher arranges the data based on themes from the coded data to answer the research questions (Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Braun & Clarke, 2022). In my study, I formulated five relevant themes and numerous sub-themes based on the data and the research questions. Data was subsequently arranged under the initial themes, and the analysis followed from there.

4.7.4 RTA fourth phase – reviewing themes

During this phase, the researcher continuously checks the relevance of the themes to the data and revises them if necessary (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Some themes may be combined, split into other themes, or removed (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The researcher may also reword some themes to align them with the data. I continuously developed and reviewed themes and sub-themes in this phase, to ensure that they are aligned with the data and the research questions. I also checked and made sure that themes and sub-themes captured the essence and meaning of the data. As a result, themes and sub-themes were continuously refined and re-arranged.

4.7.5 RTA fifth phase – refining themes

In this phase, the researcher continuously refines and checks the relevance of the theme to the data presented, and gives meaning to the theme (Braun & Clarke, 2022). In my study, I continued to refine, define and name themes and sub-themes. I further ensured that they were clear and easy to understand, that they spoke to the data, and were relevant to the research questions. I also tried to ensure coherence in the presentation of the data. Under each theme, a short description was provided for the data to make meaning.

4.7.6 RTA sixth phase – reporting findings

The researcher tells the story by reporting their findings to readers and showing how research questions were answered (Braun & Clarke, 2022). In this last phase, the researcher provides the final product – a well-presented academic report (Braun & Clarke, 2022). In my study, the sixth phase involved writing up the analysis and answering the research questions based on the information shared by participants. I supported the findings with extracts from the participants' remarks and the policies analysed. This thesis and research articles emanating from it serve as evidence of the final product of data analysis.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis also involves the interpretation of data (Flick, 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2022). This means that the researcher makes meaning of the data shared by participants. See my interpretation of the data in Chapter five.

4.7.7 Advantages and disadvantages of RTA

One of the advantages of using thematic analysis is that it is a flexible method for analysing qualitative data (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The researcher can go back and forth in the different phases until satisfied with the data presentation and analysis. Hence, Braun and Clarke (2022) argue that analysis in RTA is not a linear process. Reflexive theme analysis furthermore allows the researcher to use the theories of their choice in summarising the data and offering their grasp of the meaning of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). In using RTA, I engaged with the data and developed themes and sub-themes that would be appropriate for presenting findings in this study. Owing

to the flexibility of thematic analysis, I was able to continuously rephrase and improve themes and sub-themes to make sense of the data. I was also able to draw from three theories and use components of the theories (see Chapter three) that were relevant to my study. These were used to support the discussion of the findings (see Chapter six).

A disadvantage of RTA is that it can be subjective (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This is because the data analysis may reflect some bias resulting from the researcher's reflection on the data. In addressing possible subjectivity, I made sure not to impose my preferences in reading, coding, arranging, interpreting and analysing the data on the participants' perspectives. Although conducting reflexive analysis takes time since the researcher has to read the data various times to fully understand it (Braun & Clarke, 2022), the researcher will be able to make proper meaning and sense of the data if this stage has been thoroughly addressed. In my study, I spent a month on this phase and continuously read the data carefully to understand it.

4.8 Quality assurance through trustworthiness

It is imperative that readers must trust the research findings in qualitative research. The researcher must convince the reader that what is presented is a true reflection of the research process and the findings that came from the research. The trustworthiness process is therefore used to assure rigour or quality in qualitative research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Four commonly accepted quality criteria are used to justify trustworthiness in qualitative research, as Lincoln and Guba first proposed in 1985. These are credibility (internal validity), dependability (reliability), confirmability (objectivity), and transferability (external validity) (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The researcher must give sufficient information and engage in practices that contribute to trusted research findings through adhering to these principles. In this study, all four elements were observed to assure the study's trustworthiness, as is discussed below.

4.8.1 Credibility

To ensure credibility in this research, I applied member checking by taking the transcripts back to the participants to verify if my version represented a true reflection of their shared experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I repeated this process until participants were satisfied with my interpretation of their experiences. After a few changes to satisfy requests by participants who required some corrections on the transcripts, all the stories presented were verified and confirmed by participants. I also triangulated data by using document analysis to verify the information gained from the narrative interviews. In particular, I reviewed mentorship policies to see how mentorship for women leaders should be conducted. Triangulation is a normative and vital practice in qualitative research to ensure the significance and credibility of findings (Fabio & Maree, 2012). The data from the documents added to, challenged and confirmed stories shared during the interviews. Bowen (2009) recommended this practice for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research.

4.8.2 Transferability

Transferability involves the potential for the study findings to be transferred to another but similar context, with other participants, and to maintain the same data richness (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). It is not an easy practice in qualitative research, as participants hold different experiences and research focuses on their subjective experiences. Thus, it becomes a challenge to generalise or apply the same findings to another context. My study was conducted at Green University but the findings are not generalisable. However, I described the research sites and biographical information of study participants so as to enhance transferability options. I also made available a detailed report that describes how the study was carried out, its design, methods used to generate data, and the research findings. This practice has been proposed in research (Shenton, 2004; Fabio & Maree, 2012) to increase the transferability of the study. The information recorded in this way may assist other researchers who want to conduct the study in a similar context with similar participants.

4.8.3 Dependability

To enhance the dependability of this study (i.e. ensuring stability and consistency during data generation), I used the same research questions and style of questioning in my engagement with all the participants. All the participants were also asked to share documents of their mentoring experiences. I paid careful attention to transcribing the data by listening to the recordings at least three times. I then presented the findings as per the shared stories from the participants without any bias, as such practices can ensure dependability (Fabio & Maree, 2012; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

In addition, this report explains every step that I followed during data collection and data analysis to give the reader a clear picture of how I reached the findings. An independent critical reader and my supervisor ensured a clear link between data collection, findings, and analysis. I used their expertise to verify consistency in the data generation process, the transcripts, and in the presentation of the findings. This process, referred to as peer debriefing, enhanced the accuracy of study findings by involving someone to review the work done (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It furthermore helped to increase the dependability of the research, since the peer debriefer monitored the consistency of the process.

4.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the objectivity of data collection and analysis, and to ensuring that there are no errors (Fabio & Maree, 2012). It also the degree to which other researchers can confirm results to prove that they were not the researcher's imagination but emanated from the field text (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Since this process requires the researcher not to misrepresent participants' views, I transcribed data verbatim from the recording in this research. It was one way of ensuring that I were not presenting my own thoughts, but the participants' views. I read the transcripts many times until I fully understood them and was able to interpret and share the participants' experiences. I also provided an audit trail with a complete description of all research information. The process followed for data generation and analysis furthermore allowed for scrutiny of the research design to reflect a clear research path that was taken in conducting the study. Lastly, I used a critical reader to review the



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

work to check if the findings align with the data and presented my positionality in this research to be transparent and self-aware.

4.8.5 Triangulation

Triangulation can enhance the quality of qualitative research through its use of different sources of information and methods of generating data (Fabio & Maree, 2012). In my study, I included women leaders and their mentors to understand their different perspectives on the mentoring of women leaders in higher education. I also used interviews and document analysis to triangulate data. This added more information and knowledge on the phenomenon.

4.9 Ethical considerations

Ethics, the principles that determine what is appropriate and not appropriate when conducting research involving people, gives guidelines for conducting research (Sotuku & Duku, 2017; Patten & Newhart, 2018). The researcher is guided by these ethical principles to ensure that the study does not harm participants or tamper with their privacy, that it protects their identity and does not make participants uncomfortable. To ensure research integrity, all ethical principles of research and for conducting a case study were adhered to. I applied for approval and received ethical clearance from my institution through the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. See Annexure 7 on page 285. The University Registrar also gave me permission to access faculties at the university (see Annexure 2 on page 266). In addition to the access and permission to communicate with staff members of the university that was granted to me, I still had to obtain the participants' voluntary participation in the research.

To proceed with the study, I therefore ensured that participation was voluntary by seeking informed consent from participants and informing them about the nature of the research. This process is called informed consent (Flick, 2018). I worked directly with the participants (women leaders) in seeking their informed consent and voluntary participation (see Annexures 3.1 on page 267 and 3.2 on page 271 for the sample correspondence with participants). Prior to their participation in the study, the women



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

leaders were informed that they could withdraw from the study whenever they felt like doing so. This assurance, which was given to honour autonomy as one of the principles of ethical conduct in research (Patten & Newhart, 2018), allowed one of the women leaders to withdraw from the study. After reviewing the interview transcript, she felt that she could be easily identified based on the information she shared.

Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured throughout in this study. I protected the identity of the university, the faculties and participants by using pseudonyms. I did not use any names or information that could reveal the identity of participants so as to honour each participant's privacy (Patten & Newhart, 2018). Besides, I was mindful of the right to privacy that participants have in accordance with Chapter 2 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* – the Bill of Rights – which specifies that everyone has the right to privacy (Republic of South Africa, 1996). My study did not expose participants to any harm, risk or danger in any manner. The study contributed to the body of knowledge on women's leadership development for senior positions to address social injustices in higher education. In so doing, I observed the ethical principle of beneficence (Sotuku & Duku, 2017). All recordings and transcripts are being stored in protected electronic storage with a password to ensure the protection of participants and confidentiality of the information they provided. Written information is also kept safe in a locked shelf at the University of Pretoria, EMPS Department. According to Flick (2018), this process ensures that no one accesses the confidential information shared by participants. Both the electronic and written data gathered will be stored for 15 years in the archives of the University of Pretoria.

4.10 Limitations of the study

The main limitation of the study was that it drew from a single case study involving one public university in South Africa, thus reducing the generalisability of the findings. According to Rule and John (2011), findings from a case study may not be generalised to the entire population. To try and address this limitation, though, my case study involved nine faculties in the university, which opened the scope of participants in this research. As a result, the experiences of 14 participants in the study provided sufficient knowledge on the mentoring experiences of women leaders. Other universities will be



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

able to draw from these experiences and practices in conducting and managing their mentorship programmes. Additionally, mentoring practices shared in this study may assist in developing and improving mentorship in other universities.

4.11 Delimiters of the study

The study was demarcated to one public university (Green Univesrity) in the Gauteng province, from among the 26 public universities in South Africa. The study at Green University covered women leaders occupying senior leadership positions – from the lowest position of Head of Department to the most senior position of Dean of Faculty in the nine faculties of the sampled public university. It only involved nine women leaders who have experienced mentoring in their advancement to senior positions, as well as five mentors of the women leaders involved in the study. Data was generated over a period of eight months, starting from April to November 2021.

4.12 My positionality in the research

I am a female, and a junior academic in the university sampled for this research. As a young woman, I have observed the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, and more so in senior positions. Although this intrigued me and prompted me to investigate possible ways of addressing the gender gap that exists in HEI leadership, it did not influence my role and practice in conducting this research. The women and mentors involved in the study were all senior academics, and my position as a junior academic reduced my influence in engaging with the participants. My passion for women leaders and mentorship did not influence my interpretation of the findings. I was objective as I engaged with the data, ensuring that I shared participants' experiences from their perspective. To ensure this, I shared the transcripts with the participants, who reviewed them and confirmed the accurate representation of their experiences as they had shared them.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

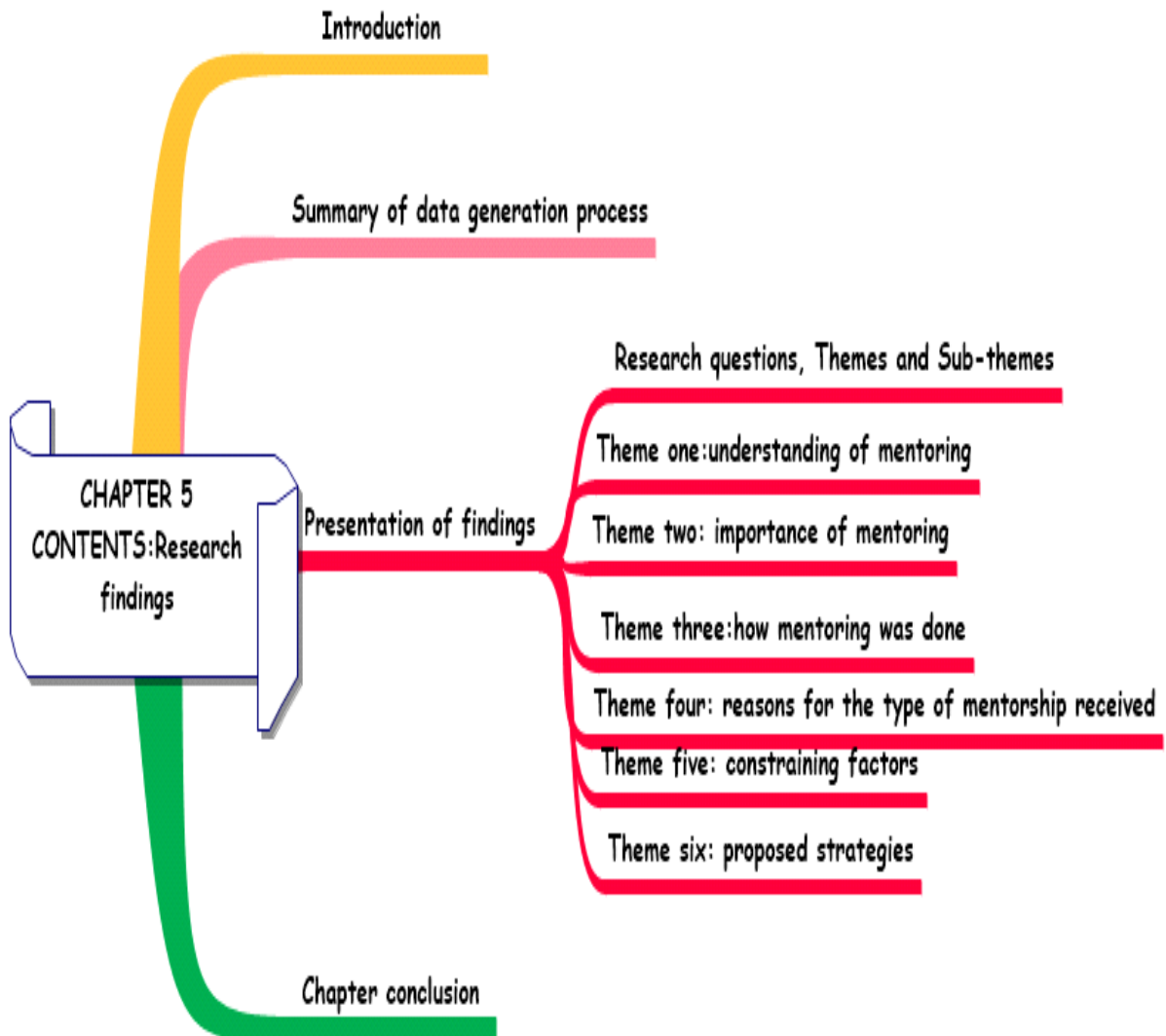
4.13 Chapter conclusion

Chapter four gave a descriptive outline of the research process followed in executing the study. I began the chapter by stating and discussing the research paradigm, approach and design adopted in the study. After that, I explained how research sites, and participants were sampled. I then shared how semi-structured interviews and document analysis were instrumental in generating data for the study. This led to the use of thematic data analysis which was explained thereafter. Towards the chapter's conclusion, criteria taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the study and all measures pertaining to ethical considerations were articulated.

Chapter five next presents the findings that emanated from the process articulated in Chapter four, as well as my interpretation of these findings.



CHAPTER 5 CONTENTS





CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter presented the research methodology, research paradigm, approach, and design for the study. This was followed by an extensive discussion of the sampling approaches for research sites and participants, research methods used to generate data (i.e. semi-structured interviews and document analysis), justification of quality assurance using trustworthiness, the ethical principles adhered to, and my positionality in the research. Chapter five now presents the study findings and my interpretation of the mentoring experiences of women leaders occupying senior positions at one public university in South Africa (Green University).

The findings derive from the data generated through semi-structured interviews with nine women leaders and five mentors of some of those women leaders, as well as the analysis of mentorship policies. Findings are presented under themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data, in line with thematic analysis. In this presentation, quotations from participants' responses and captions from the policies are infused as evidence of the findings. The chapter begins with a summary of the data generation process to give an account of what actually happened in the field during data gathering. This action is followed by the categorisation of identified themes and sub-themes, and subsequently, the presentation of the findings.

5.2 Summary of the data generation process

This is an account of what actually happened during the data generation process compared to what had been planned. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted virtually with each individual participant, as the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions ruled it unsafe to have contact interviews. Participants were invited to online interviews at a time convenient for them (see Section 4.6.1). I created virtual interview sessions on Blackboard Collaborate, Zoom, and Google Meet for each participant, and sent the link prior to the interview. Participants were asked questions using the interview schedule that was being displayed on the screen. I used two



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

interview schedules, one for women leaders and one for the mentors of the women leaders (the interview schedules are attached as Annexures 4.1 and 4.2). The interview process was very interesting and enjoyable, as most participants were eager to share their mentorship experiences. Almost all interviews lasted from 45 minutes to an hour, as participants keenly shared in detail and elaborated on their mentoring experiences. Interviews were recorded and saved with permission from the participants (see Section 4.6.1). Documents in the form of mentorship policies were requested from participants and retrieved from two institutions' websites. These were downloaded, saved, and later reviewed.

All interviews were subsequently transcribed verbatim by the researcher – a process that took about four months, as there were fifteen interviews to transcribe. It was quite an overwhelming exercise, as I went over each recording three times to ensure that I had captured all information accurately. Transcripts were thereafter shared with the participants to verify that they accurately reflected their shared experiences. Some acknowledged the true reflection of what they had shared with me, while others recommended corrections to be made to the transcripts. I attended to all such requests. One participant (woman leader) withdrew her participation, feeling that what she had shared would reveal her identity. Her transcript was immediately withdrawn and none of what she shared is presented in this study. Interview transcripts and documents are saved on the universal serial bus (USB) device and will be stored for fifteen years at the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria, in accordance with UP's data management requirements. I believe that I was able to build good rapport with the participants during my engagement with them and established truly beneficial relationships. For example, one woman leader invited me to her mentorship programmes in her faculty. All participants showed interest in the study and are eager to know the findings of this study. I say this because I have since received emails from some participants requesting feedback on the completion of this study and requesting access to my findings. This really encouraged me as I compiled this thesis.



5.3 Presentation of findings

My findings are presented under themes and sub-themes that emerged from the process of thematic analysis detailed in Section 4.7. This analysis was conducted in six phases, where I familiarised myself with data, generated initial codes, searched for themes, reviewed themes, defined and named themes and sub-themes, and produced the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A sample of this process is provided in Annexure 6 on page 275-276. The themes and sub-themes used to present the findings are discussed below.

5.3.1 Research questions, themes and sub-themes

Table 5.1 summarises, at a high level, the linkages between research questions, themes and sub-themes identified from the findings.

Table 5.1: Research questions, themes and sub-themes

Research questions	Themes	Sub-themes
1. "How do women leaders occupying senior positions in a South African university understand mentoring?"	Theme 1 Conceptualisation of mentoring by women leaders occupying senior positions	<i>Sub-theme 1.1:</i> A relationship <i>Sub-theme 1.2:</i> Role modelling <i>Sub-theme 1.3:</i> Mentoring as support <i>Sub-theme 1.4:</i> Identifying potential and nurturing people <i>Sub-theme 1.5:</i> Offering career guidance and giving advice
2. "Why is mentoring important in developing women leaders for senior positions?"	Theme 2 The importance of mentoring in developing women leaders for senior positions	<i>Sub-theme 2.1:</i> The importance of having a mentor <i>Sub-theme 2.2:</i> The role and contribution of mentoring to career progression and advancement to senior positions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receiving career guidance and advice



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating leadership opportunities • Giving encouragement and building confidence • Providing opportunities for professional development • Leading to career growth • Becoming mentors
3. "How is mentoring used to prepare women leaders for senior leadership positions in the higher education sector?"	<p>Theme 3</p> <p>How mentoring was conducted in preparing women leaders for the senior positions they occupy</p>	<p><i>Sub-theme 3.1: Informal mentorship</i></p> <p><i>Sub-theme 3.2: Identification and development of a successor</i></p> <p><i>Sub-theme 3.3: Focus areas in mentoring women leaders</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application for funding • Introduction to academic networks • Balancing career/personal life • Developing soft skills • Development for leading male-dominated departments <p><i>Sub-theme 3.4: Reasons why women leaders were mentored in the same manner as their mentors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of mentorship policy/guidelines • Lack of training for mentors
4. "What are the constraining factors encountered in mentoring women leaders for advancement to a senior position?"	<p>Theme 4</p> <p>Constraining factors encountered in mentoring women leaders for senior positions</p>	<p><i>Sub-theme 4.1: Lack of support and funding for mentorship</i></p> <p><i>Sub-theme 4.2: No training for mentors</i></p> <p><i>Sub-theme 4.3: Insufficient time for mentorship</i></p> <p><i>Sub-theme 4.4: Mentors overstepping boundaries</i></p> <p><i>Sub-theme 4.5: Having mentor/s in a different context</i></p>



<p>5. “What mentoring strategies can be utilised for effective mentoring of women leaders?”</p>	<p>Theme 5 Proposed strategies for effective mentorship of women leaders</p>	<p><i>Sub-theme 5.1:</i> Formal mentorship, informal mentorship, and a combination of both <i>Sub-theme 5.2:</i> Peer mentorship <i>Sub-theme 5.3:</i> Flexible mentoring <i>Sub-theme 5.4:</i> Having mentorship in all career stages</p>
---	---	--

My research findings are presented using the five themes and 20 sub-themes that emerged from the data. The following paragraphs present, discuss and interpret these findings. I use coded pseudonyms to refer to participants in presenting the findings, for instance WL 1-9 (women leaders 1 to 9) and MT 1-5 (mentors 1 to 5).

The first theme was generated from the responses of participants in answering the first research question: “How do women leaders occupying senior positions in a South African university understand mentoring?”

5.3.2 Theme 1: Understanding of mentoring by women leaders occupying senior positions at a South African university

Since the concept of mentoring is used differently in various contexts, it can be confusing to grasp what it entails. I therefore wish to share how women leaders in the study understood mentoring, before sharing their mentoring experiences. Under Theme 1, I focus on the conceptualisation of mentoring by women leaders in the study by using sub-themes that emerged and provided deeper insight into this theme. The sub-themes used to present the findings are *mentoring as a relationship; role modelling; mentoring as support; identifying potential and nurturing people; and offering career guidance and advice*. These were prominent descriptions of mentoring by the women leaders, as will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

5.3.2.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Mentoring as a relationship

The findings revealed that most women leaders in the study understood mentoring to be a relationship of knowledge impartation that involves a novice academic with an



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

experienced person in the same or similar field. For example, WL1 said, *it is when a senior person is in a kind of a developmental relationship with an emerging researcher or a younger person*. The same sentiment was shared by WL4, who expressed:

How I understand mentoring is that an early-career person in some field builds a relationship with a more experienced person in that field or in an associated field. They do not have to be in the same Department, but probably an academic should be mentored by an academic. This relationship provides advice, emotional support, and encouragement to follow a path that will lead to success in one's field.

Participants' expressions showed a similar understanding of mentoring as a work-based relationship that focuses on the development and career success of the mentee being the less experienced individual in the mentorship. The findings imply that the mentee learns from the mentor who is knowledgeable in the field, as the latter is seasoned in that career and therefore able to guide and support the former in growing their career. What is clear from this finding, is that mentoring results in career growth and success owing to the development that takes place in the mentorship relationship. The finding also seems to suggest that for mentorship to be beneficial, the mentor and mentee should be in a similar field of work. The assumption is that the mentor is able to guide and direct mentees in the fields with which they are familiar and in which they are experts.

In further engagements with participants, they elaborated on their understanding of mentoring as a relationship by distinguishing between the two types of relationships that can exist in mentoring. According to them, mentoring can be either formal or informal. WL1 explicated:

In formal mentoring, there is an actual agreement that is signed that this senior person is mentoring an emerging researcher or a younger person....it requires even putting together a mini timetable for your mentoring activities. The informal, is not written. It is just someone who is reaching out to you and continually asking you how



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

to do this, I have problems with that, or I have had a rejection, how do I look at this, that kind of an informal discussion.

The above extract distinguishes in detail the practices involved in formal and informal mentorship. Participants' understanding implies that formal mentorship is carefully planned, intentional and structured, with planned meetings and activities guiding the formal mentorship process, while informal mentoring may just happen mutually in the work environment as people engage with one another. The findings suggest that informal mentorship can manifest as a result of someone just caring for the career growth of a junior or less experienced person, and thereby assisting them to grow through informal conversations and engagements. This kind of mentorship is not guided or monitored, and it lacks accountability. Hence, the mentor may withdraw support of the mentee at any point in time, as there is no binding agreement to the mentorship.

It was noted from the findings that almost all participants did not define mentoring from a senior-level position (of the mentee) perspective, but rather from an early-career academic support point of view. This may imply that mentoring for senior academics and leaders has not been recognised or even noted as a practice that exists. Only one woman (WL6) in the study described mentoring from the senior position support perspective:

Mentoring for me can be formal or informal. You can get a mentor who can focus on your responsibility of being HOD. Focusing on what is your role? How can I assist you? What are the decisions that you need to take? Let us discuss your roles and responsibilities...but then there is also the non-technical or the softer side, which is just talking to somebody about, I am feeling depressed today, or I am very emotional or I have difficult colleagues that are not listening to me, what do you suggest?

This participant's understanding indicates that leaders also need mentoring in executing their roles and that this support can cater to both their leadership



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

development and emotional well-being. In this kind of support, leaders are supported to execute their roles better and to cope with challenges pertaining to their leadership roles. This was an important description as mentoring applies to leaders and women leaders in particular. It serves as a support and developmental mechanism for their leadership role.

What was explicit from the findings under Sub-theme 1.1 is that the purpose of a mentoring relationship – whether formal or not – is to develop, assist and support the less-experienced person to grow and succeed in their career. This gives an indication that the mentor invests time in working with and helping the mentee to achieve their career goals and aspirations. It shows a one-sided effort by the mentor in the relationship and the benefits are only directed to the mentee.

Nonetheless, further engagements with participants revealed an additional side that holds both the mentor and mentee active and responsible in a mentoring relationship. The findings showed that some participants understood mentoring as a relationship that required both parties to be actively involved and invest in the relationship for mentoring to be successful. WL1 said, *...the mentee must be willing to be mentored, and must commit to the mentorship*. Excerpts from WL2 emphasised the importance of commitment in the mentorship:

...successful mentoring needs equal effort by the mentor and the mentee, both must be willing. And you do not want to waste your time and the mentee's time.

The above remarks show that mentorship is a two-way process that requires commitment and joint effort in the mentorship from both the mentor and the mentee. The findings suggest that the mentee must see the value of the mentorship in relation to their career growth and be willing to learn and receive guidance and support, recognising that they need the support. The mentor must also play their part in conducting the mentorship willingly and with dignity. This suggests that mentors cannot be forced into a mentorship relationship, as they may lack enthusiasm and not put effort into it. The findings further imply that a one-sided effort in the mentorship will



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

result in it being unfruitful; there is a clear need for a collaborative effort, which is likely to result in an effective mentorship that will benefit both the mentor and the mentee.

According to participants' further description of mentoring, it benefits both the mentor and the mentee. According to WL2, mentoring *actually reduces mentors' workload and the mentee grows at the same time*. Hence, WL3 remarked, *it should be compulsory for somebody to be a mentor because it actually helps you to grow as a person, and the value that you can give to somebody else is enormous*.

Participants' responses suggest that the mutual relationship makes a positive contribution to both the academic and the personal lives of both the mentor and mentee. While there is an exchange of knowledge from both parties, there is also a sense of fulfilment from the mentors' side. This suggests an increased sense of importance and value as mentors feel needed and have an impact on the lives of their mentees. The mentee on the other hand gets to realise their potential and grow in their career, which gives satisfaction to their mentors who nurture them and get to see such growth. One gets a sense of the mentor serving as a role model who cares for and invests in the development of the mentee. Hence, existing views that mentoring is role modelling came up as one of the findings of the study.

5.3.2.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Mentoring as role modelling

Findings showed an understanding of mentoring as being a role model to someone. Actually, some women leaders referred to their mentors as their role models because they learned from them while working very closely with them. Below is a quotation from the narrative of WL4 as she described mentoring to mean role modelling:

I never had a mentor the way people talk about it now, but I had some role models. My supervisor was a wonderful woman, Professor I admired her immensely. I still think that she taught me everything I know about supervision for instance. So, in my mind I think she helped to create this feeling that women were able and could be doing amazing things which she did. ... it was lovely to have her as somebody I could look up to.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

The findings illustrate a close connection between role modelling and mentoring and suggest that the junior or novice mentee has people who grow and support them in their career. This implies that mentoring is leading by example and setting an example to the mentee on how to do things within a field of work. Thus, mentors have to set a high standard for the mentee to look up to. Also, mentoring can be a useful instrument in women's leadership growth, as they see possibilities from other women who are successful in their careers, and who – while serving as their role models – also support them to achieve their career goals.

5.3.2.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Mentoring as support

During the interview, most participants described mentoring to mean giving support to the mentee so as to achieve their career goals and aspirations. In fact, the word “support” was prominent in the findings. As expressed by WL3, *mentoring is about being supportive and creating a space for somebody to evolve into that person that they want to be; my mentor did that a lot for me*. The same sentiment was shared by WL9 who mentioned that *mentoring involves anyone that can support and help you practically, to do better what you are currently busy with*.

The above remarks from participants show that the role of a mentor involves being available for the mentee to support what they are doing. This, the mentor does not only come up with new projects or ideas for the mentee, but also helps them with their current assignments and tasks in building their career. Mentors must pay attention to what the mentee needs so that they can offer the necessary support. This kind of support has the ability to push the mentee to do more and better than expected.

5.3.2.4 Sub-theme 1.4: Identifying potential and nurturing people

In describing mentoring, the findings revealed that most participants understood it as an act of leading the mentee to self-discovery of their innate abilities. According to the participants in my study, the mentors identify potential in their mentee and nurture this to achieve the realisation of the mentee's full potential. For example, WL8 said *mentoring is about showing people what their potential is so they can realise that*. The same view was also shared by WL3:



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

I feel like mentoring is about identifying potential in people and helping them to see it in themselves and bringing it out. Mentoring is really helping people to discover their confidence and delivering on that confidence. ...the power that they have inside themselves.

One woman leader, during her description of mentoring, actually placed this definition of mentoring to practice by sharing how her mentor identified potential in her and built her for that potential to bear fruit. WL2 expounds:

She saw in me potential and it was at that point that she appointed me as the HOD of ... Department.... I think she saw in me somebody who had a desire to work and to make a difference. I think that is why she offered me that opportunity and it is because of that opportunity that she offered me that propelled me to other institutions where I did not disappoint, leading up to where I am.

The expressions of participants suggest that mentoring is about leading people to discover their own abilities and strengths. This illustrates that there is no single person born without skills, ability and talent. Based on participants' expressions, mentors play a huge role in leading the mentee to self-actualisation and putting to practice their full potential. It suggests that mentoring is an act of grooming someone, which is likely to result in career success and advancement in leadership. People who are mentored perform at their maximum ability through the guidance of their mentors. The findings also suggest that mentors should be people who can encourage and offer support to their mentees, as they engage in the process of discovering their full capability. They should be people who are able to identify potential in others and who have the skill to nurture that.

5.3.2.5 Sub-theme 1.5: Offering career guidance and giving advice

The majority of the participants viewed mentoring as having somebody who gives guidance and advice in career development. According to participants, the mentor acts



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

as the right-hand man to the mentee, showing them how to navigate their career. The remark by WL 9 attests to this: *For me, mentoring is having someone that can give you advice when you are in a situation where you do not know what to do next.* WL5 added:

Mentoring would be to have somebody that can give you guidance, almost direct guidance. Someone who would say, this is the way to deal with that, done by somebody who is invested in you and interested in your career growth.

The evidence from the above quotations implies that mentoring should be done by somebody who is well informed about career paths within the field and can clearly show the mentee how to grow and progress in that career. Thus, it has to be someone who has been successful in that career and already knows the ropes to make a successful career in their field. The findings imply that the mentor travels the career journey with the mentee, guiding them and giving them advice and support to achieve their career goals. The findings also suggest that the mentor should understand the career aspirations of their mentee so that they may guide and support them towards achieving those desired goals. Also, the mentor must have their interest at heart so that they do not mislead them.

Findings in Theme 1 have shown participants' understanding of mentoring as a developmental relationship between a mentor and mentee, which can be formal or informal. The formal approach involves a more planned and structured mentorship, while the informal happens by chance as colleagues engage informally in the workplace. Also, mentoring means having someone who acts as a role model that a mentee can learn from. It was furthermore understood as a way of supporting, identifying potential and nurturing, and offering career guidance and advice to the mentee. What also emerged from the findings under Theme 1 was that mentorship benefits both the mentee and mentee, and it leads to the career growth and well-being of both parties.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Theme 2 captures participants' responses to the second research question: "Why is mentoring important in developing women leaders for senior leadership in the higher education sector?"

5.3.3 Theme 2: The importance of mentoring in developing women leaders to senior positions

This theme focuses on the lived mentoring experiences of women leaders in the study, and shows how mentoring contributed to their advancement to the senior positions that they occupy at one public university in South Africa (Green University). Women leaders shared how mentoring contributed to their development and preparation for the positions they occupy. Two sub-themes that emerged from the data and are used to guide the presentation below involve "the importance of having a mentor", and "the role and contribution of mentoring received to career progression and advancement to senior positions".

5.3.3.1 Sub-theme 2.1: The importance of having a mentor

It is significant to first highlight that all participants in the study recognised having a mentor as a big contributor to their career success. They emphasised the importance for all people, and women in particular, to have a mentor in order to succeed in different stages of life, including a career life. According to the participants, having a mentor contributes to career growth, success, and promotion. The women leaders' expressions on how much value mentoring and mentors added to their career growth, leadership success and advancement to leadership positions, are quoted below. Most of them felt that they would not be where they are in leadership if they did not have mentors. For example, WL7 said, *I was mentored throughout my career and that is what has really helped me to succeed in my career.* WL2 postulated:

I think mentoring played a huge role in my career, a large part of who I am is because of mentoring. It prepared me to be who I am. I would say, 80% of my success originated from the mentoring relationship that I had with this lady. I think she was the game changer in my life.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

It is clear from the extracts above that mentoring has a substantial role to play in developing women for a successful career. The findings suggest that there can be minimal success in a career and in life in general if one does not have a mentor to receive guidance and support from. They also confirm that women in particular can achieve their goals and vision if they are mentored. More attention should be paid to the mentorship of women leaders in HE, and this includes ensuring that all women have a mentor to enhance their career growth. This may be facilitated by higher education institutions that need to promote, support and coordinate the mentorship of women leaders for it to be successful. The coordination of mentorship may include assisting women leaders to access mentors and monitoring the mentorship process.

5.3.3.2 Sub-theme 2.2: The role and contribution of mentoring received to career progression and advancement to senior positions

Women leaders in the study regarded mentoring as an enabler in their careers as it had a great impact on their growth and progression. Below I discuss the reasons provided by participants, in explaining how mentoring contributed to their progression and advancement to the positions they occupy.

5.3.3.2.1 Receiving career guidance and advice

It was discovered from the findings that women leaders in the study received career guidance and advice from their mentors, which contributed to their career advancement. Women admitted that their mentors guided them and were there for them to offer advice on how they can arrange their careers to succeed in academia. Evidence shows that this contributed to them making the right decisions, which led to their career success. WL6 shared the role played by her mentor in this regard by saying, *she was there just also to give advice and where there are uncertainties, to kind of clarify any uncertainties that I had, that also helped a lot.* In addition, participant WL3 stated:

She actually helped us to understand what it was like in academia, what to expect, the pitfalls, and what to do to try and grow our



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

careers. She was a strong woman in the field. She was always there to guide us and say, “this is what you should do to access this program, and go to this conference”.

The findings suggest that having a mentor is for women leaders like having a guide to building a career in academia, as they will have somebody to show them how to avoid unnecessary mistakes and what to pay attention to in building this career. This is important as women will not allow their career growth to be delayed by minimal mistakes and they will know exactly what to focus on in growing their careers. The expressions of participants implied that mentors are able to help women leaders shape their careers, fit into an academic career, meet their career benchmark and therefore advance in leadership.

5.3.3.2.2 Creating leadership opportunities

The findings reflected that women in the study were given responsibilities to lead programmes and projects in their departments by their mentors. According to the participants, this exposure built and improved their confidence in leadership. Also, through those tasks, they learned to be responsible and accountable for a project. WL3 explicated:

She entrusted us with a lot of events in the department. She put us in charge of things, even if it was small things like visits from American students. Hosting American students who came over to ... university at that time. She said, “you two run with it, plan the program and organise all of it”. It was a brilliant experience, obviously, we make mistakes, solve them and get over them. Allowing us to be in charge of things, gave us the confidence to believe in our abilities, and we became confident as women. Confidence became part of our character. I think that she definitely was a huge influence in our career.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

The findings indicate that having a mentor contributes to women leaders being given opportunities to exercise their leadership skills as they get entrusted with tasks of responsibility and accountability. In this way, women leaders improve their leadership skills and, in turn, get assurance of their leadership. This implies that exposure to leadership opens opportunities for women to be recognised for senior positions. Additionally, women learn the culture of institutions and establish some expectations of leadership roles as they embark on this task. This can increase their success when they apply for senior positions, as they will be knowledgeable about the institution. Women leaders gain confidence in their own leadership abilities.

5.3.3.2.3 *Giving encouragement and building confidence*

The findings showed that most women leaders involved in the study were encouraged by their mentors (through mentoring) to apply for the senior positions they occupy. Surprisingly, most of them did not have the confidence and intention to apply for those positions; however, after consultation with and encouragement by their mentors, they gained confidence and pursued those positions. The following were the participants' expressions:

I think it is quite significant that I did not think about applying for the Head of Department post when it was initially advertised. My mentor had to give me a nudge and say "why don't you think about applying"? He was very supportive and instrumental in making me see myself a bit more positively. He certainly pointed out how much I did in the Department and said he thought I would be very good in the position, so that affirmation was useful to me. the fact that he encouraged me to apply for the job and affirmed me as an abled person really built my confidence. (WL4)

He was always supportive of me making progress and being promoted. He also encouraged me to apply for promotion and for the position, telling me that I have the necessary qualities and capabilities to be the HOD. (WL6)



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

It is significant and explicit from the findings that women in the study received affirmation and encouragement from their mentors to apply for the positions they occupy. This suggests that mentors play a huge role in leading women to perform at their maximum potential. The findings also imply that mentoring leads to self-awareness and a sense of enablement. The motivation provided by mentors can lead to women leaders viewing themselves in a positive manner and having self-confidence. Thus, mentoring plays an important role, more so because women have been identified as having a lack of self-confidence and therefore being hesitant to apply for senior positions.

5.3.3.2.4 *Providing an opportunity for professional development*

The findings proved that women leaders were developed in their professional and leadership practice through mentorship. WL9 shared how her mentor developed her:

She discussed with me the importance of teaching and learning and how we can make it more relevant, sharing the techniques that she has used in her faculty. The best practices that I can use in my faculty.

Two women leaders shared how their mentors taught them the skill of managing conflict:

I learned to resolve conflicts better. I learned the importance of having a high level of emotional intelligence as a woman leader so that even when the guns come at me, I find a way to handle them. ... I learned to resolve conflicts without actually losing myself in that...having a high level of emotional intelligence has helped me in my role as a leader. (WL7)

If I had problems with a difficult parent or a difficult student, and I did not know how to approach the problem, I could always contact



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

her and she would help me and give me advice on how to deal with that. (WL9)

The findings revealed that women leaders are capacitated based on their developmental needs, so that they perform their duties and leadership better. Through this, they acquire critical skills such as managing conflicts appropriately, which is one of the vital skills in leadership. What is noticeable from the quotations above is that the development that was offered was tailor-made to suit the needs of women leaders. This emphasises the critical role that mentoring plays, as there is otherwise minimal development for women leaders to be successful in their careers.

5.3.3.2.5 Leading to career productivity and growth

Most women leaders felt that they grew in their career practice and achieved more as they were engaged in mentoring. In their opinion, this contributed to their promotion, as they were more productive in their career. Below WL2 narrates how mentoring led to her improved productivity and career growth:

The university was really struggling at the time when I moved in. I think they had about 2000 students, in total, in the whole university. In my position, I was able to work hard with my team, and go out and recruit teachers and I brought in new ideas about upgrading teachers in education, skilling them. ...in about two years, the university population had moved to about 6000 students. I grew so much in my practice from her mentorship. My mentor felt that I could do more for the university after she saw my potential.... They asked me if I could start the Institute of Open and Distance Learning. I gladly accepted. They appointed me to the Directorship of the Institute of Open and Distance Learning.

The extract above is evidence of career growth and promotion to leadership that the participants experienced in a short space of time. This finding indicates that mentoring



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

contributes to career growth, success, and promotion, as working with a senior leader as a mentor contributes to exposure to opportunities for the mentee to grow their career. The above expression of WL2 also suggests that women leaders can earn the trust of their mentors as they work closely with them, and then they deliver and sometimes perform beyond expectation. Mentoring can serve as the mechanism to reveal the potential of women leaders and lead to them being recognised for greater opportunities.

5.3.3.2.6 *Becoming mentors*

One of the findings worth noting is that most women leaders involved in the study ended up being mentors to others. Their remarks show that, through the mentorship experiences they themselves had had, they learned how to mentor others and developed a passion for developing and assisting juniors to grow in their career. The following verbatim quotations substantiate this perception:

Where I work, I have now identified people to mentor. I put them under my wings. I protect them, I train them, I show them how to do things, I rebuke them, and I give them opportunities. (WL2)

I am just very thankful I have been given that opportunity to mentor others as well. I am on the as a mentor to young scientists in Africa. I am very open to doing that, I find it very rewarding. (WL8)

The findings indicate that women who received mentorship, voluntarily mentor others because they have seen the value of mentorship in their own careers. They experienced the value of a helping hand and as a result, have the desire to give back. The expressions of participants reveal the passion that the women leaders have for mentoring others. They also show an understanding of mentoring others from the position of giving without any expectation, and the mentors find pleasure in seeing the success of their mentee.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

The findings under Theme 2 have shown the importance of mentoring for women leaders, as it contributes to their development; career growth; leadership opportunities that improve leadership skills and practice; encouragement; and building confidence for leadership success. Theme 3 offers findings in answering the third research question: “How is mentoring used to prepare women leaders for senior positions in the higher education sector?”

5.3.4 Theme 3: How mentoring was done in preparing women leaders for the senior positions they occupy

This theme focuses on how women leaders in the study were mentored for their advancement to and placement in senior positions. In presenting this, four sub-themes are used: *informal mentorship; identification and development of a successor; focus areas in mentoring women leaders; and reasons why women leaders were mentored in the same manner as their mentors.*

5.3.4.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Informal mentorship

The first finding revealed that all women leaders in the study received informal mentorship. Women leaders and their mentors shared that their mentorship relationship transpired mutually without any written agreements, nor was it arranged by institutions they were based in. MT4 expressed, *the first thing I have to say is that the mentor-mentee relationship was never a formal one.* The same sentiment was shared by MT5, presented in the following quotation:

There was a lot of informal mentoring taking place in the car every morning and every afternoon as we drove from my home to the office and so on. It was an informal discussion. But from what I gained later on, those were her learning opportunities.

Two women leaders confirmed what was shared by the mentors, namely that their mentorship took place informally. In this, WL1 said, *I would say it was informal, in a*



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

sense that it was never a full agreement, and it was not like every week it was planned that we must talk about this or that. Another woman leader (WL9) explicates:

We had regular coffees and she spoke to me when I was Deputy Dean on how to cope with the position and how to cope with difficult parents and so on. It just happened in such informal interactions.

The findings further revealed that in this informal mentorship, mentors relied on their own prior mentoring encounters and what they had read in general about mentoring in order to mentor the women leaders. Apparently, the mentors received mentoring in their career adventures. For example, MT1 said, *I mentor from my own experience, how I was mentored.* This same experience was shared by MT2 who expounded:

I had mentors in my career as well. That probably showed me a bit about how I should mentor others. I mentor people from just experience, and what I have read and studied about it.

The extracts above indicate that institutions of higher learning have not yet structured and planned mentorship for women leaders, in other words, women who are mentored simply happen to come into contact with people and leaders who have the desire to assist them with their career growth. The mentoring results from coincidental relationships and courtesy acts from those who care about the woman's leadership growth. This suggests a need for the development of formal and structured mentorship programmes for women leaders. There is a need for engagements from institutions on how mentoring for women leaders could be organised, structured, and executed. This is important because, as the findings suggest, mentoring for women will otherwise remain limited to those who are fortunate enough to have willing mentors, rather than mentoring being made available to all women who desire guidance towards leadership. Another limitation of informal mentoring is that the mentorship will only go as far as the prior knowledge or expertise of the mentor allows.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

5.3.4.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Identification and development of a successor

In the second finding under this theme, one mentor shared a unique practice that she used in mentoring one of the women leaders involved in the study. She shared how she had identified this woman as her successor for a senior position and mentored her to take over the position when she retires. She expressed that she did this because she saw potential and suitable qualities in this woman leader. She therefore started showing this woman leader how to execute leadership duties for that particular position. The mentoring started three years before the mentor retired, to ensure that the woman leader learned all that she needed to know for this position. This is expressed in the narrative below.

As a Deputy Dean, obviously, I was very much interested in finding a successor. I identified Prof... to succeed me. I knew that she as a woman had all the characteristics that the post required. Her passion for the success of students, her concern for the wellbeing of students, her institutional knowledge, her hardworking nature, and her commitment, all confirmed that she was a suitable candidate as my successor. I talked to her about that about three years before stepping down. ...I then made sure that I included her in every aspect of the job and what it required so that she was well-prepared for taking that on. ...I made sure that I exposed her to aspects of the role. ...the intentionality of it was to expose her to all of the different demands that she would have to deal with and committees. (MT4)

The quotation above shows that mentoring could be used to intentionally open leadership opportunities for women leaders. In doing this, they can be nurtured into a position and taught how to execute the duties of the position before they actually obtain it. Thus, mentoring will equip women leaders with knowledge about the culture and leadership practices of the institutions before they step into the position. This, on its own, places these women a step closer to successful leadership, as they would have

learned the skills necessary for the position. The fact that the woman leader (mentee), is holding the position that she was mentored for, shows the success of this strategy for mentoring women leaders.

5.3.4.3 Sub-theme 3.3: Focus areas in mentoring women leaders

A third key finding that emerged from the data involved the focus areas in mentoring women leaders. In my study, various points were mentioned as primary focus areas in mentoring women leaders for senior positions. Mentors regarded these areas as important because they contribute to promotion in academia and to senior positions.

5.3.4.3.1 Application for funding

Mentors indicated that they shared funding opportunities and assistance with applications to receive funds with the women leaders they mentored. This was deemed important in growing an academic career, as having funded projects contributes to promotions. For instance, MT5 remarked, *I also bring them in contact with where they will get funding*. Other mentors shared what they did:

I also assist them in applying for NRF bursaries. I read through the applications for bursaries whenever there is something that comes past in terms of funding, I encouraged them to apply. I give them advice on what they need to put in the application. (MT1)

I would regularly send them if there is something that I think they can apply for, some funding for their research. I will make sure that they know about that because that will be to their advantage when they apply for promotion, that they could attract funding. (MT2)

The findings revealed that mentors of women leaders are a very useful resource for women who are sourcing funding for projects. This suggests that women with mentors can be at an advantage to obtain funds, as they receive support in identifying and



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

drafting funding proposals that will source funding for them. This was a significant finding and showed that mentoring was an important tool for success, as obtaining funding can be very competitive in academia. Being successful in obtaining funding in itself begins to create a good profile for women leaders.

5.3.4.3.2 Introduction to academic networks

Introduction to academic networks in the study field was one of the prominent areas in mentoring women leaders that emerged from my study. Women leaders reported that their mentors had introduced them to local and international networks in their fields of specialisation. MT2 indicated:

I encourage the woman that I mentor to be a bit more assertive to meet other people at conferences because they have to do that if they want to move into a senior position. They have to be internationally known for their research so they have to connect to people internationally.

Women leaders enjoyed their experiences of being introduced to academic networks and shared their views on the role and the value of these networks. They disclosed how those networks had shaped and grown their careers as follows:

...I joined this African... of.... and that was an immediate way to access everybody else in the country in the network. we were looking at young career researchers and were in charge of that portfolio.... none of this would happen if we did not have a mentor to guide us and lead us to such networks and collaboration. (WL3)

I had great networks in and outside of the university, of people who used the same kind of tools for research that I used, to whom I was introduced by my HOD, my mentor. He sent me to other countries for example Australia to learn, to deepen my skills. (WL1)



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

The findings suggest that mentoring is a way of more easily connecting women leaders to academic networks and collaborations. The findings are good evidence of the fact that having academic networks opens opportunities for women to actively participate on other academic platforms – which contributes to career growth in academia. In this way, women become known in the wider society, are able to showcase their capabilities in those networks, improve their academic profile, and get the opportunity to proceed to senior leadership. Hence, they learn how to participate in key areas that contribute to their promotion in higher education.

5.3.4.3.3 *Balancing of career/personal life*

Guiding women leaders on how to create a successful career and how to achieve a balance between a career and personal life was one of the focus areas of mentors. They indicated that they used to teach women leaders how to strike a balance between teaching and research, as having that balance contributes to promotion in academia. Also, mentors advocated having a balance in work and personal lives, as this often has an impact on their mentees' career and leadership growth. Participants considered this as important because women often have demanding personal lives due to domestic duties at home. The quotation below illustrates this:

Some women find it very difficult in the Higher Education environment if they have families and they still have young children to raise. Balancing work with private personal life can be challenging for them. I always have engagements with them on how they can still do their work while also having a personal life – as I have been able to do so for many years. (MT1)

I have found that a lot of women tend to spend a lot of time on their teaching. When I mentor them, I have always tried to guide them on how to have a balance between teaching and research. They must have that to be successful in academia. I caution them that they must make sure that they spend enough time on both. I talk to them about how to handle the research part of our job, to make time for



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

that, and to attend conferences and network at conferences. Also, to have a balanced work-life environment. I have found that women tend to feel that they must prove themselves more than men so they spend more time working. I encourage them to keep a good balance between their work and family life at home. I talk to them about that.
(MT2)

WL1 narrated how her mentor encouraged a balance in her career practice:

He continually encouraged me and others of course to publish, to work hard, in addition to teaching. He always emphasised a need to have all these activities balanced rather than excelling in one area.

The findings suggest that women need support to succeed in their academic careers as they face extra demands in terms of their personal lives and striking a balance between this and their work life. The fact that women receive the necessary support from their mentors, suggests that mentoring is an impactful strategy in improving women's career and leadership success. My study also suggests that mentoring capacitates women leaders for a successful academic career and empowers them to manage their personal lives better.

5.3.4.3.4 *Development of soft skills*

One mentor indicated that he teaches women leaders the necessary soft skills. According to him, this is a critical skill in leadership that contributes hugely to one being an efficient leader. This is how MT3 expressed his view:

Leadership is really about soft skills. It is a given that most people who pursue leadership roles already have technical knowledge. But their success in those roles is usually about acquiring the necessary soft skills which are considered essential leadership skills. People management, goal setting, stress management, conflict resolution, building strong teams, and mentorship are those important



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

leadership skills. Those are the skills that are essential for everybody to succeed in any leadership role. Understanding that when you are a leader even when you are not saying anything, you are communicating. So, women learn all these skills through mentorship and I tell them to focus on that. So, I say “be deliberate in spending time to improve your own soft skills”.

The findings imply that women who are mentored have been taught how to be well-rounded leaders who are able to perform different tasks in leadership. In that, they learn how to manage their duties, work in collaboration with others, and interact appropriately with other people.

5.3.4.3.5 Development for leading male-dominated departments

The findings revealed that female mentors in particular used the mentoring opportunity to prepare the women they mentored on how to behave themselves as they tap into the leadership of disciplines that are male dominated. These women mentors felt responsible for assisting their mentees to not repeat their own mistakes or have some of the bad experiences that they themselves had encountered in their own leadership practices.

I remember one thing specifically that I said to her, “at every management meeting, she should have a presentation, some information that others do not have that she can share so that they can feel that she is a resource, that she makes a solid and valuable contribution”. She quickly earned the respect of the men. (MT4)

I encourage women to feel they are good enough. To protect women leaders from having to go through what I have been through. When I mentor them, I am able to tell them which pitfalls to avoid, how to do things, and how to not make many mistakes. (MT1)



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

It appears from the findings that mentors play a significant role in shaping women who lead in male-dominated fields. This implies that women leading those fields are still expected to behave in a particular manner for them to earn respect and be accepted. Mentoring appears to be a strategy that is useful in developing and preparing women to handle and lead male-dominated industries/sectors.

5.3.4.4 Sub-theme 3.4: Reasons why women leaders were mentored in the manner they received mentorship

In pursuing the reasons why women leaders in the study were mentored as they were, I found that there were no guiding policies, frameworks, or guidelines, and also that there was no training for mentors. These challenges are discussed below.

5.3.4.4.1 Lack of mentorship policy and guidelines

The findings showed that women were being mentored in the way that they were, because of the complete lack of a guiding policy, mentorship guidelines, or framework in HEIs. There exists no policy that gives direction on how mentoring for women who aspire to leadership should be done. As a result, my study shows that mentors chose to rely on what they knew from their own mentoring experiences. Almost all the participants in the study mentioned that there was no policy of mentoring in their institutions; as a result, they were not following any policy or guideline. For example, MT4 said, *I do not consult frameworks or use any policy, I follow my heart and what I have seen in my mentorship as I had mentors*. MT1 expressed the same sentiment:

When I mentor women, I do what I think is possible. I do not follow any specific plan or policy. I have never seen a policy on that. I am definitely not doing it from a specific framework or according to a specific book that I read or a course that I did.

It is worth noting that the findings showed a lack of mentoring framework and policy even at international universities. For instance, MT3, a mentor based in the UK,



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

mentioned a lack of any mentoring policy or guidelines in such a context and vehemently expressed:

To be honest, I would be fairly surprised if there is any place that has policies on mentorship; if there are, they are very few. There is usually nothing. In fact, I am not even talking about policy, there are not even programs on mentorship. Where I am, we do not have any policies. We have programs that also vary from institution to institution even within an institution, it varies between departments, sometimes it varies from program to program. So, it is all over the place, there is no consistency, there are no policies, nothing.

The extract above confirms the reality of a lack of focused and planned mentorship of women leaders, and hence, a lack of policy on this practice. It also indicates that mentorship varies from one woman leader to the next, based on how the mentors understand it and have experienced it. No guidelines are provided. There is, therefore, no consistency in how women leaders are mentored.

The findings revealed that the mentor from the UK (MT3) applies mentorship principles that he gained from mentorship experience and knowledge that he himself acquired as a mentor – due to a lack of guidelines on how to mentor. He described five principles to which he adheres in his mentoring:

...Firstly, I always try to help my mentee to pay attention to how they approach relationships with other people and I always say focus on collaborations.... The second thing I often encourage all my mentees on is to always approach whatever they do in a way that I was also mentored which is, you can always behave yourself to a successful outcome. It is about positive thinking and instilling positive thinking because it builds hope... The third thing that I often encourage them on is to just spend time developing their soft skill. Things like time management, learning how to manage conflict, how to manage stress, how to manage people, how to set goals, and



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

how to support others. The fourth thing that I often encourage them to think about is getting a mentor and being deliberate about the mentorship. Many people learn a lot of things from others; as the proverb says “a conversation with a wise man, is better than ten years of study”. That is a Chinese proverb. The last thing which I often encourage them to do is to respect people. I say “how you succeed in life depends on how you view people around you. In Africa, we call it Ubuntu. I am because we are. I am because they are. It is a fundamental principle of treating others the way you would like to be treated.

The findings imply that there is no uniform practice for monitoring women leaders. They learn and are developed based on what their mentors have been exposed to and how they understand mentoring to be. This clearly suggests that there is no formalised mentorship for women leaders in HE.

On a positive note, one mentor (MT1) mentioned the existence of a mentorship policy in her institution, but admitted that she had not seen the policy, let alone implement it in her mentoring practice.

I think in the faculty of humanities where I am there is a policy. Not too long ago, there is an email that went out to all full professors in the faculty asking us if we would participate in this mentorship program. I have not looked at it in detail, but I know there is one, it gives specific guidelines and specific milestones for the mentorship program.

Based on this finding, I went to review this policy to see if it provided guidelines for the mentorship of women leaders. During that process, I discovered that the mentorship programme in that particular university was not specifically designed for women; in fact, it was a general mentorship programme that catered for all academic staff members. Its intention was to offer mentorship and growth to academic staff members



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

in that institution. The extracts below are taken from the mentorship programme document and they explain what the mentorship programme is about, as well as its purpose and aims.

The Accelerated Academic Mentorship Programme (AAMP) is designed to provide mentorship, support, development opportunities and focused advice to a nominated group of permanent academic staff, thereby creating the conditions for these candidates to advance their academic career trajectories.

Document 5.1 – from mentorship programme

AAMP has the following aims:

- To support and develop academics to advance their teaching and research to the next level in terms of promotions;
- To advance their careers as world-renowned teachers and researchers/scholars, typically A and B NRF rated;
- To support and enable identified academics towards higher levels of achievement.

Document 5.2 – from mentorship programme

3. MENTORING

The aim is to support and develop academics in the areas of teaching and research, as well as to enable them to access opportunities for promotion, advance their careers and become world-renowned teachers and researchers/scholars. To achieve higher levels of academic and research performance.

Document 5.3 – from mentorship programme

The extracts above indicate no focus on women specifically in relation to this mentorship programme. I also reviewed the mentorship policy for the university under research (Green University) and discovered that it was designed for mentoring all academics in the institution, more specifically, early career academics or newly appointed staff members. Below are extracts from this mentorship policy:

In pursuit of its strategic vision, the University of Pretoria is committed to the professional development of its staff. To this end, we are committed to providing a mentor to each newly appointed lecturer to assist with their professional development.

Document 5.4 – from mentorship policy



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

It is policy that academic employees appointed as lecturers are required to engage in a mentorship programme during their probation period, structured along the following lines:

Document 5.5 – from mentorship policy

The findings under this sub-theme suggest that HEIs still lag behind when it comes to mentorship guidelines, policy development, and implementation, as there are no generally provided policies or frameworks for guiding the mentorship of women leaders in HE institutions. Higher education institutions should invest in developing mentorship and they should provide guidelines on how it should be done. There is a need for focused discussions and engagements on the development of policies in this area. It is, however, recognised that despite the lack of such guidelines, mentorship for women exists in the sense that mentors do what they regard is necessary to promote the success of these women leaders. This initiative comes despite mentors not having been prepared for this role and practice.

5.3.4.4.2 Lack of training for mentors

Mentors involved in my study emphasised that they had not been trained for mentorship. No training is provided for mentors; hence, they rely on how they themselves experienced mentorship, what they think is applicable to mentorship and what they have read about it. The remark by MT5 confirms this:

I have never been trained as a mentor. I have learned from the mentors that I had, people I could trust to help me on my own journey.

The above finding shows that the mentors in my study had no choice but to rely on their experience of mentorship as there were no guiding documents or development programmes available for them. Urgent attention should therefore be given to the training of mentors in HE for effective mentorship of women leaders.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

The findings under this theme show that most women leaders in the study were involved in an informal mentorship. Also, women leaders were mainly developed in areas that would contribute to a successful academic career. It was further noted that mentors had to rely on what they know about mentorship as there were no guiding policies on how to mentor women leaders.

The next theme presents how participants responded in answering the fourth research question: "What are the constraining factors in the mentorship of women leaders for advancing to a senior position?"

5.3.5 Theme 4: Constraining factors encountered in mentoring women leaders for senior positions

The study did not focus only on the positive mentoring experiences that the women leaders had. It also explored roadblocks that were encountered in the mentoring of women leaders, as is presented below.

5.3.5.1 Sub-theme 4.1: Lack of support and funding for mentorship

The findings revealed that mentoring in general and for women leaders in particular, currently lacks funding from institutions and the government. This contributes to the limited practice and success of mentorship. Participants' narratives revealed that lack of funding results in some mentors sponsoring the women leaders they mentor. For example, if a woman leader has to engage in activities that require funds, the mentor sources funding from their own means.

There is no funding for mentorship. If there is funding that is needed, I will do it from my own research funds. I am lucky that I have the international research grant so it is becoming easy enough for me to assist my mentee from there. (MT1)

Mentorship is not receiving support or any funding. I think we need to be very deliberate about this, for instance, if the government does not set aside funding for this, it will not happen. (WL1)



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

The quotations above emphasise that mentorship for women leaders has not received the recognition and priority it deserves, as no resources have been invested in it. Consequently, still fewer people are willing to lend a hand and serve as mentors. Mentoring seems to impose unnecessary expenses on mentors who avail themselves as mentors, as they end up supporting their mentees from their own research funds. More investment, support, and sponsorship are therefore needed for mentorship.

5.3.5.2 Sub-theme 4.2: No training for mentors

The collected data revealed that a major challenge raised by participants is that there is no training to capacitate mentors and teach them how they should conduct mentoring. Mentors are left with no option but to do mentoring the way they think, which impacts the situation negatively in that mentors sometimes doubt their intuitive practice. My study suggested that lack of training posed a state of uncertainty and mentors' lack of assurance in terms of their practice. According to MT3, *we just do it in whichever way because we have never been trained for it*. MT2 also expressed uncertainty about how she was doing mentorship:

There is no formal training for mentors. You read about it and you try to just get yourself up to date. I think that the main challenge is that you sometimes are not sure if you give the right advice or doing the right thing for the person that you are mentoring.

The assertions above confirm that no attention is given to mentors' capacitation and development. Mentors end up doubting what they are doing as there is no guidance for the appropriate mentorship of women leaders and those who aspire to leadership. Since mentors must invest time in reading about how to do mentoring, unnecessary demands are made on them and they have to sacrifice time from their busy schedules.

5.3.5.3 Sub-theme 4.3: Insufficient time for mentorship

Some participants in the study articulated that finding time to do mentoring properly was one of the challenges and barriers to effective mentoring. Mentors and women



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

leaders remarked that they hardly found time to meet and develop one another as they would like to, because of the demands of their job. This is attributed to the fact that academics have various duties to attend to, which makes it difficult for them to find the time to mentor women effectively. WL6 said, *mentoring women is intensive if you want to do it properly, and time is an issue*. A mentor (MT4) shared how it was difficult for her and her mentee to meet, and how she tried to address this problem.

The challenge was for us to find time to just be together and do that heart-to-heart talk, which I feel is key in mentorship. ...In order for us to find time to meet, I say ..., you have access to my diary, just book us a slot somewhere in advance, so that we do not (flood our) diaries with meetings and navigate to see one another. So, finding the time and making it a priority. I think those are the challenges.

The findings suggest that mentors and women leaders would want to engage and meet more often when they embark on a mentorship relationship. However, it is difficult to satisfy this desire for effective mentorship, as they do not have time to do so. The findings imply that mentors should be relieved from other duties in the workplace so that they have time to mentor women leaders effectively. In other words, HEIs should recognise mentorship as one of the roles and duties when assigning duty loads. This may increase the respect for and value of mentorship.

5.3.5.4 Sub-theme 4.4: Mentor overstepping boundaries

According to some of the participants, mentors occasionally fail to draw the line between mentoring and interfering as a result, they fail to restrict themselves to this professional relationship. They end up entering into women leaders' personal lives and want to take decisions for them on what they can do in their careers, and sometimes in their personal lives. This is evident in the expressions below:

I must be honest with you, at the time when I left ... university, she was very disappointed. She was unhappy because she had been mentoring me to become one of the top leaders of the university.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

But I felt I needed to move to another university to gather varied experience, and work experiences. She was very upset when I moved. (WL2)

I had an experience in my own career earlier on when I had a mentor who was very close to me and from whom I took all the advice. But the mentor started to talk about how I should do things in my life. Even saying not to be involved with someone in my private life because they might impact my career advancement.it was definitely stepping over the line. (WL3)

The remarks indicate that some mentors end up exercising ownership over their mentees to a point where they think they can impose decisions on them regarding their career and personal life. This obviously causes a threat to the relationship and may lead to unsuccessful mentorship.

5.3.5.5 Sub-theme 4.5: Having a mentor in a different context

WL7, who had international mentors, indicated that having mentors based at advanced institutions internationally ended up posing certain challenges to her. In particular, her mentors expected her to implement things that were not practical in a South African context. WL7 works in the health sciences and some of the things that her mentor expected her to implement were not possible due to the unavailability of resources in the country.

My key mentors, one was based in ... at the time and the other one is based in ... university. Sometimes, my mentors would talk about things that I knew even if I tried here would not work because the resources are not there. Obviously, you try and propose changes to but you can see you are just talking to a brick wall. That was one of my biggest challenges, to be mentored by people who are not based in the same institution and do not know the source level of my institution.

The above suggests that mentoring may be more effective when a mentor and mentee are from a similar context, because they will have a common understanding of what could be achievable in that context.

Findings under Theme 4 revealed that constraining factors and challenges affect the success of mentorship for women leaders. Lack of mentor training and limited support for mentorship are among the shortcomings that limited the success of mentorship for women leaders. At this stage, it is not clear how these can be addressed, and I attempt to make suggestions in this regard in Chapter 7. The next theme presents findings pertaining to the last research question: “What mentoring strategies can be utilised for effective mentoring of women leaders?”

5.3.6 Theme 5: Proposed strategies that can be used for effective mentorship of women leaders

Various strategies were suggested by participants on how mentoring could be done more effectively for women leaders who aspire to and those who are already in leadership and senior positions. Some of the views were common, while others differed. This section presents findings on some of those strategies that were proposed for mentoring women leaders to senior positions.

5.3.6.1 Sub-theme 5.1: Formal mentorship, informal mentorship, and a combination of both

It was notable from the findings that all participants were in support of mentorship for women leaders. However, they held differing views in terms of how mentoring should take place to successfully equip women leaders for senior positions. Some participants were in support of a more formal kind of mentoring, while others favoured informal mentoring. One participant proposed having mentoring that combines both formal and informal.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

5.3.6.1.1 *Formal mentorship*

Formal mentoring was proposed as one of the ways in which women leaders could be mentored. Two women leaders shared similar views about having formal mentorship and how it can be done:

Mentoring should be a proper KPI that is built into performance management. Every senior lecturer upward to Associate Professor and Professor definitely must have mentorship on their duties. They can mentor one or two women a year, but if they can do more, that would be preferable. It should be made formal, otherwise, it is dependent on individual people and how willing they are to help other people. (WL3)

I think it can be made more formal because there may be somebody who will be appointed as a woman leader and they will not have the courage to actually approach somebody to mentor them. The universities can, for example, point to specific mentors and make it a more formal arrangement, to say this person is your mentor, you need to meet at least once a quarter or once a month and maybe have a mentoring checklist or guidelines...also to make mentoring part of the performance appraisal of the person to build in those mentoring activities. (WL6)

The findings show that some mentors also supported the use of formal mentoring for women leaders and suggested that it must be part of the job of HODs and professors in the department. The following remark by MT2 attests to this:

I think it is important, especially for Heads of Departments, it must be part of the job to make sure that even if they do not do it themselves, they assign somebody that can mentor women in the department. Well, not only the HODs but the professors in the departments, should play a mentoring role.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

The findings imply that mentoring for women leaders must be structured and planned to fit within departments of the institution. Also, leading figures and senior academics must play the role of mentors of women leaders in those departments. The findings suggest that these mentors should get recognition for their effort during performance appraisal by earning points for this role. The findings suggest that seniors in the department are in a better position to share expertise and guide women leaders who aspire to senior positions, as they have the necessary expertise and knowledge.

In contrast to formal mentoring, some participants were in support of informal mentorship for women leaders.

5.3.6.1.2 *Informal mentorship*

Most participants in the study proposed the use of informal mentoring where the woman leader and mentor simply share ideas without any written agreement or formal arrangement. They also made suggestions on how this should be done.

I think that mentoring relationships that develop spontaneously are often the best. It is not as easy as just deciding that everybody has a mentor and you going to allocate them, such mentoring relationships can go wrong and be destructive too. ... mentoring for women must not be planned like that. (WL4)

It should not be something that is forced into someone, and it should not be a job description. It should happen naturally. It takes a certain personality to be a mentor. Women who want to be leaders, should not be forced into matched mentorship, where they are matched with a mentor. Matching woman with mentors might lead women to people who really do not want to see any women in leadership, or does not want to see women who are strong in leadership. (WL7)

WL7 shared how women leaders can find mentors through interaction with senior colleagues, rather than to be assigned to mentors. She expressed:



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

The institutions must create this enabling environment for people to mingle and be able to find mentors, ...get to know senior people in their department in that safe space. They can introduce regular meeting spaces where it is not a meeting for work. Maybe it can be like a meeting space where people come in to engage on certain academic issues. That is where women can get to meet senior people and choose mentors from there.

Mentors also supported the approach of informal mentoring for a more effective mentoring of women leaders. MT4 commented, *I think the aspect of the natural development of mentoring becomes important.* Additionally, MT5 shared how having been assigned to mentor someone in a formal mentorship proved challenging and unauthentic. He expressed his support for informal mentorship.

I have once been formally assigned to act as a mentor. When you are appointed as a mentor for somebody, it is artificial, because you might not be the best match for that person. You spend much time building a relationship of trust so that person can trust you.

The above remarks suggest that effective mentoring for women leaders can happen when there is willingness from the mentor, and the situation is not forced on or prescribed for them. Also, informal mentorship gives those involved a sense of ownership of the relationship and they are then likely to benefit from it. Interestingly, the findings revealed a third strategy of mentoring, which combines formal and informal mentoring.

5.3.6.1.3 *Combination of both formal and informal mentoring*

WL5 proposed a combination of both formal and informal mentoring in programmes for mentoring women leaders.

I also think mentoring, even though is structured, should also include informal mentorship. There should be opportunities for



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

women leaders and their mentors to informally connect by having a social function, not just talking about work, but talking about life, about being people, just that connection could also help. That is where they will get informal support, and social support, which is quite important. I think it would be very beneficial for novice women leaders if there is a structured program so that they know whom to go to. In addition, have that informal interaction. I think that having both could really help.

The findings imply that mentorship should be designed for women leaders who are entering leadership positions or, being new in the institution, might not be familiar with the in-house systems. Mentoring will help to guide these women to get direction in their careers. It is evident from the above quotation that having both formal and informal mentoring may assist women leaders to grow holistically. They will grow in knowledge of how to handle their career life and progress in their social life through informal engagements with mentors and peers.

5.3.6.2 Sub-theme 5.2: Peer mentorship

According to the participants, peer mentoring can be used as a mentoring strategy for women leaders. Participants felt that women learn from their mentors as well as from their peers. Apparently, women leaders will be comfortable sharing their experiences and any challenges that they might have with one another. The following remark by WL7 gives an account of the finding:

I think the best approach to mentoring women leaders is through peer mentorship...where you identify people at the same level as you, and who have similar career goals as you. ...you can always invite senior people if a need for them to come and talk about specific things rather than having that one mentor. That means you are also spreading the mentorship.... that way, you all have that large number of mentors, but also you also have each other.

Two women leaders in the study were already running peer mentorship groups where they could learn from one another as leaders in their departments. They saw good results from it and shared their peer mentorship initiatives in the following excerpts:

When I became Deputy Dean, I created a WhatsApp group with the other Deputy Deans for our peer mentorship. We had monthly meetings and those meetings acted as a mentoring role to all of us. We shared our experiences and assisted one another. (WL9)

When I was at ... university, I established a peer mentorship forum for emerging academics. As much as I was helping others, I established this because I really needed it myself. I needed that safe space where I can really talk and say anything about what I am experiencing. ... a me-too forum for researchers and emerging academics... there are certain things you do not want to say to your senior mentor because they will see you as being weak, this platform is then a safe space. (WL9)

The remarks suggest that working within support groups with peers can play a positive role in women's leadership development, since the women get support in a space where they can freely express themselves. Through this support structure, women are able to support one another and share their concerns freely as they find themselves in a similar position. Thus, peer group mentorship can provide a place of confidence where women leaders can comfortably and openly share their developmental needs and any challenges they might face.

5.3.6.3 Sub-theme 5.3: Flexible mentoring

The findings showed that flexible mentoring could be used as another strategy in mentoring women leaders. In using this strategy, WL5 suggested that women should have more than one mentor and learn from this group of mentors. The participant felt



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

that this could be quite beneficial as women leaders would get to learn from different experts in their field.

It must be a flexible mentoring approach where women can rotate between more than one mentor. I think there must be some flexibility. If we have it this way, women will learn different things, and skills from different people.

Institutions of higher learning should therefore have a network of mentors who are experts in different areas. Women who work with these different mentors can acquire the knowledge and skills from these mentors.

5.3.6.4 Sub-theme 5.4: Having mentorship in all the career stages

Being mentored from the early stages of one's life and during the early stages of a career came up strongly during the interviews. Participants argued that such mentoring would have a greater impact on and contribute to successful careers and leadership. The following verbatim narratives substantiate this perception:

What I see works is if you can mentor somebody from scratch. Maybe they have done an honours degree in your department or maybe a master's degree, and you start the mentoring process and the coaching process during that time ...you create some sort of loyalty with that individual. (WL6)

There is a need to have mentorship, not as a once-off dedicated for the few but for everybody and throughout the career. It has to be part of how we train in our education system not only from universities but from elementary all the way. Every sector has to have mentorship as part of the program to help people to get into the system, stay in the system, and flourish in the system. (MT3)



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

WL3 shared how influential mentoring has been in her career as she was mentored from the early stages of her career.

I do not think I would be where I am today if I had not had somebody mentoring me through my early career. I feel like I derived great values from being mentored early on in my career. I think that was hugely informative of who I am today, because of that continuous growth throughout my young career, as an early career researcher.

It appears from the findings that women should be supported and developed from as early as the primary school stage – in other words from when they start their education until they reach the peak of their career. Such mentoring can help women to grow better and may lead to successful careers. It is evident from the sentiments expressed that women may benefit hugely if they could learn from mentors from the earliest stages of their lives. This would expose them to learning opportunities and guidance early in their careers, which could assist them in making appropriate decisions concerning their leadership careers.

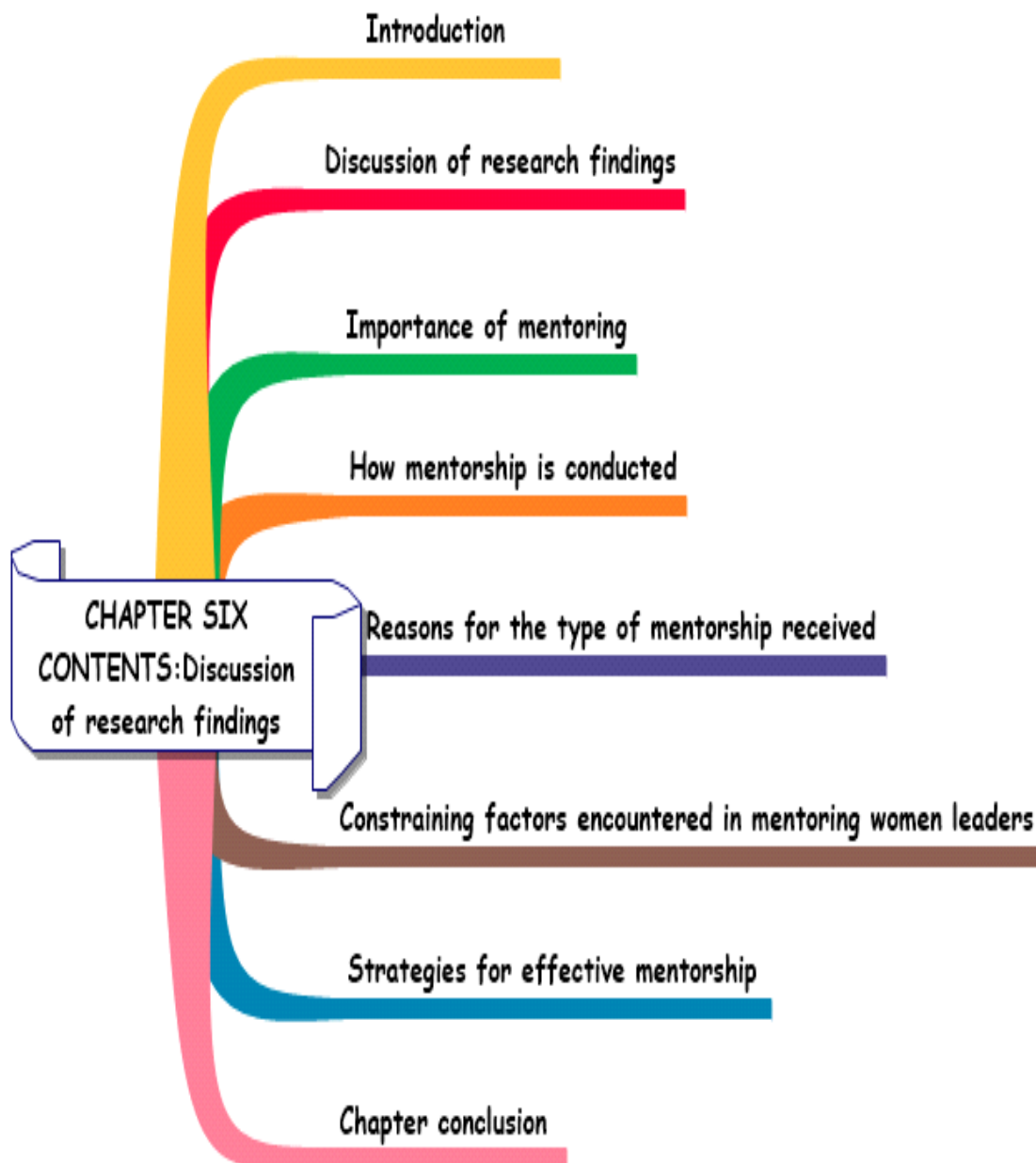
5.4 Chapter conclusion

The findings presented in this chapter showed an understanding of mentoring as a concept by the women leaders who participated in my study. It acknowledged the contribution that mentoring made to their career growth and advancement to the senior positions they currently occupy. Furthermore, the findings revealed how women in the study were mentored, the challenges encountered in the mentorship of women leaders, and strategies that could be used to mentor women leaders. A need for planned and prioritised mentorship in HE, as well as for peer support became evident. The lack of mentorship guidelines and training for mentors were identified as barriers to the successful mentorship of women leaders.

Chapter six next presents the analyses of findings in comparison to the existing literature on the topic under study and the theoretical framework.



CHAPTER 6 CONTENTS





UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter five I presented the findings from the data generation using themes and sub-themes. Thereby, I supported the findings with analysed verbatim quotations from participants' narratives and extracts from the documents, and also shared my interpretation of the participants' experiences. Chapter six discusses the study's main findings compared with the existing literature and the theoretical framework used in the study, which comprised of the three theories: Relational-Cultural Theory, Transformational Leadership Model; and Gendered Organisation Theory.

6.2 Discussion of research findings

The findings are discussed and divided into five sub-questions or themes. The secondary research questions address the main research question, which was presented in Chapter one of this study.

6.2.1 Main research question

What are the mentoring experiences of women leaders regarding their advancement to senior positions at a South African university?

6.2.1.1 Secondary research questions

- (i) How do women leaders occupying senior positions at a South African university understand mentoring?
- (ii) Why is mentoring important in developing women leaders for senior positions?
- (iii) How is mentoring used to prepare women leaders for senior leadership positions in the higher education sector?
- (iv) What are the constraining factors encountered in mentoring women leaders for advancement to a senior position?
- (v) What mentoring strategies can be utilised for the effective mentoring of women leaders?



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

6.2.2 Conceptualisation of mentoring by women leaders occupying senior positions at a South African university

The study aimed to explore mentoring experiences of women leaders who occupy senior positions at one public university in Pretoria (Green University). Before sharing their experiences, I first explored how the participating women leaders understand mentoring. Gathering their understanding of mentoring was significant because mentoring is defined in various ways in different fields, therefore it can be unclear what mentoring for women leaders in HE means. The diverse views also lead to the concept of mentoring often associated with coaching and sponsorship (Ballou et al., 2019). As a result, there is no existing universally agreed-upon definition of mentoring (Schriever & Grainger, 2019).

Debates on mentoring practices in South Africa may lead to a misunderstanding of what mentoring is (Dhunpath et al., 2018; Bodilenyane & Mooketsana, 2019; Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021). Therefore, it was essential to examine how the participants in this study define mentoring in comparison to existing definitions in the literature. The prominent findings reported in Chapter five showed most women leaders in the study (respectively and sometimes collectively) understood mentoring as: a relationship, as role modelling, as support, as identifying potential and nurturing people, and as career guidance and giving advice. A more in-depth discussion on these topics follows next.

6.2.2.1 *Mentoring as a relationship*

Most women leaders in this study perceived mentoring as a developmental relationship between a senior academic mentor and a mentee, who is junior or less experienced and who works in a similar career field. Their collective understanding of this relationship was that an experienced mentor develops, supports, and guides a junior towards a successful career. This understanding coincided with existing literature where mentoring has been described as a developmental relationship between a novice and senior colleague (Scheepers et al., 2018, Mullen & Klimaitis, 2019; Schriever & Grainger, 2019). Sims et al. (2020) describe mentoring as a one-on-one relationship where a person in a senior role provides guidance to an inexperienced person. Similarly, Dashper (2020) describes mentoring as a

relationship between an experienced and knowledgeable mentor in respect of a junior person who receives assistance, guidance, and support in developing their career. Scheepers et al. (2018) add that in this relationship, the mentor is expected to contribute to the mentee's career growth through supportive encouragement. The findings in my study and the views in the literature agree that mentoring is a developmental relationship that involves a junior/less experienced mentee who is developed by an experienced and more knowledgeable mentor. The above view corresponds with the assumption of RCT, which specifies that people and women learn and grow from mutual relationships such as mentoring (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). Most people seem to learn and grow as they work together in developmental mentoring relationships.

While, at the beginning of the interviews, it appeared as if the mentee was the only one who learns, develops, and benefits from the mentorship relationship, the study's findings subsequently revealed that both the mentor and the mentee benefit from the mentorship relationship. Participants pointed out that the mentor also learns and grows from the mentee. The mentor's workload gets reduced owing to some assistance from the mentee, and the mentor gains satisfaction from their contribution to advancing the mentee. This finding concurred to an appreciable extent with existing literature. Most scholars (Elias, 2018, Stuckey et al., 2019; Turner-Moffatt, 2019, Dashper, 2020, Dorner et al., 2021; Misic et al., 2020) in the existing literature argue that mentorship benefits both the mentor and mentee point out that mutual learning happens in a mentorship relationship.

According to Ganfi Lachter and Ruland (2018) and Stuckey et al. (2019), mentors and mentees benefit from the relationship: mentees grow in their careers, develop self-confidence, and improve their productivity; while mentors become more productive, experience reduced stress levels, enhance their leadership skills, feel pleasure in helping others, and improve their overall wellbeing. The study's findings and views in the literature agree with RCT, which emphasises the growth of people by connecting with learning skills from one another (Alvarez & Lazzari, 2016; Jordan, 2017). Additionally, this resonates with transformational leadership practice where both the leader and the follower benefit, thus gaining mutual growth (Bass & Steidlmeier, 2006)



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

and causing improved professional performance for both the mentor and mentee. Based on the literature and my research findings, it becomes evident that a healthy and effective mentorship relationship leads to improved performance and well-being for both the mentor and mentee.

My study showed that for a mentorship relationship to be effective, both the mentor and mentee must be committed to it, and they must contribute equally. As the saying goes, "we reap from what we sow", which means that both the mentor and mentee must be fully dedicated to the mentorship for them to reap its positive outcomes (such as career growth). Participants' views were consistent with lessons from the literature. For example, studies by Dhunpath et al. (2018); Mulcahey et al. (2018); Briscoe and Freeman (2019) and Coleman (2020) emphasised the importance of both the mentor and the mentee being involved, committed, and contributing to the mentorship. Mulcahey et al. (2018) add that mentoring requires dynamic, active involvement, mutual respect, and communication between the mentor and mentee for a successful mentoring relationship. Briscoe and Freeman (2019) and Dorner et al. (2021) also view commitment to mentorship as vital for the professional and personal development of those involved in the process, supported by trust, respect, and commitment. The findings and literature concur with the central premise of RCT, namely that growth in a mentorship occurs in a mutual relationship where each party is equally engaged and invested (Alvarez & Lazzari, 2016; Ticknor & Averett, 2017).

In further engagements with the participants, they described mentorship as a relationship that can be either formal or informal. In distinguishing between them, formal mentorship is described as the type of mentorship that is organised by an institution, based on a specific agreement that guides the mentorship. On the other hand, informal mentorship occurs as colleagues engage with one another during non-planned and informal engagements. This finding is supported by the literature which suggests that mentoring can be formal or informal, and extant scholars describing how the two differ. Available literature (Dhunpath et al., 2018; Ballou et al., 2019; Bodilenyane & Mooketsana, 2019; Dashper, 2020) present mentoring as either a formal or informal relationship.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Formal mentoring has been described in the literature as a relationship based on a structured arrangement provided by the institution. Generally, mentors are paired with mentees to reach specific goals and interaction includes scheduled one-on-one meetings and reflection on the mentorship progress (Dhunpath et al., 2018; Ballou et al., 2019; Diamond et al., 2019). In contrast, informal mentorship is described as a relationship that happens naturally without any arrangement or pairing by the institution. Meetings, interactions at conferences, feedback on ideas, and providing guidance and feedback occur through informal conversations (Diamond et al., 2019; McGowan & Gil, 2022). Moreover, informal mentorship relationships are unmanaged, have no formal agreement, and are not formally recognised by the institution where those involved are based (Dhunpath et al., 2018). My study's findings prominently differentiated between formal and informal mentoring. The literature above shows a shared understanding and description of these two central positions within mentoring relationships.

6.2.2.2 Role modelling

The findings from my study show that one of the women leaders associated mentoring with role modelling. She described her mentor as an encouraging role model from whom she had learned much while being mentored in pursuit of her career. Understanding mentoring as similar to role modelling is common in the existing literature and my study's findings presented comparable views of mentoring. In a study by Reis and Grady (2020), some participants used the concept of role models to mean the same as a mentor. As a result, it is reasonable that the two concepts (mentor and role model) are interchangeable.

Role models guide and model effective leadership and behaviour in the sense that they are imitated and admired (Crisp & Alvarado-Young, 2018; Kinahan et al., 2021). They also set a positive example of how the mentee should act and respond in a professional setting (Ekine, 2018; Mulcahey et al., 2018; Delgado & Allen, 2019). Conversely, a mentor shares knowledge with the mentee and demonstrates good behaviour patterns (Mulcahey et al., 2018). Bărbuceanu (2019) consequently argued that the mentor as role model offers academic, professional and personal



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

development. Mentors nurture and care for their mentees, thus justifying the common understanding of a mentor and a role model. Participants in the study and existing literature show a similar understanding of mentoring as role modelling. Despite a varied understanding and use of the concepts, the current study's findings showed that the women who had role models in their career and leadership development, grew in their leadership practice and progressed to senior positions.

A Nigerian study (Ekine, 2018) shows that women with mentors and role models succeed in their leadership roles, as is confirmed in this study. Similarly, Coleman (2020) found that the progress of women in their careers can be facilitated by role models. According to transformational leadership, leaders act as strong role models to their followers because of their success in inspiring emulation (Khan et al., 2016; Northouse, 2019). Their high moral conduct influences followers who see the leaders as role models (Abazeed, 2018). In transformational leadership theory, this kind of influence is called an *idealised influence*. My findings, the existing literature, and the theory suggest concurrence in contributions made by mentors as role models in developing women leaders towards leadership.

6.2.2.3 Mentoring as support

Luongo and O'Brien (2018), as well as Delgado and Allen (2019) suggest that mentors offer support to mentees and that women who have mentors receive the necessary support to build and succeed in their academic careers. A study conducted by Delgado and Allen (2019) shows that women who were successful in leadership and had reached senior positions acknowledged support by their mentors as a contributory factor to their success and progress in their leadership journey. Among my own study's prominent findings is that participants viewed mentoring as support. Their remarks indicated that the mentor supports the mentee towards success in their career.

6.2.2.4 Identifying potential and nurturing people

Another noticeable finding in the study's description of mentoring by women leaders was that mentoring includes identifying, recognising, and nurturing talent and abilities in people. They described the mentor as someone who helps and encourages the



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

mentee to realise their potential and perform to their best ability. One woman leader shared how her mentor saw her potential, gave her opportunities and nurtured her, which resulted in her being recognised and offered more significant opportunities. This finding is consistent with Turner-Moffatt's (2019) argument that the most outstanding quality of a good mentor is that they see can identify talent and potential even when their mentees do not. A study conducted by Longman et al. (2019) that also involved women leaders revealed that the latter likewise described mentoring as supporting both aptitude and vocation. This suggests that the mentor identifies and affirms the mentee's inner potential so that mentees can believe in themselves. This practice is consistent with the central concepts of transformational leadership practice. According to Bodilenyane and Mooketsana (2019), mentors as transformational leaders recognise talent and see the potential of their mentees. Hence, they inspire, help, nurture and empower their mentee to do their best and reach their maximum potential (Northouse, 2019 & Early, 2020).

6.2.2.5 Offering career guidance and advice

Mentoring has been described as a relationship providing advice and guidance between a more experienced academic staff member and a younger, less experienced staff member (O'Connor et al., 2020). In a study by Longman et al. (2019), women leaders described the task of the mentor as offering specific advice. According to Aman et al. (2018), Luongo and O'Brien (2018) and Roets et al. (2019), mentors are people who give advice and career guidance. Kaplan (2019) argues that good mentors provide direction. In their descriptions of mentoring, women leaders in the current study supported the ideas that also emerged from the literature. They explained that a mentor guides the mentee, gives advice on building a career and shows them what to do, There is, therefore, a correlation between how participants in my study understood mentoring and how the literature describes it. This description and finding also resonate with transformational leadership qualities. Transformational leaders are concerned with developing their followers into leaders and, as a result, guide and advise them on the career path that will lead to leadership (Bass & Steidlmeier, 2006).



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

6.2.3 The importance of mentoring in developing women leaders for senior positions

This section discusses findings about the role and contribution of mentoring to women leaders' career progression and advancement to senior positions. It highlights the importance of mentoring in developing women leaders for senior positions and emphasised the essence of having a mentor. Hence, I saw it fitting to start the presentation and discussion with this theme.

6.2.3.1 *The importance of having a mentor*

The study's findings showed that women leaders had mentors who contributed to their career growth, progress, and advancement to the senior positions they were holding. All participants acknowledged the role played by their mentors in their careers, and crediting mentorship for their career success and promotion to leadership. Some of the women leaders who had been mentored from the early stages of their career acknowledged this role in their success and progress. Other research studies reached similar conclusions, for example, in a study conducted in Vietnam by Maheshwari and Nayak (2020), 60% of participants associated their career and leadership success with the support they had received from their mentors. Research conducted at a South African HE institution involving mentors and mentees in a formal mentorship programme revealed that 92% of the participants attributed their career success to a mentor's influence (Roets et al., 2019). Moreover, the findings of a study in Texas by Delgado and Allen (2019) revealed that women who were in leadership positions in a HEI associated their success as leaders with the positive influence that mentors had had in leading them to the senior positions they were occupying. This outcome can be attributed to evidence in the literature that women who are mentored have better career outcomes, have more publication outputs, are successful in their careers, and advance in leadership (List & Sorcinelli, 2018; Delgado & Allen, 2019; Read et al., 2019; Briscoe-Palmer & Mattocks, 2020). Cozza (2022) confirms that women with mentors are likely to succeed in their careers and reach senior leadership positions. Hence, there is a need to support mentorship and develop mentors for effective mentorship. Mentors are crucial in the career development of academics and of female



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

academia in particular (Aman et al., 2018; Ballou et al., 2019; Briscoe-Palmer & Mattocks, 2020).

A further significant finding regarding mentors was that males mentored most of the women leader participants in this study. Brown (2019), Freeman and Kochan (2019) and Reis and Grady (2020) also report that most women in academia are mentored by males, probably because men dominate the senior positions in many HE institutions and there is a limited availability of female mentors (Khumalo & Zhou, 2019; Longman et al., 2019; O'Connor, 2019; Read et al., 2020). Women in my study did not feel that having had male mentors had any negative impact on them, and only a few thought that having a female mentor was more beneficial. According to them, female mentors are better positioned to guide and assist other women in building their careers. The assumption was that women mentors would more likely have had similar experiences and challenges (as the participants). As a result, they learned how to address challenges faced by women in building leadership careers. My study shows that participants had differing views on the question of whether it was more beneficial to have male or female mentors. The existing literature concurs with this variance and also shows differing views on a better-suited mentor for males and females.

Scholars such as Madsen et al. (2020); Cozza (2022) and Reis and Grady (2020) argue that men actually contribute to women's leadership development, because they can initiate women into leadership – which is known as 'their world' – given the preponderance of males in leadership positions. Cozza (2022) stipulates that women can learn more from male mentors and through support, they can be successful in leadership and progress to senior leadership. Findings shared by Madsen et al. (2020) of an investigation that looked at the "Strategies that male allies use to advance women in the workplace", showed that men contribute positively to women's professional and leadership development towards a successful career. Thus, there are males who are invested in developing women leaders and who wish them career success. In contrast, Brown (2019) held a negative view of male mentors. She shared her personal account of having been sexually harassed by three senior male mentors during her career (Brown, 2019). She argued that mentorship might not be the only pathway to women's development, as it had the potential to expose them to male



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

mentors who take advantage of them. She further asserts that “mentoring alone will not save us” (Brown, 2019, p. 171), referring to women in academia. Her advice was that women should be mentored by other women to ensure that they are kept “out of these types of toxic situations” (Brown, 2019, p. 171).

Similar views emerged in support of women having female mentors. The research findings by Scheepers et al. (2018) established that women were actually more comfortable being mentored by other women, because they felt that female mentors understood the intersectional difficulty of raising a family, building a career, and being a woman. Scheepers et al. (2018) suggested that female mentors would be able to relate better with women who are building their careers under those circumstances. This sentiment was supported by Aman et al. (2018), who argued that women are more comfortable speaking with female mentors regarding difficulties associated with family responsibilities. A qualitative study by Palmer and Jones (2019), which also investigated women-to-women mentorship relationships, showed that women mentors could help other women learn how to balance their personal and professional responsibilities. Furthermore, mentees could be honest with women mentors, which was good for their wellbeing. According to Scheepers et al. (2018) and Mcilongo and Strydom (2021), women mentored by female mentors can learn strategies and gain more career support for overcoming barriers in the workplace. As stated before, women mentors also serve as role models to other women (Scheepers et al., 2018; Mcilongo et al., 2021). Early (2020) holds a different view of male and female mentors and suggests that gender dynamics do not predict the success of mentoring relationships. Supported by Mcilongo and Strydom (2021) in the South African context, her study findings state that the gender of the mentor is irrelevant, but what a woman learns from a mentor is important. My study's findings and existing literature show differing views on the impact that the gender of a mentor has on mentoring women leaders. However, the importance of having a mentor remains highly recognised, regardless of the individual's gender.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

6.2.3.2 Role and contribution of mentorship to career progression and advancement to senior positions

I wish to start this discussion with a notable quotation from Oprah Winfrey. It captures the essence of some of the study's findings under this theme:

A mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself. A mentor is someone who allows you to know that no matter how dark the night, in the morning joy will come. A mentor is someone who allows you to see the higher part of yourself when sometimes it becomes hidden to your own view.

It is significant to indicate that the current study was conducted in a gendered HE institution. A distinct characteristic of gendered institutions is the slow advancement of females to senior positions compared to their male counterparts, making women's representation in those positions a minority (Hammer et al., 2014). According to the Theory of Gendered Organisations, such organisations reflect the concepts and realities of gender gaps when it comes to the highest positions (Acker, 1990). The results from literature and the Theory of Gendered Organisations show that HEIs reflect a gendered institutional culture, as women are still few in senior positions. Therefore, it is important to develop and support women through mentorship in this sector. The findings from the current study show that mentoring contributes to the career progression of women leaders. Turner-Moffatt (2019) states that mentored employees are more productive, they navigate an organisation's culture better and they advance to senior positions faster.

Below I present the findings that show how mentoring contributed to the career success and leadership advancement of the women leaders occupying senior positions in a gendered HEI. Included in these findings are women leaders who: received career guidance and advice; accessed leadership opportunities, received encouragement and built confidence; received opportunities for professional development, career growth, and becoming mentors.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

6.2.3.2.1 *Receiving career guidance and advice*

My study's findings revealed that women leaders received career guidance and advice on how they should advance their academic career, which route to take, and which pitfalls to avoid towards a successful academic career and leadership. They were also advised on academic matters and how to deal with issues with their mentors. Hence, some of the participants described mentoring as giving guidance and advice to someone. The literature also alludes to giving career guidance and advice, and considers it part of mentors' roles. Studies confirm that mentors *inter alia* offer advice to their mentees about personal and professional life issues (Mondisa, 2018; Longman et al., 2019). According to Mulcahey et al. (2018) mentors provide support and career guidance to the mentee. In addition, Mondisa (2018) states that mentors provide advice and feedback to their mentees regarding interpersonal skills and career plans, as well as advice on academic, personal, and/or professional aspects. This may contribute to career growth, as women will structure their career objectives in line with promotion and progression requirements. Women leaders in my study and in the existing literature show career growth from the mentorship they received. The findings reported in the current research and in the existing literature concur with transformational leadership, as transformational leaders who serve as mentors advise their mentees how to improve their careers and performance (Bodilenyane & Mooketsana, 2019). This characteristic is associated with *Individualised Consideration* in transformational leadership, where leaders give their followers special and individualised attention based on their career needs (Northouse, 2019). Mentors had to understand the career aspirations of women leaders in this study to guide and advise them accordingly.

6.2.3.2.2 *Creating leadership opportunities*

Research shows that mentors create opportunities for their mentees. The findings of a study by Delgado and Allen (2019) show that mentors provided opportunities to mentees to reach the senior positions they were occupying. It is evident that when the women take these opportunities, they have the chance to learn and improve their capabilities. Wright (2021) agrees and argues that women who receive opportunities



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

to lead end up being successful in their careers and they obtain leadership positions. This may be because these women learn and are developed in leadership as they work with their mentors (Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021). Moreover, they may be easily identified for leadership opportunities because they display their leadership skills when granted opportunities to lead. Women who exercise leadership through leading opportunities are equipped with skills to navigate organisational barriers and ultimately progress into leadership positions in organisations (Wright, 2021). Khwela et al. (2020) therefore argue that mentorship operates as a gateway to enter leadership positions.

Consistent with the literature, this study found that women leaders obtained opportunities via their mentors to organise, coordinate and lead programmes, modules, and projects. The women admitted that equivalent responsibilities taught them leadership skills; thus they gained confidence as leaders. They added that they also learned more about the organisation and working with others, which contributed positively to their leadership progression. This progression confirms Mcilongo and Strydom's (2021) claim, namely that mentors make mentees visible and known in an organisation. The findings and the literature indicate that mentors play a significant role in exposing women to leadership and developing their leadership skills. According to Jiang et al. (2017), the role played by mentors in exposing and giving women leaders opportunities to take the lead agrees with transformational leadership in the sense that transformational leaders provide opportunities to their followers. They also motivate, inspire and empower their followers and develop their leadership skills by giving them opportunities to lead (Abazeed, 2018; Sirin et al., 2018).

6.2.3.2.3 *Giving encouragement and building confidence*

During the interviews, most female leaders in the study stated that they had not intended to apply for their leadership positions but were encouraged by their mentors. The mentors helped the women leaders in the study to recognise their own potential to lead and motivated them to apply for the positions. The women leaders reported that such encouragement and affirmation gave them the confidence and courage to apply for higher positions. This finding corresponded with that of a study conducted in Vietnam by Maheshwari and Nayak (2020), involving 21 participants (19 females and



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

two males), who also found that a lack of self-confidence deterred some women from applying for leadership roles. The same study revealed that most of the participants had no self-motivation to enter the leadership roles they now occupy but were encouraged by their managers to pursue them.

A study that involved six deans at a South African university also showed that, because of their gender, women are discouraged to the extent that they are reluctant to take leadership positions. The women shared that they were often discouraged by family, colleagues, and friends from assuming the position of dean (Mankayi & Cheteni, 2021). The study by Manyayi and Cheteni (2021) therefore, established that mentoring improves self-confidence in women leaders. My findings concur with existing literature that sometimes women underestimate and see themselves as unqualified for senior positions (Elias, 2018; Herbst, 2020). Hence, the women in my study did not initially see themselves as qualified and suitable to apply for their current positions. Herbst (2020) adds that most women do not apply for senior positions because they lack confidence. A study conducted by Chitsamatanga and Rembe (2019), focusing on female academics in South Africa and Zimbabwe, revealed that women from both countries displayed low self-esteem and a lack of confidence, and therefore did not want to occupy senior positions. Mentorship has been recognised as one way to encourage and build confidence in women leaders. The findings of a study by Dashper (2020) confirms that empowering women through mentoring leads to, among other things, improved confidence.

These findings correspond with one of the outcomes of RCT, namely that working with someone in a connection (mentoring relationship) leads to increased self-esteem (Lewis & Olshansky, 2016). The assumption is that while the mentor and mentee engage in a mutually beneficial relationship, they cultivate self-awareness and confidence in their abilities (Lewis & Olshansky, 2016). It is assumed that as mentees engage with mentors in this relationship, they discover themselves and their abilities, and thus they improve their self-confidence. Building women leaders' self-confidence is one of the most effective practices in mentoring women leaders. This is because the



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

lack of confidence in women leaders may perpetuate the current cycle of men occupying senior leadership positions and so maintain the status quo regarding gender disparity in senior positions (Herbst, 2020). In contrast, by overcoming their lack of confidence, women are more likely to apply for promotions they previously overlooked and get to present their ideas in meetings (Turner-Moffatt, 2019). Mentors as transformational leaders also contribute to women leaders attaining self-actualisation and improved self-esteem (Khan et al., 2016).

6.2.3.2.4 *Providing opportunities for professional development*

Bodilenyane and Mooketsana (2019) as well as Early (2020) describe mentoring as a personal and professional developmental relationship, because it caters to the professional development of the mentee – in this case women leaders. Such initiatives are welcomed in the HE sector, especially since women generally lack professional development opportunities in this sector Heffernan (2018), who explored support and development for senior academics in HEIs of four countries (Australia; Great Britain and Ireland; New Zealand; USA), found that there was limited support and career development of senior academics in the HE sector. Therefore, mentoring serves as a strategy for the professional development of leadership skills that will benefit women climbing the career ladder (Khumalo & Zhou, 2019).

My study found that women leaders were professionally guided and developed by their mentors through mentorship in areas of their career such as teaching and learning; conflict resolution with students and parents; and managing their emotions. Participants stated that their mentors shared best practices in dealing with these issues and this became part of the professional development they received. Literature shows that professional development through mentorship enhances women leaders' career growth in practice and help them hone their professional skills and improve their careers (Khumalo & Zhou, 2019). Moreover, professional development is individualised during mentorship (Luongo & O'Brien, 2018), which implies that mentors provide professional development for every woman leader's professional needs. This corresponds with the conduct of transformational leaders as they focus on their followers' development based on the latter's developmental needs (Northouse, 2019).



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

In other words, transformational leaders treat each of their followers as a unique person and attend to their individual needs (Korjan & Shahbazi, 2016). Hence, the experience of professional development is effective, resulting in the growth and career progress of women leaders. This also speaks to RCT, which indicates that mentoring leads to learning new knowledge being co-created when the mentor and mentee engage and share their expertise (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007; Davidson, 2018). This suggests that the mentor and mentee learn from one another and grow in their practice through mentorship.

6.2.3.2.5 *Leading to career productivity and growth*

Among the roles and benefits of mentoring, this study found that women leaders grew in their careers and were also more effective in executing their duties, due to the mentorship they received. The interviewed women leaders were more productive in their practice and performed beyond expectations, causing them to progress and be promoted in their careers. One of the women leaders shared that she became more productive in her career and soon was offered a senior position, which attests to her career growth. The women leaders all associated such growth with mentor support. The current study's findings confirm the view suggested by Mčilongo and Strydom (2021), namely that mentoring leads to improved job performance. Turner-Moffatt (2019) and Banwell et al. (2019) support this view by stating that mentoring generates enhanced productivity and, as a result, career success and faster advancement. Moreover, Longman et al. (2019) argue that mentoring helps to create a speedier workplace promotion rate. Their findings, in conjunction with the current study, show that mentorship contributes to career growth in women. Thus, mentored women are promoted because of the growth they show in their careers, and they do better in executing their duties. Mentors' role in assisting women leaders to thrive in their careers is associated with transformational leadership. Therefore, my study findings revealed a connection between transformational leadership and RCT.

Transformational leaders are known to have the ability to assist their followers to perform beyond expectation. The support they provide leads to a high level of performance in their duties (Korjan & Shahbazi, 2016; Northouse, 2019). As a result,



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

the followers of transformational leaders achieve success in their careers (Northouse, 2019). In the context of this study, transformational leaders (as mentors) communicate high expectations of their followers (mentees) (Northouse, 2019). To ensure the achievement of expectations, they motivate their followers to perform extra well (Northouse, 2019). This underlines the principle of *inspirational motivation* as a concept in transformational leadership, where the leader encourages and challenges followers to achieve the set goals (Khan et al., 2016). It also agrees with the RCT outcome that emphasises motivation for better performance (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). In the current study, one woman told of the extent to which she outperformed her duties and was subsequently appointed to a higher position, with recommendation. With this achievement she met the expectations that her mentor had set for her career.

6.2.3.2.6 *Becoming mentors*

An exciting finding of my study was that most women leaders identified women in their field and department still to be mentored after they (the participants) had been mentored. They saw a need to grow, support, and help other women advance in their careers. Most of them indicated that they did not want other women to struggle and have bad experiences in their academic careers. The current study's findings confirm some recent literature findings indicating that women who have received mentoring in their careers also wish to mentor other women (List & Sorcinelli, 2018; Scheepers et al., 2018; Bărbuceanu, 2019; Kaslow, 2020; Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021). Bărbuceanu (2019) suggests that mentors feel the desire and need to mentor others, while Scheepers et al. (2018) found that mentored women developed a passion for improving other women and felt accountable for assisting women to progress in their careers, inspiring them to serve as mentors to others. Moreover, the study by List and Sorcinelli (2018) confirms that women leaders involved in peer mentorship often become mentors to other women and consequently act as role models to younger women (Coleman, 2020). The findings and literature are consistent with one of RCT's outcomes, which indicates that connection and growth in mutual relationships lead to a desire for more connection (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007; Davidson, 2018).



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

The study finding under this theme, as well as the cited literature, shows that mentorship contributes to the career and leadership development of women leaders in various ways. Thus, it emphasises the significance of mentorship for women leaders.

6.2.4 How mentoring is conducted in preparing women leaders for senior positions in the higher education sector

Under this theme, I share findings of how mentorship for women leaders in the study occurred. I also present the critical areas prioritised during the mentorship of these women leaders (as shared by participants) by referring to the existing literature. During my study, I noted the dearth of literature focusing on *how* women leaders are mentored and realised the potential of mentorship to be contributed by my research.

The main discussion in both local and international literature centres on informal mentorship – with limited insight into what to prioritise when mentoring women leaders, and how. Therefore, the findings of my study aim to close this gap in the literature.

6.2.4.1 *Informal mentorship*

Research comprehensively shows that mentorship in HE mainly takes place informally and that there is minimal practice of formal mentorship. However, women leaders are exposed to informal mentorship in practice. The literature shows evidence of typical situations of informal and unstructured mentoring of women leaders in HE (Bodilenyane & Mooketsana, 2019; Roets et al., 2019; Reis & Grady, 2020). Bodilenyane and Mooketsana (2019) state that informal mentorship is prominent in many HE institutions. Banwell et al. (2019) support this view by indicating that informal mentoring for women commonly occurs, where the mentor and mentee pair with one another spontaneously, and mentoring happens accidentally. Attesting to these views, a study by Reis and Grady (2020) involved eight women presidents in the USA who shared their mentoring experiences. They told of their exposure to informal mentoring, where mentoring relationships occurred without formal arrangement by the institutions (Reis & Grady, 2020). My findings concur with study findings, namely that all women leaders were mentored informally. All participants indicated that they were not formally



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

matched with their mentors, nor had there been any involvement of the institutions at which they were based. There was also no guiding structure in the mentorship for women leaders. Mentorship happened organically as these women engaged and interacted with their mentors, most of whom were their seniors, leaders and/or Heads of Department (HODs). This indicates that mentoring for women leaders typically occurred informally at the time of this study and suggests that HEIs should formalise mentorship for women leaders to achieve better results.

I argue for structured mentorship associated with guidelines, because it also emerged from my research that the lack of structured mentorship leads mentors to depend on their own prior mentorship experiences and study on mentoring women leaders. Most of the mentors that I interviewed indicated that they had received mentoring while advancing their own careers and, in turn, they now used their experiences to mentor the women leaders in this study. Due to the lack of formalised mentorship guidelines, one mentor had self-developed and followed five principles of mentorship for mentoring others. The lack of formalised mentorship for women leaders causes inconsistency in how women leaders are mentored and needs to be recognised. In fact, it is argued in the literature that women are apathetic about being involved in informal mentorship (Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2019) and as a result, some abandon mentorship (Schriever & Gainger, 2019). There is a need for organised and coordinated mentorship of women leaders, which forms part of my recommendations presented in Chapter seven.

6.2.4.2 Identification and development of a successor

Regarding how women leaders were mentored, the findings showed that one female mentor participant intentionally identified and developed a woman leader for a senior position that she herself was going to vacate. According to this mentor, she saw this woman's potential and leadership skills and felt she was the right person to take on the role when she retired. The mentor, therefore, intentionally mentored and developed her proposed successor. In my study, this identification and development of a successor occurred as one of the regular activities in mentoring a woman. Though discussions on this practice are limited in the literature, Pace (2018) argues that having



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

an influential leader as a mentor contributes to women's advancement in leadership and enables them to learn and navigate the institutional leadership culture. The presumption is that women learn from influential leaders, who also enable them to navigate leadership in that institution. Training leaders for leadership succession in HE through mentorship is generally encouraged (Goerisch et al., 2019; Roets et al., 2019). This view resonates with my study, where the mentor exposed the woman leader to leadership in the same department as where the mentor had learned leadership tactics for the university. The mentor's experience enabled her to practise such mentorship. Hence, Mate et al. (2018) argue that mentoring is one of the effective means of building women's capacity for leadership in organisations.

Being intentional in developing a mentee also corresponds with transformational leadership. According to Northouse (2019), transformational leaders influence their followers to work towards clear goals. In doing succession planning, they influence and assist their followers in working towards achieving the set goals (Jiang et al., 2017). My study's findings attest to the fact that the women were explicitly mentored to take over the leadership position once their mentor retires and the mentor assisted her in working towards realising this goal. Additionally, transformational leaders inspire self-confidence in their followers by delegating specific duties to them (Cavazotte et al., 2013). This transformational leadership practice corresponds with the current study's finding where a woman leader was assigned leadership duties by a senior mentor who assisted her transition to this role. The present study's findings therefore support the view emanating from the cited literature, namely that mentoring precedes leadership development and subsequent succession. Mentoring is suggested to be used as a transition and succession strategy.

6.2.4.3 Focus areas in mentoring women leaders

It is worth noting that success in an academic career is measured by various positive outcomes, inclusive of publications and notable citations; collaborations and networking; completed supervision of postgraduate students; and successful grant applications (Schriever & Grainger, 2019). Hence, for emphasis, the findings discussed below touch on some of these critical indicators as focus areas in mentoring



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

women. My study's findings identify different areas in which women leaders were mentored as part of their development for senior positions in academia.

6.2.4.3.1 Application for funding

Obtaining research grants and funding is an important career growth indicator and promotion requirement in HE. Sato et al. (2020) argue that obtaining research grants and funding enhance a researcher's productivity and competence. All academics must have funding to support their research outputs and productivity. Women's acquisition of funding for research projects would address the identified problem of limited research publications, which limits their academic career progress (Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2019). Steinþórsdóttir et al. (2020) report that in most countries – including the UK, Sweden and the Netherlands – men continue to obtain more and higher-funded research projects than women. In their literature review, Sato et al. (2020) conclude that women receive fewer research grants and lower funding compared to their male counterparts. Additionally, research funding success rates in most European countries are on average 3% lower for women than for male team leaders (Rosa et al., 2021).

This lack of financial support culminates in women having lower publication rates and slower progress in their academic careers, as publication output is one of the criteria for promotion in HE institutions. It also supports the argument by Rosa et al. (2021) that the under-representation of women in funded research is linked to the lower representation of women in leadership positions.

Mentors play a vital role in developing the career of women leaders, as the findings of my study established that mentors intentionally assisted the women they mentored in applying for and obtaining funding for their research projects. Consequently, mentors shared their funding opportunities with the mentees and encouraged them to apply for funding. According to these mentors, this was one of the areas on which they focused in mentoring women leaders, as it enhanced the career growth of women leaders. The significance of obtaining research funding is notable, based on what the reviewed literature suggests – that women find it challenging to obtain funding and that funding is one of the barriers that prevent women from advancing to senior positions.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

According to Ballou et al. (2019), women worldwide face challenges in accessing the necessary resources to build their careers. Chitsamatanga and Rembe (2019) agree that the challenges to attract and qualify for funding, and the lack of funding pose significant barriers to women's career growth. Hence the need to assist women to get funding. The findings of this study established that mentorship can help women leaders to learn how to access research grants and funding, in order to stimulate growth in their research outputs.

6.2.4.3.2 *Introduction to academic networks*

The second focus area for mentoring women in the current study involved introducing them to academic networks in their field of specialisation. The findings showed that women leaders were encouraged to attend conferences and interact with prominent scholars in their field of practice. Their mentors would readily introduce them to local and international networks in their research areas. This finding supports the literature in highlighting the importance of networking towards building a successful academic career. In a study by Read et al. (2020), mentors were found to introduce women (mentees) to networks, which led to increased self-confidence in these women. The literature also reveals other positive results of women being introduced to academic networks. For example, findings from a formal mentorship initiative for women show that mentoring leads to the establishment of substantial networks (Dashper, 2020). Delgado and Allen (2019) also found that women who occupied senior positions were exposed to networks in their specialisation fields through mentoring.

Networking holds several benefits in developing one's academic career. In fact, it is regarded as a mechanism for accessing valuable contacts and improving an individual's academic profile (Turner-Moffatt, 2019; Coleman, 2020; Dashper, 2020; Briscoe-Palmer & Mattocks, 2021). Networks are known to provide knowledge, guidance, and support from the collective group, and help with problem solving (Elias, 2018). Additionally, networking promotes emotional and professional support, professional development, work satisfaction and the likelihood or prospect of career advancement (Scheepers et al., 2018; Longman et al., 2019; Coleman, 2020). Offermanni et al. 2020) provide another example of the positive effects of networking



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

on women's career outcomes. Women involved in their study reported that mentoring contributed to their success and growth in the field. My study findings and the existing literature emphasise the importance of networking and mentors' role in introducing women to beneficial networks. This role of the mentor is critical because evidence points to women having difficulty in networking and building connections (Elias, 2018; Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2019; O'Connor et al., 2020). O'Connor et al. (2020) argue that women academics are often excluded from male-dominated academic networks because they find it challenging to enter them. Furthermore, a study in India by Gandhi and Sen (2020) found that women find it challenging to access critical networks in their field, thus resulting in missed opportunities and the lack of support from such networks. To conclude, mentorship for women leaders is important, because they can access networks through their mentors' initiatives.

6.2.4.3.3 *Creating a balanced career and work–personal life*

Mate et al. (2018) and Ballou et al. (2019) believe that striking a healthy balance between family life and a successful career is a challenge for many women in academia. This means that women should consider strategies to stabilise their personal and professional responsibilities (Palmer & Jones, 2019). A study by Dashper (2020) that explored formal mentorship involved 15 women leaders and 15 mentors. Many expressed that balancing motherhood and their career was a major challenge.

In a similar study (Maheshwari & Nayak, 2020), the biggest challenge participants raised was balancing work and family responsibilities. This results from the various roles women play at home, which they must tally with demanding academic jobs. According to Hryniewicz and Vianna (2018), women spend numerous hours a week on household chores and caring for their children, in contrast to men. This means that, during the typical working day, women have less hours to focus on building their academic careers. As a result, work and family roles have been noted as a factor that negatively affects women's progress towards a successful career in academia and handicaps them to remain at the same level for an extended period (Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2019). Women need to be mentored to juggle the available hours between their careers and personal lives. Significantly, the current study's findings show that



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

mentors contributed to women's successful balancing of their careers and personal lives, as they encouraged the women to make time for both these aspects of life. The mentors also shared practical skills on how to approach their academic career in order to be productive in all areas. The findings showed that women were encouraged to spend time on activities like publication, conference attendance and networking, while also giving the necessary attention to teaching. According to the mentors, being productive in all areas would help to create a balanced and successful career. This development seemed important, according to Brabazon and Schulz's (2020) research findings: women usually have heavy teaching loads, which results in limiting their research productivity and negatively impacting their promotion prospects.

Chitsamatanga and Rembe (2019) argue that the development of women is one of the key contributors to academic promotion and leadership progression. The current study also found that women leaders are trained to have balanced careers. This finding is consistent with the literature that shows that women find it challenging to have a successful and progressive career as well as a healthy family life (Ballou et al., 2019; Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2019).

6.2.4.3.4 *Development of soft skills*

A mentor in my study stated that, when mentoring, he focused on encouraging women leaders to build their soft skills. From his description it was explicit that soft skills involve managing people, setting goals, resolving conflicts, and building strong teams. Developing skills resonates well with mentorship, and as Turner-Moffatt (2019) put it, mentoring gives women access to new skills and competencies to become effective and successful leaders. The management of emotions forms part of conflict resolution and it has emerged from the literature as one of the necessary skills for women leaders. Elias (2018) argues that women leaders must manage their emotions in the workplace, since women are often perceived as emotional beings who openly show their positive or negative emotions. Based on my findings, mentoring appears to be one critical way for women leaders to learn to manage their feelings. Guiding women to handle conflicts better is consistent with transformational leadership: mentors assist mentees in developing critical skills needed to be effective in their leadership



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

(Bodilenyane & Mooketsana, 2019). Through intellectual stimulation, transformational leaders inspire and challenge their followers to be more creative and innovative in solving problems in the workplace (Khan et al., 2016; Northouse, 2019). Such creativity allows the women leaders as mentees in this study to deal with, analyse, address problems, and come up with appropriate solutions (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004).

6.2.4.3.5 *Development for leading male-dominated departments*

In many countries, including South Africa, HEIs are still male dominated in respect of their senior leadership. As such, they reflect a gendered organisational culture that leads to women having challenges to adjust to and be accepted in these positions (Toni & Moodle, 2019). As stated in the literature (Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2019; Bridges et al., 2021; Dashper, 2020), women leading male-dominated institutions and departments often experience opposition and non-acceptance from their followers, which causes them to feel rejected. The current study's findings are significant in the sense that women leaders indicated that their mentors trained them on how to lead and manage male-dominated departments. The mentors gave these women leaders valuable tips on leading such departments, earning respect from male colleagues, and being accepted. The findings show that women who were mentored gained respect from the men they were leading once they practised what their mentors had taught them. This demonstrates the value of mentorship for women working towards successful leadership in male-dominated departments and institutions. These findings support the view of Stuckey et al. (2019), who suggest that women with mentors can better deal with challenges related to gender issues in the academic environment, and so gain respect from their departments. Mentors in the current study guided and prepared women leaders to handle organisational matters creatively, and to develop innovative ideas for gaining the trust of the people they led. Their role articulates transformational leadership practice. According to Northouse (2019), followers of transformational leaders are encouraged to think and deal with situations carefully and to overcome challenges creatively. This speaks to the transformational leadership principle of intellectual stimulation through which transformational leaders motivate followers to be innovative in handling and dealing with difficult situations (Jiang et al.,



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

2017). Thus, mentoring has the potential to empower women as both mentees and mentors within male-dominated organisational contexts (Dashper, 2018).

6.2.4.4 Reasons why women leaders were mentored in the manner they received mentorship

This study has shown that women were mentored informally based on how their mentors had been mentored; what their mentors had read about mentoring; and the mentors' experiences of mentoring others. The findings below discuss the absence of mentorship training for mentors, policies, frameworks, or guidelines in the institutions.

6.2.4.4.1 Lack of mentorship policy / guidelines

This study has established neither a guiding mentorship policy nor a mentorship framework for women leaders in South Africa or other countries. In fact, it merely confirmed that most participants, including mentors who have been mentoring women for long, had neither received nor used a guiding policy or mentorship guidelines in their institutions. One mentor based in the UK stated that he had never seen any mentorship policy or guidelines in South Africa – or anywhere else. From the findings it emerged that mentorship was not guided by formal principles; it just happened spontaneously, based on how mentors saw fit. One participant mentioned the existence of a mentorship policy in her institution, but after I engaged with the policy I found that it was not designed for the mentorship of women leaders. Instead, it was directed specifically to the mentorship of ECAs. At Green University where this study was conducted, the mentorship policy I reviewed was not designed for women leaders either. My study found that mentoring for women leaders is unstructured and differs from one woman leader to the next, depending on the knowledge and expertise of the mentor.

The finding regarding the lack of mentorship policy supports existing knowledge in the literature. A study in India by Gandhi and Sen (2020) explored difficulties and enablers for women leaders in HE and discovered that there was no policy geared towards women's leadership development in their HEIs. Their findings showed that none of the universities in India has policies or processes in place to develop women leaders as a



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

part of their vision or mission. The lack of mentorship policy and guidelines was identified as one of the main barriers in women's leadership growth and progress towards senior positions (Gandhi & Sen, 2020) – probably due to a lack of guiding rules, which resulted in ineffective practices (Bridges et al., 2021). The omissions suggest the need for HEIs to formulate mentoring policies focused on the mentoring of women leaders. Such policies will ensure that all women benefit from mentorship (Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021), especially in gendered HEIs where women still struggle to access senior positions compared to their male counterparts. The theory of gendered organisations points out that the formulation of policies and principles that advocate equal opportunities is not prioritised in gendered institutions (Williams et al., 2012). This lack of prioritisation further perpetuates inequalities (Williams et al., 2012) as is evidenced in this study. Hence, there is a need for mentorship programmes for women leaders to be formalised, developed, and structured.

6.2.4.4.2 Lack of training for mentors

Dhunpath et al. (2018), Mulcahey et al. (2018) and Mondisa (2018) report limited recognition of mentorship in the HE sector and a lack of support and training for mentors. This results in mentors not knowing what mentoring entails and being ineffective mentors (Dhunpath et al., 2018; Mondisa, 2018). The current study agrees that participants were mainly mentored from their mentors' experience and knowledge and not from previous training. My findings and the literature agree about the fact that the mentors offered what they knew and what they had gained from previous experiences. Hence, training for mentors cannot be overemphasised, as it is assumed that mentors will learn and develop their skills from training. After all, mentoring has been identified as a skill developed, learned, and nurtured (Dhunpath et al., 2018). Sims et al. (2020) emphasise the importance of training for mentors of women leaders in order to learn the skills that are necessary to train other women to navigate gendered institutions. Such training will improve the quality of mentorship offered to women leaders and reduce potential mistakes during the mentorship. According to



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Mondisa (2018), mentors may be ineffective due to a lack of knowledge and/or training in effective mentoring techniques.

6.2.5 Constraining factors encountered in mentoring women leaders for senior positions

My study showed that mentorship for women leaders, in general, has many benefits and contributes to women's career growth and advancement to senior positions. Subsequently, the findings revealed challenges linked to mentoring women leaders. Next, I outline five obstacles that were gathered from the findings while discussing the existing literature on the theme.

6.2.5.1 Lack of support and funding for mentorship

My study found that mentorship for women has not received much recognition, and it does not receive any support or funding to make it effective. The findings suggest that HE institutions have not prioritised or paid enough attention to mentorship for women leaders. Therefore, it is still an informal practice. My findings revealed that the mentors involved in the study supported their female mentees from their personal funds if the need arose for them to engage in an activity that demanded financing. This problem was noted as one of the challenges that hindered the success of mentorship for women leaders. It concurred with the finding of Reis and Grady (2020), who showed that women who were mentored in the US as university presidents were sponsored by their mentors in support of their career growth. This shows a lack of financial support directed to the mentorship of women leaders.

Mulcahey et al. (2018) argue that there is still a lack of institutional investment and support for mentorship. Read et al. (2019) raise a similar concern and argue that institutions pay little attention to and put minor effort into mentorship practice. This confirms a need for institutions to invest in and support mentorship for women leaders. With such support, mentors will be motivated to support and develop women. Funding of mentorship programmes will add value to the mentorship and development of women for senior positions.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

6.2.5.2 No training for mentors

The need to train mentors has repeatedly been raised in the literature (Davies & Healey, 2019; Bodilenyane & Mooketsana, 2019; Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021). Davies and Healey (2019) reiterate that the training of mentors should be compulsory, as training can contribute to an effective and successful mentorship. Mentors with advanced knowledge have a positive influence on the development of women who aspire to leadership (Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021). According to Lucey et al. (2018), the training of mentors assists them to conduct mentor-mentee meetings better, record mentorship sessions, and measuring the progress of the mentorship. It also contributes to their skills for handling relationships and improves their confidence for commencing the mentorship (Crisp & Alvarado-Young, 2018). This finding emphasises the significance of training mentors. In contrast, the lack of training limits the effectiveness of mentorships as mentors will not have the appropriate skills for mentoring. Mulcahey et al. (2018) argue that a lack of training for mentors may result in a lack of practical mentoring skills or the misappropriation of specific skills. This is because not all senior academics who are assigned to serve as mentors have the necessary capabilities for mentorship (Dhunpath et al., 2018).

Besides the importance of training expressed in the literature, the current findings show that there is no formal training for a mentor. None of the mentors in my study ever received training prior to mentoring, so they were often unsure about the mentorship they provided to the women leaders. This also means there is no consistency in how women are mentored, as each mentor does it from their personal understanding and exposure to mentorship. Therefore, institutions need to train mentors to encourage consistency in the mentorship of women leaders. Institutions also need to ensure that the training is effective and serves the purpose of advancing women to senior positions.

6.2.5.3 Insufficient time for mentorship

The current study's findings show that mentorship requires time spent between the mentor and mentee to have an impact and be successful. A challenge identified from the findings was for mentors and mentees to find time to engage and learn from one

another. This may be because, as discussed in previous sections, mentorship for women leaders has not been formalised. It still happens mostly by chance and coincidence. Since there is no designated time for the mentorship, participants in the study struggled to find time for the mentorship to take place appropriately. The current study findings seem to support what has been raised in the literature (Lucey et al., 2018; Bodilenyane & Mooketsana, 2019), namely that effective mentorship is time consuming. The mentor and mentee must spend time together for effective mentoring to take place (Bodilenyane & Mooketsana, 2019).

Planning consultation times between a mentor and mentee is challenging (Mulcahey et al., 2018; Roets et al., 2019; Kaplan, 2019), because mentors are busy with work responsibilities and they are not relieved from their duties to attend to mentorship. This view is shared by Mulcahey et al. (2018), who found that procuring the undivided attention of academic mentors is challenging as they have many demanding duties. Kaplan (2019) agreed and argue that since mentors in academia are expected to spend time on their own research and teaching, they may not have time for the mentee. The mentee on the other hand needs much time to develop. Therefore, lack of time compromises the quality of mentorship for women in academia. This emphasises the need for HE institutions to develop effective mentorship programmes, especially since this sector is known to be demanding and competitive. Academia are always preoccupied with building their own careers and preparing publications (Dhunpath et al., 2018).

6.2.5.4 *Mentors overstepping boundaries*

My study also found that mentors sometimes get too close to the mentee and feel entitled to make certain decisions for their mentee. One woman leader was concerned that her mentor did not want her to move to another institution because she (the mentor) intended the mentee to lead at the institution where they worked together. This caused the end of their relationship when the mentee moved on to other institutions. Another woman leader in the study complained about her mentor who wanted to prescribe which people she should have personal relations with. She felt that this was stepping outside of the mentorship boundaries and that the mentor

struggled to uphold a professional mentorship relationship. Kaplan (2019) – a mentor who received the Susan Hardwick Excellence in Mentoring Award from the American Association of Geographers in 2018 – advised that even though mentors may want to know about the personal lives of their mentees, they should know where to draw the line.

This behaviour of mentors emerged from the current study's findings as a mentorship challenge. Women leaders complained about their mentors wanting to make decisions for them and intruding into their personal lives. Such intrusion may occur because mentors did not acquire the appropriate skills through training. This may lead to a lack of understanding of the boundaries of the mentor-mentee relationship; what mentoring involves, and the role of a mentor (Ballou et al., 2019), and pose more challenges in the mentorship relationship. In terms of RCT, mentoring relationship challenges may include disagreements on specific issues, and experiences of abuse and humiliation (Hammer et al., 2014; Jordan, 2017). These challenges may be caused, among others, by power struggles and oppression (Hammer et al., 2014) as mentors may hurt their mentee because of their powerful position in the mentorship relationship. The training of mentors may address this challenge as trained mentors with the necessary knowledge and skills can make a significant contribution to the mentorship of women who desire to be leaders (Mcilongo & Strydom, 2020).

6.2.5.5 *Having a mentor/s in a different context*

One-woman leader in the study had two mentors from a better-developed context compared to South Africa. Sometimes, she found this to be challenging as her mentors expected her to implement practices that would demand resources that were not available in the country. She felt that her mentor could not relate to contextual differences and considered this a challenge to the mentorship. Crisp and Alvarado-Young (2018), on the other hand, advocated having mentors from a different context. However, findings from a formal investigation by Roets et al. (2019) discovered that mentorship involving a mentor and a mentee who were physically far removed from one another had limited success and impact. The findings of my study attest to this as



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

a challenge and suggest that women should be mentored by people who understand their work context and can relate to the practices they are involved in.

6.2.6 Strategies that can be used for effective mentoring of women leaders

In engaging with the participants, a variety of mentorship strategies could be used in mentoring women leaders. Four strategies (formal/informal/combination of both; peer mentorship; flexible mentoring; and having mentorship in all the career stages), are proposed for the purpose of this thesis.

6.2.6.1 Formal/ informal/ a combination of both

Differing views emerged from the findings about whether mentoring for women leaders should be formal or informal. Some participants suggested that mentoring for women leaders should be formalised where they are assigned mentors and the institution should be involved in coordinating the mentorship. Others felt that mentoring should be informal so that mentors would not feel forced to do it. They also suggested that matching women leaders with mentors might lead to a situation where they are allocated to mentors who are not passionate about the mentee's growth and consequently do not really contribute to their development. The suggestion was that institutions would have to create enabling environments where women leaders can meet potential mentors via informal engagements. Literature also seemed to support a need for formal mentorship for women leaders, as Bodilenyane and Mooketsane (2019) and Dorner et al. (2021) suggest that mentorship must be formalised and coordinated by institutions to be accessible and to benefit everyone who needs it. Roets et al. (2019) found that a mentee who was involved in a formal mentorship programme gained the necessary knowledge and skills from the mentor. In their research into a formal mentorship programme for women, Stuckey et al. (2019) identified several benefits of formal mentorship, for instance networking, a better understanding of institutional policies, safe spaces for women involved, and continued relationships between mentees and mentors (Stuckey et al., 2019).

Formal mentorship seems to be more beneficial and successful, as it results in growth and development in a career. However, its limitations are also noted – some mentors



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

are driven by rewards and benefits rather than by a passion for developing others, and there is a general unavailability of mentors who want to commit to formal mentoring processes (Roets et al., 2019). The popular view in the literature supports the idea that mentorship for women should be formal because of its proved benefits. Findings from this study show that both formal and informal mentoring contribute to women leaders' career growth and development. This has been argued by Bhopal (2020) who states that, whether formal or informal, the benefits of mentoring include support in the planning and achievement of specific career goals; focus and clarity of career goals; increased confidence for the mentor and mentee; and an understanding of organisational politics.

The current study findings present the additional option of a combination of both formal and informal mentorships. The participant who shared this view expressed the need for a more structured mentorship where the institution is involved, but also for casual or informal engagements where women leaders can receive informal support. This finding supports the view of Roets et al. (2019), who argue that informal engagements within a formal mentorship programme lead to a better connection with a mentor. This means that having a formal mentorship combined with informal engagement sessions contributes to a more successful mentorship relationship. Therefore, formal mentorship is recommended for successful mentorship in women leaders.

6.2.6.2 Peer mentorship

Peer mentorship is yet another form of mentorship noted in the literature as making a positive contribution to career development and growth. It is a developmental relationship that involves two or more participants of a similar professional rank who mentor, develop and guide one another to enhance their mutual capabilities (Dhunpath et al., 2018; Ganfi Lachter & Ruland, 2018). This type of mentoring has been noted to contribute to women's development, as through this mentorship they learn from one another and progress in their careers (Briscoe-Palmer & Mattocks, 2021). It was therefore significant that, in the current study, participants recommended that mentoring for women leaders should include peer mentorship where women leaders learn from and develop one another. One participant suggested that in such a



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

mentorship women leader are able to source additional knowledge and skills by inviting colleagues and peers to come and share the expertise that they themselves lack. Women leaders in the study felt that peer mentorship provided a safe space where they could express themselves, share challenges they encountered, and support one another. Ballou et al. (2019) recommended peer mentorship, and suggested that peer relationships help women to develop networks and promote their career growth and success. The peer-mentoring programme by Ganfi Lachter and Ruland (2018) revealed that peer mentorship is conducive to leadership development and establishes networks in a study field.

Peer mentorship furthermore contributes to the psychosocial well-being of those involved (Dhunpath et al., 2018). List and Sorcinelli (2018) showed that peer mentoring provides women as academic leaders with safe platforms for professional problem solving a safe space, a sounding board, and a perspective for solving confidential professional issues. It also affords women the opportunity to recognise their own leadership achievements, to have a place where they can express any professional and personal concerns, and to experience empathy (List & Sorcinelli, 2018). Although this finding clearly shows a need for peer mentorship for women leaders, a disadvantage of peer mentorship is that peers usually have the same level of experience and may therefore not be able to assist one another in situations that require greater expertise than their own (Dhunpath et al., 2018). They may eventually have to source skills from senior academics.

6.2.6.3 Flexible mentoring

The findings of this study showed flexible mentoring as another strategy that can be used in mentoring women leaders. In this case, women are not restricted to one mentor but can rotate to different mentors. The motivation was that women would learn more from different mentors who have diverse expertise. The flexible mentoring strategy as shared by my study participants is not a foreign practice, and it is widely noted and supported in the literature. It is explained as mentoring that allows the mentee to work with, learn from, and be developed by multiple mentors with different

expertise, instead of by a single mentor whose expertise may be restricted and limited (List & Sorcinelli, 2018). Dhunpath et al. (2018) also support the idea of having flexible mentorship that allows for more than one mentor. They argue that having one mentor may not be sufficient, as no single mentor has the expertise, knowledge, and skill required in all the areas of an academic career. Cozza (2022) shares a similar sentiment by supporting the fact that women who have different mentors will grow in their leadership because they learn from diverse experts in academia. Flexible mentoring therefore seems essential.

It is worth noting that as much as having various mentors is recommended, there may be challenges in this regard. Read et al. (2020) argue that having more than one mentor can lead to a conflict of roles. Mentors may have different ways of doing things, which may confuse the mentee. They may also make different demands on the mentee in such a manner that the mentee may struggle to cope with more than one mentor.

6.2.6.4 *Having mentorship during all the career stages*

Developing a career is a journey that does not start when one assumes leadership, but it is built during different stages of life. Therefore, a person needs a mentor as early as possible. Crisp and Alvarado-Young (2018) as well as Briscoe-Palmer and Mattocks (2021) suggest that having mentors in different stages of life and careers is crucial. Crisp and Alvarado-Young (2018) argue that mentorship that starts early in life can influence people already from a young age to build a leadership career; hence they recommend that mentorship should start prior to higher education (Crisp & Alvarado-Young, 2018). The findings by Read et al. (2020) show the importance for women to have mentors throughout their careers. They report that two-thirds of women who participated in their study had mentors in all their career stages and they associated their career success with the mentorship they received. Their research also shows that women who do not start mentorship early in their careers, struggle to form mentorship relationships later on (Read et al., 2020). The findings of the current study support this view.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Participants in my study suggested that mentorship should be implemented in all the stages of the education system, also when one starts an academic career. One woman leader shared how much having had a mentor early in her career had helped her to develop her later career. Having mentors earlier seems to engender a successful career. This means that mentorship should be actively promoted from as early as high school. Crisp and Alvarado-Young (2018) argue that mentorship should be introduced as soon as possible, and that teachers, youth development practitioners, and parents could serve as mentors and role models in the early stages. This means that there should be partnership and collaboration in all departmental spheres, from primary education to HE. Crisp and Alvarado-Young (2018) advocate partnerships across multiple educational contexts so as to extend mentoring and leadership development opportunities across the educational sphere.

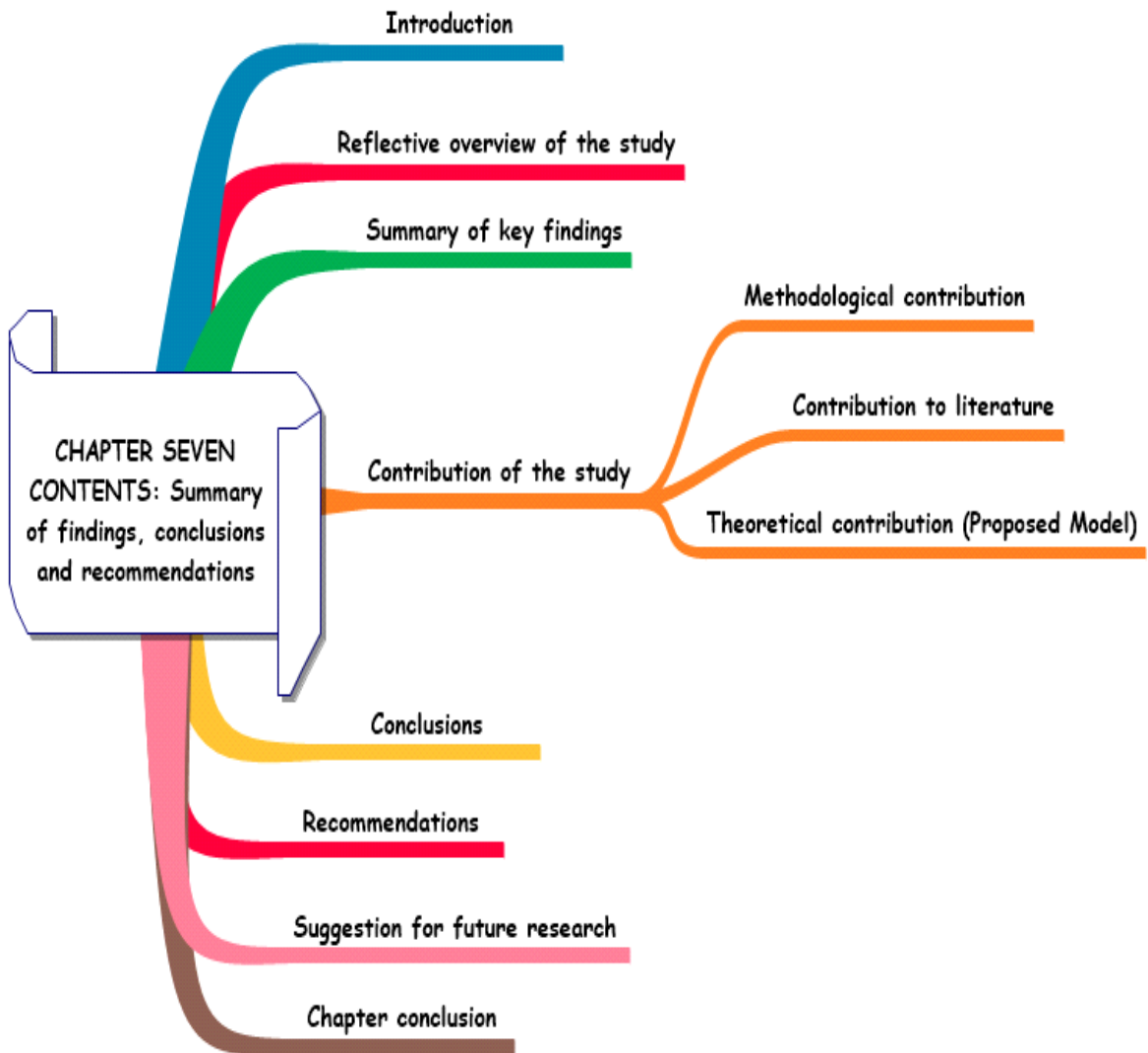
6.3 Chapter conclusion

My research findings on the mentorship experiences of women leaders were analysed and discussed in Chapter six. The discussion linked the study's findings with the literature and the theoretical framework on which my study was based. It became evident that mentoring contributes to women's leadership development, career success, and progression in leadership. The findings also revealed critical focus areas in mentoring women leaders for senior positions in HE, challenges encountered in mentoring women, and strategies for mentoring women leaders for senior positions in HE.

Chapter seven shows how the study contributed to new knowledge on women leadership, and their development through mentorship. The study concludes by providing recommendations for future research.



CHAPTER 7 CONTENTS



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

Chapter six discussed the study findings in comparison to existing literature and the study's theoretical framework. The purpose of the discussion was to answer the main research question: *What are the mentoring experiences of women leaders in their advancement to senior positions at a South African university?* In this final chapter, I first share a reflective overview of the study process (also reflecting on each chapter) and then summarise the study findings in respect of the secondary research questions. From there, I present contributions made by the study, including a proposed model for mentoring women leadership in higher education. I conclude the chapter by providing conclusions and recommendations.

7.2 Reflective overview of the study

Since I began my research journey for this PhD having many ideas concerning what I wanted my study to focus on, gaining a clear research focus was a bit of a challenge. Through engaging with other postgraduate students, I realised that finding a clear focus in postgraduate studies is not always easy. My experience was no exception. It took me about four months to discover what I wanted to focus on for my doctoral study. I began to panic as time passed while I was reading and trying to find the focus of my study. I regularly talked with my mentor and supervisor, sharing research ideas.

I knew I was passionate about women's leadership in HE. I also had a passion for mentorship of ECAs. At the time, I did not think I could explore mentorship from the perspective of women leaders. Through engagements with my mentor about my areas of keen interest, I realised that the appropriate focus for my study touched on two main aspects – women leadership in HE and mentorship. I read further on the mentorship of women leaders in HE and identified gaps in the literature on this phenomenon. I became confident about what I wanted to explore. My confidence was the beginning of this research journey. One of its highlights was when I presented my study at the Faculty of Education Research Indaba for postgraduate students, where I was



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

adjudicated as best presenter. This achievement confirmed the value of my study focus and the contribution it could make. Many Indaba participants also acknowledged the importance and uniqueness of the study and highlighted the contribution it was expected to make to women's leadership and mentoring in HE.

I am a young junior researcher and an ECA at the university where this study took place. Undertaking a study that would explore senior academics who also happened to occupy senior positions at the university was a bold step. When I thought this through before the data generation process, I was sure that interviewing women in these positions would be extremely challenging due to the very demanding nature of their work. As a result, I expected to get a maximum of five positive responses. I was truly doubtful if it was a good idea to study senior academics in senior positions.

The women were going to be sampled from nine faculties in the university. I was possibly known in the one faculty where I am based. Besides, I had been with the university for only a year and was still getting to know the university community members. I found the details of women who were holding senior positions on the university's website and used the website to communicate the purpose of my research to the prospective participants. While waiting for their responses, I began to doubt the wisdom of having decided to target women leaders who have had mentoring in their careers, and I began to wonder how many would actually have had such experience. I was concerned that this requirement would further reduce the number of women leaders participating in my study. To my biggest surprise, I received positive feedback and an excellent turnout. Ten women leaders agreed to participate in the study; all were positive about it and readily shared their experiences. In addition, I managed to involve five mentors of the five women leaders through snowball sampling, and they also participated in the study. My initial fears were greatly allayed by the willingness and positive responses from the participants.

The research process was a positive experience, as should be clear from this thesis and from a brief reflection on each chapter below.

Chapter 1 presented an overview of the study. It covered the introduction and background to the study, the problem statement and the rationale, which gave a broad



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

view of the research phenomenon and the focus of the study. The literature overview gave an overall picture of the body of knowledge on women's leadership and mentoring. The gaps in the existing literature relating to mentorship were identified and examined. This first chapter also introduced the study's purpose, objectives and research questions. The study aimed to answer one main research question and five secondary questions. It was these research questions that propelled me to pursue the investigation. I was eager to understand the role that mentoring plays in developing women leaders and how mentoring can be done better to empower women for senior positions.

Chapter 2 critically reviewed the available national and international literature. Considering the aim of the study, I reviewed the literature on women's leadership in higher education to get a sense of women's representation in leadership positions and their leadership experiences globally. I also saw a need to present legislative measures in some countries that were aimed at addressing gender inequality in the workplace and increase women's representation. As a result, the literature review contains a section on legislation that addresses gender gaps in the workplace. The South African literature includes the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996*, the *Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998*, and the *Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill of 2013*.

Special attention was paid to the literature on mentoring and women mentoring by focusing on the use of mentoring in developing and advancing women leaders in different sectors, including HE. I discovered much research on women leaders, their underrepresentation and the barriers they encounter in pursuing leadership and occupying leadership positions. I also established that although there was literature on mentoring, there was a limited focus on the mentorship of women leaders. This excited me because it confirmed the need for my study and its contribution to knowledge. In order to organise the review better and make it reader friendly, I divided the literature into themes and sub-themes that captured the essence of the discussion.

Chapter two was one of the most challenging chapters to write. I planned to present an in-depth review of the literature rather than superficially stating what other authors



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

had said. For this reason, I spent hours reviewing the literature and thus revised the chapter various times. What was interesting was that each time I immersed myself in the literature, I came across something new worth sharing and included it in my review. I had much literature and had to be selective in what I used in this chapter.

Chapter 3 presented the theoretical views underpinning the study. After a thorough review of the literature, I established that there were limited theories on the mentorship of women leaders. I was unable to find one theory that could serve as the lens for me to understand the mentoring experiences of women leaders in HE. I therefore drew from three theories – the Theory of Gendered Organisations, Transformational Leadership Theory, and Relational-Cultural Theory – as the theoretical grounding for this study. I assembled different components drawn from these theories to understand the phenomenon and so developed a conceptual framework. The conceptual framework outlined mentoring as a developmental relationship, which includes a transformational leader who serves as a mentor in a gendered HE context. In this chapter, I constructed and explained a conceptual framework in the form of a figure, and justified its relevance to the phenomenon under research in this study.

Chapter 4 presented a detailed explanation of methodological processes followed to study the mentoring experiences of women leaders and the contribution of mentors to this mentorship. The chapter started with a discussion of the interpretive research paradigm in which the study is located and the qualitative research approach that was followed. Next, I discussed the case study research design as the research design adopted in the study. At first, I was convinced I was using a narrative inquiry research design and thought it would be interesting to use such a unique, underused design at PhD level. I read about this design and implemented what I had read. However, when I used the design for the first time, I realised that I had misunderstood the implementation of the narrative inquiry. I then had to change the research design to a case study, as I realised (with guidance from my mentor and supervisor) that I was actually doing a case study and my study did not align with some narrative inquiry procedures. In particular, I had a big sample size, which generated too much data and



made it impossible to do a proper narrative analysis. I discovered this during the data analysis stage and adjusted the research design. This proved to be a learning experience, as the narrative inquiry would have better assisted me in guiding and supervising my prospective Master's students.

Chapter 4 also discussed sampling procedures, data generation methods and instruments, as well as analysis strategy. Data was generated by conducting semi-structured interviews with all fifteen participants (ten women leaders and five mentors). I had initially planned to have face-to-face interviews with the participants. However, the COVID-19 pandemic intervened and changed that arrangement. One of the first restrictions that were imposed by the pandemic, was face-to-face meetings. Additionally, people generally were uncomfortable meeting others during this period, so I was compelled to generate data through virtual interviews. This unfortunately deprived me of intimate contact with participants. However, data generation was a great experience despite this challenge. Participants were quite comfortable meeting virtually and they were free to talk and share their experiences. Most were available at scheduled times, but a few had challenges and had to reschedule the meeting. It was heart-warming that all participants shared their experiences with passion and enthusiasm during the interviews. I had great conversations with the participants. Some interviews lasted for an hour because of the active engagement with the participants. I was also encouraged by most of them, who motivated me and inspired me to pursue this study which, according to them, was “interesting”. I truly enjoyed the data generation process.

The interviews were all transcribed verbatim. This exercise was demanding and time-consuming as I had 15 interviews to transcribe, and I wanted to ensure that I was capturing the data correctly from interviews. I consequently shared the transcripts with the participants to review and confirm if I precisely reflected what they had shared with me. Most participants came back to me, and some indicated corrections that had to be made. I was impressed by the feedback and adjusted the transcripts accordingly. One woman leader withdrew her participation after she reviewed the interview transcripts and felt that what she had shared might give away her identity. I respected



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

her decision as I understood that people may at any point withdraw their participation from a study.

I furthermore reviewed policy documents on mentoring in Chapter four. This review was quite challenging as there was a limited number of such documents available. The two that I got were from university websites. Chapter four concluded by showing how quality was and ethical principles were complied with in the study.

Chapter 5 presented my findings from data analysis. The results emanated from the interviews (with nine women leaders and five mentors of some women leaders) and the review of mentorship policies. The findings showed that participants understood mentoring, what it entails and what mentorship experiences they believed contributed to their career success and advancement in leadership. What was gripping to learn from the findings was that all participants recognised mentoring as an enabler of leadership success. I was touched by the response from one participant who stated that *no one should be without a mentor, in all stages of their life* (MT5). Remarks like this showed how much the participants valued the impact of mentorship on a person's career. It was, however, also clear that there are limitations to the mentorship of women leaders, such as limited attention being paid to it, lack of training for mentors, and mentorship policy. These limitations rendered mentorship ineffective. The findings were presented in terms of themes and sub-themes to answer the study questions.

Chapter 6 discussed research findings in cross-reference with existing literature and the conceptual framework. Having reviewed the literature vastly, I found this process fascinating. I had already studied much literature when I wrote this chapter, and I could remember whether what I had read agreed with or contradicted the findings. It was, therefore, easy to locate the themes as I could add the literature and discuss each finding. I feel that, as suggested in thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022), I had read my findings so many times that I knew them by heart. I believe that transcribing the data and reading it so many times assisted me in understanding it deeply.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

It was interesting to learn that some of the participants' views and experiences were similar to those presented in the international literature. Learning this encouraged me to share the South African perspectives on mentoring women leaders in HE. The shared reflection on different stages in the research and the writing of chapters led me to this final chapter (**Chapter 7**), where I now present a summary of the key findings and share the contribution made by my study.

7.3 Summary of key findings

I explored the mentoring experiences of women leaders in their process of advancing to senior positions at a South African university. The key findings of my study are summarised and presented below, every time guided by a secondary research question to show how the study achieved the objectives posed in Chapter 1. Secondary research questions are used to answer the main research question (Aina, 2020). Hence, the discussion below shows how the five secondary research questions were answered to respond to the main research question: *What are the mentoring experiences of women leaders in their advancement to senior positions at a South African university?*

7.3.1 Secondary research question 1: How do women leaders occupying senior positions in a South African university understand mentoring?

Before conducting the study and studying the literature, I realised that mentoring was understood differently and meant different things to different people. I therefore wanted to establish how women leaders in my study understood it. Such an inquiry was essential to gain an in-depth understanding of mentoring.

The answers to the first secondary research question showed that women leaders in the study generally understood mentoring and what it involves. Most of them described mentoring as a developmental relationship, role modelling, providing support, identifying potential in people and nurturing them, and offering career guidance and advice. The findings showed that women leaders saw mentoring as a developmental relationship between an established senior academic and a novice person within their



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

field of work. From their description, it was evident that a senior person who serves as a mentor guides, supports, and encourages the junior mentee during the mentorship.

The findings also established that a mentorship relationship could be formal or informal. According to the participants, a formal mentorship relationship is more structured and based on an agreement that guides the mentorship and planned activities. The findings also suggested that the mentor in a formal mentorship is formally assigned. Contrary to this, the participants explained that an informal mentorship happens as colleagues interact, share ideas and show care for a novice colleague's career growth and well-being. This understanding of mentorship was similar to how mentorship is generally described. It shows that mentorship is still viewed from the perspective of the development of a novice/junior person, rather than from the perspective of the development of a senior person.

The findings showed that participants regarded successful mentoring relations as dependent on the mentor and mentee's commitment and effort. They felt that the mentee had to show commitment to the mentorship and that the mentor also had to put effort into it – thus both parties had to play their role during the mentorship. Participants considered this necessary, because both the mentor and mentee would benefit from the relationship. Hence, they should both invest in its effectiveness and success. In the participants' view, the mentee benefited from the mentorship by growing their career. At the same time, the mentor benefited from having a reduced duty load, because the participants assumed that the mentee would assist the mentor with some of their duties. The mentor would at the same time experience a positive feeling of adding value to someone's career progress. This finding gave a sense of the mentoring relationship being mutually beneficial and having to be nurtured by those involved.

A crucial finding under Theme 1 as women leaders shared their understanding of mentoring was that mentoring was also understood as role modelling. One woman leader shared how she had learned through observing and working with the senior people she regarded as her role models. She conceptualised this as role modelling and regarded mentors as playing the part of a role model in one's career. The other prominent finding was that mentoring was understood as an intentional practice of



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

identifying innate potential in people, guiding them and growing them to perform to their maximum capacity. This indicated that mentors were challenging and helping junior people to discover and perform to their full potential. Some participants used the word “help” to express that mentoring is helping people to find out who they already are and what they can do and become. This finding gave a sense that mentors lead the mentee to discover who they are and help them to realise their capabilities and perform to their full potential. One woman leader shared how her mentor had helped her to identify her potential by giving her leadership opportunities that showed up her abilities.

The findings further established the participants’ understanding of mentorship as providing career guidance and advice to the mentee. In this way, mentors guided the mentee to make career decisions that would lead to career success. Mentoring was therefore also regarded as support where the mentor assists the mentee as they execute their duties. In the main, mentoring was regarded as the development of a less experienced person in the mentorship relationship towards growth, support, sound career decisions, and career success.

7.3.2 Secondary research question 2: Why is mentoring important in developing women leaders for senior positions?

Answers to the second research question showed that women leaders in the study were mentored and they appreciated mentorship and its role in growing their careers. Most of them had been mentored in all different phases of their career and they recognised mentoring as having contributed enormously to their career growth and success in their leadership positions. All mentors also spoke highly of the concept of mentorship and its role in developing and leading to career and leadership success. The findings confirmed mentoring as an enabler to women's leadership advancement and success.

The findings revealed that women in the study had received career guidance and advice from their mentors. Such guidance and support enabled them to make decisions leading to a successful academic career. For example, they were encouraged to publish and establish academic networks in their field, which



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

contributed to their career growth and success. Mentorship also allowed women leaders to lead projects and programmes in their disciplines. This was possible because their mentors gave them opportunities to lead and exposed them to leadership – resulting in them gaining leadership skills and confidence. The women leaders saw this as a mentoring role that helped them in their careers to succeed.

It was significant to establish from the findings that most women in the study did not plan to apply for their positions. They were nudged and encouraged by their mentor, who felt they were qualified and suitable for these positions. Thus, mentorship played an important role in developing confidence in these women and led to their professional development. Participants described that through mentorship, women leaders learned how to improve their teaching practice, manage their emotions, and better resolve conflicts. The other notable finding from the data analysis was that almost all women leaders who participated in the study were mentors to other women in their departments and fields. They reported that, having been mentored themselves, they saw a need to assist and develop other women to have the same opportunities. This shows the power of mentorship and confirms one of the outcomes of Relational-Cultural Theory, namely that mentoring relationships lead to a desire for more connections (Davidson, 2018).

7.3.3 How is mentoring used to prepare women leaders for senior leadership positions in the higher education sector?

The study established that women were mentored informally based on their mentors' personal mentorship experiences. A mentee was identified as a successor and subsequently developed. All participants indicated that the mentorship process happened informally. The relationship was not established formally but ensued organically as they interacted. For some participants, the informal mentorship took place in the car as they were travelling together to and from work, and for others, it took place over coffee meetings. However, my study found that women learned much from such informal engagements. It was clear that institutions did not organise the mentorships, as no guidelines were followed or agreements reached to guide the mentorship. Participants reported that mentors had used their own prior mentorship



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

experiences, knowledge, or what they had previously read on mentorship as a base for the mentoring they were offering. All mentors stated that they had been mentored in the course of their careers, and all were professors and successful in their careers. One mentor said that due to the lack of mentorship guidelines, he had developed five principles and used them when he mentored a woman leader involved in the study. The five principles involved encouraging women to *collaborate with other experts in their fields; behave themselves towards a successful outcome; develop their soft skills; have mentors and be intentional about mentorship; and to respect other people*. He believed that helping women to follow these principles led to successful leaders and could assist women in their careers and leadership progress. My study showed that institutions of higher learning were barely involved in the mentorship of women. It also emerged that mentorship for women leaders happens by chance, based on the willingness of senior colleagues who care about the growth of women leaders.

A unique finding from the data was that one mentor intentionally identified a woman leader in the study whom she mentored and groomed to take over her position. This finding is unique because developing people for leadership succession in HE is still not a prominent practice. This mentor shared that the woman she mentored showed qualities suitable for the position that she herself was soon to vacate; hence she mentored her for the position.

The findings further showed specific areas in which the women in the study were mentored. Participants indicated that women leaders were developed to apply for funding, to have a balanced career and personal life, to join academic networks in their field, to hone their soft skills, and to lead male-dominated fields/departments. These were essential areas of development in academia and for having a successful leadership career in the HE sector.

The findings further identified a lack of mentorship policy, frameworks, or guidelines in South Africa and the UK. The study involved a mentor from the UK who mentored a woman leader in my study. He reported that he did not use any policy and had never seen any mentorship policy in the UK or other country, including South Africa. Other mentors in South Africa shared similar experiences. As a result, participants shared that they did not follow any policy, nor were they aware of any policy for the mentorship



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

of women leaders. Only one participant hinted at the existence of a mentorship policy in her institution. This policy was reviewed, but its focus was not on the mentorship of women leaders. The findings showed that the mentorship of women in the study was based on their mentors' personal experience and what they knew, because there were not any guidelines for mentorship.

Additionally, my findings showed a lack of mentorship or training for the mentors and identified it as one of the constraining factors of mentorship.

7.3.4 What are the constraining factors encountered in mentoring women leaders for advancement to senior positions in South African universities?

Besides the lack of training for mentors, the findings revealed a lack of support and funding for mentorship, limited time for mentorship, mentors overstepping boundaries, and having a mentor in a different context as constraining factors for the mentorship of women leaders. Participants complained about a lack of support for mentorship, including financial aid, which hampered the success of mentorship. Mentors shared that they sometimes used their own funding to support the women they were mentoring, because they (the women) lacked financial assistance. Hence, participants highlighted a need for funds that could be used to support the development of women leaders. Some participants were adamant that mentorship had to be funded to be effective and successful.

The findings showed limited mentoring time as a constraining factor because mentors in HE have many other responsibilities that need their attention. As a result, they do not have any spare time to dedicate to mentorship. Participating mentors saw this as affecting their mentoring of others because they believed that a mentor and mentee must have time to engage and discuss issues properly. One mentor shared that she tried to address this challenge by having planned meetings with her mentee, who had to schedule these meetings for them well in advance. She declared that it was challenging to find the time to do this.

Another challenge in the mentorship of women leaders was that mentors sometimes failed to draw the line between executing their role as a mentor and intruding into the personal life of a mentee. Some women leaders shared that mentors may overstep



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

and think they “own” the mentee. They would even want to restrict what the mentee can do and with whom they may have relationships. One woman leader mentioned that when her mentor did not want her to move to another institution, this negatively impacted their relationship. Another mentee shared that her mentor wanted to choose the people with whom she could be involved in her relationships – she obviously saw this as a challenge and overstepping the borders of mentorship. A woman leader who had mentors in a developed country reported that having a mentor in a different context can be a challenge, as the mentee may not be able to fulfil all the expectations of the mentor. This happens significantly where the countries differ – the mentor’s being a developed country with an advanced infrastructure and the mentee living in a developing country.

7.3.5 What mentoring strategies can be utilised for the effective mentoring of women leaders?

The study highlights several strategies for mentoring women leaders in answering the above research question. The most prominent were formal/ informal/ a combination of both; peer mentorship; flexible mentoring; having mentorship in all the career stages; and mentoring practices borrowed from similar institutions.

Some participants proposed that the mentorship of women leaders should be formal, while others preferred it to be informal. They held clearly differing views on this issue, and participants justified their views. Those who suggested formal mentorship felt that mentorship must be made compulsory for senior members who would serve as mentors to women. Also, they proposed mandatory meetings and guidelines for this formal mentorship. They argued that if mentorship were not made formal, only those willing to mentor others would be available, leading to fewer people who want to do it, hence a shortage of mentors.

On the other hand, participants who suggested informal mentorship for women leaders felt that mentorship should be done by people who willingly choose to mentor women. They shared that matching women to mentors may lead to women being assigned to people who do not want to see women succeed in leadership and who might intentionally hamper the growth of women. An interesting strategy proposed by a



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

participant was that mentoring for women should combine formal and informal mentorship processes. She suggested that informal engagements should take place between mentors and mentees, yet within a structured mentorship programme.

Peer mentorship was one of the strategies suggested to be used in the mentorship of women. Participants considered this beneficial for women's leadership growth as the women would share ideas, learn from one another and support one another. The participant felt that such mentorship would allow more women to be mentored, rather than relying on senior mentors only. One woman leader suggested that women may source external expertise from senior colleagues by inviting them to assist them in areas of their needs. Two women had already established peer mentorship support for women in their fields and considered it beneficial, as women were able to share things that they would not feel comfortable sharing with senior mentors.

Flexible mentoring allowed women to have more than one mentor from whom to learn. Participants said this would enable women to acquire different skills from mentors with divergent skills and expertise.

Some participants mentored during different career stages suggested that mentorship should be introduced in all the stages of the education system. The findings indicated that resuming mentorship at an earlier stage gives direction and assist women in developing their career better. One of the women leaders advised that successful mentorship practices be borrowed from similar institutions and such practices be restructured to suit the home institution.

The findings discussed above contribute by guiding future mentorship practice and improving mentorship for women leaders. Next, I discuss how my study contributed to the existing body of knowledge on mentoring.

7.4 Contribution of the study

My study contributed to the existing knowledge on mentorship and suggested the suitable method and theory for proposing a model to mentor women towards leadership in HE. This contribution is discussed in the following subsections.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

7.4.1 Methodological contribution

The study generated data from virtual interviews via the Zoom, Blackboard Collaborate and Google Meet platforms (see Chapter four - Research Methodology). The use of virtual interviews for data generation purposes is still limited to qualitative research – internationally and in South Africa. Most qualitative studies on mentorship focus on women's leadership development and discuss mentorship internationally, on the African continent and locally, and numerous researchers (Chitsamatanga et al., 2018; Akpey-Mensah & Muchie, 2019; Briscoe & Freeman, 2019; Stuckey et al., 2019; Palmer & Jones, 2019; Bhopal, 2020; Reis & Grady, 2020; Semela & Abraham, 2020; Gandhi & Sen, 2021) have used face-to-face interviews to generate data. An exception is Dashper (2018), who used telephonic interviews. My study contributed significantly to the use of virtual interviews as an appropriate data generation method in qualitative research. It established that virtual interviews can generate detailed and descriptive thereby meeting qualitative research requirements. The explicit findings of this study emanated from virtual interviews that took between 45 minutes to an hour per participant. The interviews yielded detailed results that were analysed to develop a proposed model for mentoring women leadership leaders in HE. Through virtual interviews, the study complied with one of the characteristics of qualitative research: using data to develop theories, concepts, and new practices (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, using virtual interviews constituted a methodological contribution of this study.

7.4.2 Contribution to the literature

The study contributed to existing empirical research on the mentorship of women in South Africa. Mentorship practice for women and women leaders in HE is still limited locally and therefore little is known about how women leaders in the country have experienced mentorship. The study shared mentoring experiences of women leaders in senior positions at a South African university to try and compensate for this gap. I focused on the South African HE context because mentoring experiences differ in different institutions and contexts, and from one person to the next (Hackmann & Malin, 2019). Sharing the experiences of women leaders in different contexts would

shed more light on the practice of mentorship. My study shared the lived mentoring experiences of nine women in the context of one public university in South Africa. Other institutions in the country can learn from the experiences of the women in this study.

Since various definitions exist of mentoring (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2019), it was unclear what exactly mentoring meant for women leaders. It is mainly defined as a developmental relationship between a junior, less experienced person and an experienced, more knowledgeable person. Though the focus was on development, literature commonly looked at the concept from the developmental perspective of junior academics, ECAs, postgraduate students, and pre-service teachers. The impression arose that mentoring only applies to junior academics, but actually, it also leads to the development of senior women. Hence, I recognised a need to conceptualise mentoring from that point of view too. Drawing from the literature and the findings of my study, I consequently proposed the following definition of mentoring as a strategy for women's leadership:

Mentoring is a flexible developmental relationship between a woman leader and a more experienced and knowledgeable mentor, including peers who develop, capacitate and motivate women for a successful career and progression to leadership.

I included in my definition the notion that mentoring for women leaders is flexible because it can be formal, informal, or a combination of the two. Since women also learn from their female peers, it was vital to include the involvement of peer mentors in the definition of mentoring for women leaders. My definition of mentoring contributes to the continued conceptualisation of mentoring and clarifies what mentoring means for women leaders and those who aspire to leadership.

7.4.3 Theoretical contribution: Proposed model for mentoring women to senior positions in higher education

The literature (Dhanat et al., 2018; Mulcahey et al., 2018; Mondisa, 2018; Crisp & Alvarado-Young, 2018; Roets et al., 2019; Reis & Grady, 2020; Sims et al., 2020)



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

supports the findings of my study and shows that mentorship for women in HE is still largely informal, not supported, and it lacks training for mentors, mentorship policy and guidelines. In a nutshell, there is no clear structure or guidelines for the mentorship of women leaders. Furthermore, there is limited theorisation on the mentorship of women and its application. Bozeman and Freeney (2007) believe there is slow theoretical progress in mentoring, despite it being an essential topic that has grown in research publications. This view suggests that upcoming researchers on the subject have limited theoretical guidelines and, as a result, are forced to borrow from theories in other research fields.

The current study also had to draw on three theories (Theory of Gendered Organisations, Relational-Cultural Theory, and Transformational Leadership Theory) to study and understand the mentorship of women leaders. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that limited contributions have been made to theories of mentorship. For example, in 2014 Memon et al. (2014) proposed a theoretical framework for mentor-mentee matchmaking in the entrepreneurship field. After conducting research in Canada, Banwell et al., (2019) also developed a proposed model for mentoring women towards leadership in sports coaching. Moreover, Satterly et al. (2018) proposed an Intergenerational Mentoring model based on findings from the international context. Mcilongo and Strydom (2020) proposed a framework for mentorship dimensions and relationships in South Africa, and used quantitative research findings to reach this construction.

As a theoretical contribution to this study, a model for mentoring women was proposed from the findings of qualitative research conducted in the South African context. The model was developed based on my study's findings, existing literature on mentorship, and the theoretical framework used in the study. The model builds and extends on the understanding of mentoring from Relational-Cultural Theory and the Transformational Leadership theory by focusing on the Gendered HE context (explained in detail in Chapter three). It also provides guidelines on how mentorship for women can be offered in the context of gendered HE, the critical focus areas in mentoring women, and the role of mentors. The proposed model is presented in Figure 7.1.

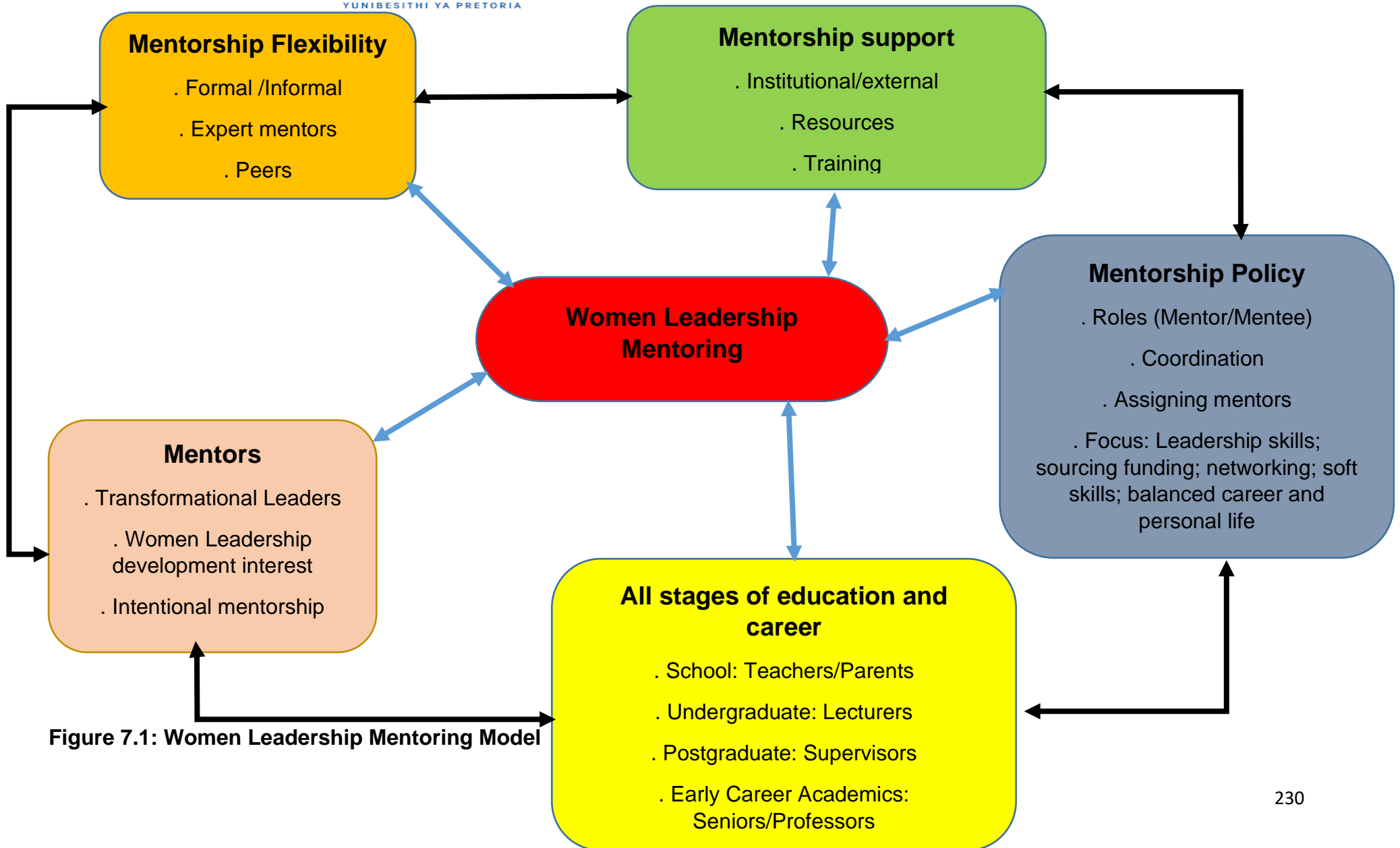


Figure 7.1: Women Leadership Mentoring Model



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

7.4.3.1 Explanation of the model

The five components of the proposed model for mentoring women towards leadership in higher education (as illustrated in Figure 7.1) are explained below: flexible mentorship; support for mentorship; mentorship policy; mentorship in all phases of education and career; and mentors.

7.4.3.1.1 Mentorship flexibility

Mentorship for women should be flexible and should consist of a combination of both formal and informal mentorship. The formal mentorship component should comprise structured mentorship activities in which women are involved during their development. In other words, institutions where women work should have a planned mentorship programme, agreements, and a memorandum of understanding to be administered as part of a formal mentorship programme. This programme should be formally coordinated to ensure that all women who need mentors have access to them, and to ensure consistency and uniformity regarding how women are mentored. This will also benefit women who are new to HE institutions and the mentorship programme should give guidance to women who might struggle to locate suitable and appropriate mentors. Furthermore, women should engage with their mentors, other senior colleagues and one another, through informal interactions. Such engagements will enable women to freely share their personal challenges with their mentors, colleagues, and peers.

Flexible mentorship will allow women to have different experts as mentors – probably in the same department, faculty or institution, or from other institutions in a similar context. Having different mentors with diverse expertise will assist in developing these women in various areas of their academic career and leadership pursuits, as one mentor may not be an expert in all areas of an academic career. Additionally, having mentors from different institutions should add to the pool of mentors and address the shortage of available mentors for women. The mentorship process can occur either face to face, in a hybrid mode, or virtually through online platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, and Blackboard Collaborate. WhatsApp video calls can also be used as a more accessible and affordable online communication method.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Flexible mentorship will also allow women to gain from peer support. Women at the same level will engage with, support, and learn from one another. Through such peer support, they will be able to freely share knowledge, skills and challenges with one another and exchange feedback and emotional support. They will also have peer support sessions to which senior experts are invited to share their specific skills and knowledge.

7.4.3.1.2 *Mentorship support*

Mentorship for women should be normalised, promoted and supported within HE institutions as well as in other areas. Support should include funding and the sourcing of grants and sponsorships for women's mentorship. These actions will assist in running the mentorship and expose women to developmental opportunities such as conference attendance, professional development and leadership training. Institutions should approach structures such as the National Research Fund (NRF), the Department of Higher Education, and the Department of Basic Education to support, promote and fund mentorship for women leaders – from primary school level to the higher education level. To further support the mentorship process, mentors (from lecturers to professors) must be trained to acquire the skills that are necessary to mentor women from early education on to leadership positions. This will require planned training and development sessions for mentors to equip them with the skills to mentor and prepare women for leadership. Training should be coordinated by the mentorship coordinator, who will be involved in structuring the mentorship programme. Both structural and financial support from institutions and outside stakeholders will be critical.

7.4.3.1.3 *Mentorship policy*

Clear guidelines about *what* has to be done by *whom* and *how*, must be developed for the effective mentorship of women. One of the ways of doing this is to have a guiding mentorship. In addition, there is a need for a policy that will specify roles, responsibilities as well as the activities that should take place during the course of the mentorship. The policy should create standard guidelines and agreements in the



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

mentorship relationship. Institutions of higher learning, the Department of Higher Education, and the Department of Basic Education should develop standardised mentorship policies that will guide mentorship for women. In other words, there should be active collaboration between these sectors. HE institutions should lead the mentorship, initiate the collaboration and guide the policy formulation process. Mentorship policies must clearly prescribe the roles and what is expected of mentors, mentees and coordinators. They should also suggest activities that should take place during the development of women so as to bring clarity on expectations and the roles of all involved in the mentorship.

The mentorship must be coordinated by someone who can ensure its smooth running and specify the required coordination procedures in the policy. The policy should determine the appropriate people to serve as coordinators and coordinate their roles and activities. It should also outline the process of allocating mentors to women and arrange the formal allocation of mentors from primary to tertiary education level. The organisation of informal engagements where women can meet and identify potential mentors should occur from the level of Early Career Academics in HE. Mentors may be assigned to women leaders when they cannot independently identify their mentors. Continuous, anonymous and confidential feedback and reflection on the mentorship should be provided so that women will be comfortable with sharing their experiences or any challenges regarding the mentorship.

Focus areas for the mentoring of women for an academic career and leadership should include leadership skills; sourcing research funding and grants; networking; developing soft skills; and developing a balanced career and personal life. These are among the critical academic roles that lead to career success and leadership. The possible outcomes from such a mentorship programme involve empowerment and an increased sense of worth, because women will grow and gain confidence in their academic practice. Additionally, women will master new knowledge and continuously improve their practice. Women who are mentored may also have the desire to mentor other women. Hopefully, this will yield more women mentors and increase the number of women who succeed in their careers. All this information should be specified in the mentorship policy as part of a mentorship guide.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

7.4.3.1.4 *Mentorship in all stages of education and career*

Mentorship for females should start as early as during their primary and secondary education. At this stage, women should be mentored by their parents, teachers, and role models in the community. These are the first contact persons for women as they start their education, and they can influence the girls' and women's career paths. The guidance for women to pursue leadership and grow their leadership skills can channel women toward leadership at this level. The mentorship programme should already be offered in schools, and schools can collaborate with HE institutions to ensure that the development starts at that basic level. HE institutions can eventually take over from primary and secondary school and implement mentorship throughout the higher education levels. Early mentorship will give opportunities for development and growth in all HE stages. Women in undergraduate studies should be mentored by their lecturers and supervisors who are at the postgraduate level. These mentors may influence junior students to develop their careers, and they may encourage and help them to grow their careers toward leadership. At the postgraduate level, study supervisors – who serve as mentors to their students in guiding them through their research – will also give career guidance, offer professional development, and provide career advice.

ECAs should be mentored by their Heads of Department, senior colleagues, and professors. They should also be allowed to choose an academic mentor with whom they feel comfortable. For leadership, women should be mentored not only by seniors and professors, but also by their peers. Senior women academics will in this way learn and develop the necessary skills to promote their academic careers and prepare for senior positions. Mentorship during all the phases of education and career will ensure uniformity and consistency of the programme, and coordinate the development of women.

7.4.3.1.5 *Mentors*

Mentors play a critical role in the development of women leaders. One of the important roles of mentors is to serve as leaders themselves. Mentors of women should therefore reflect transformational leadership and passion for the development of

women. As transformational leaders, these mentors will be role models who lead by example and who show good leadership conduct (Abazeed, 2018). They will assist women to develop career goals that are well aligned with an academic career and, subsequently, motivate and inspire them to work towards the achievement of those goals. The latter will include the promotion of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as the equipping of women to deal with challenges and conflicts in academia (Jiang et al., 2017; Bodilenyane & Mooketsane, 2019). Transformational leaders will give individual attention to the women they mentor and develop them according to their unique growth level and needs (Abazeed, 2018; Bodilenyane & Mooketsane, 2019). Mentors should be people who willingly mentor women and who have a passion for women's development, so that they will do it with love. They should be intentional about developing women for potential senior positions, contribute towards women's leadership succession by imparting the necessary skills to them, and prepare women to lead male-dominated departments in academia.

The proposed model explained in Figure 7.1 can potentially contribute to the mentorship of women for leadership in academia. It is also hoped to contribute toward the critical focus areas in mentoring women for leadership in HE. As it proposes guidelines for developing a mentorship policy in HE, the model can serve as a mentorship guideline in different contexts in both developed and developing countries.

7.5 Conclusions

The current reality is that there is a limited practice of mentorship, particularly formal mentorship, for women leaders in South Africa. This situation prevails despite the study findings and literature showing the highly recognised importance of mentorship and its contribution towards developing and advancing women leaders. It is evident from my findings that mentoring plays a significant role in developing women leaders, improving their confidence, and providing them with leadership opportunities, career growth, and success. It also became clear from the finding that mentored women are likely to have successful careers, get into leadership, and advance to senior positions. They can furthermore develop essential networks in their fields, manage their emotions and resolve conflicts better, seek and obtain funding, and have a balanced



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

personal and career life – all of which are essential competencies in having a successful academic and leadership career. Mentored women also foster a desire and passion for developing other women towards career success. This desire and passion can create opportunities for more women to advance to leadership, thus closing the gap of the underrepresentation of women in such positions.

Mentorship of women in South Africa faces many challenges that must be addressed first for mentoring to be effective. The lack of a formalised mentorship programme and guiding policy for the mentorship of women in HE is a hindrance to practical mentorship. It was prevalent from my study findings that mentorship for women is informal, unguided, inconsistent, and not supported – hence leading to its lack of recognition and limited success. The lack of suitable mentors is a further barrier to the successful mentoring of women. Mentors who are not properly trained may not have the necessary skills to develop and mentor women for leadership. Such training may improve the quality of mentorship of women. Additionally, introducing mentorship at all levels of education and all stages of the career can assist women to grow their leadership careers from an early stage.

7.6 Recommendations

Based on the findings of my study, I propose the following recommendations to improve the practice of mentoring women for leadership in HE:

7.6.1 Recommendation 1

The Department of Basic Education (DBE), working in collaboration with higher education institutions, should introduce school mentorship programmes. Mentoring positively impacts women's leadership development; therefore, mentoring for women should be introduced as early as from primary school up to the leadership stage. Teachers, parents, and community members should serve as role models to girls and women at this level. Mentors must be trained and prepared for their roles by both the DBE and HEIs. Mentorship will then smoothly continue to secondary school and university levels as women start their leadership careers.

7.6.2 Recommendation 2

HE institutions should actively support and promote mentorship since mentorship practice for women in HE is limited. For this reason, there should be a planned, formal programme for mentoring women. Such a programme will ensure that the mentorship does not occur only in theory but is actively carried out. The programme has to be well coordinated to be effective. In other words, institutions should appoint coordinators of the mentorship programme and they should reflect on and evaluate the mentorship.

7.6.3 Recommendation 3

Institutions of higher learning working with schools and the Department of Basic and Higher Education must develop mentorship policies for women. Since many HEIs have no specifically designed mentorship policies for women leaders, HEIs should lead the policy development process by inviting specialists who can assist and contribute to policy formulation. The policy must prescribe and formulate clear roles, activities, and agreements guiding the mentorship.

7.6.4 Recommendation 4

Proper training should be provided to mentors who mentor women. Therefore, institutions should design a training programme specifically for mentors of women.

7.6.5 Recommendation 5

Since institutions can fruitfully learn different strategies for mentoring women from one another, I suggest that information-sharing sessions be arranged where institutions can collaborate to share best practices and strategies for mentoring women. They can share the current strategies they are using and also propose additional strategies that could be used. These information-sharing sessions could be organised by the HEIs that lead the mentorship, and sessions could be held virtually to minimise costs.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

7.7 Suggestions for further research

Since my study was a case study, it focused on a single university in South Africa's Gauteng province and involved nine faculties. The findings shared in the study are based on the experiences of a limited sample of nine women leaders and five mentors. However, this was a sufficient sample for qualitative research, since it allowed for an in-depth study of a small number of participants. Nonetheless, for a deeper understanding of the mentorship of women leaders in South African higher education, I would suggest a similar study to explore the mentoring experiences of women leaders in HE in other South African universities. Such a study should include a more significant sample of women leaders so as to yield a broader picture of how women experience mentoring, and what role it plays in their advancement to senior positions. Further research is also needed on the perspectives of mentors of women leaders. This study involved five mentors. Future research could study mentors' roles and contributions in developing women leaders and examine the strategies they apply on a broader scale by involving more mentors.

7.8 Chapter conclusion

As a conclusion to this study, Chapter seven covered several issues. In this chapter, I presented an overview of my experiences in conducting this study, I reflected on each study chapter, I summarised the key research findings, and I considered the contribution of my study to the existing body of knowledge on women's leadership development through mentorship in higher education. I also presented my conclusions and recommendations and indicated implications for future research.

REFERENCES

- Abalkhail, J. M. (2019). Women and leadership: Challenges and opportunities in Saudi higher education. *Career Development International*, 22(2), 165-183.
- Abazeed, R. A. M. (2018). Impact of transformational leadership style on organizational learning in the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology in Jordan. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 9(1), 118-129.
- Abdelhamid, K., ElHawary, H., Gorgy, A., & Alexander, N. (2020). Mentorship resuscitation during the COVID-19 pandemic. *AEM Education and Training*.
- Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender & Society*, 4(2), 139-158.
- Acker, J. (1992). Gendering organizational theory. *Classics of Organizational Theory*, 6, 450-459.
- Ademe, G., & Singh, M. (2016). Factors affecting women's participation in leadership and management in selected public higher education institutions in Amhara Region, Ethiopia. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 7(31), 18-29.
- African Union. (2003). *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa*. Maputo: African Union.
- Aina, A. Y. (2022). Promoting Quality Early Childhood Care and Education through Resources in Registered Early Childhood Development Centres (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Pretoria.
- Akpey-Mensah, T. L., & Muchie, M. (2019). Innovative mentorship programmes for female academics in two African universities of technology via Ubuntu: An exploratory study. *Gender and Behaviour*, 17(4), 14214-14223.
- Ali, R., & Rasheed, A. (2021). Women leaders in Pakistani academia: Challenges and opportunities. *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, 27(2), 208-231.
- Alghofaily, L. (2019). Women leadership in higher education in Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(2), 14-32.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- Alobaid, A. M., Gosling, C., Mckenna, L., & Williams, B. (2020). Gendered organizational theory and glass ceiling: Application to female Saudi paramedics in the workplace. *Saudi Journal for Health Sciences*, 9(3), 177.
- Alotaibi, F. T. (2020). Saudi women and leadership: Empowering women as leaders in higher education institutions. *Open Journal of Leadership*, 9(03), 156.
- Alsaawi, A. (2014). A critical review of qualitative interviews. *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, 3(4), 149-156.
- Alvarez, A. R., & Lazzari, M. M. (2015). Feminist mentoring and relational cultural theory: A case example and implications. *Affilia*, 31(1), 41-54.
- Andriani, S., Kesumawati, N., & Kristiawan, M. (2018). The influence of the transformational leadership and work motivation on teachers' performance. *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research*, 7(7), 19-29.
- Asbari, M., Santoso, P. B., & Prasetya, A. B. (2020). Elitical and antidemocratic transformational leadership critics: Is it still relevant? (A literature study). *International Journal of Social, Policy and Law*, 1(1), 12-16.
- Awung, M., & Dorasamy, N. (2019). *Self-Efficacy as a Mechanism for Women's Career Advancement: The Case of Universities of Technology in South Africa*.
- Ayentimi, D. T., Abadi, H. A., Adjei, B., & Burgess, J. (2020). Gender equity and inclusion in Ghana: Good intentions, uneven progress. *Labour & Industry: A Journal of the Social and Economic Relations of Work*, 30(1), 66-84.
- Ayub, M., Khan, R. A., & Khushnood, M. (2019). Glass ceiling or personal barriers: A study of underrepresentation of women in senior management. *Global Social Sciences Review*, 4(4), 126-134.
- Ayyala, M. S., Skarupski, K., Bodurtha, J. N., González-Fernández, M., Ishii, L. E., Fivush, B., & Levine, R. B. (2019). Mentorship is not enough: Exploring sponsorship and its role in career advancement in academic medicine. *Academic Medicine*, 94(1), 94-100.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- Azizi, H., Abdellatif, W., Nasrullah, M., Ali, S., Ding, J., & Khosa, F. (2022). Leadership gender disparity in the fifty highest ranking North American universities: Thematic analysis under a theoretical lens. *Postgraduate Medical Journal*, 98(1163), 705-709.
- Azungah, T. (2018). Qualitative research: Deductive and inductive approaches to data analysis. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 8(4).
- Bakkabulindi, F. (2017). Positivist and interpretivism: Distinguishing characteristics, criteria and methodology. In C. Okeke & M. van Wyk (Eds.), *Educational Research: An African approach* (pp.19-38). Oxford Press South Africa.
- Bărbuceanu, C. D. (2019). Athena rising? Mentoring in higher education. *Revista de Stiinte Politice*, (62), 45-54.
- Banwell, J., Stirling, A., & Kerr, G. (2019). Towards a process for advancing women in coaching through mentorship. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 14(6), 703-713.
- Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1990). Developing transformational leadership: 1992 and beyond. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 14(5), 21-27.
- Bass, B. M., & Steidlmeier, P. (1999). Ethics, character, and authentic transformational leadership behavior. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 10(2), 181-217.
- Bernarto, I., Bachtiar, D., Sudibjo, N., Suryawan, I. N., Purwanto, A., & Asbari, M. (2020). Effect of transformational leadership, perceived organizational support, job satisfaction toward life satisfaction: Evidence from Indonesian teachers. *International Journal of Advanced Science and Technology*, 29(3), 5495-5503.
- Bertrand, M. (2017). *The Glass Ceiling*. Course Lecture, London School of Economics.
- Bhopal, K. (2020). Success against the odds: The effect of mentoring on the careers of senior black and minority ethnic academics in the UK. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 68(1), 79-95.
- Block, B. A., & Tietjen-Smith, T. (2016). The case for women mentoring women. *Quest*, 68(3), 306-315.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- Boamah, S. A., Laschinger, H. K. S., Wong, C., & Clarke, S. (2018). Effect of transformational leadership on job satisfaction and patient safety outcomes. *Nursing Outlook*, 66(2), 180-189.
- Boateng, D. A. (2018). Experiences of female academics in Ghana: Negotiation and strengths as strategies for successful careers. *African Journal of Social Work*, 8(1), 21-30.
- Bodilenyane, K., & Mooketsane, K. (2019). Transformational leadership and mentoring: A panacea for capacity building. *International Conference on Public Administration and Development Alternative (IPADA)*. Johannesburg, South Africa, 688-696.
- Bonzet, R., & Frick, B. L. (2019). Gender transformation experiences among women leaders in the Western Cape TVET Sector: A narrative response. *Education as Change*, 23(1), 1-21.
- Bonzet, R., & Frick, L. (2019). Towards a conceptual framework for analysing the gendered experiences of women in TVET leadership. *Journal of Vocational, Adult and Continuing Education and Training*, 2(1), 1-21.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27-40.
- Brabazon, T., & Schulz, S. (2020). Braving the bull: Women, mentoring and leadership in higher education. *Gender and Education*, 32(7), 873-890.
- Braun, V., Clarke, V., & Weate, P. (2016). Using thematic analysis in sport and exercise research. In B. Smith & A. C. Sparkes (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise* (pp. 191-205). Routledge.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*. SAGE.
- Bridges, D., Wulff, E., & Bamberly, L. (2021). Resilience for gender inclusion: Developing a model for women in male-dominated occupations. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 1-17.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- Briscoe, K. L., & Freeman Jr, S. (2019). The role of mentorship in the preparation and success of university presidents. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 27(4), 416-438.
- Butina, M. (2015). A narrative approach to qualitative inquiry. *Clinical Laboratory Science*, 28(3), 190-196.
- Calinaud, V., Kokkranikal, J., & Gebbels, M. (2021). Career advancement for women in the British hospitality industry: The enabling factors. *Work, Employment and Society*, 35(4), 677-695.
- Carter, A. D., Sims, C., & Moore de Peralta, M. D. (2020). Blazing the trail: A qualitative case study of mentoring in a gender equity leadership development program. *Journal of Business Diversity*, 20(2), 35-49.
- Cavanaugh, C. K. (2020). Women's leadership in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Management*, 35(1), 4-12 (ISSN 2640-7515).
- Cavazotte, F., Moreno, V., & Bernardo, J. (2013). Transformational leaders and work performance: The mediating roles of identification and self-efficacy. *Brazilian Administration Review*, 10(4), 490-512.
- Chitsamatanga, B. B., Rembe, S., & Shumba, J. (2018, September). Are universities serving lunch before breakfast through staff development programmes? A comparative study of the experiences of female academics in South African and Zimbabwean universities. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 70, 79-88. Pergamon.
- Chitsamatanga, B. B., Rembe, S., & Shumba, J. (2018). Mentoring for female academics in the 21st century: A case study of a South African university. *International Journal of Gender and Women's Studies*, 6(1), 52-58.
- Chitsamatanga, B. B., & Rembe, S. (2019). Narratives of strategies used by female academics in South African and Zimbabwean universities to overcome barriers to career development. *Journal of Human Ecology*, 65(1-3), 75-90.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research Methods in Education* (8th ed). Routledge.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- Coleman, M. (2020). Women leaders in the workplace: Perceptions of career barriers, facilitators and change. *Irish Educational Studies*, 39(2), 233-253.
- Comstock, D. L., Hammer, T. R., Strentzsch, J., Cannon, K., Parsons, J., & Li, G. S. (2008). Relational-cultural theory: A framework for bridging relational, multicultural, and social justice competencies. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 86(3), 279-287.
- Cozza, B. (2022). Driving theoretical frameworks — women leaders in higher education systems. In B. Cozza & C. Pather (Eds.), *Voices of Women Leaders on Success in Higher Education: Pipelines, Pathways and Promotion* (1-14). Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (1994). *Research Design*. United Kingdom: SAGE.
- Creswell, J.W. & Creswell, J.D. (2018). *Research Design*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Crisp, G., & Alvarado-Young, K. (2018). The role of mentoring in leadership development. *New Directions for Student Leadership*, (158), 37-47.
- Dakwa, F. (2017). The interview method. In C. Okeke & M. van Wyk (Eds.), *Educational Research: An African approach* (pp. 269-313). Oxford Press South Africa.
- Daniëls, E., Hondeghem, A., & Dochy, F. (2019). A review on leadership and leadership development in educational settings. *Educational Research Review*, 27, 110-125.
- Dashper, K. (2019). Challenging the gendered rhetoric of success? The limitations of women-only mentoring for tackling gender inequality in the workplace. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 26(4), 541-557.
- Davidson, S. (2018). Beyond colleagues: Women leaders and work relationships. *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal*, 38, 1-13.
- Davies, C., & Healey, R. (2019). Hacking through the Gordian Knot: Can facilitating operational mentoring untangle the gender research productivity puzzle in higher education? *Studies in Higher Education*, 44(1), 31-44.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- de la Croix, A., Barrett, A., & Stenfors, T. (2018). How to do research interviews in different ways. *The Clinical Teacher*, 15(6), 451-456.
- Delgado, M. Y., & Allen, T. (2019). Case studies of women of color leading community colleges in Texas: Navigating the leadership pipeline through mentoring and culture. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 43(10-11), 718-729.
- Department of Higher Education and Training (2019). *Report of the Ministerial Task Team on the recruitment, retention and progression of Black South African Academics*. Department of Higher Education and Training.
- Dhunpath, R., Matisonn, H., & Samuel, M. (2018). Towards a model of mentoring in South African higher education. *Alternation Journal*, 25(2), 74-105.
- Diehl, A. B., & Dzubinski, L. M. (2016). Making the invisible visible: A cross-sector analysis of gender-based leadership barriers. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 27(2), 181-206.
- Disch, J. (2018). Rethinking mentoring. *Critical Care Medicine*, 46(3), 437-441.
- Dodgson, J. E. (2017). About research: Qualitative methodologies. *Journal of Human Lactation*, 33(2), 355-358.
- Dorner, H., Mistic, G., & Rymarenko, M. (2021). Online mentoring for academic practice: Strategies, implications, and innovations. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1483(1), 98-111.
- Durbin, S., Lopes, A., & Warren, S. (2020). Challenging male dominance through the substantive representation of women: The case of an online women's mentoring platform. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 35(2), 215-231.
- Early, S. L. (2020). Relational leadership reconsidered: The mentor-protégé connection. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 13(4), 57-61.
- Edmonds, W. A., & Kennedy, T. D. (2016). *An Applied Guide to Research Designs: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods*. SAGE.
- Ekine, A. O. (2018). Women in academic arena: Struggles, strategies and personal choices. *Gender Issues*, 35(4), 318-329.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- Elias, E. (2018). Lessons learned from women in leadership positions. *Work*, 59(2), 175-181.
- Eliyana, A., & Ma'arif, S. (2019). Job satisfaction and organizational commitment effect in the transformational leadership towards employee performance. *European Research on Management and Business Economics*, 25(3), 144-150.
- Espino, M. M., & Zambrana, R. E. (2019). "How do you advance here? How do you survive?" An exploration of under-represented minority faculty perceptions of mentoring modalities. *The Review of Higher Education*, 42(2), 457-484.
- Evans, C., & Lewis, J. (2018). *Analysing Semi-Structured Interviews Using Thematic Analysis: Exploring Voluntary Civic Participation Among Adults*. SAGE.
- Fabio, A., & Maree, J. G. (2012). Ensuring quality in scholarly writing. In K. Maree (Ed.), *Complete your Thesis or Dissertation Successfully: Practical Guidelines* (pp. 136-144). Juta & Company.
- Ferris, S. P., & Waldron, K. (2022). Learning from senior women leaders: In their own words. In B. Cozza & C. Pather (Eds.), *Voices of Women Leaders on Success in Higher Education: Pipelines, Pathways and Promotion* (pp. 81-92). Routledge.
- Feza, N. (2017). Qualitative data analysis. In C. Okeke & M. van Wyk (Eds.), *Educational Research: An African approach* (pp. 458-475). Oxford Press South Africa.
- Fishman-Weaver, K. (2017). A call to praxis: Using gendered organizational theory to center radical hope in schools. *Journal of Organizational Theory in Education*, 2(1), 1-14.
- Fitzgerald, T. (2018). Looking good and being good: Women leaders in Australian universities. *Education Sciences*, 8(2), 54.
- Fletcher, J. K., & Ragins, B. R. (2007). Stone Center Relational Cultural Theory: A window on relational mentoring. *The Handbook of Mentoring at Work: Theory, Research, and Practice*. SAGE.
- Flick, U. (2018). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. London: SAGE.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- Gafni Lachter, L. R., & Ruland, J. P. (2018). Enhancing leadership and relationships by implementing a peer mentoring program. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*, 65(4), 276-284.
- Gandhi, M., & Sen, K. (2021). Missing women in Indian university leadership: Barriers and facilitators. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 49(2), 352-369.
- Gandolfi, F., & Stone, S. (2018). Leadership, leadership styles, and servant leadership. *Journal of Management Research*, 18(4), 261-269.
- Gumbo, M. (2017). The pilot study. In C. Okeke & M. van Wyk (Eds.), *Educational Research: An African approach* (pp. 371-387). Oxford Press South Africa.
- Günbayi, I., & Sorm, S. (2018). Social paradigms in guiding social research design: The Functional, Interpretive, Radical Humanist and Radical Structural Paradigms. *Online Submission*, 9(2), 57-76.
- Harford, J. (2018). The perspectives of women professors on the professoriate: A missing piece in the narrative on gender equality in the university. *Education Sciences*, 8(2), 50.
- Hague, L. Y., & Okpala, C. O. (2017). Voices of African American women leaders on factors that impact their career advancement in North Carolina community colleges. *Journal of Research Initiatives*, 2(3), 3.
- Haidar, N. H. (2018). Gender leadership and excellence: The case of higher education in Lebanon. *Administrative Sciences*, 8(4), 78.
- Hammer, T., Trepal, H., & Speedlin, S. (2014). Five relational strategies for mentoring female faculty. *Adultspan Journal*, 13(1), 4-14.
- Hay, I. (2006). Transformational leadership: Characteristics and criticisms. *E-journal of Organizational Learning and Leadership*, 5(2), 1-19.
- Heffernan, T. A. (2018). Approaches to career development and support for sessional academics in higher education. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 23(4), 312-323.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- Hejase, H., Haddad, Z., Hamdar, B., Massoud, R., & Farha, G. (2013). Female leadership: An exploratory research from Lebanon. *American Journal of Scientific Research, 86*, 28-52.
- Herbst, T. H. (2020). Gender differences in self-perception accuracy: The confidence gap and women leaders' underrepresentation in academia. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology, 46*(1), 1-8.
- Hill, L. H., & Wheat, C. A. (2017). The influence of mentorship and role models on university women leaders' career paths to university presidency. *The Qualitative Report, 22*(8), 2090.
- Howard, E., Msengi, C., & Harris, S. (2017). Influence of mentorship experiences in the development of women superintendents in Texas as transformational leaders. *Education Leadership Review, 18*(1), 67-80.
- Jacob, O. N., Jegede, D., & Musa, A. (2020). Administration of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in Nigerian secondary schools: Challenges and the ways forward. *Electronic Research Journal of Engineering, Computer and Applied Sciences, 2*, 50-63.
- Jaga, A., Arabandi, B., Bagraim, J., & Mdlongwa, S. (2018). Doing the 'gender dance': Black women professionals negotiating gender, race, work and family in post-apartheid South Africa. *Community, Work & Family, 21*(4), 429-444.
- Jernigan, Q. A., Dudley, M. C., & Hatch, B. H. (2020). Mentoring matters: Experiences in mentoring black leaders in higher education. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 167*(168), 43-57.
- Jiang, W., Zhao, X., & Ni, J. (2017). The impact of transformational leadership on employee sustainable performance: The mediating role of organizational citizenship behavior. *Sustainability, 9*(9), 1567.
- Joo, M. K., Yu, G. C., & Atwater, L. (2018). Formal leadership mentoring and motivation to lead in South Korea. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 107*, 310-326.
- Jordan, J. V. (2008). Recent developments in relational-cultural theory. *Women & Therapy, 1*-5.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- Jordan, J. V., Hartling, L. M., & Baker, J. (2008). *The Development of Relational-Cultural Theory*.
- Jordan, J. V. (2017). Relational–cultural theory: The power of connection to transform our lives. *The Journal of Humanistic Counseling*, 56(3), 228-243.
- Joseph-Collins, N. A. (2017). Mentorship experiences of women leaders in Adventist higher education institutions. *Journal of Research Initiatives*, 2(3), 4.
- Jyoti, J., & Bhau, S. (2015). Impact of transformational leadership on job performance: Mediating role of leader–member exchange and relational identification. *SAGE Open*, 5(4), 1-13.
- Kaepffel, K., Grenier, R. S., & Björngard-Basayne, E. (2020). The F word: The role of women’s friendships in navigating the gendered workplace of academia. *Human Resource Development Review*, 19(4), 362-383.
- Kaplan, D. (2019). What mentoring means to me. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 43(1), 116-124.
- Kankam, P. K. (2019). The use of paradigms in information research. *Library & Information Science Research*, 41(2), 85-92.
- Kanyumba, B., & Lourens, M. (2022). Career development for female academics in Australian and South African universities: An integrative review. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science*, 11(2), 91-401.
- Khokhar, A. J. (2018). Women academic leaders in higher education in Pakistan: Perspectives of female students enrolled in higher education degrees. *Pakistan Journal of Women’s Studies: Alam-e-Niswan*, 25(2), 59-76.
- Khumalo, M., & Zhou, X. (2019). Women leadership experiences in higher education institutions: The context of South Africa. *Proceedings of the UR International Conference on Educational Sciences*, 190-196.
- Khwela, B. C., Derera, E., & Kubheka, Z. (2020). Women in leadership and the glass ceiling effect: A comparative study of the private and public sectors in KwaZulu-



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- Natal, South Africa. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Studies*, 12(2), 368-383.
- Kiger, M. E., & Varpio, L. (2020). Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131. *Medical Teacher*, 42(8), 846-854.
- Kivunja, C. (2018). Distinguishing between theory, theoretical framework, and conceptual framework: A systematic review of lessons from the field. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 7(6), 44-53.
- Kivunja, C., & Kuyini, A.B. (2017). Understanding and applying research paradigms in educational contexts. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 6(5), 26-41.
- Koontz, A., Walters, L., & Edkin, S. (2019). Positively supporting women faculty in the academy through a novel mentoring community model. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*, 11(1), 102-117.
- Korejan, M. M., & Shahbazi, H. (2016). An analysis of the transformational leadership theory. *Journal of Fundamental and Applied Sciences*, 8(3), 452-461.
- Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice*, 24(1), 120-124.
- Kuzhabekova, A., & Almukhambetova, A. (2019). Women's progression through the leadership pipeline in the universities of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 1-19.
- Khwela, B. C., Derera, E., & Kubheka, Z. (2020). Women in leadership and the glass ceiling effect: A comparative study of the private and public sectors in Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Studies*, 12(2), 368-383.
- Lane, T. B., & Cobb-Roberts, D. (2022). A critical duoethnographic account of two black women faculty using co-mentoring to traverse academic life. In B. T. Kelly & S. L. Fries-Britt (Eds.), *Building Mentorship Networks to Support Black Women* (pp. 19-33). Routledge.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- Leavy, P. (2017). *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches*. Guilford Press.
- Lee, M. (2014). Transformational leadership: Is it time for a recall? *International Journal of Management and Applied Research*, 1(1), 17-29.
- Lenz, A. S. (2016). Relational-cultural theory: Fostering the growth of a paradigm through empirical research. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 94(4), 415-428.
- Lewis, C., & Olshansky, E. (2016). Relational-cultural theory as a framework for mentoring in academia: Toward diversity and growth-fostering collaborative scholarly relationships. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 24(5), 383-398.
- Li, S., Malin, J. R., & Hackman, D. G. (2018). Mentoring supports and mentoring across difference: Insights from mentees. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 26(5), 563-584.
- List, K., & Sorcinelli, M. D. (2018). Increasing leadership capacity for senior women faculty through mutual mentoring. *The Journal of Faculty Development*, 32(1), 7-16.
- Long, P. G. (2018). Dear mentor: A reflection on the impact of mentorship in higher education. *The Vermont Connection*, 39(1), 11.
- Longman, K. A. (2018). Perspectives on women's higher education leadership from around the world. *Journal of Administrative Science*, 35 (8), 1-6.
- Longman, K., Daniels, J., Bray, D., & Liddell, W. (2018). How organizational culture shapes women's leadership experiences. *Administrative Sciences*, 8(2), 1-16.
- Longman, K. A., Drennan, A., Beam, J., & Marble, A. F. (2019). The secret sauce: How developmental relationships shape the leadership journeys of women leaders in Christian higher education. *Christian Higher Education*, 18(1-2), 54-77.
- Lu, X. (2020). The barriers, facilitators, and solutions for women in educational leadership roles in a Chinese university. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 9(1), 5-24.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- Lucey, B., O'Sullivan, S., Collins, L., & O'Ceilleachair, R. (2018). Staff mentoring in higher education: The case for a mentored mentoring continuum. *All Ireland Journal of Higher Education*, 10(3), 3651- 36516.
- Lumadi, M. W. (2017). The logic of sampling. In C. Okeke & M. van Wyk (Eds.), *Educational Research: An African Approach* (pp. 224-241). Oxford Press South Africa.
- Lunsford, L., Baker, V., & Pifer, M. (2018). Faculty mentoring faculty: Career stages, relationship quality, and job satisfaction. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 7(2), 139-154.
- Madsen, S. R., & Longman, K. A. (2020). Women's leadership in higher education: Status, barriers, and motivators. *Journal of Higher Education Management*, 35(1), 13.
- Madsen, S. R., Townsend, A., & Scribner, R. T. (2020). Strategies that male allies use to advance women in the workplace. *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 28(3), 239-259.
- Magasi, C. (2021). The role of transformational leadership on employee performance: A perspective of employee empowerment. *European Journal of Business and Management Research*, 6(6), 21-28.
- Maheshwari, G., & Nayak, R. (2020). Women leadership in Vietnamese higher education institutions: An exploratory study on barriers and enablers for career enhancement. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 50(5), 758-775.
- Mahmood, M., Uddin, M. A., & Fan, L. (2019). The influence of transformational leadership on employees' creative process engagement: A multi-level analysis. *Management Decision*, 57(3), 741-764.
- Mankayi, M., & Cheteni, P. (2021). Experiences of female deans in South African universities: A phenomenological study. *Cogent Education*, 8(1), 1981199.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2016). *Designing Qualitative Research* (6th ed). SAGE.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- Mate, S. E., McDonald, M., & Do, T. (2018). The barriers and enablers to career and leadership development: An exploration of women's stories in two work cultures. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 27(4), 857-874.
- Mayer, C., & Oosthuizen, R. M. (2020). Concepts of creative leadership of women leaders in 21st century. *Creative Studies*, 13(1), 21-40.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- McGowan, S. A., & Gil, E. (2022). Mentorship as an approach to promoting gender equity in higher education leadership. In B. Cozza & C. Pather (Eds.), *Voices of Women Leaders on Success in Higher Education: Pipelines, Pathways and Promotion* (pp. 162-172). Routledge.
- Miller, J. B. (1976). *Toward a New Psychology of Women*. Beacon Press.
- Miller, J. B. (1986). *What do we mean by relationships?* (Work in Progress No. 22). Wellesley, MA: Stone Center Working Paper Series.
- Ministry of Education (1997). *Higher Education Act 101 of 1997*. South Africa.
- Mishra, S. (2007). *Quality Assurance in Higher Education: An Introduction*. National Assessment and Accreditation Council, India.
- Mondisa, J. L. (2018). Examining the mentoring approaches of African American mentors. *Journal of African American Studies*, 22(4), 293-308.
- Moodly, A. L. (2021). Divergence of perspectives on women and higher education leadership? In conversation with men in leadership. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 35(5), 184-203.
- Moodly, A., & Toni, N. M. (2017). Accessing higher education leadership: Towards a framework for women's professional development. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 31(3), 138-153.
- Moosa, M., & Coetzee, M. (2020). Climbing the illusive ladder: Examining female employees' perceptions of advancement opportunities at a higher education institution. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 30(5), 397-402.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- Mosomi, J. (2019). An empirical analysis of trends in female labour force participation and the gender wage gap in South Africa. *Agenda*, 33(4), 29-43.
- Moyo, Z., & Perumal, J. (2020). A systematic review of research on women leading and managing education in Zimbabwe. *Gender & Behaviour*, 18(2), 15688-15697.
- Moyo, Z., Perumal, J., & Hallinger, P. (2020). Struggling to make a difference against the odds: A synthesis of qualitative research on women leading schools in Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 34(10), 1577-1594.
- Mullen, C. A., & Klimaitis, C. C. (2021). Defining mentoring: A literature review of issues, types, and applications. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1483(1), 19-35.
- Nakitende, M. G. (2019). Motivation and perseverance of women in education leadership in the United States of America. *Journal of Science and Sustainable Development*, 6(2), 75-101.
- Ndlovu, W., Ngirande, H., Setati, S. T., & Zhuwao, S. (2018). Transformational leadership and employee organisational commitment in a rural-based higher education institution in South Africa. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 16(1), 1-7.
- Ngcobo, T. & Mestry, R. (2018). Introduction to Educational Leadership and Management. Education management and leadership, A South African perspective (2nd ed). Oxford University Press: South Africa.
- Nieuwenhuis, J. (2020). Introducing qualitative research. In K. Maree (Ed.), *First Steps in Research* (3rd ed., pp. 56-77). Van Schaik.
- Nieuwenhuis, J. (2020). Qualitative research designs and data-gathering techniques. In K. Maree (Ed.), *First Steps in Research* (3rd ed., pp. 80-116). Van Schaik.
- Nieuwenhuis, J. (2020). Analysing qualitative data. In K. Maree (Ed.), *First Steps in Research* (3rd ed., pp. 118-153). Van Schaik.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- Nicklin, J. M., & Segool, N. K. (2022). Work–family thriving for women in higher education. In B. Cozza & C. Pather (Ed.), *Voices of Women Leaders on Success in Higher Education: Pipelines, Pathways and Promotion* (pp. 121-132). Routledge.
- Northouse, P. G. (2019). *Leadership: Theory and Practice* (8th ed.). SAGE.
- Nyoni, W. P., & He, C. (2019). The status of gender in senior leadership positions in higher education universities in Tanzania. *International Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research*, 3(3), 56-68.
- Nyoni, W. P., & He, C. (2019). Barriers and biases: Under-representation of women in top leadership positions in higher education in Tanzania. *International Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research*, 3(5), 1-14.
- O'Connor, P. (2019). Gender imbalance in senior positions in higher education: What is the problem? What can be done? *Policy Reviews in Higher Education*, 3(1), 28-50.
- Ogunode, N. J., & Musa, A. (2020). Higher education in Nigeria: Challenges and the ways forward. *Electronic Research Journal of Behavioural Sciences*, 3, 84-98.
- Okeke, C. (2017). *Achieving validity, reliability and generalisability*. In C. Okeke & M. van Wyk (Eds.), *Educational Research: An African Approach* (pp. 207-233). Oxford Press South Africa.
- Orsini, J. M., Benghe, M. P., & Carter, H. S. (2019). Developing a Mentorship Program in Higher Education Institutions. AEC665/WC328, 4/2019. *EDIS*, 2019(2).
- Osanloo, A., & Grant, C. (2016). Understanding, selecting, and integrating a theoretical framework in dissertation research: Creating the blueprint for your “house”. *Administrative Issues Journal: Connecting Education, Practice, and Research*, 4(2), 7.
- Palmer, E. M., & Jones, S. J. (2019). Woman–woman mentoring relationships and their roles in tenure attainment. *Journal of Women and Gender in Higher Education*, 12(1), 1-17.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- Parker, P., Hewitt, B., Witheriff, J., & Cooper, A. (2018). Frank and fearless: Supporting academic career progression for women in an Australian program. *Administrative Sciences*, 8(1), 5.
- Patten, M. L., & Newhart, M. (2018). *Understanding Research Methods: An Overview of the Essentials* (10th ed). Routledge.
- Phakeng, M. (2015). Leadership: The invisibility of African women and the masculinity of power. *South African Journal of Science*, 1-2.
- Picariello, M., & Waller, S. N. (2016). The importance of role modeling in mentoring women: Lessons from Pat Summitt legacy. *Physical Culture and Sport. Studies and Research*, 71(1), 5-13.
- Queirós, A., Faria, D., & Almeida, F. (2017). Strengths and limitations of qualitative and quantitative research methods. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 3(9), 369-387.
- Rafferty, A. E., & Griffin, M. A. (2004). Dimensions of transformational leadership: Conceptual and empirical extensions. *The leadership quarterly*, 15(3), 329-354.
- Ramohai, J., & Marumo, K. M. K. (2016). Women in senior positions in South African higher education: A reflection on voice and agency. *Alternation Journal*, 23(1), 135-157.
- Ravitch, S. M., & Carl, N. M. *Qualitative Research: Bridging the Conceptual, Theoretical, and Methodological*. SAGE.
- Raymond, Z., & Canham, H. (2022). Women's refusal of racial patriarchy in South African academia. *Gender and Education*, 1-18.
- Read, D. C., Fisher, P. J., & Juran, L. (2020). How do women maximize the value of mentorship? Insights from mentees, mentors, and industry professionals. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 41(2), 165-175.
- Redmond, P., Gutke, H., Galligan, L., Howard, A. & Newman, T. (2017). Becoming a female leader in higher education: Investigations from a regional university. *Gender and Education*, 29(3), 332-351.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- Rehman, A. A., & Alharthi, K. (2016). An introduction to research paradigms. *International Journal of Educational Investigations*, 3(8), 51-59.
- Reis, T. C., & Grady, M. (2020). Moving mentorship to opportunity for women university presidents. *International Journal of Evidence-Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 18(1), 31-42.
- Republic of Ghana. (2015). *National Gender Policy*.
- Republic of South Africa. (1996). *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa No. 108 of 1996*.
- Republic of South Africa. (2019). Department of Higher Education and Training. *Report of the Ministerial Task Team on the Recruitment, Retention and Progression of Black South African Academics*.
- Republic of South Africa. (1998). *Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998*.
- Republic of South Africa. (1997). Ministry of Education. *Higher Education Act 101 of 1997*.
- Republic of South Africa. (2013). *Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill of 2013*.
- Roets, L., van Rensburg, E. J., & Lubbe, J. (2019). Faculty's experience of a formal mentoring programme: The perfect fit. *African Health Sciences*, 19(2), 2237-2242.
- Rule, P., & John, V. (2011). *Your Guide to Case Study Research*. Van Schaik.
- Saleem, G., & Ajmal, M. A. (2018). Work–family balance: Experiences of successful professional women in academia in Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research*, 33(1), 101-121.
- Sayce, S. (2012). Celebrating Joan Acker's contribution to theorising gender and organisation. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*.
- Scheepers, C. B., Douman, A., & Moodley, P. (2018). Sponsorship and social identity in advancement of women leaders in South Africa. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 33(6), 466-498.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- Seabi, J. (2012). Research designs and data collection techniques. In K. Maree (Ed.), *Complete your Thesis or Dissertation Successfully: Practical Guidelines* (pp. 81-95). Juta & Company.
- Searby, L., Ballenger, J., & Tripses, J. (2018). Climbing the ladder, holding the ladder: The mentoring experiences of higher education female leaders. *Advancing Women in Leadership*, 35(1), 98-107.
- Semela, T., Bekele, H., & Abraham, R. (2020). Navigating the river Nile: The chronicle of female academics in Ethiopian higher education. *Gender and Education*, 32(3), 328-346.
- Shaw, R. B., McBride, C. B., Casemore, S., & Martin Ginis, K. A. (2018). Transformational mentoring: Leadership behaviors of spinal cord injury peer mentors. *Rehabilitation Psychology*, 63(1), 131.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22(2), 63-75.
- Sibiya, J. P. (2019). Senior female academic's experiences of mentoring aspirant colleagues career progression: The Accelerated Academic Mentoring Programme. Master of Education, University of Johannesburg.
- Singh, V. (2007). Women and the Glass Ceiling. *The Effective Executive*. ICFAI Business School, Hyderabad, India.
- Sotuku, N., & Duku., S. (2017). Ethics in human sciences research. In C. Okeke & M. van Wyk (Eds.), *Educational Research: An African Approach* (pp. 112-130). Oxford Press South Africa.
- Steele, R. B. (1905). The poetry of Longfellow. *The Sewanee Review*, 13(2), 177-197.
- Stewart, C. A. (2021). Underrepresentation of women STEM Leaders: Twelve women on different journeys using their voices to shape the world through science. *European Journal of STEM Education*, 6(1), 16.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- Stuckey, S. M., Collins, B. T., Patrick, S., Grove, K. S., & Ward, E. (2019). Thriving vs surviving: Benefits of formal mentoring program on faculty well-being. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 8(4), 378-396.
- Suresh, S., Abdul-Aziz, A. R., & Renukappa, S. (2018). *Athena SWAN in Higher Education Sector: A Built Environment Perspective*.
- Tafvelin, S. (2013). The transformational leadership process: Antecedents, mechanisms, and outcomes in the social services (Doctoral dissertation, Umeå Universitet, Sweden).
- Taherdoost, H. (2016). Sampling methods in research methodology: How to choose a sampling technique for research. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management*, 5(2), 18-27.
- Taylor, T. A. (2019). Exploring ethical mentorship as leadership within an Islamic ethic of care. *Journal of Women and Gender in Higher Education*, 12(1), 54-69.
- Tengi, M. L., Mansor, M., & Hashim, Z. (2017). A review theory of transformational leadership for school. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 7(3), 792-799.
- Ticknor, A. S., & Averett, P. (2017). Using relational cultural theory in education research design. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 17(4), 373-384.
- Toni, N., & Moodle, A. L. (2019). Do institutional cultures serve as impediments for women's advancement toward leadership in South African higher education? *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 33(3), 176-191.
- Tran, T. T. T., & Nguyen, H. V. (2020). Gender preference in higher education leadership: Insights from gender distribution and subordinate perceptions and expectations in Vietnam universities. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 1-22.
- Turner-Moffatt, C. (2019). The power of mentorship. *Professional Safety*, 64(8), 17-19.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- United Nations. (1945). *Charter of the United Nations and the Statute of the International Court of Justice*. US Government Printing Office.
- United Nations. (2015). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.
- United Nations (2018). Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development.
- Van Wyk, M. (2017). Afrocentricity as a research philosophy. In C. Okeke & M. van Wyk (Eds.), *Educational Research: An African Approach* (pp. 3-18). Oxford Press South Africa.
- Van Wyk, M., & Taole, M. (2017). Research design. In C. Okeke & M. van Wyk (Eds.), *Educational Research: An African Approach* (pp. 164-184). Oxford Press South Africa.
- Vaughn, A. R., Taasoobshirazi, G., & Johnson, M. L. (2020). Impostor phenomenon and motivation: Women in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education, 45*(4), 780-795.
- Waheeda, A., & Nishan, F. (2018). Challenges of women leaders in higher education institutions in the Republic of Maldives. *International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling, 3*(12), 8-22.
- Westoby, C., Dyson, J., Cowdell, F., & Buescher, T. (2021). What are the barriers and facilitators to success for female academics in UK HEIs? A narrative review. *Gender and Education, 33*(8), 1033-1056.
- White Jr, F. G. (2020). *Exploring the Role of Transformational Leaders in the Mentorship of Top-Level Administrators: A Case Study of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) VISN LEAD Program*.
- Whiting, L. S. (2008). Semi-structured interviews: Guidance for novice researchers. *Nursing Standard (through 2013), 22*(23), 35.
- Williams, C. L., Muller, C., & Kilanski, K. (2012). Gendered organizations in the new economy. *Gender & Society, 26*(4), 549-573.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- World University Rankings. (2020). *Who rules? The world's top universities in 2020*.
<https://www.topuniversities.com/sites/default/files/qsworlduniversityrankings2020supplement.pdf>
- Xiao, Y., Pinkney, E., Au, T. K. F., & Yip, P. S. F. (2020). Athena Swan and gender diversity: A UK-based retrospective cohort study. *BMJ Open*, *10*(2), e032915.
- Yilmaz, K. (2013). Comparison of quantitative and qualitative research traditions: Epistemological, theoretical, and methodological differences. *European Journal of Education*, *48*(2), 311-325.
- Yin, R. K. (2015). *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*. Guilford Press.
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications, Design and Methods*. SAGE.
- Yip, J., & Walker, D. O. (2021). Leaders mentoring others: The effects of implicit followership theory on leader integrity and mentoring. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 1-31.



ANNEXURE 1: LETTER TO FACULTY DEANS SEEKING PERMISSION

EMPS Department
Faculty of Education
Groenkloof Campus
Aldoel Building, Room 3-125
Leyds Street
0002

05 November 2020

Office of the Dean
Faculty of
University of

Dear Professor

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE FACULTY OF

I am Nonjabulo Fortunate Madonda (student number 20759721), and I am currently enrolled as a PhD student in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies, at the University of Pretoria. I humbly seek your permission to conduct my doctoral research study titled: “**Mentoring experiences of women leaders in advancing to senior positions at a South African university**” in your Faculty. The purpose of the study is to explore and understand mentoring experiences of women leaders in advancing to the senior leadership positions. This research project will focus on women leaders occupying the senior leadership positions at the University of and their mentors. Should permission be granted by your kind office, I would appreciate it immensely if you could issue me with a signed letter permitting the study to proceed in your Faculty. I therefore relate hereafter what will happen if such permission is granted.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

The following are the anticipated participants in this study:

- Women leaders occupying senior positions from the senior position of the Faculty Dean down to the Head of Department in the faculty.
- Mentors who have assisted and guided women leaders who occupy senior positions involved in this study. I will ask the women leaders who have been mentored (mentees) to direct me to their mentors. Only the mentors who are available and willing to participate will be selected to participate in the study.
- Participants who agree to voluntarily participate will be asked to sign the informed consent form.

The process of fieldwork:

- Participants will be required to participate in narrative interviews. These are in-depth discourses using open-ended questions which will be conducted face-to-face (individually) where women leaders and mentors will be requested to share their mentoring experiences in relation to the advancement of women leaders to the senior leadership positions. The interviews will be substituted by online interviews in case of unforeseen eventualities (e.g. covid lockdown). The interviews will be of 30 to 45-minute duration. All interviews will be audio-recorded and thereafter transcribed verbatim. The recording will be stored safely and all transcripts will be stored in password-protected electronic files for strict confidentiality and anonymity. Only the researcher, Ms Madonda, and the supervisor, Dr Marishane, will have access to the audio-recordings and the transcribed data.
- Document analysis will also be used as another method of generating data for this study. Women leaders and mentors involved in the study will be asked to share documents such as journal records, emails, letters, pictures of mentoring experiences that they may possess. All information will be treated with the strict confidentiality.
- All research activities will be conducted at a time and place convenient to the participants.
- To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, faculties and the institution, I will be using pseudonyms. Only the researcher, Ms Madonda, will know the identity of the women leaders and mentors who will participate in the study.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

- Participation in this project is voluntary. Therefore, only participants who have voluntarily agreed and signed the consent form will be permitted to participate in this study. Participants are at liberty to withdraw their participation at any stage of the research process should they wish to do so, and their decision will not be held against them in any way. In the event participants withdraw from the study, their data will be discarded and destroyed.
- Participants will not be placed at any risk of any kind, physical and/or mental.
- No incentives will be offered to any of the research participants.
- The information provided by the women leaders and mentors will be used for academic purposes only and will take approximately six months to generate and process.
- Member-checking sessions will be conducted to confirm if my understanding and interpretation of the data are consistent to that of the participants. The participants will have access to their own data, and not of others. Member-checking for authenticity will be done once data has been transcribed, and after the preliminary report has been compiled.

Should you have any questions, concerns or need for clarity on any aspect of the proposed study, please do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me using the contact details provided below.

Your favourable response will be greatly appreciated.

Yours Sincerely

Researcher: Miss N.F. Madonda

Telephone: 012 420 4569

Email: nonjabulo.madonda@up.ac.za

Supervisor: Dr N. Marishane

Telephone: 012 420 5650

Email: nylon.marishane@up.ac.za



CONSENT FORM – DEAN OFFACULTY

I _____ (full names and surname), Dean of the Faculty of, give permission/do not give permission (please delete which is not applicable) for Miss Nonjabulo Fortunate Madonda to conduct research at the Faculty of I understand that the data collected is independent of the Faculty of, and will be used for the study titled: *Mentoring experiences of women leaders in advancing to senior positions at a South African university.*

I understand that:

- Women leaders and their mentors will be interviewed.
- The interviews will be conducted at a time and place convenient to participants, and will not in any way impinge on the Faculty's daily routine.
- The interviews will be audio-recorded for research purposes and the recordings and transcripts will be stored safely.
- Participants will also be asked to share documents of their mentoring experiences.
- Participants will be informed verbally and in writing about the research purpose and process, and they must give consent to participate.
- Participation is voluntary, and participants may withdraw from the research at any time.
- Information about the university, faculty and participants will be kept confidential.
- Information generated will be used for academic purposes only.

Signed: _____ (Dean of the Faculty of)

Date: _____



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

ANNEXURE 2: APPROVAL LETTER FROM THE UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR

Office of the Registrar

2021-03-23

Miss NF Madonda
Department of Education Management and Policy
Faculty of Education
University of Pretoria

Email: noniabulo.madonda@up.ac.za

Dear Miss Madonda

APPROVAL OF RESEARCH STUDY

The UP Survey Coordinating Committee has granted approval for the research study titled "Mentoring experiences of women leaders in advancing to senior positions at a South African university".

The proposed research study has to strictly adhere to the associated study protocol, as well as the UP Survey Policy and the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education instructions.

Please liaise with the Market Research Office in the Department of Institutional Planning to officially register the study and to finalise the survey regulations, procedures and the fieldwork dates. In order to register the study, the Market Research Office has to receive the formal ethical approval letter from the Faculty of Education.

A final electronic copy of the research outcomes must be submitted to the Survey Coordinating Committee as soon as possible after the completion of the study.

Kind regards

REGISTRAR
CHAIRPERSON: SURVEY COORDINATING COMMITTEE



ANNEXURE 3.1: INFORMED CONSENT BY PARTICIPANTS (WOMEN LEADERS)

EMPS Department
Faculty of Education
Groenkloof Campus
Aldoel Building, Room 3-125
Leyds Street
0002
05 November 2020

Dear Participant

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

I am Nonjabulo Fortunate Madonda (student number 20759721), and I am currently enrolled as a PhD student in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies, at the University of Pretoria. I hereby kindly invite you to participate in my doctoral research study titled: **“Mentoring experiences of women leaders in advancing to senior positions at a South African university”**. The purpose of the study is to explore and understand mentoring experiences of women leaders in senior leadership positions at the University of The study focuses on women leaders occupying the senior leadership positions in the University of and their mentors. The objectives of the study are:

- To understand how women leaders occupying senior positions in a South African university understand mentoring.
- To explore mentoring experiences of women leaders who occupy senior positions in a South African university.
- To investigate the role of mentoring in preparing women leaders for senior leadership positions.



- To identify barriers experienced in the mentoring of women leaders for senior positions in South African universities.
- To propose strategies that can be utilised for effective mentoring of women leaders who aspire to advance to senior leadership positions in Higher Education Institutions.

This letter outlines my study and what participation entails if you agree to participate in this study. Once you understand what the study is about, you may or may not agree to participate.

The process of fieldwork:

- Data will be generated through a narrative interview which are in-depth discourses using open-ended questions where you will be requested to share your mentoring experiences in advancing to senior leadership position. The interview will be individual and conducted face-to-face for a duration of 30 to 45 minutes. The interviews may be substituted by online interviews in cases of unforeseen eventualities (e.g. covid lockdown). All interviews will be audio-recorded using a tape recorder and thereafter transcribed verbatim. The recording will be stored safely and all transcripts will be stored in password-protected electronic files for strict confidentiality and anonymity. Only the researcher, Ms Madonda, and the supervisor, Dr Marishane, will have access to the audio-recordings and the transcribed data.
- Document analysis will also be used as another method of generating data for this study. You will therefore be requested to share documents such as journal records, emails, letters, pictures of mentoring experiences that you may possess. This information will be treated with the strict confidentiality.
- All research activities will be conducted at a time and place convenient to you.
- To ensure your anonymity and confidentiality, I will keep your names and that of the faculty and the university anonymous by using pseudonyms. Only the researcher, Ms Madonda, will know your identity and the identity of the mentors.
- All the data will be stored in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies for the period of 15 years and thereafter, destroyed. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the data in this period.
- Participation in this project is be entirely voluntary. You will participate in this study if you agreed and signed the consent form. You will be at liberty to withdraw your



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

participation at any stage of the research process should you wish to do so and your decision will not be held against you. In the event you withdraw from the study, your data will be discarded and destroyed.

- You will not be placed at any risk of any kind.
- You will receive no incentives for participation in this study.
- The information you provide will be used for academic purposes only and it will take me approximately six months to generate data.
- Member-checking sessions will be conducted to confirm if my understanding and interpretation of the data are consistent with yours. You will only have access to your own data and not others. Member-checking will be done once data has been transcribed and after the preliminary report has been compiled.
- The findings and recommendations of this study will be made available to your institution in the form of a thesis on completion of this study.
- I would also like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research in this regard may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

Should you be willing to participate in this study, kindly sign the attached consent form.

Should you have any questions, concerns or need clarity on any aspect pertaining to the proposed study, do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me on the contact details provided below.

Yours sincerely

Researcher: Nonjabulo Fortunate Madonda

Supervisor: Dr. Nylon Marishane

Contact number: 012 420 4569

Contact number: 012 420 5650

Email: nonjabulo.madonda@up.ac.za

Email: nylon.marishane@up.ac.za



INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I _____ (Full names and Surname), a women leader in the University of Pretoria agree to participate in the research conducted by Miss Nonjabulo Fortunate Madonda titled: **“Mentoring experiences of women leaders in advancing to senior positions at a South African university”** in my faculty. I give permission/do not give permission (please which is not applicable) for Miss Madonda to interview me. I understand that the data generated is independent from the Faculty and will be for her study.

By agreeing to participate, I understand that:

- I will be expected to share my mentoring experiences during an interview that will be audio-recorded using a tape recorder. Also that I will be expected to share any documents of my mentoring experiences. I understand that this information will be stored safely.
- Participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me.
- The interview will take place at a time and place convenient to me.
- My identity and that of the faculty will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- The data will be used for research purposes only.
- The data will be stored safely and destroyed after 15years.

The data will be used for further research purposes as it will be the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria.

I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them about matters to this research.

Participant's Signature

Date



ANNEXURE 3.2: INFORMED CONSENT BY PARTICIPANTS (MENTORS)

EMPS Department
Faculty of Education
Groenkloof Campus
Aldoel Building, Room 3-125
Leyds Street
0002
05 November 2020

Dear Participant

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

I am Nonjabulo Fortunate Madonda (student number 20759721), and I am currently enrolled as a PhD student in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies, at the University of Pretoria. I hereby kindly invite you to participate in my doctoral research study titled: **“Mentoring experiences of women leaders in advancing to senior positions at a South African university”**. The purpose of the study is to explore and understand mentoring experiences of women leaders in senior leadership positions at the University of The study focuses on women leaders occupying the senior leadership positions in the University of and their mentors. The objectives of the study are:

- To understand how women leaders occupying senior positions in a South African university understand mentoring.
- To explore mentoring experiences of women leaders who occupy senior positions in a South African university.
- To investigate the role of mentoring in preparing women leaders for senior leadership positions.
- To identify barriers experienced in the mentoring of women leaders for senior positions in South African universities.



- To propose strategies that can be utilised for effective mentoring of women leaders who aspire to advance to senior leadership positions in Higher Education Institutions.

This letter outlines my study and what participation entails if you agree to participate in this study. Once you understand what the study is about, you may or may not agree to participate.

The process of fieldwork:

- Data will be generated through a narrative interview which are in-depth discourses using open-ended questions where you will be requested to share your mentoring experiences with women leaders in their advancement to senior leadership position. The interview will be individual and conducted face-to-face for a duration of 30 to 45 minutes. The interviews may be substituted by online interviews in cases of unforeseen eventualities (e.g. covid lockdown). All interviews will be audio-recorded using a tape recorder and thereafter transcribed verbatim. The recording will be stored safely and all transcripts will be stored in password-protected electronic files for strict confidentiality and anonymity. Only the researcher, Ms Madonda, and the supervisor, Dr Marishane, will have access to the audio-recordings and the transcribed data.
- Document analysis will also be used as another method of generating data for this study. You will therefore be requested to share documents such as journal records, emails, letters, pictures of mentoring experiences that you may possess. This information will be treated with the strict confidentiality.
- All research activities will be conducted at a time and place convenient to you.
- To ensure your anonymity and confidentiality, I will keep your names and that of the faculty and the university anonymous by using pseudonyms. Only the researcher, Ms Madonda, will know your identity and the identity of the mentors.
- All the data will be stored in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies for the period of 15 years and thereafter, destroyed. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the data in this period.
- Participation in this project is be entirely voluntary. You will participate in this study if you agreed and signed the consent form. You will be at liberty to withdraw your participation at any stage of the research process should you wish to do so and your



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

decision will not be held against you. In the event you withdraw from the study, your data will be discarded and destroyed.

- You will not be placed at any risk of any kind.
- You will receive no incentives for participation in this study.
- The information you provide will be used for academic purposes only and it will take me approximately six months to generate data.
- Member-checking sessions will be conducted to confirm if my understanding and interpretation of the data are consistent with yours. You will only have access to your own data and not others. Member-checking will be done once data has been transcribed and after the preliminary report has been compiled.
- The findings and recommendations of this study will be made available to your institution in the form of a thesis on completion of this study.
- I would also like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research in this regard may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

Should you be willing to participate in this study, kindly sign the attached consent form.

Should you have any questions, concerns or need clarity on any aspect pertaining to the proposed study, do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me on the contact details provided below.

Yours sincerely

Researcher: Nonjabulo Fortunate Madonda

Contact number: 012 420 4569

Email: nonjabulo.madonda@up.ac.za

Supervisor: Dr. Nylon Marishane

Contact number: 012 420 5650

Email: nylon.marishane@up.ac.za



INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I _____ (Full names and Surname), a women leader in the University of agree to participate in the research conducted by Miss Nonjabulo Fortunate Madonda titled: “**Mentoring experiences of women leaders in advancing to senior positions at a South African university**”. I give permission/do not give permission (please which is not applicable) for Miss Madonda to interview me. I understand that the data generated will be used for her research study.

By agreeing to participate, I understand that:

- I will be expected to share my mentoring experiences during an interview that will be audio-recorded using a tape recorder. Also that I will be expected to share any documents of my mentoring experiences. I understand that this information will be stored safely.
- Participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision will not be held against me.
- The interview will take place at a time and place convenient to me.
- My identity and that of the faculty will remain anonymous.
- The content of the interview will remain confidential.
- The data will be used for research purposes only.
- The data will be stored safely and destroyed after 15years.
- The data will be used for further research purposes as it will be the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria.

I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them about matters to this research.

Participant’s Signature

Date

ANNEXURE 4.1: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (WOMEN LEADERS)

Study title: Mentoring experiences of women leaders in advancing to senior positions at a South African university

Mentee (Women leaders in senior positions at the University of)

Study purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore mentoring experiences of women leaders on their advancement to senior positions at a South African university. The aim is to gather lived experiences of women leaders who have experienced mentoring in their advancement to senior leadership positions. The study also aims to uncover and propose mentoring strategies that can be used in mentoring women leaders in HEIs.

Remember: Everything you share and discuss in this interview will be treated as confidential. You can withdraw your participation at any point of the study.

Section 1: Biographical details

1.1. Age in these category: 35-45; 46-55; 56-65

1.2. Qualifications:

1.3. Work experience in HE:

1.4. Work experience at the University of:

1.5. Years of experience as a leader:

1.6. Years of experience in senior leadership:

1.7. Current Position held:

1.8. Year of experience in the current position

1.9. Department:

1.10. Race:

1.11. South African/non-South African



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Section 2: Interview questions (Semi-structured interview)

- 2.1. Can you please share with me your journey/experience into leadership in Higher Education
- 2.2 Can you tell me about your journey/experience to the senior leadership position that you hold.
- 2.3. What can you say about your journey in advancing to the senior leadership position as a women leader at a university?
- 2.4. What were some enabling factors that contributed to your leadership in HE?
- 2.5. Are there any challenges that you encountered in your pursuit to the senior position at a university where you serve? How did you overcome them?
- 2.6 Did you receive any support for you to advance to this position? and what kind of support?
- 2.7. Is there a person or people who played a role in supporting you to progress to this position? Who, What role and How?
- 2.8. Did you learn and develop any skills or practices from anyone in your journey/advancing to this position? If yes, who and how?
- 2.9. Do you regard this as mentoring? Do you regard him/her/them as mentors?
- 2.10. Tell me, what is mentoring in your own understanding?
- 2.11. Do you think mentoring play a role in women leader's advancement to the senior positions? What is that role?
- 2.12. How has your mentoring experience been in advancing to the senior position at this university? What role did mentoring play in your own advancement to the senior position?
- 2.13. What leadership skills and competencies did you learn through mentoring?
- 2.14. How were you mentored? Do you know why your mentor mentored you this way?
2. 15. What have been some of the challenges in your mentoring journey?
- 2.16. How do you think these challenges can be addressed?



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

2.17. How do you think mentoring can be done in mentoring women leaders who aspire to advance to the senior positions in Higher Education Institution?

Section 3: Document analysis

3.1. Are there any documents that you can share with me in relation to the mentoring experience that you have had?

3.2. Are you aware of policies that your mentor used as he/she was mentoring you? Which policies are those? Can you share with me if available?

Section 4: Termination

4.1. Is there anything else that you would like to add in relation to mentoring for women leaders in their advancement to senior positions and your experience?

4.2. For the purpose of the study, I am inviting the mentors who have developed the women leaders in the study to also share their own experiences in the kind of mentorship. Can you please share the name and details of your mentor with me, if that is fine with you?

Thank you very much for the time that you have spent with me and the information that you have shared with me.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

ANNEXURE 4.2: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (MENTORS)

Study title: Mentoring experiences of women leaders in advancing to senior positions at a South African university

Mentors of women leaders in senior positions at the University of

Study purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore mentoring experiences of women leaders on their advancement to senior positions at a South African university. The aim is to gather lived experiences of women leaders who have experienced mentoring in their advancement to senior leadership positions. The study also aims to uncover and propose mentoring strategies that can be used in mentoring women leaders in HEIs.

Remember: Everything you share and discuss in this interview will be treated as confidential. You can withdraw your participation at any point of the study.

Section 1: Biographical details

- 1.12. Age in this category: 35-45; 46-55; 56-65; 66-70
- 1.13. Qualifications:
- 1.14. Work experience in HE:
- 1.15. Current Position held if working:
- 1.16. Institution:
- 1.17. Department:
- 1.18. Race:
- 1.19. South African/non-South African:

Section 2: Interview questions (Semi-structured interview)

- 2.1. How many women have you mentored in Higher Education? To senior position?
- 2.2. Can you please share with me your experience in mentoring women leader/leaders in Higher Education for senior leadership?
- 2.3. How did you do it?

- 2.4. Why did you do it this way?
- 2.5. Was there any guiding policy or framework that you use in guiding your mentoring for women leaders?
- 2.6. Have you received any training for mentoring? What kind of training?
- 2.7. Tell me, what is mentoring in your own understanding?
- 2.8. Is there leadership involved in mentoring? What type of leadership?
- 2.9. What leadership did you play in mentoring women leader for senior position?
- 2.10. Do you think mentoring play a role in women leader's advancement to the senior positions? What is that role?/ How does mentoring prepare women leaders for senior leadership?
- 2.11. Which leadership skills and competencies are learned through mentoring?
- 2.12. How do you think mentoring for women leaders can be done in Higher Education Institution? Any strategies that you can suggest?
- 2.13. Are there any challenges that you encountered in mentoring women leader/s for senior position? How did you overcome them?
- 2.14. Did you receive any support from the institution to ensure contribute on the mentoring that you were doing? What kind of support?

Section 3: Document analysis

- 3.1. Do you have any documents that relate to your mentoring experience/that you used as a guiding framework in mentoring women leader/s? Can you please share those documents with me? (policy/guiding framework).

Section 4: Termination

- 4.1. Is there anything else that you would like to add in relation to mentoring for women leaders for their advancement to senior positions in Higher Education Institutions?

Thank you very much for the time that you have spent with me and the information that you have shared with me.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

ANNEXURE 5: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS GUIDE

Part A

1. Participants requested for Mentorship policies/Guidelines used in their institutions.
2. Participants requested for documents used during their mentorship or in mentoring others.

Part B (Document Analysis)

Documents (Mentorship Policies) reviewed. Focusing on:

1. Which institution has developed the policy?
2. Was the policy developed for the mentorship of women leaders?
3. Does the Mentorship Policy speak to the mentorship of women for leadership?
4. What does the document stipulate concerning the mentorship process of women leaders?
5. Who should take part in the mentorship of women leaders and what are their roles?



ANNEXURE 6: SAMPLE OF DATA ANALYSIS

Research Question	Participant 1	Participant 2	Codes	Initial themes	Final themes and sub-themes
1. How do women leaders occupying senior positions in a South African university understand mentoring?	<p>Women leader 1: I understand it as a formal or informal. So, let me talk about the formal kind of mentoring. So there is an actual agreement that is signed. That this senior person is mentoring an emerging researcher or a younger person. And by the way, I think that you can also be a mentor at the same level. If you have different skills.</p>	<p>Women leader 2: Identifying a need and that is the need to develop a person. You identify a person and you work with that person, you put that person under your wings whether it is mentoring in a job, whether it is mentoring in education, whether it is mentoring in family or in religious ground or religious field</p>	<p>Final or informal Formal-agreement signed Senior person assist junior person Same level mentorship-different expertise Know mentee career aspirations Career support and guidance Relationship Development Identify and nurture someone</p>	<p>Formal/Informal relationship Formal-agreement Career support and guidance Development Nurturing</p>	<p>Theme 1 Conceptualisation of mentoring by women leaders occupying senior positions <i>Sub-theme 1.1:</i> A relationship <i>Sub-theme 1.2:</i> Role modelling <i>Sub-theme 1.3:</i> Mentoring as support <i>Sub-theme 1.4:</i> Identifying potential and nurturing people <i>Sub-theme 1.5:</i> Offering career guidance and giving advice</p>
2. Why is mentoring important in developing women	<p>Women leader 3 She actually helped us to understand what it was like in academia, and what</p>	<p>Women leader 4 I admired her immensely, I still think still that she taught me everything I know</p>	<p>Career guidance Career advice Leadership opportunities Encouragement</p>	<p>Credited leadership opportunities Gave advice and guidance</p>	<p>Theme 2 The importance of mentoring in developing women leaders for senior</p>



<p><i>leaders for senior positions?</i></p>	<p>to expect, and you know the pitfalls, and what to do to try and grow your career. She looked out for us, it was me and my sister and few other people as well who were coming up through the system, and she was saying this is what you should do to access this programme, and go to this conference. She helped create those situations and she entrusted us with a lot of events in the department. She put us in charge of things, even if it is small things like visits from American students, hosting American students who came</p>	<p>about supervision for instance. So, in my mind I think she helped to create this feeling that women were able and could be doing amazing things which she did, ...it was lovely to have her as somebody I could look up to. The fact that he encouraged me to apply for the job and affirmed me as an abled person really built my confidence.</p>	<p>Affirmation Building confidence</p>	<p>Built self-confidence Encouragement</p>	<p>positions</p> <p><i>Sub-theme 2.1:</i> The importance of having a mentor</p> <p><i>Sub-theme 2.2:</i> The role and contribution of mentoring to career progression and advancement to senior positions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving career guidance and advice • Creating leadership opportunities • Giving encouragement and building confidence • Providing opportunities for professional development • Leading to career growth • Becoming mentors
---	--	---	--	--	--



	over to at that time, she said, you two run with it, you plan the programme and organize all of it.				
3.How is mentoring used to prepare women leaders for senior positions in the higher education sector?	<p>Mentor 1 I am definitely not doing it from a specific framework or according to a specific book that I read or a course that I did or anything. For me it is experience, own experience.</p> <p>I do not want women to experience the same things that I experienced in my career because it is not nice and it is not comfortable.</p> <p>I do not follow any specific plan, policy or anything. I have never</p>	<p>Mentor 2 Sometimes we talk about how to handle different situations. If there is a dispute or if there is none agreement about something between people, how to handle that situation.</p> <p>I have found that a lot of women especially in lecturing positions, they tend to spend a lot of time on their teaching. I have always tried to give them a balance that they must have a balance between the teaching and their research.</p>	<p>From own experience No mentorship policy Informal How to resolve conflicts Balancing academic career</p>	<p>Informal mentorship Lack of existing policy Balancing a career Resolving conflicts</p>	<p>Theme 3 How mentoring was conducted in preparing women leaders for the senior positions they occupy <i>Sub-theme 3.1:</i> Informal mentorship <i>Sub-theme 3.2:</i> Identification and development of a successor <i>Sub-theme 3.3:</i> Focus areas in mentoring women leaders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application for funding • Introduction to academic networks • Balancing career/personal life



	seen a policy on mentoring.				<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing soft skills• Development for leading male-dominated departments <p><i>Sub-theme 3.4:</i> Reasons why women leaders were mentored in the same manner as their mentors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of mentorship policy/guidelines <p>Lack of training for mentors</p>
--	-----------------------------	--	--	--	---



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

ANNEXURE 7: ETHICAL APPROVAL



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

Ethics Committee

09 February 2021

Miss NF Madonda

Dear Miss NF Madonda

REFERENCE: EDU198/20

We received proof that you have met the conditions outlined. Your application is thus **approved**, and you may start with your fieldwork. The decision covers the entire research process, until completion of the study report, and not only the days that data will be collected. The approval is valid for two years for a Masters and three for Doctorate.

The approval by the Ethics Committee is subject to the following conditions being met:

1. The research will be conducted as stipulated on the application form submitted to the Ethics Committee with the supporting documents.
2. Proof of how you adhered to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) policy for research must be submitted where relevant.
3. In the event that the research protocol changed for whatever reason the Ethics Committee must be notified thereof by submitting an amendment to the application (Section E), together with all the supporting documentation that will be used for data collection namely; questionnaires, interview schedules and observation schedules, for further approval before data can be collected. Non-compliance implies that the Committee's approval is null and void. The changes may include the following but are not limited to:
 - Change of investigator,
 - Research methods any other aspect therefore and,
 - Participants.

The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education does not accept any liability for research misconduct, of whatsoever nature, committed by the researcher(s) in the implementation of the approved protocol.

Upon completion of your research you will need to submit the following documentations to the Ethics Committee for your

Clearance Certificate:

- Integrated Declaration Form (Form D08),
- Initial Ethics Approval letter and,
- Approval of Title.

Please quote the reference number EDU198/20 in any communication with the Ethics Committee.

Best wishes

Prof Funke Omidire
Chair: Ethics Committee
Faculty of Education



ANNEXURE 8: TURNITIN ORIGINALITY REPORT

Ms Madonada Final PhD Thesis

ORIGINALITY REPORT

6%

SIMILARITY INDEX

5%

INTERNET SOURCES

3%

PUBLICATIONS

%

STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1

repository.up.ac.za

Internet Source

1%

2

www.tandfonline.com

Internet Source

<1%

3

uir.unisa.ac.za

Internet Source

<1%

4

"The Education Systems of Africa", Springer

<1%