

Research Portfolio of Evidence

Role Congruity Theory and women's perceptions of the challenges in achieving senior leadership roles: A descriptive focus group of a medium-sized Durban company 2018.

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Module: Research Methodology

Module Code: RESM8419

IIE Bachelor of Commerce Honours in Management

Qualification Code: HBCM412

Word Count: 14990

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the Bachelor of Commerce Honours in Management degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

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Date: 26/10/2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Sharon Ballack for her tireless dedication and guidance, and Philippa Juul, for her editorial work.

ABSTRACT

This research attempted to solve the problem of the perceived unequal treatment of women in the workplace. It described the Role Congruity Theory and how perceptions affect the challenges women face in achieving senior leadership roles. The problem is that there is a gender disparity in companies and this study discussed why. Inequality is fundamentally unjust, and companies and governments have an obligation to ensure that people are treated equally. The gap in knowledge was that, despite legislation, there is still perceived unequal treatment in South Africa and this study aimed to establish why. A focus group was conducted where women in senior leadership roles at one company discussed their experiences of perceived challenges they have faced. This was chosen because of the qualitative nature of the study and the interpretivist paradigm. The most significant findings from this study were that the perceived challenges of the women at the company studied were self-doubt and their own expectations of themselves. Contribution to the field of sociology was that these women did not see their gender as a challenge in the workplace of the company studied.

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1. INTRODUCTION

A background to the study was provided, identifying the relevance as well as identifying the problem and purpose statement. This section provides the foundation for the study by identifying research questions and objectives.

1.1. Background

Out of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) outlined by the United Nations, goal five pertains to gender equality and empowering all women and girls. The UN believes that empowering women will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large (UN, 2015). This research attempted to solve the problem of the perceived unequal treatment of women in the workplace. The unequal treatment of women is still an issue today as confirmed by the difference in payment between genders (Topping & Barr, 2018). This perceived unequal treatment alludes to the stereotypes and prejudice women face in the workplace. Put into a South African context, from 2015 to 2016, only 16.3 percent of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) positions in companies were held by women (Catalyst, 2017). This showed how relevant this topic still is.

This study described Role Congruity Theory (RCT) and its key concepts that affect the perceptions of the challenges women face in achieving senior leadership roles. These key concepts are stereotypes the 'double bind' the 'glass ceiling', Social Role Theory, prejudice and, leadership and RCT. A variety of literature of this study discussed RCT as well as the key concepts.

1.2. Rationale

This research was conducted because of the researcher's personal interest in the topic. The idea of equality between different genders makes up a core part of the beliefs of the researcher who is a woman. Articles read by the researcher and experiences of people in the researcher's life have formed this interest in the topic of women and their challenges. The researcher wanted to gain an understanding of the reasons for gender inequality in South Africa (SA). This was significant to the researcher because SA is home and understanding the reasons for inequality might allow something more to be done about it. According to the World Economic Report (2017), SA is ranked 15th out of 144 countries in terms of inequality (Grant Thornton, 2017). This showed the seriousness of the problem in SA.

1.3. Relevance

This study was important because it was applied in a South African context and addressed the perceptions of challenges women face in achieving senior leadership roles in the workplace. All employees, especially women, have positive impacts on a company's profitability and survival. It was, therefore, important to determine the perceived challenges which prevent them from achieving success for themselves and their companies (Hummel, 2017). This research was significant because it helped address the knowledge gap. It contributed to the fields of humanities and business.

Women are still being treated unequally, especially in SA, as approximately 31 percent of companies have no women in senior management positions (Grant Thornton, 2017). Industry leaders in SA claim that women are not equipped for top management roles. SA's score for a number of women in senior management roles was 28 percent (2017), with only three percent being women in CEO positions, five percent lower than the global average (Grant Thornton, 2017). This showed that, despite SA's attempts at closing the inequality gap, it is still a pressing issue. RCT was viewed within a South African context. The findings of this study were compared with RCT, which added to the theory. This created more space for researchers to argue this theory and its relevance for the specific industry of the company studied. The findings of this research provided information for companies about the topic in a South African context.

1.4. Problem Statement

The problem was that there is a gender disparity in the workplace and this study looked to address the knowledge gap which was the perceived challenges of women-specific to the company being studied (Fajardo & Erasmus, 2017). This was a problem because being treated equally is a basic human right (sahrc.org.za, 2018). The reason this problem needed to be solved was that inequality is fundamentally unjust, and companies and governments have an obligation to ensure people are treated equally (Thagard, 2018). This research assisted in solving the problem of the perceived inequality facing women in the workplace at the company studied. As government plays an important role in ensuring equality, the situation in SA showed that there are legislations that combat this issue such as the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000 (justice.gov.za, 2000). However, there are still a number of inequality cases (Grant Thornton, 2017). The gap in knowledge was that despite legislation in SA there is still perceived unequal treatment. This study aimed to establish why.

Although legislation plays a role in equal treatment, for the purpose of this study it was omitted. The concepts which influenced the perceptions of these challenges included stereotypes and prejudice. RCT explained that these can lead to the prevention of women achieving senior leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This study looked at one specific company to solve the gap in knowledge about women in senior leadership roles.

1.5. Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to use RCT as a framework to describe women's perceptions of challenges in achieving senior leadership roles at the specific company. This study discussed the reason why there was a gender disparity in the workplace in SA. The purpose was to conduct a qualitative focus group on women in senior leadership roles at the company studied. The study assisted in solving the research problem by describing RCT in terms of women at the specific company. This research was descriptive because it described the findings in detail. The purpose of this research was to widen and highlight issues for the company studied in order to address the perceived challenges the women face.

1.6. Research Question

What are the perceptions of the challenges women face in achieving senior leadership roles at a medium-sized Durban company?

1.7. Research Objective

To describe women's perceptions of the challenges they face in a medium-sized Durban company.

This section provided the foundation for the qualitative research study and outlined the purpose, research questions, and objectives to be analysed. The importance of gender equality in the workplace and knowledge gap was indicated.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

To strengthen the findings in the study, a core theory is analysed according to its relevance and applied further in the analysis of the literature review to assess previous sources on the research topic. This section will also conceptualise the key concepts.

2.2. Theoretical Foundation

2.2.1. Role Congruity Theory

RCT was coined by Eagly and Karau in 2002. It examines prejudice toward female leaders. This theory stemmed from Eagly's Social Role Theory (SRT) of sex differences and similarities (Eagly, 1987). SRT suggests that the differences and similarities between men and women develop from their social roles within society, through socialisation and the formation of gender roles (1987; Eagly, Wood & Diekmann, 2000).

The aim of this study is to describe the perceived challenges women face in achieving leadership roles at the company being studied. By understanding the key concepts of this theory, the research objective is achieved as it describes the perceived challenges women face. This study is put into a South African context and excludes cultural and ethnic factors as well as leadership styles. This theory describes the perceived challenges women face in the workplace. This theory did not address the current environment in which women currently work. This is addressed by conducting a focus group in the present environment in which women now find themselves working. Different research conducted by the same author on the topic as well as different perspectives and different co-authors were looked at under this section.

Prejudice comes from relations that people perceive between the characteristics of a social group. This happens when social perceivers hold a stereotype about a social group that is incongruent with the characteristics that were thought to be needed for success in certain classes of social roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This is relevant as it relates to the perceived challenges women face in achieving senior leadership roles. Prejudice is formed as a result of the social roles held by women. As the interpretivist paradigm views reality as a social construct, the link between this paradigm and the key concepts are clear.

The prejudice discussed under RCT can be connected to the natural differences between men and women which stems from evolutionary psychologists (Eagly & Karau, 2002). It states that women lack the inherent characteristics needed for leadership as a result of fundamental

differences between the two genders. It is believed that these differences evolved genetically and came from the need to adapt to primeval conditions (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The roles that were created by new economic conditions, such as wars, demanded more masculine labour. Women did not participate in these wars as their roles were more aligned with pregnancy and domestic duties. This led to gender stereotypes (Eagly & Karau, 2002). RCT proposes that the perceived incongruity between women and leadership roles is because of the biological differences and economic conditions. This led to two forms of prejudice: one, a perception of women as less favourable than men as candidates for leadership and two that when women are evaluated by others, their behaviour does not fulfil the preconceived notion of what a leadership role requires (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

RCT states that attitudes are less positive towards female leaders and make it more challenging for women to become leaders. Research paradigms show evidence which confirms that consequences such as gender stereotypes and prejudice occur, particularly in situations that enhance perceptions of incongruity between female gender roles and leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This theory predicts that women will be less likely than men to develop as leaders when the expectations for the leadership roles are incongruent with gender stereotypes (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Therefore, the incongruence between masculinised task requirements and gender stereotypes pacify women's leadership development (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

The relevance of this theory is that it incorporates the concepts of stereotypes about women and leadership, and alludes to why there are perceived challenges for women in achieving leadership roles. According to RCT, perceived challenges for women in achieving leadership roles is a result of socialisation (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The theory looks at how these stereotypes are perceived as a challenge to women in everyday life and work environments. Stereotypes have formed through people's interactions with society, what it has told them, and aligns with the chosen interpretivist paradigm.

RCT shows that women have achieved increased access to supervisory and middle management roles, but that it is rare for them to be in elite positions (Eagly & Karau, 2002). It is agreed that prejudice is one of the perceived challenges for women in achieving leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Prejudice arises from the relations perceived by people in terms of the characteristics between members of a social group. This happens when a stereotype

about a social group is incongruent with the perceived characteristics thought to be required in classes of social roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This relates to the research title and aim as the perceived challenges which women face is discussed. This theory implored the construct of gender roles because social roles are socially shared expectations which apply to certain people in certain social positions (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Gender stereotypes originate from observations of people in sex-typical social roles, such as men being the breadwinner and women being the domestic caretaker (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This was a key concept under stereotypes and is discussed in the literature review.

SRT forms a core part of RCT as it stems from the social roles of women in society. SRT describes that the causes of sex differences come from the physical characteristics of the sexes and features of social structures (Eagly & Koenig, 2006). This is relevant because it argues that women have physical characteristics that set them apart from men and that perceptions of women are influenced by society. This forms the foundation of the perceived challenges women face in the workplace. Other works by Eagly and Carli (2007) suggest that the phenomenon of the 'glass ceiling', which is a barrier at high levels in organisations, is wrong. It implies that women and men have equal access to entry- and midlevel positions. They do not (Eagly & Carli, 2007). They believe the 'glass ceiling' fails to incorporate the complexity and variety of challenges that women can face in their leadership journeys. They believe that a labyrinth is a better metaphor for the perceived challenges women face in their professional endeavours (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

2.3. Literature Review

Below is a review of literature pertaining to the key concepts of RTC. This literature describes the concepts, stereotypes, 'double bind', 'glass ceiling', prejudice, SRT and, leadership and RCT.

2.3.1. Introduction to Literature Review

The research problem is addressed through the analysis of literature. This review of literature looks at gender disparity within the workplace. This review assesses sources pertaining to RCT and key concepts which fall under it. RCT describes that the differences and similarities between men and women developed from their social roles within society (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The majority of the literature analysed is empirical and theoretical. Empirical means the

literature is based on experience and observation and deals with original research such as scientific experiments and surveys. Theoretical literature is about theory rather than on application (Abao, 2017). The literature discusses key concepts under RCT which influence the perceived challenges women face in the workplace.

2.3.2. SRT

The research by Schmitt, Long, McPhearson, O'Brien, Remmert & Shah (2017) looks at the differences between men and women's personalities and refers to SRT. For the purposes of this study, the perceived gender roles of this literature under SRT are discussed as it is seen as a challenge for women in achieving senior leadership roles. This is backed up by the authors Hoogh, Hartog, and Nevicka (2015), who draw on SRT and the findings on prescriptive gender stereotypes. They believe that these two factors influence the perception of female leaders and their effectiveness (Hoogh, et al., 2015). This article is relevant to the study because SRT refers to the sex differences and similarities in social behaviour between men and women (Schmitt, et al., 2017). These differences between men and women influence the perceived challenges women face as they developed from their social roles within society. This happens through socialisation and, consequentially the formation of gender roles. This theory also forms the base for RCT as SRT was coined by Eagly in 1987 and is further explored by the literature of Eagly & Wood (2016).

The article by Thompson (2014) interprets technical communication research about sex differences according to SRT, which argues that sex differences are enculturated through experiences associated with social positions in the family and the workplace (Thompson, 2004). Her purpose is to describe a theoretical framework for explaining the differences and similarities between the behaviours of men and women in the workplace (Thompson, 2004). She describes the origin of SRT and suggests that sex differences are structural, learned from the different experiences associated with different social positions in the family and workplace. According to SRT, people develop gender stereotypes from observing and participating in certain "role performances" (Thompson, 2004). Thompson describes gender roles as socially constructed, based on historical differences in contributions to the economy. This links to the paradigm of this study. SRT holds that, regardless of early socialization, women can learn behaviours associated with the provider role by participating in social experiences once thought to be only for men (Thompson, 2004). Thompson found that women are beginning to occupy high-status

occupational roles. SRT proposes that both the gender roles from childhood socialization and the occupational roles from adult experiences in the workplace are likely to affect behaviour and attitudes (Thompson, 2004). The relevance of this article is that it goes into detail about SRT which forms the foundation for RCT. It gives more insights into the concept of stereotypes. The link to the topic is that SRT offers discussions of RCT concepts which play a role in the perception of challenges women face in the workplace. Although this article is dated, it is important to this study because of the discussion of how women and men have learnt their behaviours from previous experiences and how these have contributed to developing stereotypes. This has also played an important role in interpreting the findings of this study.

2.3.3. Stereotypes and Prejudice

The article by Seceleanu (2017) is important because it highlights a key concept which has influenced the perceived challenges women face in the workplace. This article discusses the evolution of the relations between women and men in society and refers to the anatomic differences and behaviours which have created stereotypes and prejudice (Seceleanu 2017). Seceleanu (2017) mentions how the process of social categorisation and social perception lead to the development of gender stereotypes and prejudice. As gender is the most used social category, and social categories are unavoidable, it helps people identify themselves in comparison to others (Seceleanu 2017). In turn, gender stereotypes have led to the development of sexism. Gender stereotypes play a role in affecting how people perceive the world through socialisation and contribute to the perceived challenges women face in the workplace. According to Thompson's (2004) research, gender roles are socially constructed stereotypes describing and prescribing personality differences and behaviours based on biological sex. Notions of masculinity and femininity, as defined by gender roles remain entrenched in people's perceptions as they are enacted and reproduced (Thompson, 2004).

The authors (Johnson & Smith, 2018) found that there are some men who have confused the idea of mentoring women with trying to "save" them. The authors believe that it is correct for men to mentor women because it is seen as illegal to exclude them but, taking the approach of trying to rescue them, is also wrong (Johnson & Smith, 2018). The authors make reference to the knight-damsel in distress archetype and suggest that depicting male mentors as heroic rescuers strengthens the gendered status quo, showing women as damsels unprepared for serious leadership roles (Johnson & Smith, 2018). This is a perceived challenge in the

workplace. Johnson and Smith (2018) describe why this stereotype is outdated and suggest that women need to be mentored instead of rescued in order to contribute to a company's success. When women are mentored by men, they make more money and receive more promotions (Johnson & Smith, 2018). Doing this brings advantages to the entire company and is particularly helpful to women when addressing the perceived challenges to their career advancement (Johnson & Smith, 2018). This relates to RCT as it demonstrates a prejudice against women, and suggests that, although it does assist women, the approach is wrong. As mentioned in RCT, this prejudice gives way for discrimination against female leaders, - which results from the commonly held stereotypes between men and women. In this article, reference is made to reciprocal mentorship, but is excluded from the discussion as it is not relevant for this study. This article is relevant as stereotyping is a key concept of RCT and it shows that these are still prevalent in the workplace (Johnson & Smith, 2018). The authors agree that women perform better and advance faster when they have effective mentors. This research is important as it shows that women can be effective leaders when seen as equal members (Johnson & Smith, 2018).

Berdahl and Moon's research suggests that women, but not men, suffer negative professional consequences if they have children. These unequal consequences can be attributed to stereotypes about women's and men's roles as caregivers and providers for their families (Berdahl & Moon, 2013). Their study shows that women without children experience more harassment and mistreatment than mothers do, because of stereotypes (Berdahl & Moon, 2013). This is important because gender stereotypes of women and their role in family life could be a perceived challenge for women's work life. People tend to assume that women and men play stereotypical roles when it comes to parenting. Women are expected to take on the majority of caregiving responsibilities for children, while men are expected to put career first to maximise their income (Berdahl & Moon, 2013). The author's study found that mothers are especially disadvantaged compared to women without children. Childcare and housework are still viewed as low-status "women's work" (Berdahl & Moon, 2013). This literature speaks about how gender stereotypes affect women in the workplace and how they are put at a disadvantage. Their research shows that women are seen as less competent, especially if they have children. This can be seen as a perceived challenge for women in the workplace. This links to the topic as it shows that this is still a relevant issue. The discussion about the different roles men and women

are expected to portray are a significant consideration in the perceived challenges women experience at the company. This article plays an important role in the interpretation of the findings.

Agar (2004) discusses how, over the last 30 years, gender issues in the workplace have received a lot of attention. He discusses how stereotypes are a certain and meaningful contributor to the limited presence of women in high-level positions. Agar (2004) shows that gender discrimination remains a reality in our society. Despite changes in values, examples of bias and prejudice are rather easily produced. Gender stereotypes influence judgments and evaluations such that men and women are treated differently. He argues that women and men are not equally represented in management, particularly when examining higher levels (Agars, 2004). Issues include sexual harassment, work-family conflict, and social strategies (e.g. networking). Agar (2004) suggests that, despite these advances, substantial differences in the gender composition of high-level management positions still exist. The purpose of this article is to illustrate that gender stereotypes have been under-examined as a causal factor although they do, in fact, play a powerful role in maintaining the 'glass ceiling' (Agars, 2004). This article is important as it provides a reconsideration of stereotypes as an explanatory factor and demonstrates a more appropriate way through which to interpret the impact of gender stereotypes on the representation of women in management (Agars, 2004). The findings show the likely important role stereotypes play in evaluations of women's performance and it discusses the 'glass ceiling' which is a key concept of RCT (Agars, 2004). The link is the discussion of the importance of women and stereotypes, and how this has created a gender disparity in the workplace, which links to the research problem. Even though this article is dated, it is nevertheless relevant because these issues are still discussed and faced today. It is important because these issues still cause problems ten years after this article was published.

Makashvili, Vardanashvili, and Javakhishvili discuss the complex phenomenon of prejudice (2018). They use the Intergroup Threat Theory (ITT) which is one of the most efficient theoretical frameworks to identify the triggers of prejudice. In their study, using an experimental design, they examine the effects of symbolic and realistic threats on prejudice that was measured by means of a modified social distance scale (Makashvili, Vardanashvili, & Javakhishvili, 2018). They found that whether prejudice is blatant or subtle depends heavily on the context. In the United States, for example, racial prejudice is highly condemned and equality

is taught in schools. While in Georgia, both the results of various nation-wide survey polls and real-time cases of homophobic, xenophobic and religious discrimination are qualified as the manifestation of explicit prejudice (Makashvili, et al., 2018). Prejudice is a psychological construct that can account for such negative attitudes. They discuss how a number of researchers (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998; McFarland, 2010; Parrillo & Donoghue, 2005) argue that males, as compared to females, are more prone to being prejudiced. This is relevant because the article examines how women are more prone to experience prejudice against them and suggest that how prejudice is perceived depends on the context. Context is however not relevant to this study.

In literature by Mackie and Smith (2016), they discuss contemporary news sources which show evidence of the variety of ways in which outgroups (like women) are devalued, discriminated against, and sometimes ridiculed by members of other groups (like men). In attempting to understand, predict, and prevent such negative intergroup behaviour, social psychologists have typically focused on prejudice as the cause of discrimination (Mackie & Smith, 2016). The authors use attitude theory made evaluations with social groups as their central object. They say that theories of the antecedents of prejudice toward other groups have changed remarkably over the years, reflecting the changing preoccupations with personality, cognitive, and motivational explanations of phenomena (Mackie & Smith, 2016). The authors (Mackie & Smith, 2016) say that negative affective responses become associated with groups through a conditioning mechanism, ultimately leading to the responses becoming automatically activated as part of the mental representation of the group. This means that outgroups are negatively evaluated, regardless of circumstance (Mackie & Smith, 2016). This article is important to the study because prejudice is discussed in terms of being a reflex. It also draws the importance of how outgroups like women tend to be negatively evaluated in terms of performance and perceptions of them. This links to how women are treated differently because of their gender, which ties in with previous research by Thompson (2014).

2.3.4. Double Bind

Kessler (2014) discusses that women have been put into more leadership roles, however, no evidence is given for this claim. This is relevant to the 'double bind' because it is considered as a perceived challenge which prevents women from achieving leadership roles. Kessler makes reference to how women try to imitate male leadership styles (Kessler, 2014). Male leaders are

known to be more agentic, while women are expected to be communal, such as being compassionate. This is the 'double bind' which was coined by Gregory Bateson in 1950 (Bryman, Collinson, Grint, Jackson & Uhlbien, 2011). In the context of leadership, it refers to a double standard in the evaluation of women and men. Women must display greater evidence of skill than men to be considered equally competent leaders (Kessler, 2014). Eagly and Karau (2002) considered this concept and said that people also believe that successful managers have more agentic than communal qualities (Bryman, et al., 2011). Kessler (2014) discusses the challenges women face when they are in organisations shaped by masculine values. This relates to the perceived challenges women face and links to stereotypes which have been discussed. The foundation of the 'double bind' is based on stereotypes and prejudice (Bryman, et al., 2011).

Kessler wrote in her thesis; *'The erotic attraction of power? Authentic living – a challenge in Christian missions'* that people see 'womanhood' and 'manhood' as social constructs which suggests that the biological differences between men and women play a role in how they are viewed (Kessler, 2014). This points to the natural differences between men and women and how it has created stereotypes and prejudice. This article relates to the interpretivist paradigm of this study as social constructs and perceptions of experiences are fundamental. It also relates to RCT as the differences between men and women play a role in influencing how women are perceived in the world. In the article by Seceleanu (2017), there was discussion of how traits can be grouped into two categories: one referring to competences and the other to kindness and expression. It was concluded that men are more aggressive, - and assertive, while women are seen as kind, weak and submissive (Seceleanu, 2017). This relates to the double bind as these traits can be grouped into agentic and communal (Bryman, et al., 2011).

The article by Hoogh, Hartog, and Nevicka (2015) has to do with narcissistic leaders which this study does not focus on. However, it relates to the 'double bind' phenomenon which is a key concept of RCT. When a female leader is dominant, she is perceived to be narcissistic. It is pointed out that narcissistic female leaders lack stereotypically gender appropriate qualities and have undesirable qualities. This article relates to the 'double bind' as narcissism in male leaders is perceived as more acceptable (Hoogh, Hartog & Nevicka, 2015). The same characteristics of men and women are therefore evaluated differently. Female leaders need to lead in a certain

way and act according to their specific gender stereotypes in order to be accepted (Bryman, et al., 2011). This article aligns with the aim of the study as it discusses key concepts of RCT.

2.3.5. Leadership and RCT

According to authors Fajardo and Erasmus (2017), Bain and company have been researching for the last seven years how and why career paths differ for men and women. In their report, they look at lessons learned from past studies, -and opportunities in order to apply these lessons to address gender disparity in the South African workplace. This literature is relevant as it is in a South African context. The study utilised for their report was conducted over a seven-year period by a reputable company, Bain, which shows that the results are reliable. In 2017, 31 percent of South African companies had no female representation in senior leadership roles and only ten percent of South African CEOs were women (Fajardo & Erasmus, 2017).

The authors (Fajardo & Erasmus, 2017) found that the South African Constitution and the Employment Equity Act aims to promote women's participation in the private and public sectors. Although these legislations are in place, SA women still perceive challenges within the workplace. Fajardo and Erasmus asked the question: 'Why are so few women reaching senior leadership positions in South Africa?' (Fajardo & Erasmus, 2017). The results found under this report add value to this study as they explore the perceived challenges women face in achieving senior leadership roles, specifically in SA. The above question is not included in the focus group questions. In the report, the authors share current perceptions of gender equity in the South African workplace and the obstacles to success that women need to overcome on a daily basis in order to succeed, which is relevant to this study (Fajardo & Erasmus, 2017).

The authors' research found that South African women are just as determined as men to reach senior leadership positions (Fajardo & Erasmus, 2017). Their research found that 80 percent of senior management showed that they were convinced of the benefits of gender equality (Fajardo & Erasmus, 2017). This shows that companies within SA find the topic of gender equality relevant. This report discusses gender equality and the challenges that come with it. This links to the research problem and contributes to understanding the perceived challenges that create gender disparity in the workplace. This points out that women are still perceiving challenges in achieving senior leadership roles. This shows that this topic is still relevant for SA.

2.3.6. *Glass Ceiling*

Authors Behery, Al-Nasser, & Parakandi (2017) examine the effect of leadership on women's career paths in the Middle East, with special attention to the 'glass ceiling' effect. Their paper reports on the findings of a study examining the relationship between leadership styles and women's career success (Behery et al., 2017). For the purpose of this study, leadership styles have been omitted, but the focus on the 'glass ceiling' is relevant. The 'glass ceiling' phrase was first introduced in the 1980s (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2007; Mullins, 2005). It is mostly located above middle-level management positions, therefore, preventing women from acquiring higher leadership positions in their organisations (Behery et al., 2017). The term 'glass ceiling' represents the hidden barriers which obstruct women and minorities from climbing the corporate ladder to acquire leadership and senior management positions. The authors conducted an empirical study from 14 business sectors. They found a significant negative relationship between the 'glass ceiling' effect and women's career paths which shows that it can be perceived as a challenge for women. Although organisations around the world have witnessed a significant increase in the role of women in the workforce, their share in leadership positions is still under-represented. This shows a disparity in women's career advancement developed by gender bias and inequality (Behery et al., 2017). The 'glass ceiling' is based on gender bias and remains the most challenging problem women face in their professional lives. This shows how important the 'glass ceiling' is as a perceived challenge for women in achieving senior leadership roles. It is also a key concept of RCT. Studies demonstrate that men have a better chance than women of climbing up the organisational ladder and being promoted to leadership positions (Behery et al., 2017). This article discusses the development of perceived challenges for women and why they exist. It also explains how these affect women in achieving senior leadership roles within the workplace. This article can help solve the research problem by discussing the gender disparity caused by stereotypes and prejudice towards women, and which have created the 'glass ceiling'.

Authors Patton and Haynes (2014) believe that the discourse surrounding the 'glass ceiling' has been present in both academic and non-academic literature since 1978. They say that the 'glass ceiling' metaphor is used to communicate the reality that, despite the entry of women into nearly all fields traditionally occupied by men, women remain virtually non-existent in elite leadership positions (Patton & Haynes, 2014). Women continue to be underrepresented in

corporate leadership roles, which aligns with the problem of this research and demonstrates, that this is still an issue. For the purpose of this study, ethnicity and racial factors are omitted. Patton and Haynes (2014) discuss a study conducted by Elacqua, Beehr, Hansen, & Webster (2009) which examined female managers' perceptions of workplace advancement barriers. The author's Patton and Haynes (2014) show that Elacqua (2009) argued mentorship—or the lack thereof—played a sizeable role in employees' perceptions of differential treatment. The authors contend that the 'glass ceiling' metaphor is no longer sufficient for describing those institutional inequalities that women face (Patton & Haynes, 2014). The relevance of this literature is that it shows how widespread the 'glass ceiling' still is and the issues it brings to the workplace. The 'glass ceiling' is considered a perceived challenge women face in the workplace which prevents them from achieving senior leadership roles.

2.3.7. Conclusion of Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to describe the key concepts of RCT. It is also to deduce how these contribute to the perceived challenges women face in achieving senior leadership roles at the company being studied. This literature review addressed the research problem that there is a gender disparity in the workplace and gender inequality is still an issue. This review is grouped into key concepts of RCT which are considered as the themes for interpreting the findings. Important considerations identified is that, according to Eagly and Karau (2002), women have achieved increased access to supervisory and middle management roles but that it is rare for them to be in elite positions. The foundation of this is due to stereotypes which have created perceived challenges for women - such as the 'double bind' - and relates to the research title (Ryan & Haslam, 2007). After the analysis of literature for RCT and its concepts, it is concluded that it is suitable for this study as it describes gender stereotypes pertaining to women and leadership. It also discusses the perceived challenges women face in achieving senior leadership roles. This literature review gives insight and understanding which will solve the research problem by addressing the key concepts of RCT.

2.4. Conceptualisation

Leadership: Leadership is a process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others, towards the achievement of a goal (Kruse, 2013). Leadership is an important part of RCT as it links prejudice against women in the workplace to how it affects them achieving leadership

positions. This links to the research topic as the focus is on women achieving senior leadership roles.

Social Role Theory: assumes that gender differences are a result of perceived gender roles, gender socialisation and socio-structural power differentials (Schmitt, et al., 2017). It proposes both distal and proximal causes for men and women behaving differently under some circumstances, and similarly under others (Eagly & Koenig, 2016). This theory formed the foundation for RCT and was coined by the same author, Alice Eagly in 1987. This links to the topic as RCT is the core theory.

Stereotypes: characteristics imposed upon groups of people because of their race, nationality, and/or sexual orientation. These characteristics tend to be oversimplifications of a group, but are not necessarily representative of all people within that group (Nittle, 2018). They form the base of RCT and are an important perceived challenge women face in the workplace.

Prejudice: when social perceivers hold a stereotype about a social group that's incongruent with the characteristics that were thought to be needed for success in certain classes of social roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This is a key concept of RCT and is a perceived challenge women face in the workplace.

Double Bind: a phenomenon when women are expected to be communal in order to be a successful leader (Bryman, et al., 2011). This is seen as a barrier which hinders women's advancement into senior leadership roles and is a key concept of RCT.

Glass Ceiling: implies that gender (or other) disadvantages are stronger at the top of the hierarchy than at lower levels and that these disadvantages become worse later in a person's career (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, & Vanneman 2001). There is evidence that women encounter a 'glass ceiling' or barrier to advancement into the executive ranks of organisations (Bryman, et al., 2011). Is a concept of the RCT and is seen as a challenge to achieving senior roles.

In conclusion, this section identified the application of a theoretical model together with identifying previous literature sources, creating a foundation for understanding the perceived

challenges women face in the workplace. The analysis of the literature identified six themes to be utilised in the analysis of the research data.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The following section identifies the research method, research paradigm, design, population and sample, and how the researcher conducted data collection and analysis.

3.1. Research Paradigm

A paradigm is made up of assumptions, or beliefs about rudimentary aspects of reality, which establishes a certain worldview (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). The aim of this study was to understand human behaviour and to gain in-depth understandings of these behaviours. It looked at integrating human interest and sees reality as social constructs through language, consciousness and shared meanings. This required a lot of face-time with participants in order to appreciate how they experienced daily life and to understand what was meaningful and relevant to them. This was why the interpretivist paradigm was chosen (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014).

The idea of objective knowledge and truth is challenged under this paradigm, as facts are seen as fluid and embedded within a meaning system and are dependent on people's interpretation of information (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). It is believed that reality is a social construction and is dependent on the meanings that people ascribe to their own experiences and interactions with others, which depends on culture and experiences (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). RCT discussed the perception people have towards women, which linked back to the way people perceive their own realities and how they have been constructed (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The basis of this study was that people's perceptions have been moulded by the expectations of society and its traditional ideologies have shaped the way people see the world in terms of stereotypes (Johnson & Smith, 2018). The paradigm believes that reality is a social construction and dependent on meanings people ascribe from their own experiences (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). This was the link between the study and the paradigm.

Epistemology refers to the assumption that something is seen as knowledge when it feels right to those being studied. Knowledge was collected only when it was seen as such and when it felt right for the study. The assumption here was that knowledge was explained as more subjective and participatory (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014).

Ontology refers to the assumption that reality is fluid and subjective, and is created by human interaction (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). This study looked at the belief that people create

their own realities based on their own experiences. This was a nominalist stance and the respondent's internal and subjective experiences were important. This study looked at gathering information about participants' personal experiences which means that there were multiple realities to this study (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014).

Meta-Theory refers to the approach investigation and analysis of information takes and assumes that theory should tell a story in order to create an in-depth understanding of other people's realities. It dictates a qualitative approach and described how information was collected and analysed (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). Information in this study was collected through a focus group and data was analysed using thematic analysis. The link here is because the study was qualitative.

Methodology refers to the assumption that subjective, qualitative methods should be used (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). Qualitative methods measure the understanding of certain phenomena. This was discussed in detail in the next section as it was used for collection and analysis. The researcher needed to be empathetically and intersubjectively immersed in the research.

Axiology refers to the assumption that uniqueness needs to be valued in terms of an individual's behaviours (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). For this study, the theory was first examined, which was highly valued, and then the application was next examined. The respondent's personal experiences and honesty were valued. Because of the qualitative nature of this study, understanding of concepts was valued, and concern for women and gender equality was valued by the researcher.

3.2. Research Design

Timeframe: two weeks and cross-sectional.

The conceptual approach of this study was qualitative. This deals with the underlying qualities of subjective experiences and meanings associated with social phenomena and related to the topic because perceptions are based on subjective experiences and meanings which come about through social situations (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). Qualitative data collection methods allow for richness and depth of data dealing with experiences. In qualitative research, the researcher captures detailed descriptions to convey the feelings of the inner lives of the people. This was to understand their subjective experiences and to see things through their

eyes (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). This approach was used because understanding the subjective experiences and meanings of people's perceptions were key to this study. These perceptions were social constructs which cannot be measured quantitatively. This related to the paradigm of the study because understanding human behaviour was the aim. Key concepts of RCT, such as prejudice and stereotypes, are based on social constructs and on people's subjective experiences.

Deductive theorising was used in this study because certain concepts needed to be tested and conceptualised. It allowed the testing of an existing theory, RCT, and was based on its findings (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). A set of theoretical assumptions, such as prejudice exists between men and women, and the concepts such as stereotypes and 'double bind' drove the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. These were some of the themes upon which the focus group questions were based and the findings analysed (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014).

This study was descriptive as it aimed to describe a situation, problem, and phenomenon, namely the perceptions of women in achieving senior leadership roles. The study provided information about RCT and drew comparisons between the findings of the theory along with the results of the study (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). This was a cross-sectional study because it looked at observing a phenomenon. It occurred at a specific point in time as the focus group had a set date. It was a non-experimental and non-empirical study as it looked to theory. This study was trans-disciplinary as it crossed the business and social disciplines.

3.3. Population

3.3.1. Target and Accessible Population

The population is 'the total group of people or entities from which information is required' (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). The population of the study was the female senior leaders in management divisions such as finance, marketing, and training at the medium-sized Durban company studied. Population parameters refer to the nature of people in terms of size and characteristics (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). The population parameters were women who are in senior leadership roles within the Durban company. Age limits and ethnic groups were not considered within this study as they were not relevant.

The target population was everyone or everything that fell within the population parameters (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). For the study, this included women in senior leadership roles in the

previously specified departments at the Durban company. The accessible population referred to the section of the population that was actually included within the study (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). There was access to six female senior leaders at the Durban company.

3.4. Sample and Sampling Method

3.4.1. Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this study was the people - specifically the women - in senior leadership roles at the Durban company studied, along with their perceptions and experiences.

3.4.2. Non-probability Sampling

Non-probability sampling was used. This is a qualitative approach which involves a selection of specific participants and relies on the subjective judgment which was obtained verbally (Stephanie, 2016). This method was cost and time effective and was used because the sample size of the study was small. A disadvantage of this technique was that it was difficult to tell how well it represented the entire population (Stephanie, 2016). The type of non-probability sampling that was chosen for this study was purposive. This is when the sample is chosen based on the knowledge of the population and the study itself (Stephanie, 2016). The sample for the focus group was six women in senior leadership roles at the Durban company. This ensured that the discussion was controlled by the researcher, as focus group discussions can easily be diverted from the set of specific questions.

3.5. Data Collection Method

3.5.1. Focus Group

A focus group is a gathering of people who have been deliberately selected to participate in a planned discussion intended to elicit certain responses about a particular topic (Devault, 2018). The topic of this study's focus group was the perceived challenges women face in achieving senior leadership roles at the company. The focus group allowed participants to interact and influence each other during the session, which brought different ideas and perspectives. Focus groups are designed to identify the feelings and thinking of participants. A disadvantage of the focus group was that participants were from various senior leadership positions and these differences might have caused dishonesty in participant's responses (Devault, 2018). To prevent this, a comfortable environment was created, the focus group was confidential and the participants were instructed to be as honest as possible. The reason a focus group was chosen

for this study was that of its qualitative nature and its ability to describe how people felt. This method required between six to twelve participants. For this study, the participants were contacted by a senior director of the Durban company whom the researcher emailed. This single person coordinated the necessary participants, venue, date, and time. An assistant moderator and question schedule were used in the data collection method. See appendix for email, questions schedule and confidentiality agreement.

3.6. Data Analysis Method

3.6.1. Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data (Maguire, & Delahunt, 2017). Thematic analysis pays attention to the meanings of phenomena, which aligned with the purpose of this study. It helped create an understanding of information as symbolic phenomena which linked to the interpretivist paradigm (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014).

This was able to provide insight into the intentions of the participants (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). The process involved four steps:

Step 1: Preparing the data.

The researcher transcribed the interview to capture all the responses from participants. The notes taken by the assistant moderator were transcribed using *Microsoft Word*.

Step 2: Coding data.

Deductive thematic analysis was conducted of the transcribed text. This means that the specific research questions were addressed and the data were analysed with this in mind (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Conducting a deductive thematic analysis is when a conceptual framework is derived from a general theory (RCT) and was used to identify the concepts within the text. The data was analysed and grouped into chunks and then assigned to the broader themes of related meaning. These included the key concepts of RCT, such as stereotypes and prejudice (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). The process of grouping data into themes is coding and was applied to the data of the focus group. Every code was defined so that themes were identified when analysing the text.

Step 3: Establishing themes.

In this study, the themes were conceptualised and then identified in the text through coding. These included: leadership and RCT, stereotypes, prejudice, SRT, the 'double bind' and the 'glass ceiling'. The goal was to provide a detailed description of the social reality in the texts which aligned with the interpretivist paradigm of the study (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). The reason thematic analysis was chosen was that it can describe, identify themes and patterns of social realities. Themes were used as they looked beyond what was said, and examined the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations that were theorised as informing the semantic content of the data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

Step 4: Interpreting data and drawing conclusions.

The themes mentioned in step three were used to interpret the findings of the focus groups. The findings and focus group questions were grouped into these themes and presented in table format. From these findings, conclusions were drawn.

This section focused on the methodology and research design to identify how the researcher assessed the qualitative research approach and the process used to collect and analyse the findings in order to ensure the trustworthiness of results. The themes mentioned have been conceptualised.

4. PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

To follow is an interpretation of the data gathered from the focus group. This data has been presented in a table format. Each question has been addressed in terms of the research problem, question, objective and literature review. It also explains how the trustworthiness of the study was upheld.

4.1. Presentation and Interpretation of Findings

Not every participant had something to say for each question and so not every participant was considered at each question. When transcribing the text and analysing the notes, parts of the discussion that was irrelevant were omitted as it was tangential to the actual question. This was only when a participant's answer did not relate to the question or topic. The researcher's predisposition towards this research was that it would likely be that gender disparity would be discovered at the company because of the literature analysed and the stated research problem.

4.1.1. Themes: Stereotypes, double bind and leadership

It was found under question one that gender disparity was experienced by two of the participants on their journey and this showed that it is still an issue. The knowledge gap was not necessarily addressed by this question as the findings seem to be split. As this question related to the participant's overall leadership journey, it cannot be specifically analysed for the company studied. Three out of the six participants have experienced challenges in their leadership journey because of their gender.

Table 1: Focus Group Question 1

Question 1: Describe your journey to becoming a leader.	
Participant 1	<i>"Journey has not been easy but it has nothing to do with being a woman."</i> Balancing her work and family life was difficult.
Participant 2	Worked in a Human Resource (HR) position at a different company which was female dominated.
Participant 3	Had a leadership role at a different company where she was given a false sense of leadership.
Participant 4	Felt that gender has never affected her role at the company but she has been subjected to gender stereotypes throughout her journey at other organisations.
Participant 5	Worked for the company for years. Her journey was not easy, but not because she was a woman.
Participant 6	The journey was not more challenging because she is a woman.

Three out of the six participants felt that their gender has never had an effect on their journey as a woman, although each has faced certain challenges. Participant two was in a stereotypical woman's job, Human Resources (HR) (Candido, 2017). Some participants have had a negative experience while working in a male-dominated company or working for a male. Participant four has experienced gender stereotypes in her journey but not while at the company being studied. The quote for participant two was to show how strong this participant felt that her journey and its challenges had nothing to do with being a woman. However, it did contradict her next statement about how difficult it is to balance her work and family life.

Participant four has experienced gender stereotypes in her journey from family to becoming a leader. This aligned with the literature from Secleanu (2017), that women face stereotypes when achieving leadership roles. Participant two was once in an HR position where her leader, a male put all the work onto her shoulders. HR positions are stereotypically for women, according to literature by Kessler (2014). This related to the 'double bind' phenomenon which states that women exhibit communal traits which make them more suitable candidates for positions such as HR (Kessler, 2014). Participant three was in a leadership role where she felt that she was respected as a leader. She felt however, that she had been misled into believing that she was a leader at the company which was male-dominated. This aligned with literature from Fajardo and Erasmus (2017) which shows how many companies are male-dominated. In 2017, 31 percent of South African companies had no female representation in senior leadership roles and only ten percent of South African CEOs were women. This aligned with the literature of RCT, which states that it is rare for women to be in elite positions (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Question six showed that gender disparity could not be determined. It was found, however, that the knowledge gap is present as there was no way of knowing if the men and women earned the same amount in the same positions at the company studied. A challenge for the participants was that they felt that they had difficulty demanding the pay they want during job interviews. They felt that men were more easily able to do this.

Table 2: Focus Group Question 6

Question 6: Why do you feel there is a difference in salaries between men and women, even if they occupy the same position?	
Participant 1	Doesn't think it's a relevant factor as she had never experienced this.
Participant 2	Believes that there is a difference in women and men when going for interviews. She felt that men are more likely to make demands in terms of money.

The participants believed that pay differences are not relevant at the company studied. They did not know whether they were earning any less than their male counterparts, but they did acknowledge that this difference exists in many companies. They felt that it doesn't exist in their company. According to the participants, all agreed that gender is not an influencer of how much they get paid at the company studied. This indicated that the research problem of the knowledge gap was still present because the information about payment between genders was not known at the company studied.

4.1.2. Themes: Stereotypes, SRT, and, leadership and RCT

Question two clearly demonstrated that gender disparity was evident, as three out of the six participants felt that a challenge in their leadership role was because they are women. This was because of comments made by strangers, friends, and family. These women felt that the challenges they have faced within the company studied were created by their own expectations of themselves. One participant felt that she tends to doubt herself and this became a challenge for her in terms of her work.

Table 3: Focus Group Question 2

Question 2: As women, what have some of the challenges been in achieving a leadership role?	
Participant 1	Told a story about how she battled with other women from a previous job. She was put into a high leadership role and at the same time found out she was pregnant. Not disadvantaged or ostracised but rather congratulated by her boss. She felt that because she was pregnant, it would affect her career in a negative way.
Participant 2	Questions why she can't say "no" to doing things. She felt she can't say no because she always had to prove herself in the workplace.
Participant 3	She drives large taxis for staff training purposes. Men frequently questioned whether she was able to drive these large vehicles. On one occasion, not from company.
Participant 4	Felt that people in her life expected her to have a stereotypical woman's job such as HR. Her biggest challenge was trying not to doubt herself.
Participant 6	She spoke about "mother guilt" when she doesn't spend enough time with her children.

A number of the participants felt that they put their own pressures onto themselves and that they create their own expectations which can become a challenge for them. For example, participant two was very aware of the fact that she struggles to say "no" because she is trying to prove something. Some of the gender stereotypes came from outside the company, from family or strangers. Only one participant out of the six felt that they are judged at the company depending, on what time they come to work and what time they leave. The fact that they are women has played a role in how some of the participants have been treated at other companies. A note to be made and which was implied by the participants is that the organisational culture of the company doesn't encourage stereotypes or prejudice. Participant one felt that there is no discrimination and participant four felt that there are no specific challenges created by gender inequality at the company.

Participant four felt that there is, in general, a perception that women should stay home with children and be housewives, this was not specific to the company studied. This is backed up by literature from Berdahl and Moon (2013) that there is a stereotype that women are expected to take on the majority of caregiving responsibilities. Participant two believed that balancing

work and home life has been the biggest challenge in her journey. She felt that as, a mother, there are additional pressures that need to be dealt with. The literature by Behery (2017) states that women don't progress easily in terms of their career because of their gender as it can be argued that having children adds additional pressures.

Another article that contradicts the findings from this focus group is that of Patton and Haynes (2014), which states that women remain non-existent in elite leadership positions. This aligned with the literature of RCT, that the incongruence between masculinised task requirements and gender stereotypes pacify women's leadership development (Eagly & Karau, 2002). These six female leaders at the company all agreed that their expectations of how much work they need to do have nothing to do with their gender. An experience by participant one showed that being a mother doesn't affect the perceptions of others at the company being studied. This contradicted literature from Berdahl and Moon (2013), who believe that mothers are especially disadvantaged compared to women without children. Participant two felt like she can't say "no" and that she constantly has to prove herself at work and in family life. It can be inferred that this is a result of stereotypes in society that women are not competent enough to be in leadership positions and tend to doubt themselves (Kessler, 2014).

Question five did not find gender inequality in terms of the number of females in leadership roles at the company studied. This added to the knowledge gap that more women are in leadership roles at the company studied. There were not many perceived challenges for women at the company as there are more females than males in leadership positions. Achieving leadership positions at the company studied did not seem to be challenging for women working there.

Table 4: Focus Group Question 5

Question 5: In your view, are there still fewer females in leadership roles at the company? If so, why do you think that this?	
Participant 5	She said there have always been more females than males at the company since she has been there; didn't give a reason.
Participant 6	Felt that there are more women than men in leadership positions at the company.

There are more females than males at the company, however, when asked why there was uncertainty. The researcher then asked whether they thought it could be industry or culture

related and participants agreed that this could be a reason. At the company studied, all participants agreed that there were more women in leadership positions than men. This was in conflict with the literature by Agars (2004) which states that women and men are not equally represented in management, particularly when examining higher levels. This finding was also in conflict with literature from Fajardo and Erasmus (2017) who stated that in 2017, 31 percent of South African companies had no female representation in senior leadership roles. This finding was in conflict with the literature of RCT which states that women have achieved increased access to supervisory and middle management roles but that it is rare for them to be in elite positions (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

4.1.2. Themes: Leadership and RCT, and prejudice

The expectations of the participants were perceived to be no different from the expectations of their male colleagues. This showed that there was no gender disparity at the company studied in terms of what was expected from these women. Therefore the expectations of the women were not seen as a perceived challenge for achieving senior leadership roles at the company studied. However, certain expectations came from the participants themselves and were seen as challenges. These challenges were their own thoughts and criticisms and did not align with the literature review.

Table 5: Focus Group Question 3

Question 3: What have the expectations in your roles as women been?	
Participant 3	When a women filled a leadership role previously held by a prominent male leader, participant three had thoughts about how it was going to work.
Participant 4	Father and mother pushed to her to work hard, but did not push her brother. This participant agrees times have changed and that the expectations we have depended on the type of person you are.
Participant 6	She felt that the expectations should remain the same, regardless of gender. She believes that you don't have to act like a man to be perceived as successful; you just need to be a good leader.

It was found that a challenge for these participants was their own thoughts and criticisms. They felt that, when women are put into male roles, there are expectations and perceptions of what is expected of them, but that these come more from themselves. However, this was contradicted by participant three who stated that she might have had doubts as to how a woman

might fill a role held by a male. Some participants felt that these perceptions and expectations came from the influencers in their life such as family, friends, and culture and that they were developed through their experiences. This related to literature by Thompson (2004) on SRT suggesting that the natural differences between genders still play a role in how they are treated. It was agreed by the entire group that, when women are put into leadership roles, their own perceptions and expectations are more important than those of others.

The participants sometimes felt that they had to imitate the previous leader in order to meet certain expectations held by others. This contradicts the statement that their own expectations of themselves are more important than the expectations of others. This could allude to stereotypes, as participant four felt that there is a stereotype that women need to work harder than men. Literature by Hoogh (2015) states that the same characteristics between men and women are evaluated differently based on gender. The social standing of women influences the perceptions of female leaders and their effectiveness, according to literature by Thompson (2004). For example, a participant filled a role previously held by a male leader, and at first thought about what might be expected of her because of the fact that the previous leader had been a man, but also believed that her style, while different, was just as successful.

Question nine showed that gender disparity was not an issue at the company studied, however, the advice given adds to the knowledge gap. The advice was to be themselves, rather than considering it to be more difficult in the workplace because they are women. The biggest perceived challenge for the participants was to put less pressure on themselves in terms of their own expectations. This related to the previous comment made by a participant that she finds it difficult to say “no”.

Table 6: Focus Group Question 9

Question 9: What advice would you give prospective female leaders?	
Participant 1	Being recognised and acknowledged for achievements. When women are supported, they can be more loyal than men.
Participant 3	Be true to herself. Mistakes are okay - in fact, they are very important.
Participant 4	Opportunities should be taken.
Participant 5	Stop putting so much pressure on oneself.
Participant 6	Be yourself, be authentic and people will tend to follow you more.

The biggest takeaway from this question was for women to be genuine and to stop putting so much pressure on themselves. The participants wanted to be acknowledged for their achievements and they believed that opportunities should always be taken. The advice given by the group was that a person needs to find her own personal leadership style. Leadership styles were, however, omitted from the study. Participant one said that women should support other women and their successes. This aligned to literature by Johnson and Smith (2018) which states that, when women are mentored, especially by a man, they perform better and are more effective leaders, especially when they are seen as equal.

4.1.3. Themes: SRT, glass ceiling, stereotypes and double bind

Question four showed that there has been some gender inequality found at the company studied. There was an indication, by one participant, that women were expected to do more, and another felt judged because her characteristics as a leader were criticised. Three out of the six participants described feeling that there were different expectations for them because of their gender. Their perceptions were, however, not as extreme when compared to previous literature. The perceived gender inequality at the company was not seen as a perceived challenge by the participants.

Table 7: Focus Group Question 4

Question 4: Does the fact that you are woman play a role in how you have been treated in the workplace?	
Participant 1	She felt that women are not different because of their gender, but should rather think in terms of what they can bring to the table because of their skills and experiences. She felt women shouldn't try to be like men.
Participant 2	Felt that women need to prove they are good enough to 'make it', believes that being a woman and how they are treated depends on the type of industry.
Participant 3	She is the only female voice in her team at the company, and she felt privileged being in a male team.
Participant 4	Had a situation where she was judged based on a trait at the company.. People thought she should be more outspoken because she was a leader.
Participant 6	Someone made a comment when she stepped into her current leadership position that was previously filled by a man. The comment was that she has got big shoes to fill, her comment back, "Glad that I don't wear a size 8 men's shoes then".

The participants did not want to be seen as different based on their gender. Participant one felt that the company has succeeded in doing this. She felt that leadership style is a more important factor to consider. One participant felt that being a woman and how women are treated depends on the type of industry they are in. A participant made the comment that she doesn't know why she felt different being in a leadership team where she was the only female voice. Even though she was not treated unequally, she still felt this way because of the underlying expectations and the social roles society has created. Being judged based on characteristics and gender was an issue for two of the participants, where one was told she was quite withdrawn for her leadership role. The other participant's experience was that the expectations from others for her role were compared to the expectations of a previous male leader who had occupied her role. The quote used for participant six was to show that she felt she should not be compared to the previous leader because they both had their own skills to bring to the table.

Participant three felt like it was a privilege being the only female voice in her team. The reason for this can be inferred from the natural differences between genders, which cause them to act differently and which have led to gender stereotypes. This aligned with the literature by Schmitt et al (2017) who discusses personality and gender differences. Participant two felt that, as women, they needed to prove that they were good enough for a specific role. This aligned with literature from Behery et al (2017) who discussed the presence of the 'glass ceiling' which has been identified as one of the most influential barriers to women's advancement to leadership positions. Participant two felt that it also depends on the type of industry one is in.

Participant four spoke of an experience she had where she was criticised for being too withdrawn for her leadership role. This aligned with literature from Kessler (2014) on the 'double bind' which states that, in order to be perceived as a successful leader, one needs to show traits such as aggression, which is more common in men. Participant six spoke of her experience in filling the role of a previous male leader, where there were certain expectations of her and where she had doubted whether she could meet them. This refers to literature from Thompson (2014) who suggests that gender roles are socially constructed based on historical differences in contributions to the economy. This was relevant to this situation as the history of the previous male leader had contributed a lot to the company. This also aligned with literature from Agars (2004), which states that gender stereotypes influence judgments and evaluations such that, ultimately, women and men are treated differently.

Question seven found that company excluded women from golf days which was seen as a stereotype that women don't play golf. This could be perceived as a challenge as golf days are seen as networking systems where people are able to build relationships.

Table 8: Focus Group Question 7

Question 7: Could you give any examples of situations at the company where you felt you were being treated differently because you are a woman?	
Participant 6	When golf days are organised the women are always excluded.

The only relevant finding was that the golf days for employees or clients hosted by the company excluded women. The exclusion of women from golf days aligned with the literature by Schmitt et al (2017) who assumes that gender differences are a result of the perceived gender roles and gender socialisation. This aligned with literature from Seceleanu (2017) which states that social categorisation and social perception lead to the development of gender stereotypes and prejudice. In this case, the gender stereotype was that women don't play golf.

Question eight found that gender inequality was not the biggest challenge for the participants at the company studied. It did, however, highlight some unexpected perceived challenges which added to the knowledge gap. The participants agreed that their biggest challenge was themselves and their own expectations and criticisms.

Table 9: Focus Group Question 8

Question 8: What has been your biggest challenge in achieving your senior leadership position?	
Participant 1	Balancing work and family life.
Participant 3	Being too critical of themselves and acknowledging that their best is enough.
Participant 6	That recognising that relying on others should not be seen as a weakness.

The biggest challenges for the participants was finding a balance and not being so hard on themselves in terms of their own expectations. No reference was made to being a woman and how challenging it can be in the workplace because of their gender.

As the biggest challenge for the majority of the group was balancing work and family life, especially for women who have children, this could be seen as a perceived challenge.

According to literature by Berdahl and Moon (2013), there is an expectation for women to be able to balance both the role of caretaker and provider. Unequal consequences that occur can be attributed to stereotypes about women's original roles as caretakers. Women's roles have changed and they are now filling the role of caretakers and providers, which brings new challenges (Berdahl & Moon, 2013). This is in conflict with the literature of Patton and Haynes (2014) which states that the biggest challenge for women is the 'glass ceiling'. This was not true for the participants at the company studied. The biggest challenge according to the majority of the group was balancing both these roles and the expectations that come with them. This aligned with literature by Thompson (2004) which states that SRT holds that, regardless of early socialization, women can learn behaviours associated with the provider role through participating in social experiences once reserved for men.

Question ten found that the most important aspect did not relate to gender inequality. This was unexpected but did add to the gap in knowledge. The perceived challenge for the participants were being true to themselves, working hard and respecting one another. This did not align with the perceived challenges discussed under RCT.

Table 10: Focus Group Question 10

Question 10: What do you feel has been the most important aspect of this discussion?	
Participant 1	Be happy for someone else's success.
Participant 2	Made the comment that she 'never wakes up and thinks, ah damn I am a woman, today is going to be a tough day at work, because of that fact'.
Participant 6	Know that you will always be challenged and be okay with that. Be yourself and be real to others.

The participants felt that being themselves was important and that being happy and true to others and expecting to be challenged was the key takeaway. The reason a paraphrased quote was given from participant two was because it summed up perfectly how these women felt at the company studied: they did not see their gender as a challenge for achieving their senior leadership roles at the company. Participant two stated that she had experienced no gender stereotypes at the company. According to the participants, the most important aspect of the discussion was that each person has their own challenges and that the barriers which are

typical to many companies, such as the 'glass ceiling', are not present at the company studied. This contradicted literature by Behery et al., (2017).

4.2. Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, the overarching term used for validity and reliability is 'trustworthiness'. It is not possible to repeat a qualitative study and get the same results, as results are not objectively measurable because they are unique to the answers given by each participant and their experiences (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). Trustworthiness is divided into credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014).

Credibility refers to the accuracy with which the data generated from participants was interpreted. This was ensured by spending a significant amount of time with the participants included in the study in order to get a better understanding of them and to gain deeper insights into their lives (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). For example, before the focus group commenced, a tea was held at the company to get to know the participants before the discussion. These findings have credibility as the data gathered was accurate and depicted what the participants said. Well-established research methods and a research design that fitted the research question were used. The literature from the review was academically sourced. There were frequent debriefing sessions between the researcher and supervisor, as well as the researcher's reflective notes of the focus group.

Transferability is the facility with which the results of the study can be applied to similar situations and generate similar results. This meant that the focus group was discussed in detail in order for other researchers to be able to generate similar results. For example, data collection and analysis were discussed, while the questions were attached under the appendix. This allowed for generalisation (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). Transferability was ensured by using participants who were typical to the context being studied as they were all women in senior leadership positions. The context for the findings was discussed and understanding of the context being studied was achieved through purposive sampling.

Dependability refers to the quality of the process of integration between the data collection method and data analysed. The study was based on valid and reliable data collection and analysis methods which formed part of the research process (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). Information was gathered from reliable sources such as *Google Scholar* and *Ebscohost*.

Dependability was ensured through the research design and implementation. Documentation of the research analysis process was captured so that other researchers can see the decisions made by the researcher.

Confirmability is how well the data collected supports the findings and interpretation of these findings (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). For example, the research process for this study was described in full in order for others to scrutinise the research design (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). To reduce research bias and ensure the confirmability of the findings, the researcher's own predisposition was stated. Contextualised understanding has been given for each quote that has been included.

In conclusion, the above section interpreted and presented the findings from the focus group according to the concepts of RCT. The trustworthiness of the study was also assessed. An explanation was provided as to how it was upheld by the researcher.

5. CONCLUSION

In this section, the appropriate conclusion to address the research objective, question and research problem was made. The findings have been assessed with ethical considerations and limitations. The anticipated contribution was offered, as were recommendations for future research.

5.1. Conclusion to Findings

Through analysing the findings, it was found that some participants experienced gender stereotypes while others did not. It was pointed out that the perception of an environment that is inequality free was industry specific. There were only a few examples of stereotypes found specifically at the company studied, such as the exclusion of women from golf days. There was some alignment with the findings and the literature analysed, such as Secleanu (2017), who states that women face stereotypes when achieving leadership roles. Some of the literature was rejected, such as Berdahl and Moon (2013), who believe that mothers are especially disadvantaged compared to women without children. The participants felt that their gender was not a perceived challenge for them at the company studied. One participant felt like she could not say “no” and that she constantly has to prove herself. It can be inferred that this was a result of stereotypes in society that women are not competent enough to be in leadership positions and they tend to doubt themselves (Kessler, 2014). This showed that the underlying expectations of society still play a role in how women perceive themselves.

The research question was answered but not in the way that the researcher anticipated. For example, the perceived challenges faced by the majority of these women in achieving their leadership roles were their own expectations, pressures, and criticisms. These perceived challenges were described under the research findings and it can be concluded that the research objective was achieved. The research problem of inequality in the workplace for South African women cannot be entirely solved by this research alone. The knowledge gap was solved as it was found that more women than men are in leadership roles at the company studied. However, the difference in payment between the genders was not determined. The company studied did not have many incidents of gender inequality.

It was found that these participants did not consider their gender to be a hindrance to their advancement for senior leadership roles. The prediction of the literature on RCT, that women

are less likely than men to develop as leaders, was rejected. This can be said because these participants felt that being a woman at the company studied did not play a role in their achieving their senior leadership roles.

This study was successful as it addressed the research problem, research question, and objective. To fully address the issue of gender inequality in South African companies, further research needs to be done. Self-inflicted pressures and expectations along with self-doubt are considered perceived challenges for women at the company studied. This can be seen as a result of society's stereotypes and prejudice such as the 'double bind', discussed in the literature by Kessler (2014).

In conclusion, the literature of RCT stated that prejudice against women was evident in the workplace. In addition, literature from Eagly and Carli (2007) believed that a labyrinth was an apt depiction of the perceived challenges women face in their professional endeavours. Although, this and other literature points to women experiencing perceived challenges in achieving leadership roles, the findings at the company studied, rejected this. It can be inferred that a potential reason for this was because the company studied was the exception, due to its culture and industry.

5.2. Ethical Considerations

Ethics are moral or professional codes of conduct which set the standards for attitudes and behaviour. In research, ethics are important because they have the potential to affect all stakeholders in the research (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014).

5.2.1. Participants

There are ethical concerns that need to be adhered to in order for the study to have integrity. An ethical clearance letter was given from the IIE and is attached under the appendix. When conducting research that involves people, permission from each participant is required in order to do the research. For the focus group of this study, each participant signed a permission form to be a part of this study and a permission form to allow for audio recording. These forms ensured each participant confidentiality, as their names were not recorded. Each participant was referred to as participant 1, 2, 3...respectively. The researcher and assistant moderator signed a confidentiality agreement which ensured that the assistant moderator cannot talk about the focus group to anyone. A gatekeeper's letter was signed by a director to ensure that

this study could be conducted at the company. Each participant participated voluntarily and was not coerced. The participants were fully briefed about the nature of the study and where the data would be used (IIE Post Graduate Policy, 2017).

5.2.2. Researcher

The researcher did not falsify information in order to get the desired outcome or to save her reputation. To falsify information means to deliberately change or fabricate data (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). This was safeguarded against by recording the focus group so that the necessary person could check the information to see that falsification had not happened. The researcher did not distort the results. This means that the researcher did not deliberately emphasise certain aspects over others of equal significance. (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). The researcher did not emphasise any parts of the questions. On occasion, the researcher did ask a question which arose at the moment, but still had relevance to the study. The researcher ensured that no bias was present when collecting, analysing and interpreting the results of the study. Bias is the expectation of achieving a particular result (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). The researcher avoided this by ensuring that every participant's opinion was heard on each question and that nothing significant was omitted.

The researcher did not misuse any of the information gathered and generated from the study. The data collected was not used for any other purposes. The researcher did not use any inappropriate research methods. Inappropriate methods included those which were harmful to participants or those which were unsuited for the researcher's stated purpose. This was ensured as the researcher only used the accepted research methods, such as focus groups and thematic analysis (IIE Post Graduate Policy, 2017).

5.3. Limitations

Limitations are elements which are outside of the researcher's control, such as time, financial resources and access to information (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). As this study was at an honours level, no funding was provided. This limited the size of the study and the number of participants which could be reached. Only one company was used in the study and only six participants were asked to participate. This limited the study to a small sample so that results can not necessarily be generalised. Other companies could not be included because of time and location constraints.

5.4. Anticipated Contribution

This research added to the existing body of knowledge on the topic of the perceived challenges women face in the workplace. The knowledge obtained from this study added to the literature surrounding RCT. This study added information to the topic of women and the perceived challenges they face in the workplace, by relating the findings to the existing literature surrounding the topic. It could enlighten the company about issues which contribute to the perceived challenges women face in achieving leadership roles.

5.5. Recommendations

In terms of the research problem, the researcher recommends that further research needs to be done in order to achieve a comprehensive solution. These findings could serve as a reference for future practices of other researchers as there is a knowledge gap in SA. For future studies, similar companies, different industries, culture and leadership styles should be taken into consideration in order for the research problem to be fully addressed. This is suggested because of the comments made by the participants about how the culture at the company plays a role in how people are treated. A look at people from different locations of the company would be imperative to future research. Local South African researchers and companies' could use this study in their own research. The findings of this study could have implications for policy and future project implementation in terms of leadership development programmes for women.. This study could be further expanded by other researchers to create knowledge which can be applied to real-world situations.

The above section concluded the findings conducted as it identified how the research question, objective and problem were addressed. This section provided ethical considerations as well as the limitations encountered. A relevant anticipated contribution of the study and recommendations were made.

6. CLOSING STATEMENT

This research study aimed to describe women's perceptions of the challenges they faced in a medium-sized Durban company. The qualitative nature of this study provided an in-depth analysis of findings collected from the focus group. The purpose of this study was to use RCT as a framework to describe women's perceptions of challenges in achieving senior leadership roles at the company studied. The findings, incorporated with RCT, were provided as a relevant suggestion to change policies in terms of women's employment and equality.

This research uncovered a gap in knowledge about gender disparity in the workplace. It found that six female senior leaders had not perceived any gender stereotypes or prejudice at the company studied. A key-takeaway from this research was that the participants considered that their biggest challenge was their own self-doubt and high expectations of themselves.

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8. ANNEXURES

8.1. Annexure A Focus Group Question Schedule

Welcome

My name is Amy Mills and I am currently completing my BCom Honours in Management at Varsity College. This is my assistant moderator, Vanessa who has signed a confidentiality agreement. Thank you for participating in this focus group discussion. The topic is discussing the perceived challenges women face in achieving senior leadership roles within Jonsson. The results obtained from this discussion will only be used in my research paper. You were selected because of your experience and position in the company.

Some ground rules...

There are no right or wrong answers, this is an open discussion and your opinions are all important. We are on a first name basis tonight but none of your names will be used within my report. You may be assured of complete confidentiality. When another person is talking please be respectful by not interrupting them. We are recording this with my phone and my assistant will be taking notes. Please switch your phones on silent. If you must respond to a call, please do so as quietly as possible and re-join us as quickly as you can. My role as the moderator is to guide this discussion and my assistant's role is to record it.

Well, let's begin. You have been given name tags to help us remember your names so please use the pens provided to write them down. After the discussion is complete please would you give my assistant your name tags for reporting purposes. Let's find out more about each other by going around the circle. Please tell us your name in a clear voice and your position within the company. Moving on to our questions.

Question 1: Describe your journeys to becoming a leader.

Question 2: As women, what have some of the challenges been in achieving a leadership role?

Question 3: What have the expectations in your roles as women been?

Question 4: Does the fact that you are woman play a role in how you have been treated in the workplace?

Question 5: In your view, are there still fewer females in leadership roles at the company? If so, why do you think that this?

Question 6: Why do you feel there is a difference in salaries between men and women, even if they occupy the same position?

Question 7: Could you give any examples of situations at the company where you felt you were being treated differently because you are a woman?

Question 8: What has been your biggest challenge in achieving your senior leadership position?

Question 9: What advice would you give prospective female leaders?

Question 10: What do you feel has been the most important aspect of this discussion?

8.2. Annexure B Explanatory Information Sheet, Consent and Audio Forms

To whom it may concern,

My name is Amy Mills and I am a student at Varsity College Westville. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Sharon Ballack about the perceived challenges women face in achieving senior leadership roles. I hope that this research will enhance the understanding of the implications the results might have for policy and future project implementation in terms of leadership development programmes which attempt to develop female leaders. I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.

What will I be doing if I participate in your study?

I would like to invite you to participate in this research because you are a female in a leadership position. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to conduct a focus group where I will ask some questions and you will be free to discuss them. You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.

Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?

Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about your experience being a women and in a leadership position. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

Do I have to participate in the study?

- Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary;
- If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;
- Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will my identity be protected?

I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only

my supervisor, my assistant moderator Vanessa (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) and I will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at Varsity College, will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished the focus group, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my BCom Honours in Management. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate. You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

My contact details are as follows:

Amy Mills

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Sharon Ballack

Consent form for participants

I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by (Amy Mills) about the perceived challenges women face in achieving senior leadership roles. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. I agree to be interviewed for this research.
2. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
3. My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.
4. I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.
5. I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.

Signature

Date

Consent form for audio-recording/ video recording

I, _____, agree to allow Amy Mills to audio record my interviews as part of the research about the perceived challenges women face in achieving senior leadership roles. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
2. The recordings will be stored in a password protected file on the researcher's computer.
3. Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and assistant moderator (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings.

Signature

Date

8.3. Annexure C Gatekeepers Letter

Dear Senior Director,

This letter serves to ask your permission to conduct my research entitled “Role Congruity Theory and women's perceptions of the challenges in achieving senior leadership roles: A descriptive focus group of a medium-sized Durban company 2018” at your company.

This research is being conducted by Amy Mills from IIE Varsity College as part of my IIE Bachelor of Commerce Honours in Management Degree. The study has been approved by Varsity College's Ethics Committee and, as part of that approval process; I am required to obtain gatekeeper permission from a senior director from the company.

The requirements for permission will be for me to make notes, and record audio evidence of participants discussing and answering a set of questions in a focus group. Confidentiality is protected, as while the researcher knows the names of participants these will be excluded in the final research report.

The aim of this study is to investigate the factors which affect the perceptions of women in achieving senior leadership positions.

The researcher would need a maximum of one to two hours allocated to the focus group with six females in senior leadership positions at the company.

If you are willing to be involved would you please sign the form below that acknowledges you understand the nature of the study being conducted and you give permission for the research to be conducted at the site.

Yours sincerely

Amy Mills

[Name _____] as [Role Title: _____]
of [Company Name _____] having been fully informed of the nature of the research to be conducted in ““Role Congruity Theory and women's perceptions of the challenges in achieving senior leadership roles: A descriptive focus group of a medium-sized Durban company 2018”” give my permission for the study to be conducted. I reserve the right to withdraw this permission at any time.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

8.4. Annexure D Invitation to Company E

To:
CC:
Subject: Amy Mills Research

Dear Senior Director

Happy Women's Day.

There have been a few changes to my research as discussed with my supervisor. I will only be conducting a focus group and only 6 women will be required. Please find attached the updated Gatekeepers Letter, the consent forms which will need to be signed by each participant and a brief outline of what I will be doing.

I am delighted you are willing to consider 6 women to participate in my study, and I'm happy for you and the CEO to read my report.

I'll provide my timeframes as soon as we have a start date confirmed.

If this is in order, could we meet on Friday 24th August or 31st August at 15h30 at your offices?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Amy

8.5. Annexure E Invitation to Participants

A happy Women's Month to you all!

My name is Amy Mills and I have been given permission to conduct my research study, which is required for me to complete my BCom Honours in Management degree, at your company. I have spoken to a senior director who believes that you would be suited to helping me with my research. My research title is, "Role Congruity Theory and women's perceptions of challenges in achieving senior leadership roles: A descriptive focus group of a Durban company in 2018". If you chose to participate, you will be part of a focus group discussion where I will ask a few questions. Since it is Women's Month, I believe that my research fits with the context. I am hoping to shed some light on the perceptions you have of your role as a leader in the workplace. The dates and times will be confirmed by the senior director and I have given the consent forms which need to be signed if you agree to participate. The forms explain my research in more detail and have described how it will protect your identities. The forms also have my contact details should you have any further questions.

Warm regards,

Amy Mills

8.6. Annexure F Confidentiality Agreement with Assistant Moderator

1 Parties

1.1 The Parties to the agreement are:

1.1.1 _____ (“First Party”);

1.1.2 _____ (“Second Party”);

2 Preamble

2.1 The purpose of this agreement is

To ensure that the assistant moderator keeps the information obtained at the focus group discussion at the company in question confidential.

3 Non-disclosure

The Parties agree that:

3.1 they acknowledge that the confidential information is a valuable asset and the property of the disclosing Party. There shall be no unauthorised disclosure or use of it except in accordance with this agreement;

3.3 they will disclose confidential information only to each other, solely to pursue the programme, without disclosing it to third parties. Disclosures may be made to their employees and/or agents duly authorised or as required by law;

3.4 if confidential information is disclosed to the Parties employees and/or agents duly authorised, such persons shall bind themselves to this agreement;

3.5 if a Party is required by law to disclose the confidential information, it must immediately notify the other Party in writing of this and will make only such disclosure as is strictly necessary;

3.6 on written demand and/or upon the lapse of this agreement a Party must return to the other party the confidential information within 5 (five) business days from receipt of the demand or from the lapse of this agreement. If the confidential information is in an electronic format then the responsible Party must destroy or expunge such records in such a manner as is reasonably necessary to maintain its confidentiality;

3.7 the Parties will not rely on warranties, representations or undertakings made by either of them unless recorded in writing and signed by the Parties;

3.8 the Parties’ rights and obligations in terms of this agreement may be enforced in terms of any remedies available in law, including by interdict or mandatory order of a court of competent jurisdiction;

3.9 no amendment or abandonment of rights under this agreement will be of any force or effect unless reduced to writing and signed by the Parties, and attached to this agreement;

3.10 this document records the entire agreement between the Parties;

3.11 all legal documents, notices or other communications must be delivered to the following addresses of the Parties, which will act as their *domicilium citandi et executandi*:

First Party: _____

Second Party: _____

3.13 non-legal documents, notices or other communication between the Parties may be by electronic communication; where a “read receipt” must be attached to each electronic communication sent so it can be determined that the electronic communication was received and read by the other Parties.

4 Signatories

Signed at _____ on _____ 20__.

As witnesses for the First Party:

1.	_____	_____
	Signature	Full name
	_____	_____
	Signature	Full name

The First Party:

_____	_____
Signature	Full name

Signed at _____ on _____ 20__.

As witnesses for the Second Party:

1.	_____	_____
	Signature	Full name
2.	_____	_____
	Signature	Full name

The Second Party:

_____	_____
Signature	Full name

8.7. Annexure G SafeAssign Originality Report



DECLARATION

1 I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the Bachelor of Commerce Honours in Management degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

Amy Mills

Date: 2 26/10/2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS I would like to thank my supervisor, Sharon Ballack for her tireless dedication and guidance, and Philippa Juul, for her editorial work.

RESM8419_2018_HBC1_VCDW1 - RESM8419_VCDW1

Activity 5.3.2: Submitting your final report

Amy Ann Mills on Fri, Oct 26 2018, 5:18 PM

18% highest match
Submission ID: b9c0a6c3-6af1-42be-9d46-0e19e403ee0b

Research POE Final.d...

Word Count: 20,987
Attachment ID: 236698472

18%

8.8. Annexure H Ethical Clearance Letter

8.9. Annexure I Final Research Report Summary Table

Research Purpose/ Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors	Literature Review – Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method	Ethics	Key Findings	Recommendations
To describe women's perceptions of the challenges they face in a Durban company.	What is the perception of challenges women face in achieving senior leadership roles at a Durban company?	The idea of equality between different genders makes up a core part of the beliefs of the researcher who is a woman.	Eagly and Karau (2002) Eagly and Carli (2007) Eagly & Koenig (2006)	<u>Theme 1:</u> Leadership and RCT <u>Theme 2:</u> Social Role Theory <u>Theme 2:</u> Stereotype <u>Theme 4:</u> Prejudice <u>Theme 5:</u> Double Bind <u>Theme 6:</u> Glass Ceiling	Interpretivist <u>Epistemology:</u> Knowledge subjective and participatory. <u>Ontology:</u> Reality is a social construct, multiple realities. <u>Meta-theory:</u> Focus group and data analysed using thematic analysis. <u>Methodology:</u> Empathetic immersed <u>Axiology:</u> Respondent's personal experiences	Qualitative deductive approach Purposive sampling	Focus Group	Ethical Clearance Letter <u>Participant</u> Signed permission forms Assistant moderator Non-disclosure agreement <u>Researcher</u> No information was falsified, and the results were not distorted. Bias was avoided.	The most significant findings from this study were that the perceived challenges of the women at the company were self-doubt and their own expectations of themselves.	In terms of the research problem, further research needs to be done. Different industries, culture and leadership styles should be taken into consideration. Could have implications for policy and future project implementation in terms of leadership development programmes.
Research Problem	Secondary Questions/ Hypotheses/ Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theory			Population	Data Analysis Method	Limitations	Key Contribution	
Gender disparity in the workplace. The gap in knowledge.	N/A	Leadership and RCT Social Role Theory Stereotypes Prejudice Double Bind Glass Ceiling	Role Congruity Theory			Female senior leaders at the Durban company.	Thematic Analysis	Only the Durban company was accessible. Time, money and location constraints.	SA context, the gap in knowledge. Added to the gap of knowledge of gender disparity in the workplace.	

