

An exploratory study on how females occupying top management positions within KwaZulu-Natal, Durban lead.

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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.

Abstract

Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) state that women have slowly chiselled away at existing stereotypes possessed by society at large as the female gender are increasingly becoming leaders within their respective organisations. Rosener (2011) suggests that the female approach to leadership has changed since their introduction to managerial positions. Females are adopting a style of leadership which is based on their unique skills and attitudes (Rosener, 2011). The purpose of this study was therefore to determine the manner in which current female top managers lead within their respective organisation and, secondly, to determine the leadership styles they have adopted. Structured electronic interviews were utilised to collect data from the respective participants which formed part of the sample. This method was adopted for this study due to the restrictions imposed regarding physical interaction amidst the covid-19 pandemic faced by the world. This study found that the interviewed female top managers possessed a leadership style which could be classified as interactive, collaborative and supportive. Additionally, it was noticed that the leadership style possessed by the participants mostly supported the style identified by Rosener (2011) as the interactive leadership style. This study contributes towards the growing domain of literature regarding the modern female approach to leadership.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Contextualisation

Christman and McClellan (2012) postulate that the majority of leadership roles and positions still belong to males. Christman and McClellan (2012) further provide that men are in the possession of socially supported privilege advantages in their respective leadership roles whereas women are in pursuit of accomplishing leadership and breaking through the glass ceiling. The continuous increase of female participation in the workforce over the last fifty years as well as their inclusion into decision making or managerial positions has forced a change in the definition of leadership (Kark, 2004). According to Appelbaum and Shapiro (1993) historically, organisations were predominantly made up of the male gender, as a result many females selected effective and successful male leaders and their respective leadership styles as their role models. According to Engen, Leeden and Willemsen (2001) women in managerial positions are expected to adopt a leadership style which suits the men's world in order to uphold their status. Rosener (2011) argues that a second wave of female leaders are moving into top management, these leaders are not imitating the leadership styles of men but rather adopting a style of leadership which is based on their unique skills and attitudes. According to Rosener (2011) effective leaders do not stem from one mould, female leaders which have managed to break through the glass ceiling have demonstrated this. The intent of this review was not to compare the leadership styles of women to men, this review set out to explore the behaviours and leadership styles undertaken by female leaders.

1.2 Rational

According to Vithal and Jansen (2004) as cited by Maree (2016) the rationale of a study serves a unique purpose, it outlines how a researcher developed interest in the selected topic and it provides and explains why a researcher believes the respective topic is worth researching.

Rosener (2011) suggests that the female approach to leadership has changed since their introduction to managerial positions. Females are adopting a style of leadership which is based on their unique skills and attitudes (Rosener, 2011). Rosener (2011) believes that female leaders are succeeding due to, not in spite of, these skills and characteristics. Female leadership is also believed to provide a firm with a competitive advantage and increase the firm's chances of surviving in what is seen as an uncertain business environment (Rosener, 2011). Female leaders are believed to portray a different leadership style when being compared to male leaders (Hryniewicz & Vianna, 2018). According to Hryniewicz and Vianna (2018) traditionally, women were not included into the workplace and as a result they did not occupy any decision-making positions or positions which carried power. Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) argue that women have slowly chiselled away at existing stereotypes possessed by society at large as the female gender are increasingly becoming leaders within their respective organisations. According to Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) it is therefore relevant to discover the manner in which these female leaders lead. This study had the goal of discovering the manner in which female top managers lead within their respective organisations situated in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. Due to the findings provided by Rosener (2011) which indicated that female leadership has evolved since

their introduction, it is necessary for literature and research into this domain evolved simultaneously. It was therefore relevant to explore the topic of female leadership, or more specifically, the manner in which female top managers lead within organisations located in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.

1.3 Problem statement

Kiamba (2008) argues that the concept of leadership has carried the notion of masculinity over time, the underlying belief that the male gender collectively makes better leaders compared to women is still apparent today. According to Rosener (2011) the first female leaders adhered to existing rules of conduct which were crafted to ensure the success of men, female leaders resorted to these as they were entering an area of the organisation which was historically foreign to them. Due to the fact that organisations were predominantly made up of the male gender, women were forced to select previously effective and successful male leaders and their leadership styles as their role models (Appelbaum & Shapiro, 1993). According to Kiamba (2008) a problem surfaces where the traditional leadership traits, those of male leaders, do not always correspond to those traits possessed by women. Kiamba (2008) further argues that female leaders often alter their leadership styles to conform with those of the traditional, autocratic, male leader in order to gain the approval of their subordinates and followers. Rosener (2011) states that those female leaders who have managed to break through the glass ceiling within their respective organisations have demonstrated that successful leaders do not come from a single mould. The aim of this study was to discover the manner in which women in top management positions lead.

1.4 Purpose statement

According to Rosener (2011) the female approach to leadership has changed since their introduction to managerial positions. Females are adopting a style of leadership which is based on their unique skills and attitudes (Rosener, 2011). Rosener (2011) believes that female leaders are succeeding due to, not in spite of, these skills and characteristics. Female leadership is also believed to provide a firm with a competitive advantage and increase the firm's chances of surviving in what is seen as an uncertain business environment (Rosener, 2011). From the aforementioned, it is evident that the topic of female leadership has evolved. This created the underlying purpose of this study as it set out to discover, even in part, the manner in which current female top managers lead within their respective organisations.

1.5 Research question

How do females occupying top management positions in organisations situated within Kwazulu-Natal lead?

1.6 Sub-question

Which leadership style is best attributed to female top managers?

1.7 Research Objectives

According to du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014) research objectives make reference to the specific goals the study sets out to achieve. Research objectives are divided into two categories, namely main objectives and sub-objectives, where main objectives are an overall statement of motivation and sub-objectives include the use of action words such as discover and explore (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). The research objectives for this study were:

- To form an understanding of the manner in which female top managers lead their respective organisations in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.
- To discover which leadership style female top managers portray in leading their respective organisations in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.
- To determine which behaviours are carried out by female top managers of organisations situated in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Conceptualisation of key terms

2.1.1 Top management

According to Stanley and Karolin (2016) the possession of clear and focussed goals along with a strong strategy is what distinguishes a top-manager from other members in an organisation. Hofstrand and Anders (2009) provide that top management comprises of the following positions; Chief executive officer, Chief Operating Officer, Vice President of Operations, General Manager or Chief Financial Officer. Stanley and Karolin (2016) argue that it is the task of a top manager to develop strategic plans which set out to achieve the goals of the firm. Stanley and Karolin (2016) then further provide that top-managers also create company policies and make decisions which guide and direct the organisation. Female top managers within organisations situated in Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal make up the accessible population of this study, the manner in which these female leaders lead their respective organisations is what this study aims to uncover.

2.1.2 Leadership

According to Bass (2008) as cited by McCleskey (2014) a single definition of leadership does not exist and any efforts in discovering a universal definition may be in vain. According to Bass (2008) as cited by McCleskey (2014) the correct and fitting definition of leadership is dependent on the interests of the researcher as well as the nature of the problem or situation being studied. According to Burns (1978) and Bennis and Nannis (1985) as cited by McCleskey (2014) leadership is a process of influence which, if effective, will lead to the achievement of the desired and shared goals. The underlying theme of this study is leadership, Lipman-Blumen (1992) provide that more

female leaders are breaking through the glass ceiling, it is relevant to study the manner in which these women lead.

2.1.3 Leadership style

According to Fertman and van Linden (1999) the manner in which leaders provide direction, motivate employees as well as accomplish objectives constitute the leadership style of leaders. It can therefore be said that leadership styles are models of behaviour used by leaders whilst interacting with employees. Obiwuru, Okwu, Akpa and Nwankwere (2011) state that leadership styles are used to predict and measure the effectiveness of leaders within the organisation by looking at whether employee's commitment and enthusiasm are either enhanced or diminished. In addition to the behaviours, the leadership styles of female leaders will provide insight into the manner women lead.

2.1.4 Glass ceiling

As per Stephen and Kumar (2018) Marilyn Loden first coined the term the glass ceiling on the 24th of March 1986, the glass ceiling symbolises a variety of barriers faced by women and minorities in their quest to improve their employment status. According to Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia and Vanneman (2001) the glass ceiling implies that gender related disadvantages become more apparent later in an individual's career. Cotter et al. (2001) further argue that the disadvantages are stronger at the top of the organisational hierarchy as opposed to at the lower levels. According to Lipman-Blumen (1992) women are more frequently being included into managerial positions within their respective organisations, it is therefore relevant to explore the manner in which these females lead.

2.2 Theoretical foundation

This study integrated the Situational leadership study

2.2.1 The Situational leadership theory

According to Kaifi, Noor, Nguyen, Aslami and Khanfar (2013) the situational leadership theory was originally developed by Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard in 1969. As the name of the theory implies, the situational leadership theory requires the leader to adapt to those circumstances they find themselves in as the situation contingencies dictate the leader's leadership style for that moment (Lumsden, Lumsden & Wiethoff, 2010). According to Northouse (2004) as cited by Kaifi et al. (2013) the situational leadership theory comprises of both directive and supportive dimensions. The directive dimension is similar to task behaviours whereas the supportive dimensions are closely related to relationship behaviours (Kaifi et al., 2013). According to Bass (2008) task-oriented leaders define their follower's roles, provide specific instructions, create formal channels of communication as well as establish organisational patterns. Bass (2008) and Shin, Heath and Lee (2011) agree that relationship orientated leaders demonstrate their concern for followers, avoid all emotional conflicts, pursue harmonious relationships with others and encourage equal participation among members of the follower base. According to McCleskey (2014) the situational

leadership theory focuses on whether a leader's behaviours are task or people focussed. As per Northouse (2004) as cited by Kaifi et al. (2013) the situational leadership theory demands leaders to familiarise themselves with their subordinates needs and, consequently, adapt their leadership style accordingly. According to Silverthorne and Wang (2001) there are three core competencies attributed to situational leaders, these include diagnosing, flexibility and lastly partnering.

According to Rosener (2011) female leaders actively work to create positive interactions and relationships with their subordinates. Rosener (2011), Gipson, Pfaff, Mendelsohn, Catenacci and Burke (2017) and Chin (2011) agree that female leaders encourage the participation of each individual throughout their follower base, share both power and information with subordinates, enhance the self-worth of each individual as well as create a sense of excitement among subordinates about their work. From the aforementioned, it is evident that female leaders are more relationship orientated as opposed to being task-orientated, female leaders centre their focus on building a healthy and strong relationship with their followers. According to Kaifi et al. (2013) female leaders are flexible in their leadership approach, female leaders alter and adapt their leadership styles to align with the context of employees as well as what a specific situation demands.

2.3 Review of Relevant Literature

2.3.1 Leadership

Before exploring the manner in which female top managers lead in their respective organisations, it is essential to firstly define the term leadership. Leadership is a term which does not have a single or universal definition, various authors in the field of leadership possess their own belief regarding what the definition of the term is. Silva (2016) states that for several years, leadership was merely seen as a personality trait which was possessed by certain individuals, this was until Stogdill argued that leadership is a process of influencing others. Stogdill (1950) defined leadership as a process of influencing the behaviour and activities of a group towards achieving a predetermined goal. Tannenbaum, Weschler and Massarik (2013) agreed with Stogdill (1950) as they defined leadership as "interpersonal influence, exercised in a situation, and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals". According to Silva (2016) Kotter provided a new perspective on leadership with his definition of the term. According to Kotter (1988) as cited by Head (1990) leadership can be defined as a process of directing a group of individuals in a desired direction using mostly non-coercive means. The definition of leadership has been altered and developed a great deal since its introduction. Iszatt-White, Saunders and Botha (2017) provide a definition which is widely accepted, they state that leadership is a process whereby an individual influences the behaviour and actions of a group of people towards willingly achieving a shared and desired goal. According to Iszatt-White et al. (2017) this definition implies that for an individual to be considered a leader, the individual will firstly need to have followers. Secondly, Iszatt-White et al. (2017) argue that leaders prioritise the building of authentic relationships among individuals. Lastly, the leader and his or her follower base share a common goal, the leader possesses the ability to influence the actions and behaviour of the follower base in order to achieve that shared goal (Iszatt-White et al., 2017).

2.3.2 The leadership style of female leaders

Since leadership was first introduced, there has been a great deal of interest in exploring the concept of leadership style (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). According to Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) leadership style was first coined by Blake and Mouton in 1964, the term was then defined as a relatively constant set of behaviours displayed by a leader. According to Gipson et al. (2017) two intersecting axes are used to describe and depict the leadership style of an individual, the first of these axes are task related and the second is the relationships and interactions with people. Appelbaum and Shapiro (1993) provide that historically men have occupied the majority of leadership positions, male leadership styles are therefore defined as traditional. Therefore, since the leadership style of female leaders contradict that of male leaders, their leadership style is labelled non-traditional (Appelbaum & Shapiro, 1993). According to Chin (2011) strong evidence exists which support the tendency of female leaders to adopt a more cooperative, democratic and collaborative leadership style. Various literature has been published regarding the leadership style of women occupying decision making or managerial positions, different researchers have provided their views regarding which leadership style best encapsulate women leaders. Rosener (2011) and Appelbaum and Shapiro (1993) argue in favour of what is termed interactive leadership whereas Kark (2004), Bass (1996) and Druskat (1994), among others, believe female leaders display a transformational leadership style.

2.3.3 Interactive leadership styles

A survey conducted by Rosener (2011) revealed that female leaders possess characteristic and behavioural traits which closely align with those of an interactive leadership style. Rosener (2011) argues in favour of this leadership style as she noticed female leaders actively work towards achieving healthy relationships with subordinates. To be more specific, female leaders encourage participation, share both power and information, enhance the self-worth of their subordinates and lastly create excitement around the work followers carry out (Rosener, 2011). These four factors make up the interactive leadership style.

Appelbaum and Shapiro (1993) encouraging participation makes reference to the leader's ability to make his or her subordinates feel part of the organisation. According to Rosener (2011) the creation of an inclusive environment is positioned at the core of interactive leadership. In interviews conducted by Rosener (2011) it was noticed that female leaders described nearly every aspect of management by making reference to their efforts in making individuals feel part of the organisation. Rosener (2011) then further provides that female leaders instil a group identity by encouraging the input of all subordinates regarding all areas and activities carried out by the firm. Participation is seen to provide the leader and the organisation with the benefit of support for the decisions reached, the risk of rejection or employee resistance to the decision is significantly reduced.

According to Appelbaum and Shapiro (1993) the sharing of power and information refers to creating the feeling among subordinates that information flows in both directions. Rosener (2011) argues that the share of information and power establishes and enhances loyalty from colleagues and subordinates within the organisation as it signals to them that their ideas are valued and they are trusted. According to Rosener

(2011) it was evident through the interview responses of female leaders that they do not have any intentions of guarding power and information. According to Appelbaum and Shapiro (1993) the process of sharing information and power provides employees with the ability to assist in the reaching of conclusions and solving of problems.

According to Rosener (2011) the third factor in interactive leadership is the encouragement of subordinate's self-worth. As per Appelbaum and Shapiro (1993) this factor makes reference to the enhancement of individuals self-confidence and self-esteem by giving subordinates praise, credit and recognition where it is due. Rosener (2011) provides that subordinates self-worth is raised once information and power is shared with them. During the interviews carried out by Rosener (2011) the female leaders disclosed the manner in which they build a feeling of self-worth among subordinates, small signals of credit and recognition are sent by female leaders to subordinates.

Energizing others is the fourth and final factor of interactive leadership (Appelbaum & Shapiro, 1993). According to Appelbaum and Shapiro (1993) this factor refers to the creation of excitement and enthusiasm among subordinates regarding their work, leaders delegate challenging tasks to subordinates which is seen to be both exhilarating and fun. Appelbaum and Shapiro (1993) state that female leaders tend to place high amounts of energy and enthusiasm into their work as they believe employees will feed off of this energy and have it too. Rosener (2011) cautions against too much enthusiasm as she argues that a cheerful leadership style could damage a leader's credibility within conservative professions.

Appelbaum and Shapiro (1993) and Rosener (2011) agree that the female leadership style is best described as interactive. Appelbaum and Shapiro (1993) state that the non-traditional leadership style of women is characterised as highly interactive or participative and transformational.

2.3.4 Transformational leadership style

According to Bryman, Collinson, Grint, Jackson and Uhl-Bien (2011) the term transformational leadership was first coined by Downton in 1973, however, the discovery of this leadership style is more commonly credited to James McGregor Burns. According to Bass and Avolio (1994) as cited by Iszatt-White and Saunders (2017) the main objective of transformational leaders is to transform both individuals and the organisation in a literal sense. According to Bass (1985) as cited by Kark (2004) a transformational leader is an individual who empowers and motivates each individual within his or her follower base to perform at a higher level than what they expected. According to Bass (1985) as cited by Kark (2004) transformational leaders influence the behaviours and activities of followers toward the achievement of a shared goal as opposed to focussing solely on their immediate personal interests. Fondas (1997) argues that the current conception of transformational leadership is in line with both the altercations and development of the organisation as well as current literature on management which stresses the need for a flatter, more flexible organisational structure.

Bass (1996) and Druskat (1994) both perceive female leaders as transformational. Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen (2003) conducted a meta-analysis study on organisational leaders, their findings supported the views of Bass (1996) and Druskat (1994) as their study found that female leaders portray the characteristics and

behaviours which closely align them with the transformational leadership style. A survey conducted by Rosener (2011) found that female leaders perceived themselves as transformational leaders. The survey revealed that female leaders are focussed on converting the self-interest of subordinates from a personal capacity to the interest of the group through concern for a desired and shared goal (Rosener, 2011). According to Rosener (2011) the survey also brought to light that female leaders ascribe their power to personal characteristics such as charisma, high work ethic and interpersonal skills. Further reinforcing these findings, Groves (2005) states that female leaders showcased high amounts of charisma, which is believed to be key component in the transformational leadership style.

In addition to the aforementioned leadership styles, some researchers argued in favour of supplementary leadership styles. Eagly and Johnson (1990) and Van Engen and Willemse (2004) agree that female leaders display a democratic leadership style. Eagly and Johnson (1990) found what is consistent with stereotypic expectations, discovering that female leaders tend to adopt a more democratic or participative leadership style and a less autocratic or directive style. According to Van Engen and Willemse (2004) female leaders typically avoid a directive leadership style, instead, female leaders behave in more collaborative and participative ways which, therefore, aligns them with the democratic leadership style. Lipman-Blumen (1992) argues that female leaders display a connective leadership style. According to Lipman-Blumen (1992) a connective leader is an individual who not only connects their followers to their own tasks and ego drives, but also to the other members of the group and community which depend on the achievement of shared goals. Lipman-Blumen (1992) further provides that female leaders align with this leadership style due to their willingness to care for others, connect with their subordinates and take full responsibility for mediating the conflicting needs of others.

2.3.5 The behaviours of female leaders

Goldberger, Clinchy, Belenky and Tarule conducted in-depth interviews with one hundred and thirty-five female leaders varying in age, marital status and ethnic and class backgrounds (Druskat, 1994). According to Goldberger et al., (1987) as cited by Druskat (1994) these interviews discovered many common behaviours across the interviewed women, these behaviours were a strong commitment to values, a strong preference to collaboration and community as well as high levels of trust in subordinates. As per Goldberger et al., (1987) as cited by Druskat (1994) these female leaders also revealed their preference for operating in groups as opposed to in isolation and believe that as leaders they have the responsibility to continuously provide employees with credit and praise as this is a prerequisite for development. According to Goldberger et al., (1987) as cited by Druskat (1994) the female leaders favoured interaction which emphasised connection over separation, acceptance and understanding over assessment, collaboration over competition and group discussions over debates.

Apfelbaum and Hadley carried out another study in 1986 which supports the findings of the previous study (Druskat, 1994). Apfelbaum and Hadley aimed to understand the thinking process and behaviours of fifteen female leaders, the findings of the study showed that the women in their study also reported a commitment to their values (Druskat, 1994). In addition to the afore mentioned, the interviewees reported that leadership commences from a base of experience, attention to subordinates needs as

well as responsibility (Druskat, 1994). These female leaders also believed that strong and sustainable relationships should be built with individuals situated at all levels of the hierarchy. In agreement with the study conducted by Rosener (2011) these female leaders described their leadership style as participatory (Druskat, 1994).

Eagly and Johnson (1990) argue that female leaders placed a high amount of importance on their interpersonal relationships, female leaders looked to actively maintain and uphold harmonious relationships with their subordinates. Van Engen and Willemse (2004) further provide that female leaders behave in more collaborative and participative manners and avoid being autocratic or directive towards their followers.

2.3.6 Conclusion

Contrary to traditional beliefs, female leadership is no longer an oxymoron (Lipman-Blumen, 1992). Although female representation in managerial positions are not where it should be, women are more frequently entering positions holding power (Rosener, 2011). Nevertheless, Budworth and Mann (2010) state that an opportunity, which has traditionally not been present, has come forth to gain a better understanding of the leadership styles of female leaders. Current literature surrounding female leadership revealed that female leaders are more likely to adopt an interactive, democratic and transformational leadership style. Although the different researcher's argued in favour of differing leadership styles, the behaviours of female leaders were believed to be noticeably similar. Rosener (2011) believes female leaders focus their behaviours on the encouragement of participation, the energising of subordinates, sharing of both power and information and enhancing the self-worth of individuals within their follower base. Eagly and Johnson (1990) argue that female leaders are highly interpersonally orientated whilst simultaneously placing a high amount of importance on maintaining harmonious relationships with subordinates. All of these behaviours posit the same message, female leaders are more relational orientated as opposed to being task orientated.

According to Lipman-Blumen (1992) to meet the demands of the twenty first century workplace, organisational leaders will need to display certain behaviours which woman are accustomed to, however, it is insisted that numerous female leaders should abandon these behaviours to ensure their personal occupational success.

3 Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Paradigm

According to Guba and Lincoln (1985) paradigms represent a basic belief system which guides a researcher throughout his or her study, this belief system is also seen as a worldview. Guba and Lincoln (1985) then further provide that the actions investigators undertake throughout the research or inquiring process cannot occur without making reference to a paradigm. According to du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014) three dominant traditions exist from which a researcher could adopt to their respective studies, these traditions include positivism, interpretivism and lastly critical realism.

An interpretivist tradition was adopted in carrying out the study concerned with the manner in which females occupying top management positions lead. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) as cited by Maree (2016) it is the task of the researcher in the interpretivist paradigm to understand, demystify as well as explain social reality from the participants perspective. Fertwell (2009) as well as Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2012) all agree that interpretivist researchers discover reality through the individual views of participants, this view encompasses both the participant's background and experiences. This study focussed on the behaviour of human beings, in more specific terms, it focussed on the manner in which females occupying top management positions lead. This study possessed the intention of discovering and understanding how females in top management positions lead their organisations by gaining an understanding of the perspective and views of participants whom form part of the accessible population. The position which is evident in this research tradition is the ontological position of interpretivism. According to du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) in the ontological position of interpretivism reality is both subjective and fluid, reality is believed to be created through the interaction of human beings. This study aims to discover the manner female leaders lead within their organisations, their behaviours and interactions with subordinates are explored.

3.2 Research Design

According to Kumar (2011) a research design is a procedural plan adopted by a researcher or research team to aid the process of answering the question in a valid, economic and accurate manner. According to du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.* (2014) the research design serves as the complete plan for the entire research process. According to Groenewald (2004) qualitative research designs are the most flexible when being compared to the other experimental techniques as it encompasses a wide variety of accepted structures and techniques. Groenewald (2004) argues that four major qualitative research designs exist, these include, phenomenology, ethnography, case study and grounded theory. A phenomenological methodology was adopted to guide the researcher through the exploration of the manner in which female top managers lead within their organisations. According to Hammersley (2000) in contrast to positivists, phenomenologists firmly believe that the researcher of a study cannot be separated from his or her standpoint or beliefs regarding a study, researchers should not pretend otherwise. From the outset, the intention of this research was to gather data regarding the manner in which the participants of the study, female top managers, lead within their respective organisations. According to Astalin (2013) in its most literal sense, phenomenology refers to the study of phenomena. Astalin (2013) further provides that phenomena could present itself in the form of situations, events, experiences or concepts. Phenomenology is a way of describing an existing aspect which is present in the world we live in, this research methodology will not provide a conclusive and definitive explanation of the phenomena but it will however raise awareness and add to a pre-existing body of knowledge (Astalin, 2013). According to Groenewald (2004) the aim of the researcher undertaking this methodology is to accurately describe the selected phenomenon without straying from the facts. According to Welman and Kruger (1999) as cited by Groenewald (2004) the phenomenologist is concerned with building a sound understanding of the social phenomena from the perspectives of the participants included in the study. According to Groenewald (2004) as a whole, this research methodology requires the researcher

to explore the actions of those participants involved, or who were involved in the issue being researched.

This aim of this study was to gather data which would enable the researcher to formulate an understanding of actions undertaken by either an individual or group of individuals. Once these human actions were understood by the researcher, it is possible for them to be described from the perspective of those individuals which were considered in the study. This design was in sync with this particular study as it strived to formulate an understanding of how females lead.

3.3 Research Approach

According to du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.* (2014) three options are available to a researcher when deciding on which research approach to adopt in their study, these are a quantitative approach, qualitative approach or mixed-methods. du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.* (2014) further provide that mixed-methods is a research approach which makes reference to the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods in carrying out the research process. The manner in which a researcher selects, collects, analyses and interprets information guides the decision on which approach will be the best fit for the study (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.* (2014) argues that quantitative methods seek to present numerical or statistical data whilst qualitative methods seek to present interpretive data. This study centres its focus on understanding and describing the manner in which female leaders lead within their respective organisation, a qualitative approach will therefore be adopted as the behaviours of individuals are studied.

According to Astalin (2013) qualitative research is a systematic scientific inquiry which seeks to develop a clear and well-rounded description to inform the researcher's understanding of the respective social or cultural phenomenon. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993) qualitative research can be defined as an inductive process of organising data into relevant categories with the goal or aim of identifying patterns among the categories. The above-mentioned definition implies that meaning and data surfaces naturally from the research context (Astalin, 2013). Qualitative research is seen as an umbrella term for a large variety of unique approaches and methods, these are significantly different in terms of their focus, role of the researcher or research team and their assumptions regarding the nature of knowledge. According to Astalin (2013) qualitative research is gathered through either observation, interviews with participants, document reviews or a combination of the above. Astalin (2013) further provides that a high amount of importance is placed on ensuring variables are studied within their natural setting, the interaction among the variables of the study is also vital in a qualitative study.

With regards to this study, the qualitative approach will be adopted as it aims to explore and understand aspects such as the behaviour, beliefs and attitudes of individuals (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). The qualitative approach is relevant as this study seeks to determine the manner in which female top managers lead within their respective organisations. The behaviours, beliefs and attitudes of these females will be analysed to determine which leadership style is most apparent and applicable to them.

3.4 Population

3.4.1 Target Population and Accessible population

According to du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) the population of a study refers to the group of individuals which possess information regarding the topic being explored, this information is extracted by the researcher with the goal of answering the respective research question. Banerjee and Chaudhury (2010) provide that the population of a study may present itself in various forms, the use of individuals is common among studies whilst other forms include heights, weights, events or outcomes. Banerjee and Chaudhury (2010) argue that both the research question as well as the purpose of the study serve as an indication of who need to be included in the study's population, as an example, the location and a restriction to a certain age group, gender group or profession. du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) suggest that the population of a study is divided into two categories, the first being the target population whilst the second is referred to as the accessible population. du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) further provide that the target population is inclusive of all individuals who meet the predetermined population parameters whereas the accessible population includes those individuals which the researcher or the research team is able to include in the study.

As elementary requirements, the participants of this study had to be between the age of 18 and 60 years of age and they needed to be female. In addition to these requirements, participants needed to occupy a top management position within their respective organisation. According to Hofstrand and Anders (2009) the top management category comprises of positions or titles such as Chief executive officer, Chief operating officer, General manager or head of department. It can therefore be said that the target population of this study included females who are occupying top management positions within their organisations. This target population was inclusive of many females which reside or operate within areas which are not accessible to the researcher and as a result they could not be included in this study (Lavrakas, 2008). Due to the aforementioned, the accessible population of this study comprised of females which are occupying a top management position within a firm that is located within Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.

3.5 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this particular study is individuals. To be more specific, it is female top managers which operate within Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.

3.6 Sampling

The sample for this study was determined using the purposive sampling method. This method was adopted as the researcher possesses the ability and freedom to select which individuals will form part of the sample of the study (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). The researcher selected these participants based on a predetermined set of criteria which eliminated any participants that do not meet all the set conditions. The three participants selected to form part of the sample for this particular study met the criteria of being female, aged between the 18 and 60 years old and, lastly, occupying a top management position within an organisation located within Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.

According to Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe and Young (2018) qualitative studies do not require a considerably high number of participants to form part of the sample. Vasileiou et al. (2018) further argue that the reasoning behind this is that the aim of qualitative studies is not to generalise the findings of the study to the population at large. The intended and achieved sample size of this study was three female top managers which operate within Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. The sample size of merely three participants seems small, however, due to the fact that this study is qualitative in nature, the number of individuals is accepted. Bryman (2012) argues that qualitative studies aim to gather a detailed and in-depth understanding of the experience and insight provided by a small number of participants.

The sample of this particular study consists of three female top managers which work within Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. The racial groups of the participants within the sample included one Indian female top manager and two white female top managers. With the aim of gathering diverse data, the three participants were selected from three different organisations. The participants of the study preferred that their respective company names be kept confidential.

As a first step in the recruitment of participants, which were both relevant and suitable for this study, the researcher contacted individuals within his network with the goal of discovering females who meet the predetermined criteria. This process provided the researcher with contact details for three potential participants, these individuals were then contacted using electronic mail. The electronic mail which was sent to the three potential participants served the purpose of confirming that all the necessary conditions were met for the participants to form part of the studies sample. Through this process it was discovered that one individual resided in Cape Town which meant that the condition of operating within Durban was not met. The researcher then obtained the contact details of an additional potential participant, this was a referral from a participant which had already been recruited and selected to form part of the study. After contacting this individual using electronic mail it was discovered that she had met all the necessary criteria. Once it was confirmed that all three participants met the criteria, via electronic mail the researcher outlined what the research study entailed and asked participants what date and time would be most convenient for them to carry out the zoom interview. The researcher sent documents to participants which provided context regarding what the study aims to achieve (see annexure). These documents also served the purpose of obtaining consent from participants to firstly carry out the interview and secondly to record the discussion.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the researcher explained to participants that no physical or one-on-one interaction was necessary as the interview would be conducted using an electronic medium. After confirming all participants of this study have access to a computer or laptop with zoom, the researcher began discussing what the most convenient time would be for the participants to carry out the interview.

3.7 Data-Collection Method

The data collection method adopted for the purpose of this study was electronic in-depth interviews. Paradis, O'Brien, Nimmon, Bandiera, and Martimianakis (2016) argue that in-depth interviews are used by the researcher or research team of a study as a means of collecting relevant information from the respective participants in a one-on-one setting. According to Paradis et al. (2016) the information is extracted from

participants using a set of predetermined questions. Paradis et al. (2016) further suggest that in-depth interviews may present itself in two different forms, the first is a structured interview whilst the second is an unstructured interview. A structured interview is characterised by a predetermined set of questions which are proposed to participants of a study to extract the necessary data (Paradis et al., 2016). Alternatively, an unstructured interview provides participants with more freedom in their response to a set of loosely compiled questions (Paradis et al., 2016).

A structured in-depth interview was developed and carried out by the researcher of this study. The set of eleven questions relevant to this particular study were carefully designed and proposed to participants with the goal of acquiring information from the respective participants to assist the researcher in answering the respective research question. The set of questions were purposefully developed to be open-ended; this was done by the researcher to avoid one-word answers as a response by the participants. The researcher wanted to provide participants with the opportunity to completely express their insights, experiences and opinions. It was found that the questions proposed to participants acquired rich and detailed responses. In the instances where the participants did not understand or incorrectly answered the questions, the researcher explained what the question was asking and when needed a follow up question was asked. The interviews were recorded using two devices. Firstly, the interviews were recorded using a function on the Zoom platform, this was then stored on the researcher's laptop. Secondly, the interviews were recorded and stored on the researcher's mobile phone. Two devices were used in an effort to eliminate the risk of losing the recordings as they were required to carry out the transcribing process thereafter. According to Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006) in-depth interviews are a well suited and commonly used data collection method for qualitative studies within the interpretive paradigm. Terre Blanche et al. (2006) further argue that in depth interviews allow the researcher to collect both rich and detailed data pertaining to the study. In addition to the aforementioned, it allows the researcher of the study to build a sound understanding of phenomena as they emerge in their respective contexts (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Cacciattolo (2015) agrees as he argues that in-depth interviews are most suitable to studies which set out to understand the perceptions, behaviours, actions or attitudes of participants. As a result of the aforementioned views proposed by the authors mentioned above it can be stated that in-depth interviews are a well-suited data collection method for this study.

Each participant participated in an interview which was approximately twenty-five minutes in length. As an example, one of the questions were regarding the process participants follow when making or carrying out a decision within the organisation. This question strives to determine whether the participants prefer including other employees or organisational members in the decision-making process or whether they prefer carrying out the process alone. The response assists the researcher in determining which leadership style the respective participants embody. Not every question in the predetermined set of eleven was asked by the researcher in all three of the interviews, some questions were disregarded in instances where the participants already provided a satisfactory response to a pending question.

The in-depth interviews with the participants of the study were conducted using an electronic medium. The reasoning behind this decision is due to the restrictions

regarding physical contact, interaction and social distancing as a result of the Covid19 pandemic. Via electronic mail each female within the sample agreed to the use of Zoom to conduct the interviews. According to Antonelli (2011) Zoom is a cloud-based video communications platform which enables users to conduct virtual and audio meetings, webinars and live chats. This medium was proposed to participants by the researcher due to its popularity, ease of use, collaborative capabilities and its ability to record meetings.

Many difficulties arose during the scheduling of and the electronic in-depth interviews themselves. Due to the nature of the positions held by the participants, it was difficult to find a date and time where the participants were available to conduct the interviews. The positions held by the participants of this study demand a great amount of time on the various tasks they are required to carry out, all three participants mentioned that their schedules were flooded with multiple meetings and deliverables. However, in the end a convenient time and date was found which suited both the researcher and the participants of the study. An additional difficulty in the scheduling of interviews presented itself in the form of load shedding. The researcher had to ensure that both the participant's and the researcher's residential areas would not be affected by load shedding during the mutually agreed time. During the course of the first interview, the participant experienced a power failure unrelated to load shedding. As a result, the interview had to be postponed to a time later the same day. The Covid-19 pandemic presented another difficulty through the restrictions on physical contact. The newly instated laws and regulations which set out to govern the behaviour of individuals during the pandemic has forced the researcher to use Zoom to conduct the interviews. However, the use of an electronic medium which provides users with the ability to see each other virtually allowed the researcher to identify the non-verbal cues displayed by the participants during the interview.

4 Findings and Interpretation

4.1 Participants

The researcher interviewed three participants for this study. Participant A is a white woman in her mid-forties, married with one dependent. Her current position is a Key Accounts Manager for the retail sector of a dairy and food corporation, hereafter referred to as Company A. She has been working at her current company for the past 23 years. Participant B is a white woman in her late-forties, no dependents. She holds a Postgraduate Diploma in Financial Planning and Services. Her current position is a Regional Manager for Kwa-Zulu Natal and Eastern Cape at a financial services and investment company, hereafter referred to as Company B. Her career background consists of 5 years as a Business Development Manager at said company and 2 years as a Retail Investment Specialist at another financial services company. She has been working in her current position at Company B for 8 years. Participant C is an Indian woman in her early-forties. Her current position is Head of Department, Groceries and Confectionary at a South African based supermarket, hereafter referred to as Company C. She has been working at her current company for the past 16 years, working her way up starting as a Buyer and ultimately attaining her current position.

From Individual to Collaborative Leadership

According to Rosener (2011) the female approach to leadership has changed since their introduction to managerial or leadership positions. Females are adopting a style of leadership which is based on their unique skills and attitudes (Rosener, 2011). Rosener (2011) believes that female leaders are succeeding due to, not in spite of, these skills and characteristics. Through the in-depth interviews conducted by the researcher with the three participants of this study, evidence was found which supports the view expressed by Rosener (2011). Female leaders are no longer leading in a manner which reflects the traditional male autocratic leadership style. The Sub themes presented below reflect what the researcher of this study found regarding the current leadership style adopted by the female leaders of this study.

4.2.1 Sub-Theme 1: Creation of a collaborative environment

It was evident that all three female leaders favoured a cooperative team environment which could be characterised as collaborative or participative. All three female leaders stated that they preferred including employees of the organisation or members within their team within processes such as decision making. Participant A stated “okay, I like to include everyone” when being asked what process she follows when having to make a decision in the organisation. Participant A further provided that the inclusion of every team member or employee in team deliverables or tasks is crucial to the achievement of collective buy-in from all employees. She noticed that once there is buy-in from the team at large, there is a shift in the possession of the project itself from solely her project to a shared project. Participant B completely agreed with the view possessed by Participant A as she stated “Ok so for me, so what I do with my team as we quite often work on projects is you have to get team buy-in”. The views of the two participants are indistinguishable from one another, both female leaders have noticed the benefits related to a collaborative team environment. Participant C provided that her reasoning behind the preference of a participative, interactive and collaborative organisational environment was due to multiple benefits which present itself as a direct result. In addition to the collective buy-in of employees or members of a team, Participant C mentioned that other benefits include the enhancement of team performance and consequently an improved end result.

The above-mentioned responses provided by the participants to the selected questions in the adopted data collection method support the view possessed by Van Engen and Willemse (2004). Van Engen and Willemse (2004) argued that female leaders typically avoid a directive leadership style, instead, female leaders behave in more collaborative and participative ways which, therefore, aligns them with the democratic leadership style.

4.2.2 Sub-Theme 2: Team Rather Than Me

An underlying factor which surfaced from the responses provided by participants was their individualised concern for the employees in their respective organisations. Participants A, B and C mentioned the importance of getting to know each individual within their team. Participants provided that it assists them in their quest of motivating the employees with the firm. All participants agreed that the process of getting to know

each individual member in their teams provided valuable insight into what it is that motivates them.

When dealing with conflict resolution or disagreements in the organisation, all participants stated that they preferred the approach of formulating a sound understanding of the perspective held by employees as well as the situation as a whole. Participant A believed that the development of a sound understanding regarding both the perspectives held by employees involved and the situation in its entirety facilitated better decision making. Participant B pointed out the importance of keeping in mind that every individual is fundamentally different, she stated "We all have backgrounds and we all have different views in the way we look at something and the most important thing for me is you need to learn how do you try and see someone else's perspective. How do you actually get yourself to say okay, well I might not agree with what this person is saying but I would like to understand their perspective". She stated that it is important for her to respect the manner in which others in her team look at a problem they are facing. Holding a similar view, Participant A provided that "when there is a disagreement, I try to understand the other view of how, what and why the disagreement happened. Because I am a firm believer that I see one thing and I believe that it's the right thing but other people have a different view and interpretation of the same scenario". This approach adopted by the female participants in resolving disagreements and conflict in the firm highlights the fact that they allocate individualised concern for employees in their firm. The beliefs of each individual are taken into account, this is accompanied by a high degree of respect for each individual's perspective.

The data collected through the electronic interviews revealed that two female participants of this study strive to continuously develop the members or employees within the organisation. It was noticed that the participants adopted a variety of ways in which they developed members of their team; these included the provision of experience in conducting certain tasks as well as the use of storytelling to facilitate learning from the participants personal experiences. It is important to note that participant B provided that the employees need to be willing to develop themselves, she cannot be held accountable for an employee learning and development. This indicated the supportive role the female leaders play in leading others in the firm. Participant C further supported this finding as she stated that when employees come to her with a problem in the organisation, she prefers to guide them to a solution as opposed to simply providing it. Additionally, after careful analyses, it was noticed that the female top managers included the word "we" several times in their responses to the proposed questions. This indicates that the female top managers don't see the efforts of the organisation or the efforts conducted in team projects as solely her own but rather as a joint effort. This was further emphasised in a response provided by Participant B as she provided that she does not want the members in the organisation or members in her team to carry the perception that she is better than them. Participant B stated "I always say to my team the fact that I'm managing the region does not make me better than them, firstly, alright I need to be present just as much as they are and they need to be able to see me work just as hard as they work".

4.3 Theme 2: The Continuous Search for Role Models

According to Rosener (2011) the first female leaders adhered to existing rules of conduct which were crafted to ensure the success of men, female leaders resorted to these as they were entering an area of the organisation which was historically foreign to them. Due to the fact that organisations were predominantly made up of the male gender, women were forced to select previously effective and successful male leaders and their leadership styles as their role models (Appelbaum & Shapiro, 1993). Sealy and Singh (2008) agree as they state that there is an excessive amount of data which supports the fact that there is a lack of female role models within the corporate life, this represents a major barrier to the advancement in their personal careers. This theme was created by the researcher of this study as it was noticed that two of the three participants selected a male role model as the leader which they look up to.

Interestingly, it was noticed that two participants within this study looked up to male leaders which they had previously worked under in their careers. The two female top managers who provided the researcher with this response were participant A and Participant B. Participant A responded by stating "I'm not going to give you a famous name or someone like that but I had a manager that was a bit older and he went into retirement now but he at one stage ran our company". Whilst participant B stated "Rob Dower, he was the CEO of Allan Grey. He is still involved in the business". As a potential reason behind the decisions undertaken by the majority of participants in this study regarding the question of who a leader is that they look up to, Sealy and Singh (2008) state that it is difficult for minority groups, such as female top managers, to find leaders which are adequately perceived as similar or desirable to emulate. These responses support the argument articulated by Appelbaum and Shapiro (1993) whilst indicating that the statement is still valid after several years. In addition to the aforementioned, the responses concurrently indicate that, despite the remarkable progress achieved by females in their quest to achieve equality in all areas of the workplace, an insufficient number of female leaders are present in the modern business environment.

The outlier to this finding was participant C who revealed that her role model, from a leadership point of view, was her mother. The key differences in her response to the proposed question was that her selected leader was firstly, female and secondly, she was not an individual who formed part of an organisation. Interestingly, the researcher of this study noticed that the reasoning behind each participants selection of the leader they look up to was extremely similar and, in some instances, identical. To support their respective selections, participants disclosed which characteristics, behaviours or traits of the leaders they had selected stood out to them. The characteristics, behaviours or traits which were identical across all responses provided were the leaders consideration for each individual or employee as well as the manner in which the selected individuals interacted with those around them. These were emphasised in the provided responses as they took up the majority of the discussion regarding the reasoning.

Sealy and Singh (2008) argue that the leaders which individuals select to look up to or view as their role models have a considerable impact on the manner in which they personally lead. Sealy and Singh (2008) further argue that leaders in society select role models based the extent to which they admire or share the traits underlying the

selected role model's behaviour. What this indicates is that the participants of this study lead in a manner which encompasses the characteristics they have highlighted in their respective responses. It can therefore be said that, like their selected role models, the female participants lead in a manner which provides individualised consideration for other employees in the organisation whilst also placing a high level of importance on the manner in which they interact with the employees. However, as a contradiction to the view held by.

4.4 Trustworthiness

Astalin (2013) argues that qualitative studies do not set out to identify causal relationships among variables or to generalise findings to the broader population. According to Astalin (2013) qualitative research aims to develop a sound, in-depth understanding of a specific phenomenon. Both Shenton (2004) and Gunawan (2015) agree that the terms reliability and validity do not relate to qualitative studies. According to Gunawan (2015) qualitative studies prefer using the concept termed trustworthiness to measure its reliability. According to Guba and Lincoln (1985) as cited by Shenton (2004) four criteria should be considered by the researchers of a qualitative study in their pursuit of trustworthiness, these include credibility, transferability, dependability and lastly confirmability.

According to Shenton (2004) credibility makes reference to the researcher's level of accuracy in interpreting the information provided to him or her by the participants in the sample. Shenton (2004) further provides that a study's credibility increases as the researcher's amount of time spent with participants of the study increases, the time spent together provides the researcher with insight into the lives of participants. The researcher of this study will ensure that enough time is allocated to each interview, this will then allow for a greater amount of discussion to take place prior to the interview and after the interview. According to Forero, Nahidi, De Costa, Mohsin, Fitzgerald, Gibson, McCarthy and Aboagye-Sarfo (2018) transferability refers to the extent to which a research study's results and findings can be applied beyond that specific study. du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.* (2014) argue that this will allow the researcher to generalise findings within a research approach that is believed not to support generalisation. Forero *et al.* (2018) further argue that dependability refers to ensuring the same results will be obtained if the same participants, coders and context is used in the qualitative study. To enhance the dependability of this study, rich and detailed explanations have been provided regarding the methods used within this study. And lastly, du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.* (2014) provide that confirmability refers to how well the collected or gathered data supported the results and findings of the researcher. This study will provide a clear description of all steps undertaken in the research process, disclosing how the researcher arrived at the conclusion made. According to Forero *et al.* (2018) this will enhance the confirmability and the dependability of this study as those who read the study will come to a similar conclusion to that of the researcher.

5 **Conclusion**

5.1 Addressing the Research Question

In terms of the studies quest in identifying the leadership style adopted by female top managers, the findings of this study supported the views proposed by Rosener (2011) and Appelbaum and Shapiro (1993). Together these authors believed that female leaders lead in a manner which can be labelled interactive.

The findings of this study closely align with the interactive leadership style provided by both Appelbaum and Shapiro (1993) and Rosener (2011). The study found that the female participants preferred the inclusion of employees and members of their respective teams in the various processes that are required to be carried out. Appelbaum and Shapiro (1993) and Rosener (2011) agree that the encouragement of participation and the creation of an inclusive environment are positioned at the core of interactive leadership style. It was also found that participants of this study placed significant importance on making individuals feel part of the team by including them in all activities which need to be carried out. As an example, which support the aforementioned statement, Participant B provided employees of the organisation with the ability to each present the final result of projects the team carried out. She believes that this key to making individuals feel part of the team and the firm. Additionally, it was noticed that one participant, participant C, desired the fact that employees within her firm thoroughly enjoy and understand what they do as she believed that this serves as an indication that they have settled in. Appelbaum and Shapiro (1993) and Rosener (2011) state that encouraging participation makes reference to the leader's ability to make his or her subordinates feel part of the organisation.

According to Rosener (2011) the third factor in interactive leadership is the encouragement of subordinate's self-worth. As per Appelbaum and Shapiro (1993) this factor makes reference to the enhancement of individuals self-confidence and self-esteem by giving subordinates praise, credit and recognition where it is due. This was an aspect which was apparent in all of the female top managers of this study. Interestingly, all three participants stated that they prefer using non-monetary methods of motivating employees, they preferred providing time off and verbal recognition. Participants noted that it was important to recognize the efforts and performance of their employees.

Energizing others is the fourth and final factor of interactive leadership, it was found that the participants aligned with this factor as each of them provided methods which they carry out in creating enthusiasm among employees (Appelbaum & Shapiro, 1993). Participant A stated that "I put the whole board room full of balloons and little things, we made a bit of a hoo-ha that cost me about R200". Participant C provided that she had carried out this task with the goal of creating excitement among the members of the team.

The four I's of transformational leadership represent the four components which make up the leadership style (Avolio, Waldman & Yammarino, 1991). Avolio et al. (1991) the four I's include idealised influence, individualised consideration, intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation. Avolio et al. (1991) further provided that two of the I's in the transformational leadership style were noticed through the data extracted from

participants of this study. Intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration. The identification of the other two I's among leaders in practice requires the perspective held by employees on the leader (Avolio et al., 1991). Through the selected data collection method for this study it was the researcher proposed a question to participants which entailed their opinion on how the members within their teams would describe them as a leader. It was then noticed by the researcher that the responses provided by the participants would be biased and inaccurate as. Therefore, it cannot be said that the participants of this study possess a transformational leadership style.

This study found that female top managers which operate within Durban, KwaZulu-Natal lead in a manner which is collaborative and interactive in nature. The participants of this study indicated that their consideration for the employees within the organisation played a significant role in the manner in which they lead. Through the examples or scenarios provided by participants in their responses to the proposed questions, it was also noticed that the female top managers lead in a supportive manner. Not only was it noticed that the female top managers which formed part of this study lead in a manner which places importance on interaction, individualised consideration and collaboration, it was also noticed that the female leaders view these as stand out characteristics or traits in their selected role models. The findings of this study, for the most part, supported the existing literature regarding the manner in which female leaders lead in their respective organisations.

5.2 Implications of findings for future practices

The implications of findings for future research for this study are as follows. This study revealed that the female leadership style has progressed since the introduction of females into leadership positions within the workplace. It was noticed that the female leaders included within this study displayed a preference for a collaborative work environment as opposed to leading in isolation. The study provides other, aspiring or current, leaders with the knowledge that females do not need to adopt the traditional leadership styles adopted or displayed by men. Team over me was a sub theme noticed in this study where female leaders placed emphasis on getting to know each individual and ensuring that each individual views the leader as part of the team. This study could assist a selection committee in identifying whether a specific gender would be suited for a position or a role. The manner in which this could assist is by providing an indication on the approach and behaviours adopted by female leaders in carrying out various tasks. This study has indicated that female leaders prefer collaborative, inclusive and supportive environments whereby female leaders strived to place others above themselves.

The aforementioned findings were related to the behaviours of female leaders in the organisation. This could serve as a basis for future studies in the field of female leadership whereby the behaviours of female leaders in the organisation are analysed.

Additionally, it was found that the female participants still selected male leaders as their role models. This theme surfaced despite the continuous increase in the inclusion of female leaders within leadership positions. However, it was noticed that the female leaders selected these role models based on specific traits which they strived to achieve.

5.3 Research Success and possible Future Research

The research study was a success as it achieved its goal of answering the proposed research questions whilst gaining an understanding of the manner in which the females selected to form part of the sample lead. This study aimed to include three participants within the sample, this goal was achieved by the researcher. Additionally, all participants of the study met all the predetermined population parameters and requirements.

This study was in line with literature regarding both qualitative studies and the interpretivist paradigm as it obtained in depth and detailed information from the participants, this supports and contributes towards the success of this study. Additionally, this research was successful as it contributed to the increasingly popular domain regarding the manner in which current female leaders are leading within their respective organisations.

The deliberate design of the electronic interview questions provided the researcher with rich and in-depth data from the selected participants, this data was utilised in formulating a better understanding of the manner in which female top managers lead. This data was analysed and interpreted by the researcher; the findings provided critical insight in answering the studies research questions. Due to the limited number of participants included within this study, the findings of this study are not considerably significant. Qualitative studies do not require a large number of participants, however, the sample size of three individuals constitutes a small study (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2013).

A scope for future research is present. Future research could be conducted regarding the difference between female leadership and male leadership. This study merely addressed this topic in a very vague manner. It must be noted that, due to the small sample size addressed in this study, future research could include more participants as this would provide more valuable and significant findings.

5.4 Ethical Implications

From the participants perspective, this study considered informed consent, deception, the sensitive nature of the topic and the confidentiality of participants (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). From the researcher's perspective this study considered the falsification of information, distorting of results and the utilisation of inappropriate research methods.

As mentioned above, all participants which were selected to form part of the study received an email prior to the electronic interviews regarding the context of the study, their consent to participating and a date which was best suited to their personal schedules. The researcher of the study ensured that the participants of the study were not deceived into thinking the study was regarding another topic. The electronic mails sent to participants clearly disclosed what the study entailed. The researcher was also aware that the topic may be sensitive to some female participants, this was considered throughout the research process. In terms of the confidentiality of participants, each individual's identity was kept confidential throughout the research process. Once the

information was gathered it was not falsified, fabricated or altered in any way. This study did not place emphasis on the results obtained through the data collection process nor did it highlight aspects which in actual fact is of insignificant importance. Another ethical consideration involves the Covid-19 Pandemic. As mentioned earlier, the electronic interviews with participants were recorded, these recordings were kept safely and out of the general public's reach. The misuse of research methods has been considered, no participants were harmed in their physical or mental capacity as the research methods are suited to the context of this study.

5.5 Limitations of the study

The limitations of this study include time, financial resources, human resources and the Covid-19 pandemic. Time was a limitation as the research pertaining to the topic of how female to management leaders lead needed to be completed within a predetermined time frame. The luxury of completing this study at the researcher's pace was therefore not possible. Due to the fact that this study is carried out by a single researcher and not by a research team, the limitations of human resources and financial resources was present. The researcher was solely liable for all costs incurred in the study. As mentioned earlier, the Covid-19 pandemic was a severe limitation to this study. Those participants which the researcher of this study required to extract information from could not be reached due to the respective laws on physical interaction. Participants were therefore not allowed to be interviewed in person, the interviews were then conducted with the use of a technological medium, in this case Skype and Zoom. Additionally, load shedding and the busy schedules of participants led to an increase in difficulty for carrying out the data collection process.

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7 ANNEXURES

A. CONSENT FORM



Explanatory information sheet and consent form for participants To whom it may concern, My name is Sheldon Swanepoel and I am a student at Varsity College, Durban North. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Sally Fisher about an exploratory study on how females occupying top management positions within KwaZulu-Natal, Durban lead. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding on how females in top management positions lead in their respective organisations 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 your input and experience is required in order to gain an understanding of how female top managers lead within their respective organisations. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to ask you a set of predetermined questions which will assist me in answering the study's research questions. 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 in a leadership role. 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, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will

have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at Varsity College, Durban North, 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 all interviews, 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:
Sheldon Swanepoel

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:
Sally Fisher

B. CONCENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

Consent form for participants					
I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Sheldon Swanepoel about An exploratory study on how females occupying top management positions within KwaZulu-Natal, Durban lead. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that: • I agree to be interviewed for this research. • My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private. • 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. • I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview. • I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.					
<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="height: 40px;"></td> <td style="width: 20%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Signature</td> <td>Date</td> </tr> </table>				Signature	Date
Signature	Date				

C. CONCENT FORM FOR AUDIO OR VIDEO RECORDING

Consent form for participants	
I, _____, agree to allow Sheldon Swanepoel to audio record my interviews as part of the research about An exploratory study on how females occupying top management positions within KwaZulu-Natal, Durban lead.	
This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:	
• My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private. • The recordings will be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer. • Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings.	

D. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do you handle disagreements and conflict in your organisations?
2. How do you motivate others within your organisation?
3. Can you walk me through a time where you managed a team project? What was your approach to the work and how did you delegate tasks?
4. How do you help members in your team develop themselves in their careers?
5. When making a decision within the organisation, what is the process you follow?
6. How do you go about getting members in your team excited about new projects and tasks?
7. Think of a situation in which your employees were sceptical about a new work process you had to introduce which was necessary for the effectiveness of the organisation. Describe both the situation and your exact response in detail.
8. Think of a situation in which it was very important that employees performed well for the success of your organisation, but you had the impression that certain employees were dissatisfied and your team did not work efficiently or as quickly as you expected. Please describe both the situation and your exact response in detail.
9. What values are most important to you as a leader?
10. Who is a leader that you looked up to and why?
11. How, in your opinion, would other employees describe you?

E. ETHICS CLEARANCE LETTER



11 August 2020

Student name: Sheldon Swanepoel

Student number: 17920336

Campus: Varsity College Durban North

Re: Approval of HBCM Proposal and Ethics Clearance

HONOURS ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and your supporting documents and instruments are in order to proceed. We hereby provide you with permission to proceed with your research.

In the event of you deciding to change your research methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued.

We wish you all the best with your research!

GENERAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

Permission is granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted.

Please note: The panel has not considered the merits, accuracy or ethical soundness of the research. The only merits examined are the use of The IIE as a sample.

Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all of the participants in his/ her sample if the study is not anonymous.
2. The researcher(s) will need to obtain Gatekeeper approval/permission letter/s and have handed this to the supervisor for verifying.
3. The researcher(s) may only use the data collected for research purposes and in no other way.
4. Photographs of human subjects may only be taken if relevant to the research, informed consent was obtained, and even with informed consent, the photographs may not be published on any online platforms.
5. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
6. No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the research and the research must be voluntary.
7. Please make it clear that the information will not be used punitively in any way and participants may in no way be counselled/advised based on this.

F. Final Research Report Summary Document Table

PROVISIONAL TITLE: An exploratory study on how females occupying top management positions within Kwa-Zulu natal, Durban lead.

Research Purpose/ Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/ Sources	Literature Review – Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method(s)	Ethics	Key Findings	Recommendations
The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding on how females in top management positions lead in their respective organisations.	How do females occupying top management positions in organisations situated within Kwazulu-Natal lead?	Females have made great progress since they have entered the workplace in 1956. As a result, more females are emerging as leaders within their respective firms, this study set out to discover the manner in which females in top management positions lead.	Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard in 1969-The situational leadership theory	Theme 1: Leadership Theme 2: Female leadership style Theme 3: Interactive leadership style Theme 4 Transformational leadership style Theme 5 The behaviours of female leaders	Paradigm Interpretivism Ontology Social construction based on personal experiences and interactions.	A qualitative approach	In-depth interviews.	For participants: -informed consent -deception -sensitive topic - participants confidentiality For researcher: -falsifying information - distorting results - use of inappropriate research methods.	This study anticipates to find that female leaders are interactive, encouraging of participation and participative in the organisation. The leadership style of females is in line with that of transformational leadership.	Future research could be conducted on the difference between male and female leadership. A larger sample size could be addressed, as this would provide more valuable and significant findings.
						Population	Note: this was carried out electronically due to Covid-19. The selected tool was Zoom due to the preference of the participants.			
						Population Parameters	Females who occupy top management positions within firms located in Durban, South Africa.			

Research Problem	Secondary Questions/ Hypotheses/ Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theorists			Sampling	Data Analysis Method(s)	Limitations	Key Contribution	
The first female leaders adhered to existing rules of conduct which were crafted to ensure the success of men. All successful leaders do not come from a single mould.	The objective of this study was to gain an understanding, through the use of interviews, on how females in top level management, lead. Interviews were conducted via Zoom	-Leadership - Leadership style -Top management -Glass Ceiling	Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard in 1969-The situational leadership theory			Non-probability Purposive sampling Size 3 female top managers	Unit of Analysis Individuals or people (Females) Data Analysis Method(s) Qualitative content analysis	Limitations of this study included: -Time -Financial Resources -Human Resources -Health regulations due to Covid-19 .	This study contributed towards the existing literature as a whole within this domain. Provided insight into the manner in which female leaders lead.	