

**INVESTIGATION INTO THE ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOUR OF WOMEN IN
SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND BOARDS IN THE UK: 'CAUSE' AND
'EFFECT'**

BY

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requirement for the degree of**

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27 June 2019

Dear Keziah,

Re: Ethics Application: Gender Diversity in Boardrooms: An investigation into the adaptive behavior of female board members in the UK– GUEP644R

Thank you for submitting the revisions to your submission of the above to the General University Ethics Panel. The ethical approaches of this project have now been reapproved by GUEP.

Please note that should any of your proposal change, a further submission (amendment) to GUEP will be necessary.

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Good luck with your research.

Yours sincerely,
Pp.



On behalf of GUEP
Dr William Munro
Deputy Chair of GUEP

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the adaptive behavior of women in senior management and boards in the United Kingdom. The research addresses two questions firstly focusing on identifying the factors influencing the adapting behavior exhibited by women in senior management and secondly seeking to establish links between this behavior and the slow advancement of women into senior management. Although Initial findings from the pilot study had highlighted influences impacting on women's propensity for adaptive behavior, four new factors were further identified in the main study. These new factors influencing the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management are (i) the need to conform to the status quo within their work environment, (ii) an association of certain behaviors with success, (iii) the need to adapt behavior for career progression, and (iv) the influences on personality leading to behavior. Findings led to the development of a theoretical framework that provides evidence to the existence of a relationship between the adaptive behavior of women in senior management and the slow advancement of women into senior roles. The theoretical framework also identifies two pivotal points where in a vicious cycle the adaptive behavior negatively impacts on the rate of women advancing into senior management, and where in a virtuous cycle the behaviour of women in senior management can produce a positive impact on woman career advancement. This study utilizes a qualitative approach of inquiry with an interpretative methodology, producing findings from the analysis of data generated from 33 interviews. Results of this study provides new insights into the area of research on women in management and reveals the effects of behavior exhibited and consequences of actions taken by women in senior management on the rate of advancement of aspiring women into senior management roles, contributing to the representation of women in senior management.

KEYWORDS

Diversity, Inclusion, Career advancement, Barriers to advancement, Adaptive behavior, Women in senior management, management styles, female leadership, Organizational culture, FTSE 250 companies

TABLE OF CONTENT

Abstract	iii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.2 BACKGROUND OF STUDY	1
1.3 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM.....	4
1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION	6
1.5 OBJECTIVES OF STUDY	6
1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY	7
1.7 SCOPE OF STUDY	8
1.8 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY	9
1.9 SUMMARY- STUDY ROAD MAP	10
 CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	 12
2.0 INTRODUCTION.....	12
2.1 PREVALENCE OF WOMEN IN SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND BOARDS IN THE UK.....	16
2.2. BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S CAREER ADVANCEMENT INTO SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND BOARDS IN THE UK	19
2.2.1 Lack of sponsors or mentors	20
2.2.2 Family/ Work commitments	21
2.2.3 Lack of access to networking groups and events.	21
2.2.4 Lack of access to line positions leading to board nomination impacting on acquiring Experience for top roles	22
2.2.5 Stereotypes and bias on the of ability of women to function on boards.	22
2.3 CAREER TRANSITION STAGES AND ASSOCIATED BEHAVIOUR.....	23
2.3.1 Entry into the labour market	24
2.3.2 Entry into the organization through employment	24
2.3.3 Advancement into senior management.....	25
2.4 UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOUR	26
2.4.1 Overachieving Behaviours.....	26
2.4.2 Invisibility behaviours	27
2.4.3 Adaptative behaviours.....	27
2.5 BEHAVIOUR AND LEADERSHIP: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES.....	29
2.5.1 Social Identity Theory	32
2.5.2 Agency Theory	34
2.5.3 Tokenism Theory	35
2.5.4 Critical Mass Theory	36
2.6 FACTORS MOTIVATING ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR	38
2.6.1 Territorial protection	39
2.6.2 Personal agenda to succeed	40
2.6.3 Collegiality	41

2.7 EMERGING CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: LINKING THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES	42
2.7.1 Emerging Conceptual framework	43
2.7.1.1 Connecting the dots: Building the conceptual framework	45
2.8 GAP IN LITERATURE	47
2.9 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	49
2.10 SUMMARY.....	50
 CHAPTER THREE: PILOT STUDY	52
3.0 INTRODUCTION	52
3.1 PILOT STUDY	52
3.1.1 Pilot study research process adopted	53
3.1.1.1 Recruitment of participants	53
3.1.1.2. Development of pilot study questions and interview guide	55
3.1.1.3 Interview timing and transcript generation	57
3.1.1.4 Data analysis process	58
3.1.1.4.1 Compiling data	58
3.1.1.4.2 Assembling, disassembling and reassembling data	59
3.1.1.4.3 Findings from emerging themes.....	75
3.1.1.5 Adopted verification process	79
3.1.2 Resources required for study	80
3.1.3 Management strategy for processes and resources.....	81
3.2 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY	82
3.3 MODIFIED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: ELUCIDATIONS FROM PILOT STUDY.....	83
3.3.1 Pilot study conceptual framework.....	84
3.4 SUMMARY	86
 CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY	88
4.0 INTRODUCTION	88
4.1 RESEARCH PATHWAYS OF INQUIRY	89
4.2 CONSIDERATION OF GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH PROCESS ADOPTED	89
4.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH	90
4.3.1 Positioning of this study	92
4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN	94
4.4.1 Selection of study's research design	95
4.4.1.1 Quantitative research design	95
4.4.1.2 Qualitative research design	96
4.4.1.3 Mixed methods research design	96
4.4.2 Justification of design selection.....	97
4.4.3 Data sources	98
4.4.4 Data collection.....	99
4.4.4.1 Interviews	99
4.4.4.1.1 Strengths of interviews	100
4.4.4.1.2 Weaknesses of Interviews	100

4.4.4.2 Observation	101
4.4.4.2.1 Strengths of observations	101
4.4.4.2.2 Weaknesses of Observation	102
4.4.4.3 Focus groups	102
4.4.4.3.1 Strengths of Focus groups	103
4.4.4.3.2 Weakness of focus groups	103
4.4.4.4 Case Study	104
4.4.4.4.1 Strengths of case study	104
4.4.4.4.2 Weakness of case study.....	104
4.4.5 Comparisons of qualitative techniques	105
4.4.6 Participants' recruitment.....	107
4.4.7 Data analysis	108
4.4.7.1 Addressing research questions	109
4.4.7.2 Generating transcripts and data coding	110
4.4.7.2.1 First order codes	118
4.4.7.2.2 Second order themes and analysis	121
4.4.7.3 Establishing composition of emergent themes	122
4.4.7.3.1 Composition of 'conformation to status quo theme.....	122
4.4.7.3.2 Composition of 'association of behaviour with success theme	124
4.4.7.3.3 Composition of 'influences on personality leading to behaviour theme	126
4.4.7.3.4 Composition of 'drive for career progression theme	127
4.4.7.3.5 Composition of 'willingness to support/promote other women progressing and securing top roles theme	127
4.4.7.3.6 Composition of 'women's responsiveness to the low number of women represented in senior management' theme	129
4.5 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN	132
4.5.1 Reliability of study	132
4.5.2 Validity of study	133
4.6 LIMITATIONS OF METHODOLOGY.....	134
4.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION	137
CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS	139
5.0 INTRODUCTION	139
5.1 STUDY FINDINGS	140
5.1.1 Conformation to status quo	141
5.1.2 Association of behaviour with success.....	142
5.1.3 Influences on personality leading to behaviour	142
5.1.4 Drive for career progression	143
5.1.5 Willingness to support/promote other women progressing and securing top roles.....	144
5.1.6 Women's responsiveness to the low number of women represented in senior management and boards	146
CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION	148

6.0 INTRODUCTION	148
6.1 ASPECT 1: THE IDENTIFICATION OF FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOUR IN SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND BOARDS	151
6.1.1 Element one: The adaptive behaviour	151
6.2 APECT 2: THE IDENTIFICATION OF A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOUR OF WOMEN IN SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND BOARDS AND THE LOW REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN SENIOR MANAGEMENT	158
6.2.1. Element two: Critical acts	160
6.2.2 Element three: Critical mass	162
6.2.3 Building the theoretical framework	165
6.3 AEPECT 3: THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE VICIOUS AND VIRTUOUS CYCLES WITHIN THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	175
6.4 SUMMARY.....	181
 CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION	184
7.0 INTRODUCTION	184
7.1 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH	187
7.1.1 Aspect 1: The identification of factors influencing the adaptive behaviour of women in Senior management and boards	189
7.1.2 Aspect 2: The identification of a relationship between the adaptive behaviour of women In senior management and boards and the low representation of women in senior of management	191
7.1.3 Aspect 3: The identification of the vicious and virtuous cycles within the theoretical framework	194
7.2 RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS	197
7.2.1 Research Implications of study	198
7.2.2 Research contributions of study	201
7.2.3 Practical contributions of study	203
7.3 RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE	204
7.4 PERSONAL REFLEXIVITY ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS	207
7.4.1 Researcher's personal and professional development	209
7.5 CONCLUSION.....	210
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	212
APPENDICES	268
 LIST OF TABLES	
Table 2.1: Davies steering group action recommendations	17
Table 3.1: Generated descriptive and analytic codes	64
Table 3.2: Generated descriptive and analytic codes cont.	65
Table 3.3: Example of responses referencing 'behaviour'	69
Table 3.4: Example of responses referencing 'Confidence'	72
Table 3.5: Example of responses referencing 'Opportunity'	74
Table 4.1: Strengths and weaknesses of research methods	97

Table 4.2: Summary of strengths and weaknesses of qualitative technique	107
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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.0: Percentage growth of women representation in senior management and boards in the UK from 2014 to 2021	3
Figure 2.1: Percentage growth in representation of women in FSTE 250 companies' leadership roles between 2017-2021	13
Figure 2.2: Recent change policies taken by businesses globally to achieve gender parity in senior management.....	14
Figure 2.3: Percentage increase of women in UK FSTE 250 companies from 2018-2021.....	18
Figure 2.4: Comparison of percentage increase of women in FSTE 250 companies in the UK and globally from 2018-2021	19
Figure 2.5: Career transition stages	25
Figure 2.6: Group types-proportional representation of two social categories (Male/Female)	35
Figure 2.7: Schema showing factors linking to motivation and actions of women in leadership roles.....	41
Figure 2.8: Connecting the dots in developing the conceptual framework	45
Figure 2.9 Emerging conceptual framework	47
Figure 3.1: Stages in the development of a semi-structured interview guide	57
Figure 3.2: Interview responses word cloud	59
Figure 3.3: Codes allocated to INT1	61
Figure 3.4: NVivo12 code matrix.....	66
Figure 3.5: Word tree for behaviour	68
Figure 3.6: Word tree for confidence	71
Figure 3.7: Word tree for opportunity	73
Figure 3.8: Modified conceptual framework.....	85
Figure 4.1: Schema of empirical exemplar descriptive codes and second order emergent themes	131
Figure 6.1: Determinants of adaptive behaviour	153
Figure 6.2: Behaviours associated with success	155
Figure 6.3: Factors influencing personality and behaviour	156
Figure 6.4: Factors that impact on women's career progression	158
Figure 6.5: Differing perspectives of gender inclusion policies	161
Figure 6.6: Initial conceptual framework from pilot study	166
Figure 6.7 Connecting influence on personality leading to behaviour, drive for	

Career progression, adaptive behaviour element and conformation to Status quo, and association of behaviour with success.....	171
Figure 6.8 Connecting influence on personality leading to behaviour, drive for Career progression adaptive behaviour element, critical acts element, progressing and to willingness women support/promote other securing top roles, women’s responsiveness to the low number of women represented in senior management , critical mass element.....	174
Figure 6.9: Developed theoretical framework	175
Figure 6.10: Highlighting the vicious cycle.....	177 and 195
Figure 6.11: Highlighting the virtuous cycle.....	179 and 196
Figure 6.12: Theoretical framework highlighting both vicious cycle.....	180 and 197
Figure 7.1: Adaptive behaviour element and related themes.....	190
Figure 7.2: Critical act element and related theme.....	191
Figure 7.3: Critical mass element and related theme.....	193
Figure 7.4: Developed theoretical framework.....	193

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with the background of the research in section 1.2 which provides context to the information discussed throughout the research. The research problem statement is presented in section 1.3, where the focus and relevance of the investigation is defined. Following insights offered by the problem statement, the research questions for this study will be developed and presented in section 1.4, followed by the objectives and significance of this study presented in section 1.5 and 1.6 respectively. In section 1.7, the scope of this study which defines the study's coverage parameters will be presented. The limitations of the study are stated in section 1.8, with a summary of the chapter presenting a road map of the research presented in section 1.9.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

The sustainability of any corporation is reliant on its ability to develop transient competitive strategy, innovation, and organizational change (He, 2012; McGrath, 2013). Studies show the basic talent pool of any organization should be versatile enough to allow for the generation of diverse innovation which in turn allows for transient competitive advantage (McGrath, 2013; Górska, 2016). In an environment where 'how', 'when' and 'where' businesses compete is constantly changing, harnessing, and utilizing leadership from diverse individuals in varying levels as a corporate strategy can be an effective way in achieving competitive advantage (McGrath, 2013; Górska, 2016).

The significance of diversity and inclusion, and its contributions to organizational performance is not an ethical notion, but a feasible model evidenced by empirical data (Arguden, 2012; CIPD, 2015). This study investigates an aspect of diversity and inclusion which relates to women represented in senior management and boards. I will be exploring women represented in senior management and boards, looking at factors behind the slow rate of career advancement of women into senior management. This is of importance as studies have argued the merits of a diverse management team far outweigh its demerits (Westphal & Milton, 2000; Cox & Beale, 2001; Williams, 2003;

Eagly et al., 2003; Levin & Mattis 2006; Smith et al., 2006; Karmer et al., 2006; Francoeur et al., 2007; Konrad et al., 2008; Adams & Funk, 2009; Marimuthu & Kolandaisamy, 2009; Nielsen, 2010). These studies show the implementation of diversity and inclusion in senior management produces differing leadership behaviours and perspectives necessary for effective change in organizational performance and outcomes (Cox & Beale, 2001; Erhardt et al., 2003; Williams, 2003; Adams & Ferreira, 2004; Campbell & Mínguez-Vera, 2008; Adams & Funk, 2009). This bolsters the argument that diversity and inclusion should be an essential element in today's organizational corporate strategy, structure, and culture (Machado et al., 2017; Francis & Michielsens, 2021).

Concerns over the low representation of women in senior management and boards has significantly risen in the United Kingdom and globally over the past two decades (Vinnicombe et al., 2009; Davies et al., 2011; Deloitte, 2020), with various countries in Europe proposing and implementing varied forms of action, legislation, and quotas aimed at increasing the presence of women in decision-making positions in organizations (Vinnicombe et al., 2009; Davies et al., 2011). Such policies have seen the rate of inclusion and nomination of women to leadership roles rise (Bernardi et al., 2006; Rose, 2007), resulting in a slow growth of representation of women in senior management and boards within organizations in Europe and the United Kingdom today (Daily et al., 1999; Arfken et al., 2004; Chen et al., 2014; Deloitte, 2022). According to the report presented by Deloitte (2022), UK figures show a growth in the representation of women on boards from 22.7% in 2018 to 30.1% in 2021 (see figure 1.0 below). Although the report shows a significant increased growth in women on boards holding chair positions from 4.2% in 2018 to 10.1% in 2021, it shows a 0.2% growth in the number of female CEOs and a 0.3% growth in the number of female CFOs in the UK between 2018 to 2021 (Deloitte, 2022).

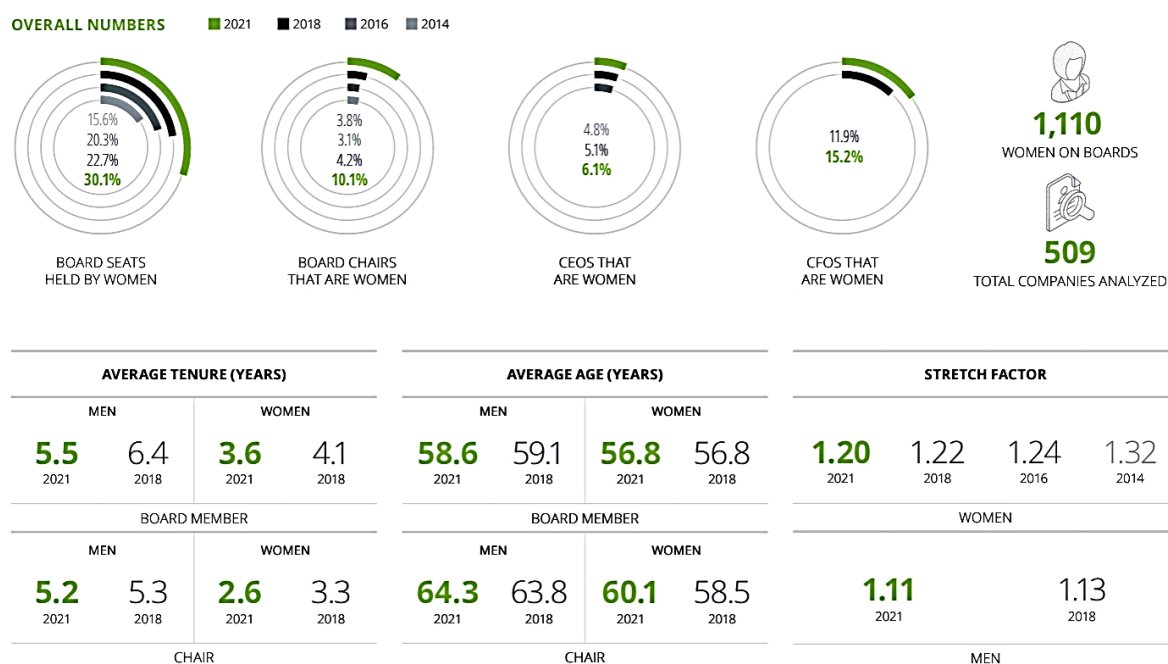


Figure 1.0: Percentage growth of women representation in senior management and boards in the UK from 2014 to 2021
Source: (Deloitte 2022)

Konrad et al. (2008), Terjesen and Singh (2008), Skaggs et al. (2012) and Dezsö and Ross (2012), argue that organizations with women on their boards tend to have a higher representation of women in senior management, as a degree of inclusion allows these female leaders some influence in the implementation of diversity-friendly policies in their organizations. This then makes way for the advancement of more women into senior management (Adams & Flynn, 2005). However, studies have presented findings suggesting that is not necessarily the case, with evidence of low representation of women in senior management roles within organizations that have women in leadership role or boards (Burke et al., 2000; Arfken et al., 2004; Catalyst, 2007; Vinnicombe et al., 2009).

However, studies such as Daily and Dalton (2003), Terjesen et al. (2009), Bear et al. (2010), Hoogendoorn et al. (2013), Carter et al. (2015), Quayle et al. (2019), and Ardito et al. (2020), go on to advocate the benefits of increasing the representation of women in senior management and boards such as better adherence to core values or Lower risk attitudes. See appendix 1 for table listing the merits and demerits of having women in senior management.

These benefits buttress the importance of having more women in leadership roles within organizations (Eagly et al., 2003; Daily & Dalton, 2003; Adams & Ferreira, 2009; Kang et al., 2010; Ardito et al., 2020; Brahma et al., 2020; Simionescu et al., 2021). See appendix 2 for table further listing studies arguing the benefits of increased representation of women in senior management and boards on organizational performance. Considering such benefits presented, an explanation for the current slow rate of women advancing into senior roles is uncertain (Singh et al., 2001; Mathisen et al., 2012; Crom, 2013; Gulamhussen & Santa, 2015; Gregorič et al., 2015; You, 2019).

1.3 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Studies have purported that increasing the representation of women in senior management and boards will result in a growth in the rate of advancement of women into senior roles (Dreher, 2003; Konrad et al., 2008). This perception was anchored on a premise that promoting a small number of women into leadership roles in male-dominated organizations will automatically improve opportunities for their aspiring female subordinates (Ellemers et al., 2012). However, studies also show that having more women in senior management and boards does not necessarily facilitate the advancement of other women to senior roles (Rindfleish & Sheridan, 2003; Ellemers et al., 2012). On the contrary, some studies argue that the presence of women in senior management and boards may undermine other women's advancement to senior roles, with findings showing that women leaders in male-dominated organizations may reproduce rather than challenge the existing gender-hierarchy (Rindfleish & Sheridan, 2003; Ellemers et al., 2012; Derks et al., 2016; Khilji & Pumroy, 2019). Such women may adapt their behaviour and leadership style to conform to the male-dominated organizational culture. And rather than create opportunities for women to advance to senior roles, become barriers themselves to the advancement of other women (Khilji & Pumroy, 2019). In Khilji and Pumroy (2019) this behaviour is denoted as a coping strategy, where women conform and assimilate into masculine culture or adapt a muted strategy, unaware of how their actions further reinforce masculine values and impacts on the career advancement of other women (Rindfleish & Sheridan 2003).

In Phelan and Rudman (2010), they argue that most existing organizational culture attribute leadership qualities as inherently more masculine characteristics. Studies argue that to be viewed as qualified for leadership positions, women are expected to exhibit characteristics where they present themselves as self-confident, assertive, and competitive (Phelan & Rudman, 2010; Yue & King, 2021). As women in senior management adopt certain behaviours to overcome their organizational expectations (Phelan & Rudman, 2010; Elsesser & Lever, 2011; Brescoll, 2016), a unique dilemma is created where they are faced with a choice between being respected but not liked by exhibiting characteristics associated with successful leaders or be liked but not respected by exhibiting more characteristic associated with their gender (Phelan & Rudman, 2010; Elsesser & Lever, 2011). Hence the adaptation behaviour of women in senior management and boards is at odds with current global perceptions on the establishment of diversity and inclusion in organization's senior management, as female managers attempt to prove themselves worthy of leadership roles by adapting their behaviour to conform to the expected stereotype of success (Elsesser & Lever, 2011). Studies have also shown that women in management adapt their behaviour due to the existence of intra-gender competition between women in their groups (Ellemers et al., 2004). In this instance, women in senior management may exhibit agency characteristics that are unemphatic, commanding and controlling towards other women in their line of succession, and devalue the competency of such women to enhance their own comparative worth (Elsesser & Lever, 2011; Loyd & Amoroso, 2018). This occurs out of a sense of competitiveness and territorial protection (Mizrahi, 2004; Elsesser & Lever, 2011; Latu et al., 2013; Derks et al., 2016). Although this behaviour may allow women in leadership to be effective in delivering results and raising their profile, it usually fails to support aspiring women and in turn limits opportunity for their career advancement (Ellemers et al., 2012; Sandler, 2014; Loyd & Amoroso, 2018).

There has been a plethora of studies that present barriers to the advancement of women into senior management and boards (Oakley, 2000; Schein, 2007; Kumra et al., 2016; Burke et al., 2016; van 't Foort-Diepeveen et al., 2021), but few have focused on how they impact on diversity and inclusion within their organizations (Hilal, 2015). Evidence of an association between the gender ratio of leadership representation with leadership behaviours is yet to be conclusively established, even though some studies

Indicate the existence of such a relationship (Konrad et al., 2000; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Abarca & Majluf, 2021). This consistent slow rate of women advancing into senior management and boards indicates that more investigation is needed into the factors that contribute to such under-representation. It is my submission that until we gain a holistic understanding of why women are still underrepresented in senior management and boards, we may not fully grasp an understanding of this phenomenon and develop effective solutions to address it.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

Considering the above discussion, two questions come to the forefront:

1. *Are the forces such as the need for territorial protection, a personal agenda to succeed, and collegiality, the prevailing influences behind the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards?*
2. *Does the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards impact on the rate of women advancing into senior roles, hence is responsible for the low representation of women in senior management?*

In addressing these questions, insights on the study area will be sought from exploring theoretical perceptions and reviewing existing literature.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The purpose of this investigation is aimed at three objectives, namely:

1. To explore the factors influencing the adaptive behaviour exhibited by women in senior management and boards within the United Kingdom.
2. To investigate links between the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards, and the rate of women advancing into senior roles. Hence its impact on the representation of women into senior management and boards.
3. To contributing insights towards the growing discussion on women in management, by being the first step in bringing awareness regarding this

behaviour and presenting it as a potential barrier to the advancement of women into senior management.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

There have been calls for research aimed at identifying and exploring factors that impact on the social and behavioral attributes of women in senior management and boards (Sarah & Mona, 2008; Dwivedi et al., 2014). These calls encourage exploration into the experiences and behaviour of such women (Davidson et al., 2000; Davidson et al., 2000; Seierstad, 2015; Glass & Cook, 2016). There are few studies that seek to understand how the behaviour and actions of women in senior management impact on diversity and inclusion issues within their organizations (Glass & Cook, 2016; Longman et al., 2018), and even fewer studies that explore the impact behaviours exhibited by women in senior management and boards has on the career advancement of women (Longman et al., 2018; Place & Vardeman-Winter, 2018). Existing studies on women in senior management and boards have only been explored by a small school of researchers in the women on boards area of study, with most of the research lacking useful development of theory (Terjesen et al., 2009; Vinnicombe, 2015). The degree of inclusion in decision-making processes by women in senior management, and their impact on the career advancement of other women within their organizations are currently under-researched (Vinnicombe et al., 2009; Place & Vardeman-Winter 2018).

With these in view, I surmise that: -

1. There is an awareness of the slow rate of advancement of women into senior management and boards within organizations in the UK (Ballenger & Stephen, 2010; Baker & Cangemi, 2016; Hunt et al., 2018; Rosenbach et al., 2019).
2. There are limited studies focused on how women in senior management and boards behave, how their behaviour impacts on the advancement of women into senior management, and their stance on supporting aspiring women to advance in their organizations (catalyst,1993; Krishnan, 2009; Ballenger & Stephen, 2010; Baker & Cangemi, 2016; Hunt et al., 2018; Rosenbach et al., 2019; Khilji & Pumroy 2019).

3. Given some barriers to women's advancement in management have been identified in existing studies, few studies attempt to highlight the cause for the consistent slow rate of advancement and low representation of women in senior management and boards (Khilji & Pumroy 2019).

As there currently is a lack of literature focusing on the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards with a view to establishing connections between it and the slow rate of female advancement into leadership roles, the theoretical framework developed in this study will not only identify factors that influences the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards, but also establishes the existence of a link between this behaviour and the slow rate of women advancing into senior management. The theoretical framework also presents the vicious cycle which signifies the point when and how this behaviour impacts negatively on the rate of advancement of women into senior management and boards, and the virtuous cycle which signifies when and how the behaviour of women in such senior roles positively impacts on the rate of women advancing into senior management.

The identification of these cycles contributes to enhance the research on the barriers to diversity and inclusion in senior management and boards, by highlighting the factors that impact on the advancement of women in management, hence impacting on female representation in senior management. This study also offers practical implications and contributions for organizational studies and corporate strategy through knowledge sharing and suggestions for future research. It stands as a source of information for the development and implementation of workable solutions and tools for addressing diversity and inclusion issues in management in organizations within the UK and globally.

1.7 SCOPE OF STUDY

This study seeks to address and understand the factors influencing the low representation of women in senior management. Studies argue that organizations with women in senior management and boards should have a higher representation of women in senior roles within these organizations (Bilimoria, 2006; Singh, 2008). However, statistics have shown this is not necessarily the case (Grant Thornton,

2021). Although both men and women are subject to behavioral change based on situations and personality (Kaiser & Hogan, 2011; Dalal et al., 2015; Green et al., 2018), this study will explore the impact of the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards on the rate of women advancing into senior management.

‘Gender’ is a category system made up of varying definitions and opened to interwoven interpretations (Lindqvist et al., 2020), physiology defines gender along the most fundamental level, designating people as male or female based on their observable biological anatomy (Eckes et al., 2000). However, socialization surrounds the basic facts of sexual form and function with a system of social rules and customs concerning what men and women are supposed to be and do (Kelan, 2010). To explore and identify the factors contributing to this phenomenon, this study will limit its scope to explore the adaptive behaviour tendencies of women in senior management and boards in varying industries within the United Kingdom, where diversity and inclusion will be examined from the perspective of participants who identify as women. Hence I will be utilizing a gender classification which refers to the distinction between biological sex of male and female.

Data analyzed for the literature review have been sourced from journals listed and ranked in the Academic journal guide 2021. Participants recruited for both the pilot and main study’s interviews comprise of women who have previously occupied or are currently occupying leadership positions in organizations within the private, public and third sector in the United Kingdom. In this study focus is not placed on the concept of their ‘leadership’ itself, but insights are generated through participants’ narrative regarding their perspectives and perceptions of their impact on the advancement of women in their organizations.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

Limitations identified in this study clearly maps out what the methodology or findings in the study can or cannot do. This relates to limitations regarding sample population and participant recruitment as well as limitations relating to my research methodology and design of study. Limitations relating to the degree of reliability and validity achieved in the interpretation and analysis of qualitative data are also identified. As

semi-structured interviews were utilized to generate data for this study, interview questions were designed to enable participants to reflect on and discuss lived experiences about their career trajectory. The interpretation of findings from the data generated will be the basis of analysis. Although some interview questions do lend themselves to yes/no answers, to counter this, probing questions will be asked as follow-up questions. The nature of qualitative data indicates replication of studies may not be achievable (Gioia et al., 2012). A detailed discussion on the limitations of this study is presented in section 4.6 of chapter four. However, although limitations in this study are highlighted, the validity of this study will be established by ensuring the accuracy of the research design and methods adapted. Internal validity will be achieved using multiple participants, digital recorded data, and low inference descriptors. The dependability of this study's findings will be achieved from the analysis, as findings will be subjected to a viva examination. External validity will be achieved by utilizing clear and detailed description of analytic constructs, premises, terms, and definitions. Methods of data collection, procedures and analysis will be explicitly documented and explained. The wording of my interpretation of findings has been presented to counter the danger of over-claiming what can be evidenced with the interviews, with findings presented as propositions as opposed to claims or generalized statements. Further discussions on reliability and validity in this study will also be elaborated upon in section 4.5 of chapter four.

1.9 SUMMARY- STUDY ROAD MAP

This research consists of seven chapters which are structured in the following sequence: -

1. *Chapter one - Introduction:* Chapter one introduces and provides an overview of the research by presenting the background content of the study. This chapter briefly explains the purpose and significance of the study by presenting insights into the phenomenon being studied, leading towards the foreshadowed problems to be addressed. The scope of the study and limitations that may arise in this study are also presented in this chapter.
2. *Chapter two - Literature review:* This chapter expands on the context of the study by exploring existing literature in a broader scholarly and historical context (Boote & Beile 2005). It not only presents the claims made in the

existing literature which enables me to distinguish what has been learned or accomplished, but also reveals existing gaps in the literature.

3. *Chapter three - Pilot study:* This chapter contains the pilot study conducted prior to the main study. The pilot study is a feasibility study that enables trial runs of planned methods to answer methodological questions and to guide the development of a robust research plan for the main study (Kim, 2010).
4. *Chapter four - Methodology:* This study's research methodology outlines the manner in which this research is conducted (Howell, 2013) and explains the methods of investigation adopted. Here, the study's research questions are addressed, presents the methodological structure of the study, and its justification (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012; Goundar, 2012; Howell, 2013). The philosophical positioning of the study will also be presented in this chapter.
5. *Chapter five - Findings:* The findings chapter contains the analysis of the data generated in the main study. As little or no predetermined theory or framework regarding the phenomenon being studied exists, an inductive approach to data analysis is adopted whereby the data itself generated for this study is utilized to derive the structure of analysis (Burnard et al., 2008). Each key finding is presented in subsections, using appropriate quotes from the data to illustrate those findings.
6. *Chapter six - Discussion:* In this chapter, the interpretation of findings generated from the data analysis is presented. Discussions on findings refrained from speculative interpretations of meaning and remained within the boundaries of the data and findings presented (Burnard, 2004).
7. *Chapter seven - Conclusion:* This chapter presents a summary of the research and offers closing statements with regards to the theoretical and practical implications of my research findings. Further discussions on limitations are presented along with reflections on my academic and personal development during this research process.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

In the past decade there has been growing attention on the diversity of executives and managers in senior management in organizations globally (Burke, 2003; Armstrong & Walby, 2012; Vinnicombe et al., 2015; Winters & Sharma, 2016; Jaekel & St-Onge, 2016; Warner & Corley, 2017; Hampton-Alexander Review, 2020). There has also been a focus on existing barriers that have impeded the advancement of women into leadership roles (Johns, 2013; Klemm Verbos & Vee E. Dykstra, 2014; Klenke, 2017; O'Lone & Webster, 2019), such as male-dominated organizational culture, structures, policies, family commitments and a lack of access to mentors or networks (Burke & Mattis, 2005; Ibrat, 2015; Kapasi et al., 2016; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2010; Al-Asfour et al., 2017; Kholis, 2017; Ganiyu et al., 2018).

There is a global drive for change regarding prevalent male-dominated cultures within organizations (Ibrat, 2015). It has been argued that for change to be effective, existing organizational values and practices regarding diversity and inclusion should focus on tailoring and implementing policies to address and facilitate diverse representation in management (Burke & Mattis, 2005; Hamel, 2009). The implementation of these new policies can result in increased rates of women advancing into varying levels of management (Linehan et al., 2001; Metz & Tharenou, 2001; Burke & Mattis, 2005; Hamel, 2009). This was proven in recent times by FTSE 250 companies, which are companies with 51% operational presence within the United Kingdom, whose performance closely impacts on the UK economy (Werner & Webley, 2009). These companies implemented business-led policies focused on ensuring equal access to developmental work opportunities and the creation of inclusive cultures within the UK (Grant Thornton, 2020), which led to a rise in the representation of women in senior management within FSTE 250 companies from 28.5% in October 2020 to 30.7% in October 2021 (KPMG, 2022).

However, despite the push for diversity in their senior management, statistics show that in 2019 only eight women held CEO roles in FTSE 250 companies in the United

Kingdom (Catalyst, 2020; Grant Thornton, 2020). Figure 2.1 below presents the percentage growth in the number of women in senior management and boards within FSTE 250 companies in the United Kingdom between the year 2017 and 2021. This shows an estimated growth of 6.4% in women represented in senior management in a span of four years.

FTSE 250 ²⁷		June 2017	June 2018	June 2019	October 2020	October 2021
Representation of Women in Leadership	-	24%	24.9%	27.9%	28.5%	30.7%
Number of Women in Leadership	-	2984	2964	3203	3243	3638
Number of Women on Executive Committee	-	318 (16.6%)	292 (16.3%)	319 (18.6%)	378 (21.7%)	433 (24.4%)
Number of Women Finance Directors ²⁹	-	-	-	30 (15.6%)	16%	33 (18.3%)
Number of Women HR Directors	-	-	-	114 (63.3%)	116 (64.8%)	123 (69.9%)
Number of Women Chief Information Officers	-	-	-	20 (11.7%)	15 (8.8%)	13 (7.5%)
Number of Women Co.Secretary/ General Counsel or joint role	-	-	-	97 (40.9%)	104 (43.5%)	109 (45.2%)
Total Leadership Roles	-	12414	11923	11491	11382	11848
Number of companies with 33% + (excl. Investment Trusts)	-	41(20%)	38 (20%)	52 (28%)	48 (27%)	65 (35.9%)
Number of All-Male Executive Committees	-	47	45	38	24	13

Figure 2.1: Percentage growth in representation of women in FSTE 250 companies' leadership roles between 2017-2021
Source: (KPMG, 2022, p.24)

Despite growing calls for the development and implementation of strategies to increase diversity and inclusion in leadership levels globally, 78% of global businesses still take no action to ensure increased diversity and inclusion within their senior management (Grant Thornton, 2020). The Grant Thornton 2020 report showed that only 26% of businesses globally are reviewing recruitment processes to focus on a need for diversity, and only 34% of businesses are actively creating an inclusive culture in their organization. Figure 2.2 below sets out some action plans being taken by businesses to achieve diversity and inclusion within their organization.

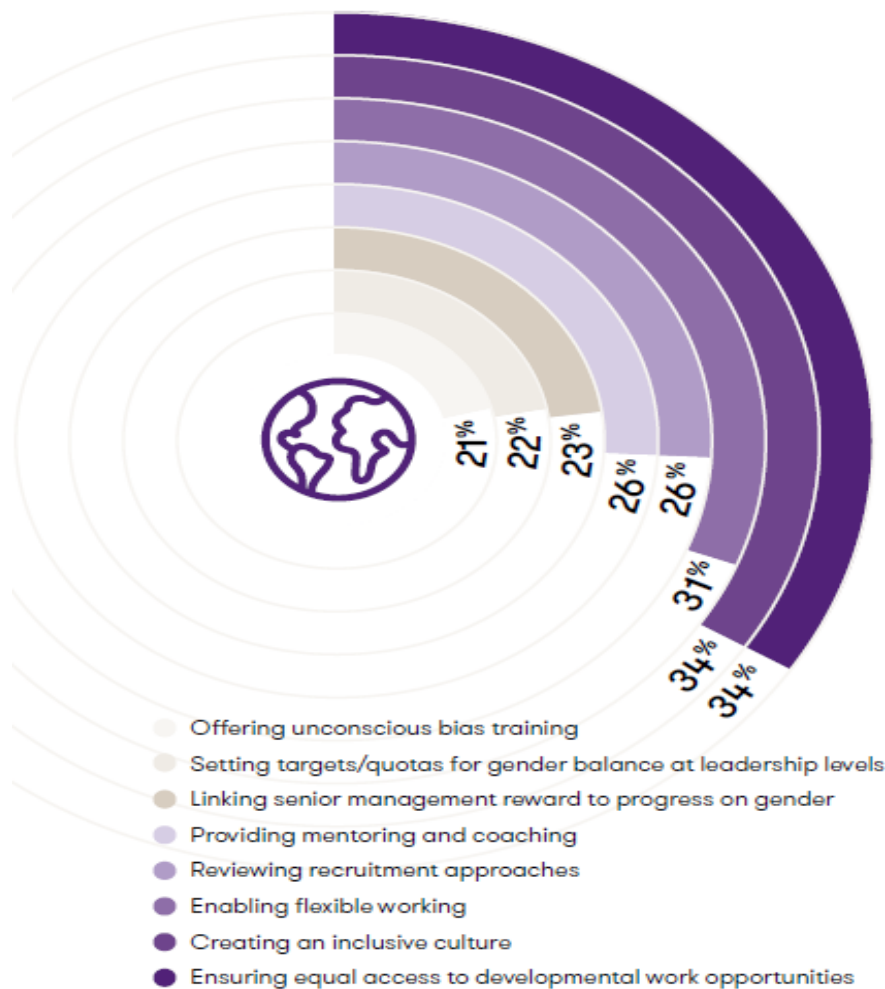


Figure 2.2: Recent change policies taken by businesses globally to achieve gender parity in senior level management
Source: Grant Thornton, 2020, p.6

According to the Hampton-Alexander Review (2021), there has been some increase in the representation of women in leadership positions within the United Kingdom. However, this increase has been slow and the number of women who occupy roles in senior management and boards remains low (Kapasi et al., 2016; Hampton-Alexander Review, 2021). Studies have argued that investigations into women in senior management are limited, looking at the impact such women have on the advancement of women into senior management within their organizations are limited (Schein, 1975; Noe, 1988; White, 1995; Shrader et al., 1997; Vinnicombe & Singh, 2002; Smith et al., 2006; Duffy et al., 2006; Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Burke & Mattis, 2010). Hence, there are insufficient insights on possible links between the actions and behaviour of women in senior management and boards, and its impacts on the advancement of women to senior management (Powell et al., 2008; Dwivedi et al., 2014). This research seeks to

address this by identifying the relationship between the behaviour of women in senior management and what impact this behaviour has on the rate of female career advancement into senior management.

In the following sections, existing literature from studies on women in senior management and boards is reviewed. Section 2.1 of this review will be an overview of women in management, looking at global and UK statistics on the representation of women in senior management and boards to gain an understanding of the number of women represented in senior management. These statistics are collected from grey data sources such as the World Economic Forum report on global gender gap, Grant Thornton reviews on women in business in the UK, and the Hampton-Alexander 2021 report on FTSE women in leadership, as well as the analysis of research/academic materials on the impact of the representation of women in senior management. In section 2.2 barriers that impede the advancement of women into leadership levels will be discussed giving deeper understanding of hindrances to the career advancement of women. In section 2.3, the varying stages women in management pass through as they advance in their careers and the influences that trigger their behavioral changes through their career transition stages will be discussed. In section 2.4, this study will explore the concept of 'behaviour', as we define and explore behaviours exhibited by women in senior management as identified in Kanter (1977) and Khilji and Pumroy (2019), hence justifying the selection of the adaptive behaviour for this study. In section 2.5, insights from theoretical perspectives on behaviour are explored. Factors motivating the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management are then identified and discussed in section 2.6. With insights gained from the literature review, an emerging conceptual framework is developed in section 2.7. In section 2.8, gaps discovered in existing literature on the study area are identified and discussed, followed by the presentation of this study's research questions in section 2.9. Finally, in section 2.10, a summary of the literature review, highlighting the main argument/claim of this study and evidence supporting the rationale of the study is presented.

2.1 PREVALENCE OF WOMEN IN SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND BOARDS IN THE UK

In the United Kingdom, women are estimated to constitute a growing percentage of the total workforce with the number of women in management growing to 34%, compared to the European Union average of 33% (Burke et al., 2016). However, despite policy changes aimed at increasing the representation of women in senior management within the UK, women are mostly in low paying and low status employments and hold less than one third of the most influential jobs (Davidson & Cooper, 1993; Burke et al., 2016). Most senior managerial positions and board membership were found to be held predominantly by middle age able-bodied white men (Gatrell & Swan 2008), with approximately 32% of managers within the UK corporate sector being women (Consultancy UK, 2022). As of October 2019, 8% of such women hold non-executive director positions (Higgs, 2002; Burke & Vinnicombe, 2005; Catalyst, 2020).

In 2021 despite calls for more representation of women in senior management and boards in the United Kingdom, female advancement to leadership positions is still significantly low compared to their male counterparts (Andrew & Deborah, 1993; Oakley, 2000; Terjesen et al., 2009; Da Silveira et al., 2014), with a higher share of men occupying senior management roles at 14% compared to women at 9% (House of commons: UK parliament, 2021). There has been considerable effort by European countries including the United Kingdom to bridge the gaps in the representation of women in boards through the establishment of policies and 'quota systems', as well as the planning of proposals that set minimum sanctions for companies that fail to imbibe equal pay in their remuneration structures (Adams & Ferreira, 2009; Dezsö & Ross, 2012; Fitzsimmons, 2012; Skroupa, 2017; European Commission, 2017; Catalyst, 2018). From 2005 to date, these policies have begun to create opportunities in the European business environment, where women have advanced to senior positions within public listed companies (Rubery et al., 1999; Sweigart, 2012; OECD, 2017), resulting in a growing presence of women in senior management and boards in organizations across Europe and in the United Kingdom (Terjesen et al., 2014).

In 2011, a committee lead by Lord Mervyn Davies commenced efforts to improve gender balance in organizations within the United Kingdom, aiming to ensure women occupy 25% membership of FTSE 250 companies' boards by the year 2015 (Davies Review, 2015; House of commons: UK parliament, 2021). Using a voluntary business-led framework, with no influences from the United Kingdom government or the use of European Union legislative intervention policies, this framework saw companies adapting ten actionable recommendations submitted by the Davis steering group (Davies Review, 2015; House of commons: UK parliament, 2021). The actions recommended by the Davies steering group are listed in table 2.1 below.

SNo	Recommendations	Actions
1	Target of 25%	FTSE 100 companies to achieve a minimum of 25% women on boards by 2015.
		FTSE 250 to aim for same 25% target in longer timeframe
2	Gender Breakdown Disclosure	FTSE 350 companies to disclose proportion of women on board, in senior executive positions and across company as a whole. Effective from October 2013.
3	FRC Requirement for Board Diversity Policy	Financial Reporting Council (FRC) to amend UK Corporate Governance Code to require listed companies to establish boardroom diversity policies
4	Company Disclosures and Transparency	FTSE 350 companies to report on aspirational targets for women on boards, gender breakdown in the organization and their board diversity policy
5	Nominations Committee Disclosure	FTSE 350 companies to make meaningful disclosures about their search and appointment process and how diversity is addressed in their organization
6	Role of Investors	Proactive engagement and action from Investors on gender with FTSE 350 companies
7	Advertising Opportunities	Periodic advertising of non-Executive positions by FTSE 350 companies:
8	Executive Search Firms Voluntary Code of Conduct	Industry standard Code of Conduct to be drawn up by the Executive Search community, to redress gender balance and promote best practice
9	Supporting Women, Growing the Talent Pipeline	Identifying and investing in talented women
10	The role of the Davies Steering Group	Steering Group to meet every 6 months to discuss and monitor progress

Table 2.1: Davies Steering Group Action Recommendations
Source: Davies Review, 2015, p.57

In 2018, building on the breakthroughs achieved by the Davies review, the Hampton-Alexander Review reported that attaining 25% representation of women on British corporate boards has almost been achieved at 24.9% (Hampton-Alexander Review, 2018). However, progress leading up to that achievement had been slow, with the rate of nomination to boards being one to every three vacancies going to women (Hampton-Alexander Review, 2018). The report revealed that 78% of appointments to executive committees on UK boards, and 69% of newly available executive roles were occupied or went to men, even though qualified women had applied and were

available for such roles (Hampton-Alexander, 2018). However, a new report by Grant Thornton (2020), on 'women in business', showed a slight increase in the representation of women in senior management and boards in the UK in 2019. This was mostly due to the wave of attention on diversity and inclusion brought about by gender pay gap reporting (Grant Thornton, 2020). Statistics on FTSE 250 women in management shows an increase in the percentage of women on FTSE 250 boards from 27.9% in 2018, to 28.5% in 2019, to 31.9% in 2020, and 34.9% in 2021 (GOV.UK, 2021; Cranfield University, 2021). Figure 2.3 below is a graphical representation of the percentage increase of women in UK FTSE 250 organizations.

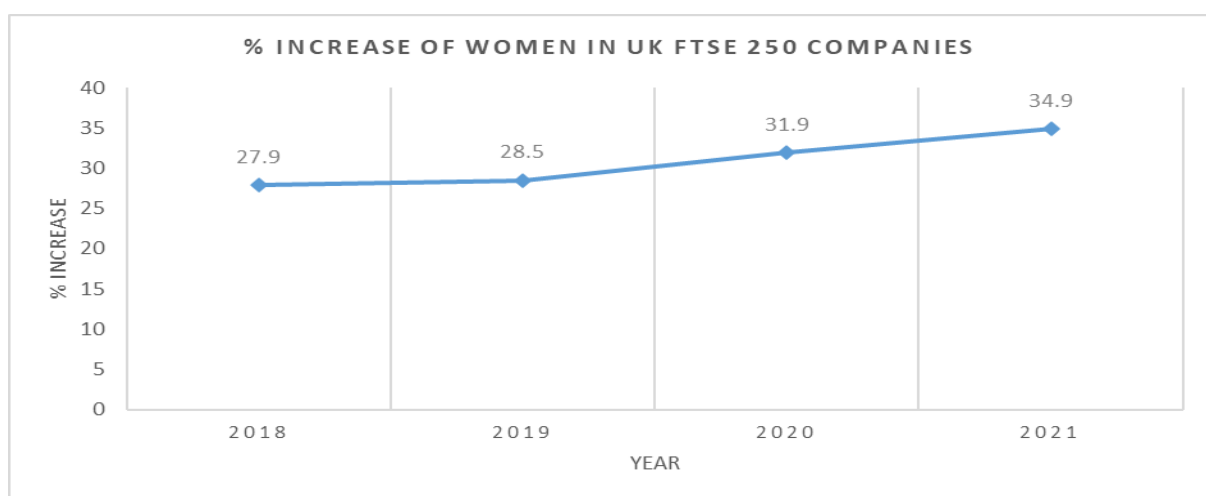


Figure 2.3: Percentage increase of women in UK FTSE 250 companies from 2018-2021

The figures show the rate of women represented in senior management and boards in the UK is higher compared with global figures, with an average increase of representation in FTSE 250 companies of approximately 7.1 % between 2018 and 2021 in the UK compared to the global average increase at 3.8%. Figure 2.4 below presents this comparison.

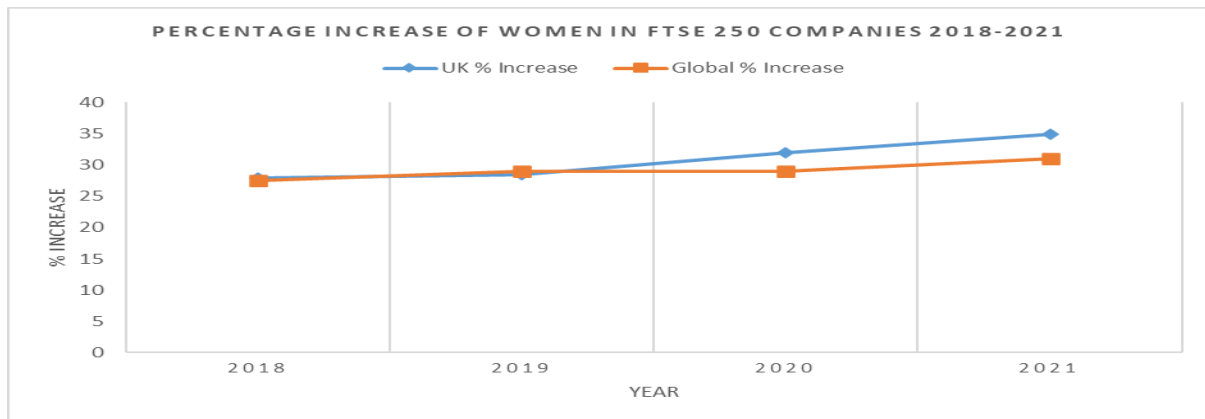


Figure 2.4: Comparison of percentage increase of women in FTSE 250 companies in the UK and globally from 2018-2021

Although studies argue that the number of qualified women available for leadership positions is on the rise (Elmuti et al., 2009; Shin & Bang, 2013), figures 2.3 and 2.4 above show a slow rate of increase in the number of women advancing into senior management and boards in the UK and globally. This indicates the existence of barriers hindering a faster rate of women's progression into senior management. Hence, to understand the factors impacting on the rate of advancement being recorded for women in management in the UK, this study will explore barriers identified in existing studies in the next section.

2.2. BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S CAREER ADVANCEMENT INTO SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND BOARDS IN THE UK

The socialization of gender sees the characteristics of women/girls and men/boys through social constructs that associates these groups not only with certain norms and behaviours but defines their interactions with each other in varied societies (WHO, 2024). Social and economic factors such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, age etc, exert influence on individuals to change attitudes and behaviors to conform to ideologies and behaviours regarded as desirable and appropriate within their organizations and society at large (Turner et al., 2001; Guhin et al., 2021). Over time these social constructs create hierarchies that give rise to inequalities and barriers to certain groups over others in varying facets of their lives (WHO, 2024).

Looking at women's career pathway and advancement, there have been a surplus of studies on the barriers to women achieving elevated professional success (Jackson &

O'Callaghan, 2009; Lewis-Enright et al., 2009; Vinnicombe et al., 2009; Johns, 2013; Verbos & Dykstra, 2014; Klenke, 2017; O'Lone & Webster, 2019). These studies show that women who weave through the labyrinth of career advancement towards leadership roles enjoy higher wages, greater respect, and more authority (Eagly & Carli 2009). However, in contrast with the relatively straight career path available to men (Gorman & Kmec, 2007; Ibarra et al., 2010), such women must exert more effort and traverse the labyrinth more carefully to overcome barriers (Eagly & Carli, 2009; Carli & Eagly, 2016; Philips & Grandy, 2018; Khilji & Pumroy, 2019). These barriers are discussed in the following subsection.

2.2.1 Lack of sponsors or mentors

Nomination to both executive and non-executive positions on boards is to some degree, dependent on references or recommendations made by existing board chairpersons and executives, who act as mentor or sponsors to their nominees (Burke et al., 2000; Burgess & Tharenou, 2002). While some organizations have nominating committees whose role it is to nominate candidates for executive roles, most FTSE 250 companies ascribe that responsibility to the chairperson of the board (Main, 1993; Burgess & Tharenou, 2002). Mentors or sponsors are usually executive members of boards that tend to move in the same social and professional circles and are more inclined to refer or work with people that they are comfortable with (Noe, 1988; Walt & Ingley, 2003). In the UK, there has been concerns expressed on the influence of the 'old boys club' across FTSE 250 companies, with regards appointments to senior management roles and boards, as the vast majority of non-executive appointments into boards were made without formal advertisement, application, or interviews (Singh et al., 2008). Mentorship plays a very important role in career advancements (Noe, 1988; Mattis, 2001; Francis, 2017; Harmon & Williams, 2020). Few women have the opportunity to acquire such mentors (Headlam-Wells et al., 2005; Baugh & Sullivan, 2005; Kay et al., 2009), with existing studies highlighting the route and access to acquiring mentors and the privileges that stem from such relationships have been restricted to an elite group of senior women managers (Vinnicombe & Singh, 2011; Vinnicombe & Bank, 2015; Thew, 2016; Ivey & Dupré, 2020). These routes are not readily available or accessible to aspiring

women starting off in their careers (Vinnicombe & Singh, 2011; Vinnicombe & Bank, 2015; Thew, 2016; Ivey & Dupré, 2020).

2.2.2 Family commitments.

Women usually have the additional role of being caregivers to their families (Friedman & Weissbrod, 2005). Hence balancing careers with the demands of looking after a family has been highlighted in studies to have an overwhelming impact on women's commitment to work (Powell et al., 2002; Coltrane, 2004; Clarke, 2005; Guillaume & Pochic, 2009; Crutchfield, 2017). Studies show that breaks in career progression when taking maternity leave or time-off to care for family members reduces women's viability and interrupts the acquiring of skills and experiences necessary to advance into senior management jobs (Ackah & Heaton, 2004; Clarke, 2005). Studies also show that the unequal division of labour in family caregiving sees women staying at home for longer periods of time after childbirth, returning to work to take up part-time roles, and widening the gap in acquiring job experience compared with their male colleagues (Liff & Ward, 2001; Williams & Segal, 2003; Grosvold et al., 2007; Haake, 2017). The experience these women do have, is usually not recognized, or valued (Nelson & Burke, 2000; Terjesen, 2005; Grummell et al., 2009; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Holgersson, 2012; Saadin et al., 2016; Semere et al., 2016).

2.2.3 Lack of access to networking groups and events.

The consequence of women having fewer opportunities to access mentors and sponsors compared to their male counterparts, is a lack of access to be part of or attain membership of networking groups or events (Tonge, 2008; Al-Ahmadi, 2011; Ozkazanc-Pan & Clark Muntean, 2018). These groups or events provide the exposure necessary for prospective candidates to showcase themselves, gain information on available opportunities and acquire the caliber of referees/sponsors that can impact on their advancement (Oakley, 2000; Linehan, 2001; Linehan & Scullion, 2008; Wang, 2009; Kakabadse et al., 2015; Luc et al., 2018). This lack of access to would-be mentors obstructs the establishment of interactions that are needed to generate the mentor/sponsor relationships that facilitate and influence

attainment to executive positions in corporations (Noe, 1988; O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005; Harmon & Williams, 2020).

2.2.4 Lack of access to line positions leading to board nomination impacting on acquiring experience for top roles.

Most women do not occupy line positions that transition into senior management roles or board membership (Conyon & Mallin, 1997; Adams & Flynn, 2005; Litzky & Greenhaus, 2007). Hence they lack adequate experience necessary to meet existing requirements for such roles (Oakley, 2000; Ryan & Haslam, 2007). Nominations to executive roles on boards require candidate to have previous 'CEO level experience' which few female managers possess as they have mostly occupied positions in middle management (Ryan & Haslam, 2007).

2.2.5 Stereotypes and bias on the ability of women to function on boards.

From the early years of an individual's life, the process of socialization gives rise to the enforcement of stereotypical beliefs and gender bias that contributed to the creation of inequalities between varying groups (York, 1988; Tobin et al., 2010). These stereotypical beliefs influence and creates a culture where women are characterized to be supportive and submissive in their manner, activities, and interactions with others, while men are seen as strong leaders (Handel, 2006). The influence of gender stereotyping continues to exist in many societal activities and occupational domains till this day, and weights in on the resistance in nominating women to senior management and boards (Nielsen & Huse, 2010; Galbreath, 2011). These biases stem from generalized belief on what women are, how they should behave and the leadership styles they adapt in the execution of their duties (Heilman, 2001; Vinkenburg et al., 2011). These stereotypes categorize women as emotionally, submissive, or lacking in ambition (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989; Bilimoria & Piderit, 1994; Nielsen & Huse, 2010), and suggests women are not suited for certain managerial roles that require some degree of assertiveness, or competitiveness (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989; Bilimoria & Piderit, 1994; Nielsen & Huse, 2010). The nurturing stereotype presents women as more suited as family care providers, unable to give the commitment or bear the immense responsibilities such senior managerial roles carry (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Bielby & Bielby, 1989; Duxbury & Higgins,

1991; Rosener, 1995; Svalfors et al., 2001; Van Der Boon, 2003; Trzebiatowski & Triana, 2018).

With these insights gained this study recognizes that such barriers can and do obstruct women from advancing into senior management and boards (Sheridan & Milgate, 2003; Carrasco et al., 2014), and this will be further discussed in the context of the findings of this research. However, despite improved policies in addressing these barriers (Oakley, 2000; Adler, 2002; Reinhold, 2005; Hewlett & Rashid, 2010; Barsh & Yee, 2011; Tatli et al., 2013; Hampton-Alexander Review, 2017), the recruitment and advancement of women into senior management and boards still proves to be a sporadic and challenging feat (Seo et al., 2017; Rincón et al., 2017; Lawrence et al., 2018; Merluzzi & Phillips, 2019; Duchek et al., 2020; Grant Thornton, 2021).

After exploring the barriers that may hinder women advancing into senior management, I now turn my focus on women in senior management roles and their behaviour as they advance in their careers. Ragins and Sundstrom (1989) show that women go through stages in their career transitions, in which they develop behaviours as they relate with their roles or work environment. Factors within these transition stages motivate their behaviour and determine their propensity to impact on diversity and inclusion policies within their organizations (Ragins & Sundstrom 1989). These career transition stages and factors will be discussed in the next subsection.

2.3 CAREER TRANSITION STAGES AND ASSOCIATED BEHAVIOUR

Studies show women are subjected to or influenced by various factors that impact on their career choice, decision-making, and behaviour (Quimby & Santis, 2006; Domenico & Jones, 2007; Malik & Al-Emran, 2018). Socio-cultural or economic factors such as education, social class, religion/beliefs/values, income, and opportunity influence specific stages of their careers, and impact on the development of differing values, perspectives, and behaviour (Bain & Cummings, 2000; Whitmarsh et al., 2007; Trauth et al., 2008). These factors also influence their propensity to adapt their behaviour (Powell, 2009; Woolfolk & Margetts, 2012; Ormrod et al., 2019). Ragins and

Sundstrom (1989) identified that women pass through three stages of career transition in their trajectory. These stages are expanded below.

2.3.1 Entry into the labour market.

This stage is the initial stage of entry into the labour market. Sullivan (1999) show in this stage women's behaviour is anchored on choice, as this is when a decision to have a job or to plan for a career is made. At this stage decisions made are the bedrock of the career trajectory, with factors that impact on the career choice at this stage being socio-system factors such as educational achievements, economic factors, gender-role, a need for identity, or societal stereotypes (Sullivan, 1999, O'Neil & Bilimoria 2005; Bataille 2012).

2.3.2 Entry into the organization through employment

At this stage, entry-level employment into an organization is achieved (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). This entry is impacted by factors such as women's ability to access information on vacancies or to access informal or formal job networking groups (Crowell, 2004). At this stage organizational cultures and structures are potent influences on the individual's behaviour. As 'person-organization' fit impacts on job satisfaction and organizational commitment (O'Reilly et al., 1991), the individual aligns her values and ambition with company missions and vision and begin to function according to organizational practices and culture (Lau & Murnighan, 1998; Dzubinski et al., 2019). Advancement for promotion relies on the forming of work relationships, or networking with peers and persons of influence within the organization (Kram & Isabella, 1985). As these mentors or persons of influence are likely to be men, women may be inclined to adapt their behaviour to simulate such persons to gain acceptance (Kanter, 1977). It is most likely at this stage that adaptation of their behaviour begins to develop as acceptance into power groups within their organization or society is sought, as the confidence in their ability to effectively execute their roles grows (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). At this stage women are motivated to achieve advancement, spurred on by a personal need for power, influence, or a need to protect their position within the organization (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005).

2.3.3 Advancement into senior management

At this stage women advance into senior roles. Factors such as the individual's personality traits, qualifications, social and occupational background, or professional networks, has influenced their career trajectory (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005; Cordova-Wentling & Thomas, 2006). Success for women in this stage comes in the form of recognition and respect, and their career paths are likely to be stable (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005; Cordova-Wentling & Thomas, 2006). As mentorship or subordinate support is crucial for advancement, work relationships formed at this stage are strategic (O'Neil & Bilimoria 2005; Cordova-Wentling & Thomas, 2006). To form such relationships, women behave in a manner that allows acceptance or belonging to power groups. Other interpersonal factors such as tokenism impact on behaviour at this stage (O'Neil & Bilimoria 2005; Cordova-Wentling & Thomas, 2006; Saadin et al., 2016).

As highlighted in the above discussion, each career transition stage sees women encounter varied barriers, experiences, and opportunities that shape behaviour (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). Insights suggest that the adaptive behaviour of women may develop between the 'entry into the organization' and the 'advancement to senior positions in management' career stages and may be driven by a need for career progression (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). Figure 2.5 below shows the three career transition stages and factors that influence behaviour at each stage.



Figure 2.5: Career transition stages
(Modified from source: Ragins and Sundstrom, 1989, p. 53)

To further understand the nuances behind the behaviour of women in senior management and boards, this study explores the concept of 'behaviour' itself, seeking

to highlight the varying behaviours adapted by women in senior management and the possible factors influencing them. This provides insights needed to address the first research question raised in this study.

2.4 UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOUR

Studies present behavior as an offshoot of an individual's personality and identity (Tyler & Blader, 2001; Lee et al., 2006). Where personal identity reflects distinctive differences from person to person, social identity is derived from group membership or belonging (Madrigal, 2001; Burke & Hogg, 2018). Hence, an individual is likely to either adapt behaviour to mimic the values or practices within a group in circumstances where social categorization is made prominent or resist conformity when personal identity is salient (Madrigal, 2001; Hogg & Terry, 2014; Hackel et al., 2017; Burke & Hogg, 2018).

Holdershaw and Gendall (2008), argue women exhibit varied behaviours in life depending on the experiences they have encountered. These experiences lead to the formation of varying perspectives and attitudes, which influences their behaviour (Labaw, 1982; Holdershaw & Gendall, 2008). An individual's perspectives are key determinants of their behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1970; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011) and can be subject to other people's influence such as friends, family, or colleagues (Sutton, 1998; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011; Foxall, 2014). According to Kuhl et al. (1985), behaviour may also be influenced by situational factors that are not under a person's control, such as the requirement of certain abilities or resources, which impinge on an individual's ability to act or respond in specific ways. Hence the individual adapts behaviour to correspond with the situation (Allen & Butler, 1993; Andreasen, 1995; Holdershaw & Gendall, 2008).

According to Kanter (1977), women in senior management exhibit three prominent behavioral patterns. These will be expanded on below.

2.4.1 Overachieving Behaviours

Kanter (1977) argues that women in senior management and boards are usually under-represented, and such women react to performance pressures and

expectations by putting in extra effort in achieving set targets (Buono & Kamm, 1983; Olsson & Walker, 2004; Servon & Visser, 2010; Malley, 2019). According to Groysberg and Bell (2013), female board members express that their male counterparts have created hostile board cultures that fail to listen to female board members or accept them as equals (Kanter, 1977; Capezio & Mavisakalyan, 2016; Belasen, 2017). This creates a situation where female board members continually strive to re-establish their credentials and outperform their male counterparts to justify their worth (Groysberg & Bell, 2013). Women often encounter resistance if their behaviour differs from the existing status quo, hence they exhibit extreme competency and often strive to promote themselves and their achievements given the opportunity to do so (Belasen, 2017). The motivation to overcome negative gender-role stereotyping also pushes women to overachieve in their roles (van Knippenberg et al., 2004; Chrisler et al., 2010; Capezio & Mavisakalyan, 2016).

2.4.2 Invisibility behaviours

Women on boards are usually the victims of stereotypes as they become representatives of their gender on the board and not regarded as individuals (Kanter, 1977; Groysberg & Bell, 2013). Due to their underrepresentation in senior roles, women often view themselves as the out-group while their male counterparts constitute the in-groups (Turner et al., 2001; Mathisen et al., 2012). In Kanter (1977). Women may react to this environment by attempting to become invisible or limit the awareness of their physical presence or efforts (Kanter; 1977). Kanter (1977) also argues that woman sometimes feel prominent in such roles, hence they attempt to draw as little attention to themselves as possible (Kanter, 1977; Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011). Kay and Shipman (2014) argue the higher a woman's position in management, the more she makes a conscious effort to play down her volubility and visibility(Kanter, 1977; Kay & Shipman, 2014).

2.4.3 Adaptative behaviours

The self-categorization theory introduced by Turner et al. (1987) proposed that an individual's social identity is an integral part of their self-concept as they see themselves as members of social groups. Hence the norms and expectations of such groups drive their behaviour (Turner et al., 1987; Vinnicombe et al., 2013). In this

theory, Turner et al. (1987) proposed the Identity-fit model of career motivation, sees women adapt behaviour more than their male counterparts due to the social context and differing workplace experiences. The model suggests that if women perceive themselves as prototypical members of their organization especially as leaders, acceptance into organizational membership becomes part of their self-concept (Vinnicombe et al., 2013). Hence their attempt to fit in, leading to their career progression and occupational success (Van Dick et al. 2004; Vinnicombe et al., 2013).

In Kanter (1977), women on boards seek acceptance into the dominant group by adapting their behaviour that are prevalent with the dominant group (Singh & Vinnicombe, 2004). This adaptation of behaviour may arise through conscious, or unconscious effort (Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Campbell, 2004; Mavin et al., 2014). These women adapt needs and styles like those of male leaders, and as they pursue the non-traditional role of a leader they reject feminine roles (Singh & Vinnicombe, 2004; De la Rey, 2005). They mimic the dominant group's ideologies and accept their culture processes; essentially becoming 'one of the boys' (Singh & Vinnicombe, 2004; De la Rey, 2005). They may even join social events so not to be left out of important discussions that happen in such circles (Groysberg & Bell 2013). They often strive to prove their loyalty by defining themselves as unique exceptions of their gender and might even work against women's advancement in an organization in their bid to gain acceptance, inadvertently impacting negatively on the progress of other women to such positions (Kanter, 1977).

Khilji and Pumroy (2019) developing on Kanter (1977), argue that as such women seek to progress in their careers, they conform to assimilate into the existing masculine organizational culture distancing themselves from other women and lowering their ambition (Kanter, 1977; Liff & Ward, 2001; Thomson et al., 2005; Harman & Sealy, 2017; Eagly et al., 2003; Belasen, 2017; Khilji & Pumroy, 2019). Studies also show that such women engage in competition for perceived scarce resources, such as gaining their male counterparts' acceptance or approval (Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Campbell, 2004; Mavin et al., 2014), and engage in exclusionary tactics which stigmatize, or ostracize aspiring women from advancing (Campbell, 2004; Mavin et al., 2014).

The above insights indicate that of the three behaviours identified, the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards has a more negative impact on the advancement of women into senior management (Kanter, 1977; Thomson et al., 2005; Beckwith, 2007; Khilji & Pumroy, 2019). Hence this study's objective is to investigate this behaviour and the probable factors that may influence it. To further understand the motivation behind this behaviour, I explored insights from theoretical perspectives looking at the concept of 'behaviour' as it relates to 'leadership', and seeking factors that motivate the change in women's behaviour in senior management.

2.5 BEHAVIOUR AND LEADERSHIP: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Leadership and behaviour are stated to be contextual and are influenced by the power relationships among the participants (Madden, 2003; Larsson & Vinberg, 2010; Yukl, 2013; Silva, 2016). Contemporary leadership behaviour research has come under criticism for lacking theoretical foundation (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013; Behrendt et al., 2017). Earlier theories had focused on charisma, or the characteristics of leadership as they highlight behaviours attributed to successful leaders (Behrendt et al., 2017), with more recent theorists focusing on the description of dimensions of team and collaborative leadership (Chin, 2004).

Underrepresentation and the existence of gender bias frame the context of leadership for women, with current theories on leadership typically omitting discussions of gender within the principles of diversity and inclusion (Chin & Day, 2014). Although current organizational cultures remain male dominated and seldom strive toward gender-equitable work environments, ethics-based leadership, diversity leadership, and collaborative-transformational leadership styles ascribed to women leaders are important concepts in leadership today (Chin & Day, 2014). And although the behaviour of men and women leaders are similar, leadership and behaviour for women remains a very different experience with few existing theories developed from the study of leadership among women (Chin & Day, 2014).

Feminist theories such as radical, Marxist, liberal, and postmodern feminism, attempt to bridge this gap by exploring the experiences of women leaders to understand the

pervasive and persistent gender discrimination, inequality, and women's oppression in society (Hooks, 2000; Lorber, 2001; Kark, 2004). These theories believe the socially constructed expectations on attitudes and behaviors of both women and men are components of social life which values men and masculinity over women and femininity (Greer et al., 2003). However, these theories vary according to their explanations of the underlying cause for women's underrepresentation in senior management (Lorber, 2001; Harnois, 2005) and the ways in which women's advancement in the workplace or in society can be achieved (Kark, 2004). Feminist theories recognize that gender privilege varies across different groups of women and men, and do not treat women or men as homogenous groups (Greer et al., 2003; Chafetz, 2004). However, these theories do not focus on the behaviour of women leaders in relation to other women, but mainly focus on systems and structures in place that are barriers against the advancement of women in management, presenting women as victims of male dominance (O'Donohue et al., 1997; Marlow, 2020).

In Eagly (1987), the differences in behaviour of women in senior management compared to their male counterparts corresponds to women's cultural and societally defined gender roles. And since leadership is not ascribed as one of these gender roles (Eagly, 1987; Chin, 2004), women were not portrayed as effective leaders. The undervaluation of women's effectiveness as leaders was supported by several theoretical perspectives including lack of fit theory (Heilman, 2001), role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), expectation states theory (Berger et al., 1977; Ridgeway, 2011), and the think manager–think male paradigm (Schein, 2007). These were further explored by feminist theories in providing a partial answer to the understanding of this undervaluation (Kark, 2004).

However, despite research arguing that men may be perceived as better suited and more effective leaders than women (Eagly et al., 1992; Carroll, 2006), studies have found the opposite was the case as women in leadership roles are considered an advantage in modern organizations (Conlin, 2003; Smith, 2009; Williams, 2003; Berkery et al., 2013). Berkery et al. (2013) argued that this advantage stems from the belief that women are more likely than men to adopt collaborative leadership styles and behaviour, with men exhibiting more assertive and controlling characteristics.

However, this has been criticized among leadership and gender researchers, proposing that studies should not focus on 'if' there is a perceived gender difference in leadership styles but rather focus on 'why' there are perceived gender differences in leadership effectiveness and 'when' those differences occur (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Vecchio, 2003). De la Rey (2005) argued that behaviour of leaders should not only be categorized based on biological differences between men and women, nor viewed from societal/socialization practices and sex roles but should be studied based on the development of behaviours in leadership and how these behaviour; which are mostly masculine, become dominant and privileged (De la Rey, 2005).

As this study explores changes in behaviours of women in management, I begin by exploring if the concept of 'leadership' has an impact on the adoption of perspectives and behaviour exhibited by women in senior management. Leadership involves managing benefits to the organization and realizing its purpose (Chin, 2004; Silva, 2016). Often women leaders must manage within organizational cultures that tend to be masculinized (Kolb & Williams, 2000; Chin, 2004). Hence women in leadership roles adapt their management style in accordance with varying organizational cultures (Chin, 2004). Perceptions of how women should behave influences what leadership style she adopts (Berkery et al., 2013). Hence women in senior management are often bound by these perceptions, which tie them to gender roles or function within contexts that are masculinized (Berkery et al., 2013). Studies show that a narrower range of acceptable behaviour exists for female than for male leaders (Eagly et al., 1992; Ragins et al., 1998; Indvik, 2004; Chin & Day, 2014). This indicates that women in senior management perceive a need to adapt their behaviour and management styles to appear more collegiate to their male counterparts (Ragins et al., 1998; Indvik, 2004).

Feminist theories hold theoretical perspectives that consider 'gender' as conceptually significant in the analysis of society, with behaviour, expectations and relationship between the sexes/genders problematized (De la Rey, 2005). However, these perspectives can interlock, contradict, or run parallel with each other (De la Rey, 2005). Hence rather than classifying the different perspectives offered by feminist theory into theoretical strands and then adopting a particular stance, it is my view that it will be more beneficial for this study to draw on four theoretical perspectives that focus solely on 'behaviour' in exploring the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management

and boards. These perspectives not only provide insights on the behaviour of women as individuals or as group members, but also provides insights on the motivations behind behaviour. These perspectives are sought from theories on behaviour namely:

- (i) the social identity theory,
- (ii) the agency theory,
- (iii) tokenism theory and
- (iv) critical mass theory.

The first two theories considered, namely the social-identity and the agency theories, offer insights to factors influencing the propensity of women in senior management to adapt their behaviour. The third and fourth theories, namely the tokenism and critical mass theories offer insights on the consequences this behaviour has on the advancement of women into senior management. Insights gained from these theories will provide the foundations for arguments utilized in addressing the research questions raised in this study as expanded below.

2.5.1 Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory is based on the social psychological analysis of the role of an individual's 'self-conception' in group membership, group processes, and intergroup relations (Burke & Hogg, 2018). As social identity constitutes identity that is developed from an individual's location within a social space (Gecas et al., 1973), this theory highlights that individuals have a need to attain and maintain a propitious image of themselves and are motivated to sustain such an image by adapting behaviours of individuals within their social groups (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg et al., 1990; Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Hogg et al., 1995). The social identity theory, developed by Henri Tajfel in the 1970s was based on studies on social perception, social categorization, and intergroup conflict, and describes how individuals define themselves according to their membership groups (Austin et al., 1979). According to Austin et al. (1979), individuals within groups protect their self-esteem to attain a particular social identity which usually results in their separation, discrimination, or competition with other groups, while giving privileged treatment to members of their group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg et al., 1990; Hogg et al. 1995; Terjesen et al., 2009; Teo & Islam, 2014).

Relating to the behaviour of women in senior management, the theory highlights that for women in such roles, social identity is an integral part of their self-concept (Harman & Sealy, 2017). Hence the norms, expectations and interests of that group influences and drive their behaviour (Hornsey, 2008; Harman & Sealy, 2017). An extended aspect of social identity is self-categorization, where identity is based on the individual's evaluation of the 'in-group' (Turner & Giles 1981; Hewstone et al., 1986; White et al., 1996). To process such evaluations, individuals undertake a series of social comparisons and deviate from other groups with the aim of increasing their own self-esteem (Trepte & Loy, 2017). Hence, depending on the prominence of the circumstance either an individual's personal identity or their social identity drives their behaviour (Trepte & Loy, 2017). Hence, the motivation for adapting behaviour is found within the social group, which promotes commonality in behaviour and perspectives, as well as association, collaboration, and support within members of the group (Hogg et al., 1990; Hogg, 2001).

However, in Rabbie and Horwitz (1988) social identity theory was critiqued to have failed to adequately distinguish between social categories and social groups as dynamic entities. Rabbie & Horwitz (1988) proposed exploring how individuals grow to develop a sense of entitativity with others through interdependence of goals, outcomes, and agency. Hence although the perception of interdependence was central in understanding group behaviour, it was seen as part of a wider social identity mechanism where individuals use interdependence and agency to construct social categories (Perreault & Bourhis, 1998; Rabbie & Lodewijkx, 2018). This theory only focuses on social influence of group norms on individuals which impacts on individual self-enhancement through collective behaviour within and between groups (Bryant et al., 2006; McKeown et al., 2016). Over the course of their lives, people are members of varying combinations of social groups and categories, with the concept of 'self' being unique to each individual (Stets & Burke, 2000; Huddy, 2001). Hence, social identity theory alone does not fully substantiate why women change behaviour from that associated with their gender/social group and adapt their behaviour to mimic other groups (Stets & Burke, 2000).

2.5.2 Agency Theory

Another perspective on why women in senior management adapt their behaviour can be found in agency theory (Lienert, 2015). Agency is utilized in this study in defining factors shaping individual's behaviour leading to change (Lienert, 2015; Barker & Jane 2016). It relates to the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices (Barker & Jane 2016). The agency theory explains the power within an individual to define and set goals, to act on these goals and to achieve such goals even when faced with obstacles (Bandura, 1991).

Agency theory presumes that individuals are generally opportunistic, and they constantly aim to maximize their own interests (Bøhren, 1998; Dalton et al., 2007; Oliver et al., 2017). Hence, it offers insights into the influences that motivate women's behaviour with regards to goal achievement (Eteläpelto et al., 2013). This viewpoint acknowledges that individuals differ in their aspirations and goals, and these differences may or may not result in agency costs by way of adapting changes in an individual's behaviour (Eteläpelto et al., 2013). Thus, suggesting individuals might not always conform and act in the best interests of the dominant group, as agency motivates them to act towards maximizing their own interests, even at the expense of the group (Eisenhardt, 1989. Shankman, 1999).

Hence agency theory subscribes to individualism where people are considered as bereft of any social dimension, seeking the satisfaction of their own goals and desires (Fontrodona & Sison, 2006). They form or join groups only to further their interests and they do not subscribe to any moral imperative (Bøhren, 1998). Studies such as Aoki (1986), Bowie et al. (1992), and Wright et al. (2001), criticize these assumptions and argue that individuals have an inert nature that is equally social and relational, and individuals within groups strive to contribute to the common good (Fontrodona & Sison, 2006). Hence understanding the complex and contradictory nature of the interweaving shifting desires and identities of individuals, the activities in which they participate, and their own representations and understandings of these relations can offer an insight into the motivation or influences on behaviour exhibited by people (Poutanen & Kovalainen, 2013).

Nilakant and Rao (1994), Hendry (2005), Wiseman et al. (2011), and Parker et al. (2018) argue individual differences in goals and aspirations are likely to manifest in individual behaviour even when there is strong social pressure to conform in the most uniform of societies or an existing general agreement on values. However, agency can have negative repercussions, by presenting itself as an individual's power over others, where individuals utilize resources and processes to override the agency of others (Kabeer, 1999). The behaviour of an individual is often influenced by the environment and by groups such an individual is affiliated to, taking on the values and goals of such groups as their own (Pennington, 2002; Bourdieu, 2000; Rao, 2017). Hence women in senior management who adapt their behaviour, weigh the collective goals of the organization as more significant than their personal goals (Flick et al., 1998; Bourdieu, 2000).

2.5.3 Tokenism Theory

In Kanter (1977), tokenism theory was developed from a behavioral study of group interactions among women with differing qualifications backgrounds, culture, and status in a male-dominated corporate environment. Kanter (1977) demonstrated the interaction of individuals within groups, and how their proportion or numerical representation within the group determined their behaviour. These groups are presented in figure 2.6 below and are identified based on the proportional representations of individuals.

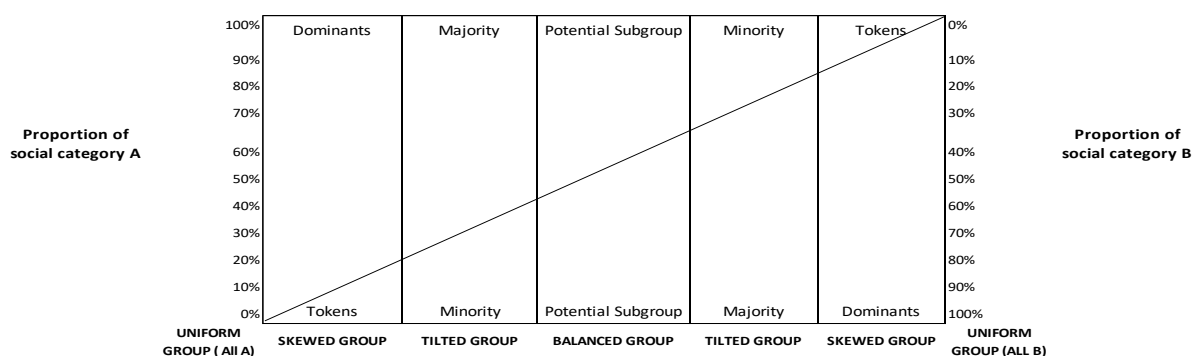


Figure 2.6: Group types - Proportional representation of two social categories (Male/Female).
Source: (Kanter, 1977, p.967)

Kanter (1977) focused her analysis on the behavioral attributes of the skewed group, as the most relevant when studying the impact of numerical representation of women

in groups and organizations in male-dominant business environments. According to her findings, women within this group are regarded as 'tokens' and often experience extreme visibility due to their low numbers (Kanter, 1977; Poutanen & Kovalainen, 2013; Cho et al., 2018). This isolates them, causing them to stand out and be the object of intense scrutiny (Kanter, 1977; Beckwith & Meyers, 2007; Poutanen & Kovalainen, 2013; Cho et al., 2018; Yilmaz & Dalkilic, 2019). They also face pressures to work harder and over perform as they are regarded as representative of their gender, and often put up with negative evaluation and bias from the dominant male group (Kanter, 1977; Yilmaz & Dalkilic, 2019). They then adapt their behaviour to mimic the existing culture and organizational structure to gain acceptance from existing male-dominant group (Kanter, 1977; Poutanen & Kovalainen, 2013; Cho et al., 2018).

Tokenism as a theoretical construct focuses on the ways unequal group memberships are being created and reinforced in organizations (Poutanen & Kovalainen, 2013). However, critics of tokenism theory argue that its emphasis on equalizing numbers and the assumption that only women are referred to as tokens was inaccurate as other individuals can also experience negative attitudes and treatment due to perceptions of social inferiority in society in general (Yonder, 1991; Poutanen & Kovalainen, 2013). This renders Kanter's theory somewhat insufficient in explaining aspects of diversity in groups (Zimmer, 1988; Yonder, 1991; Lewis & Simpson, 2012). Jain and Ahern (2020) argue that tokenism adopts a reductive logic that assumes numerical underrepresentation of women is an implied signal of lack of power, thereby failing to fully reflect the latent power of tokens as potential agents of both personal and inter-group change.

2.5.4 Critical Mass Theory

Tokenism had introduced the assumption that behavioral patterns presented by women in senior management suggest the need for a numerical threshold for the representation of women in senior management (Terjesen & Singh, 2008). This threshold creates a conducive environment which balances the power dynamics of groups (Terjesen & Singh, 2008; Celis & Childs, 2008; Madera et al., 2019) and allows agency forces to bring out the individuality of women, allowing them to

participate actively in management functions (Terjesen & Singh, 2008; Celis & Childs, 2008; Madera et al., 2019). Kanter's (1977) tokenism theory was expanded by Dahlerup (1988), arguing that an increase in women in leadership would bring about change in the overall numerical representation of women in senior management. Dahlerup (1988) termed this numerical threshold the 'critical mass' of the representation of women in leadership and senior management (Beckwith, 2007; Beckwith & Meyers, 2007; Terjesen & Singh, 2008). In addition, Dahlerup (1988) proposed a shift in focus from the numerical to a substantive representation of women. Hence introducing the concept of the 'critical acts' of women in senior management, which is the willingness of women in leadership to bring about changes in the dynamics of their group within organizations (Dahlerup, 1988; Beckwith, 2007). Dahlerup (1988) argued that through the critical acts of women in positions of power who actively support the advancement of women, more women can advance to senior management and boards (Yedidia & Bickel, 2001; Vinnicombe & Singh, 2003; Mavin, 2008; Konrad et al., 2008; Clarke, 2011; Torchia et al., 2011).

Dahlerup (1988) premise for the achievement of a critical mass of women representation in leadership rests on the concept of an opportunity for women to form supportive alliances as the group grows and becomes more diverse. Studies such as Joecks et al. (2012) supported this, arguing that although increasing the number of women in senior management roles had an initial negative affect on organizational performance and change, this relationship then becomes positive after a "critical mass" of women representation has been achieved (Feyerherm & Vick 2005). Dahlerup (1988) also argued that although available empirical evidence does not support a relationship between specific percentages of women represented in leadership and change, factors that are impossible to isolate or control such as shifts in societal attitudes, might further explain both change and lack of change following the advancement of more women to leadership roles (Dahlerup, 1988; Childs & Krook, 2008). However, varying studies refuted the validity of the theory, arguing that critical mass theory did not offer a strong foundation for the impact of increased representation of women in leadership, (Saint-Germain, 1989; Tremblay & Pelletier, 2000; Bratton, 2005; Heath et al., 2005; Beckwith & Meyers, 2007; Ayata & Tutuncu, 2008; Childs & Krook, 2009).

Childs and Krook (2006) argued that the use of the critical mass theory to advocate for women representation be discarded, as the numerical representation of women in senior management has less impact on the introduction of change policy with regards the advancement of women into senior roles. They agreed that focus should be placed on the substantial representation of women in senior management rather than on a numerical one (Childs & Krook, 2006). Hence studies argue that further research on the concept of 'critical acts' highlighted by Dahlerup (1988) was required in understanding the impact an increased representation of women in senior management and boards can have on the improvement of diversity and inclusion in senior management (Williams, 2003; Childs & Krook, 2006; Childs & Krook, 2009). They argue that 'critical acts' moves focus from 'when' an increased representation of women makes a difference, to 'how' it impacts on organizational change (Childs & Krook 2008).

Insights from the theoretical perspectives discussed above highlight factors that may influence the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards, allowing me to further investigate possible motivations for this behaviour in the following subsection.

2.6 FACTORS MOTIVATING ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOUR

Studies have identified that a woman's acceptance into the male dominant world of management rests not on their exhibition of 'critical acts', but on their willingness to adapt their behaviour to be perceived as more male than men themselves (Wajcman, 1998; Mavin, 2008; Kremer et al., 2019). These studies show that women in senior management are marginalized by the prevalent masculine organizational culture, where the traditional and hierarchical form of management depicts successful managers as male (Olsson, 2000; Carvalho et al., 2018). Hence women who aspire for senior roles adopt stereotypical male characteristics and norms and try to suppress their femininity (Wajcman, 1998; Mavin, 2008; Carvalho et al., 2018; Kremer et al., 2019). This change in behaviour often makes it difficult for female subordinates to relate to them (Mavin, 2008; Sobczak, 2018). Rather than enabling alliances, the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management tends to destabilize any form of

gender solidarity, and establishes a sense of competition (Ely, 1994; Derks et al., 2016). Hence instead of supporting the advancement of women into senior management and boards, women in such positions essentially becoming barriers themselves to the advancement of these women into senior management (Ely, 1994; Chesler, 2009; Derks et al., 2016; Sterk et al., 2018; Sobczak, 2018; Kremer et al., 2019).

From the theoretical perspectives discussed three factors were highlighted as prominent motivations influencing the propensity of women in senior management and boards to adapt their behaviour. These factors are expanded on below.

2.6.1 Territorial protection

Women who gain entrance into senior management and boards frequently find themselves regarded as token representatives (Elstad & Ladegard, 2010; Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011; Joecks et al., 2012; O'Reilly & Main, 2012; Jain & Ahern, 2020). They stand out and are often scrutinized closely by the rest of the board (Kramer et al., 2006; Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011; Lückerath-Rovers, 2011). Hence such women behave in a manner that will not put them in a negative light (Lückerath-Rovers, 2011). They may deny issues on gender discrimination, or even be reluctant to initiate diversity friendly policies (Ibrat, 2014; Abalkhail, 2020). In Rippetoe and Rogers (1987), the study utilized the protection motivation theory introduced in Rogers (1975), which argues that an individual will adopt a protective behaviour to effectively reduce threat, will adopt an avoidance response by denying the threat, or actively avoids threats all together (Tanner et al., 1991; Conner & Norman, 2008). Hence, behaviour change was presented in the study as a response to 'fear' (Rippetoe & Rogers, 1987).

Hence the reluctance of women in senior management and boards to initiate or push for diversity friendly policies may stem from a concern for self-preservation (Piderit & Ashford, 2003; Johnson & Mathur-Helm, 2011). They may be concerned that involving themselves in any form of diversity and inclusion campaign will diminish their credibility within power groups in some form (Piderit & Ashford, 2003; Johnson & Mathur-Helm, 2011) and jeopardize their position or career progression (Hofmeyr & Mzobe, 2012; Ibrat, 2014). These women sometimes referred to as 'queen-bees'

may not assist the advancement of women into senior roles from a competitive standpoint (Davidson & Cooper, 1992; April & Dreyer, 2007; Johnson & Mathur-Helm, 2011; Hofmeyr & Mzobe, 2012; Sobczak, 2018; Kremer et al., 2019; Abalkhail, 2020), and desire to remain unique in the organization especially where access to opportunities is limited (Sobczak, 2018; Kremer et al., 2019; Abalkhail, 2020). To protect their territory, they adapt their behaviour to reflect the predominant male power groups seeking acceptance from group members, hence ensuring their 'rite of passage' and proof of their competency (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2007). They define themselves in relation to their membership of the power groups and consider other women outside of senior management as outsiders, hence they behave in a manner that is less supportive of the advancement of more women into their group (Sachdev & Bourhis, 1991; Jehn & Mannix, 2001; Kremer et al., 2019). These women see themselves as exceptional and powerful, hence not wanting to share the spotlight with other women whose entry into senior management might diminish the magnitude of their achievements (Rosener, 1998; Johnson & Mathur-Helm, 2011).

2.6.2 Personal agenda to succeed

Agency theory offers some insights on why women in senior management affiliate or align themselves with the dominant groups relating to their career advancement (Chugh & Sahgal, 2007; Ibarra et al., 2013; Terosky et al., 2014). Personal goals set by women to ascend to positions of power in an organization might see them distance themselves from diversity issues or deny its existence all together (Ibrat, 2014; Abalkhail, 2020). Such women are usually reluctant to talk about gender discrimination in the workplace or acknowledge the barriers they faced in their career trajectory (Piderit & Ashford, 2003; Thomson et al., 2005). They believe their success proves these barriers can be surmounted through hard work (Johnson & Mathur-Helm, 2011; Ibrat, 2014). Such women avoid joining groups or committees that are affiliated with diversity initiatives, as this might impede acceptance by the male dominant power group (Eagly et al., 2003; Belasen, 2017). They concentrate on working harder, adapting to the dominant male group to be seen as insiders, as they need the support and goodwill of these dominant power group to secure their positions within the organization and to advance in their careers (Catalyst, 1993; Rosener, 1998; Ragins et al., 1998; Khilji & Pumroy, 2019).

2.6.3 Collegiality

This factor stems from women's need to function as a valid member of the board, contributing efficiently towards effective decision making, and being a functioning member of the team (Vandewaerde et al., 2011). Female board members might collaborate with their male colleagues and cooperate with the existing status quo, to ensure no conflicts on the work process are experienced (Nielsen & Huse, 2010; Shaukat et al., 2017; Pillemer & Rothbard, 2018). By doing so they reinforce existing stereotypical attitudes and male-dominant prevailing organizational culture and values (Rosener, 1998). The collective sharing of team effort, information, and leadership, results in the buildup of team members' capabilities and the enhancement of organizational performance (Friedrich et al., 2009; Carson et al., 2017; Vandewaerde et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2014; D'Innocenzo et al., 2016; Wu et al., 2018; Aufegger et al., 2020). Hence women in senior management roles strive to ensure they are part of this effective team, and place priority on delivering positive organizational outcomes rather than focus on diversity issues, which are of lesser priority (Strachan et al., 2004; Lenard et al., 2014). In so doing they distance themselves from championing diversity and inclusion policies in the organization (Strachan et al., 2004).

In figure 2.7 below is a schema which summarizes these three factors, their motivations, the resulting actions, and consequence of these behaviour as highlighted in the discussion above.

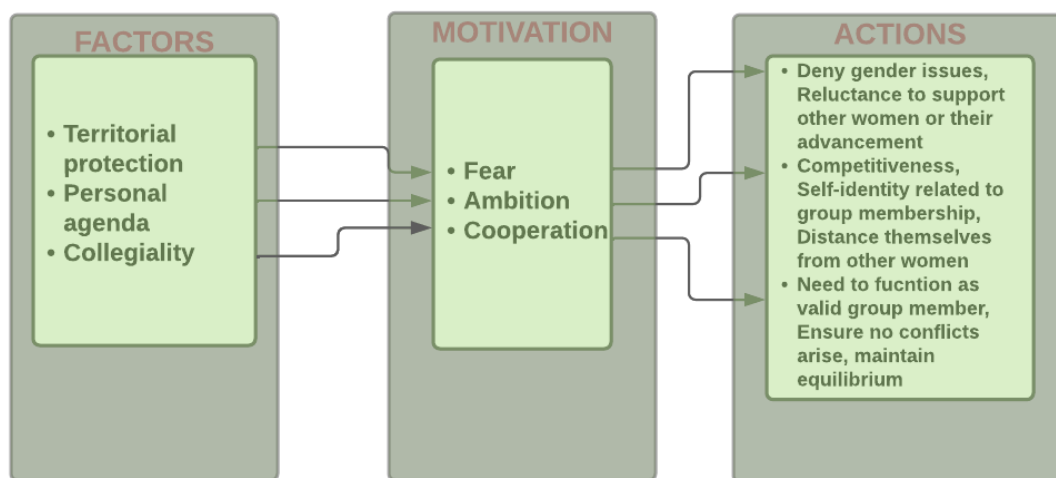


Figure 2.7: Schema showing factors, linking to motivation, leading to actions

Following the identification of the three factors as motivations for the adapt behaviour of women in senior management and boards, I began to develop a conceptual framework, seeking to link this behaviour with the rate of women advancing into senior management in the following section.

2.7 EMERGING CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: LINKING THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Tokenism bears a fundamental claim that group proportions influence member's behaviour, and interactions are strongly influenced by social and cultural experiences such as societal norms, values, education, culture, religion etc. (Kanter, 1977; Karen Morley & Associates, 2015). As the proportions of representations changes, work interactions and behaviour of individual group members change (Gustafson, 2008). Hence the number of women on a board should have a strong influence on the behaviour of the board, and impact on any policy, gender related or otherwise, within the organization (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Sinclair, 2005; Campbell & Mínguez-Vera, 2008; Broome et al., 2011; Joecks et al., 2012; Cook & Glass, 2017). Building on this, the critical mass theory introduced by Dahlerup (1988), argued that a critical mass or increased numerical representation of women on boards, has positive impact on organizational outcomes (Torchia et al., 2011).

However, Grey (2006) identified that nothing in the body of work presented by Kanter (1977) or Dahlerup (1988) substantiates a defined threshold for the numerical representation for women to have significant impact in senior management. Grey (2006) argued that it was difficult to fully explore the validity and impact of the 'critical mass' concept on change policy in organizations, as there is still a low representation of women in senior management. The study concluded that the impact of the critical mass concept has been over exaggerated (Grey, 2006). Other studies also argued that the numerical representation of women alone is not enough to influence change policy in any organization (Dahlerup, 1988, Williams, 2003, Childs & Krook, 2006, Childs & Krook, 2009). However, Stets and Burke (2000), argue combining an increased representation of women on boards with a willingness by women in senior

management to drive for change will support the advancement of women into senior management roles.

In this study, 'critical acts' takes the form of agency, reflecting the willingness of the women in senior management actively influencing decision-making processes and policies on diversity and inclusion in organization (Stets & Burke, 2000). Hence, I will propose that to increase the substantive representation of women in senior management and boards, an increase of women with a high propensity for critical acts and a lower propensity to adapt their behaviour is necessary. This increase in the substantive representation of women in such senior management in turn sets off a domino effect that sees the implementation of policy for improved diversity and inclusion in senior management, resulting in the advancement of more women into senior roles .

Based on the insights from the above discussions, I have identified three principal elements to this study namely: -

1. Adaptive behaviour – Behaviour exhibited by women in senior management.
2. Critical acts – Willingness exhibited by women in senior management to support the advancement of women into senior roles and addressing the issues surrounding the low representation of women in senior roles.
3. Critical mass – The numerical increase of women in senior management and boards, and its impact on the advancement of women into senior management.

Exploring these elements as they relate to the low representation of women in senior management and boards, becomes the basis of this study's conceptual framework. The conceptual framework is developed by establishing connections between these three elements with insights on factors influencing this behaviour. This is expanded below.

2.7.1 Emerging Conceptual framework

Insights from the literature review indicate 'critical acts' provides a crucial link between the social identity of women in senior management and how these identities exhibit themselves through behaviour. These behaviours are further influenced by agency factors that either increase the individual's propensity for critical acts or

adaptive behaviour. Insights also indicate that attaining an increased numerical representation of women in senior management and boards impacts on the implementation of policy in supporting the advancement of women into senior management roles.

Studies argue that the number of women on boards is positively related to the number of women holding line management or senior management positions in the organization (Bilimoria, 2006; Terjesen et al., 2009). In Singh (2008) a survey of two hundred and nineteen women in leadership roles within UK found that 69% of the women surveyed felt confident that there was a real probability of ascending to positions in the boards of their organizations if there are existing female executive directors on their boards. This is based on the premise that when female executive directors provide mentoring and networking opportunities for aspiring women, which increases the potential for advancement (Catalyst, 1995; Ibarra, 1999; Burke et al., 2000; Linehan & Scullion, 2008).

Utilizing Insights from my literature review, I surmise that when women come into the first stage of their careers, their behaviour is usually influenced by socio-economic factors such as economic independence. There is an agency need at this stage for women to choose either acquire a job or a career. This is the first stage of their career transition. Once entry into organizations is gained, social identity becomes more prominent, and they begin to be influenced by organizational culture and processes. This is the second stage of their career transition. There is an initial willingness to speak out or act against any form of discrimination. However, at these levels, women's roles give them minimum influence to act against barriers encountered in their career progression. It is at this stage that some measure of adaptive behaviour begins, with a growing agency need for power, responsibility, and increased remuneration. They begin to align their social identity to power groups, networking and forming work alliances aimed at increasing their chances for advancement. They change their behaviour to gain acceptance from their supervisors or mentors.

In the third stage of their career transition, women advance to senior management positions. At this stage behaviour based on the tokenistic nature of their position is apparent. Here, agency and social identity increases as they seek to ensure the

security of their positions and status within power groups and behave in a manner that establishes their worth. By adapting similar attributes and processes to members of the power group, they distance themselves from diversity issues or are nonchalant towards addressing diversity and inclusion issues in their organization. They inadvertently become barriers themselves to women aspiring to reach senior management. This ultimately contributes to the low representation of women in senior management and boards.

Combining the above inferences with insights from the three elements highlighted in my literature review, I was able to develop a conceptual framework for the study. This is expanded on below.

2.7.1.1 Connecting the dots: Building the Conceptual framework.

In developing this study's conceptual framework, a connection is drawn between the three principal elements identified in the literature, and the factors motivating the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management (See figure 2.8 below).

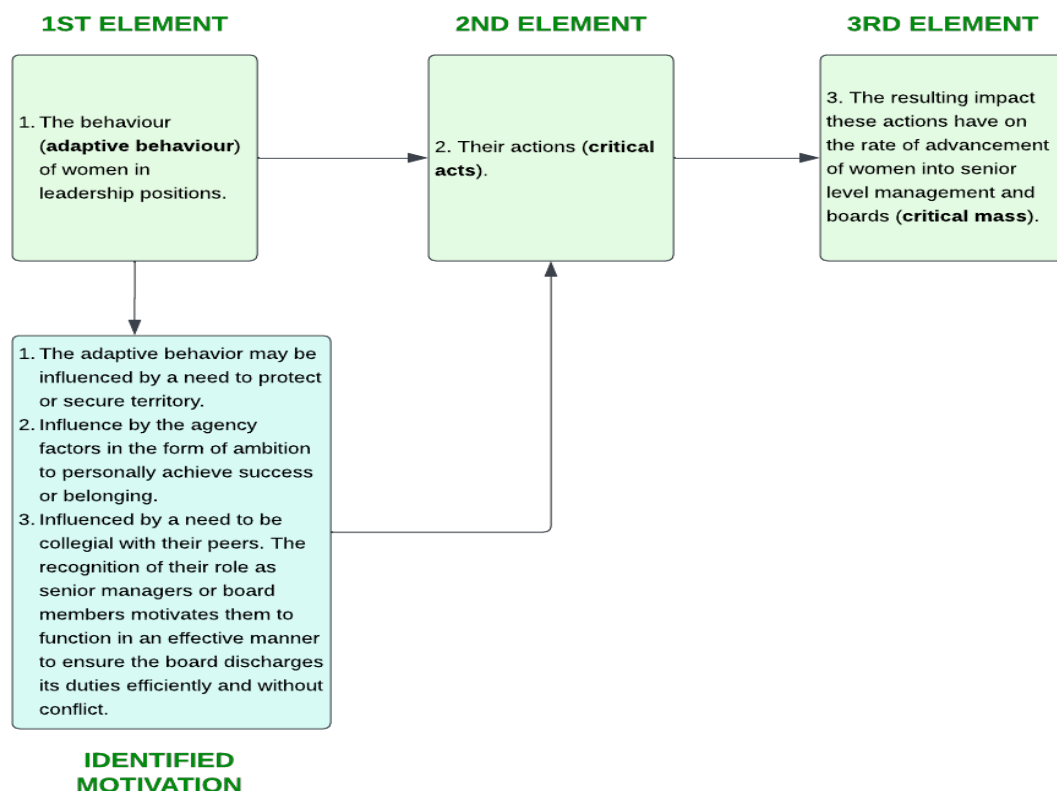


Figure 2.8 Connecting the dots in developing conceptual framework

The first element of the framework of this study is 'adaptive behaviour'. As highlighted by Kanter (1977), I perceive that if women in senior management find themselves as a minority within an organization, they are prone to exhibit some form of tokenistic behaviour which is influenced by agency or social identity forces (Kanter, 1977). They either adapt to conform with power groups and distance themselves from addressing unpopular issues regarding diversity or use their position to influence policies aimed at improving diversity and inclusion within the organization (Kremer et al., 2019). Their propensity to act for or against the advancement of women into senior management shows their propensity for critical acts (Dahlerup 1988). This links the adaptive behaviour element to the second element of the conceptual framework, which is the 'critical acts' element.

I further surmise that if the tendency for 'critical acts' is high, then the propensity for women in senior management to adapt their behaviour and conform to existing culture will be low. Hence, if their tendency for critical acts is high, women in senior management would have a great willingness to use their position to strategize for change regarding diversity and inclusion issues within their organizations (Stets & Burke, 2000). This impacts positively on the advancement of women into senior roles within their organizations, which then results in an increase in the representation of women in senior management (Stets & Burke, 2000). I also surmise that the reverse is the case if the tendency for 'critical acts' is low. Women in senior management adapt their behaviour to conform to the practices of existing power groups within their organization and distance themselves from addressing diversity and inclusion issues (Abalkhail, 2020). Their nonchalant attitude in addressing issue of discrimination and equality in their organizations impacts on the drive for female advancement into senior management and has a negative impact on the number of women advancing into senior roles (Abalkhail, 2020).

This reasoning sees a link between the 'critical acts' element and the third element of the framework, which is the 'critical mass' element. The resistance to becoming change agents exhibited by women in senior management impacts negatively on the advancement of women into senior management (Mavin et al., 2014). This then impacts on the number of women advancing into senior roles, hence impacting on

the achievement of a critical mass of women represented in senior management (Mavin et al., 2014). Figure 2.9 below is a visual representation of the emerging conceptual framework resulting from the above insights.

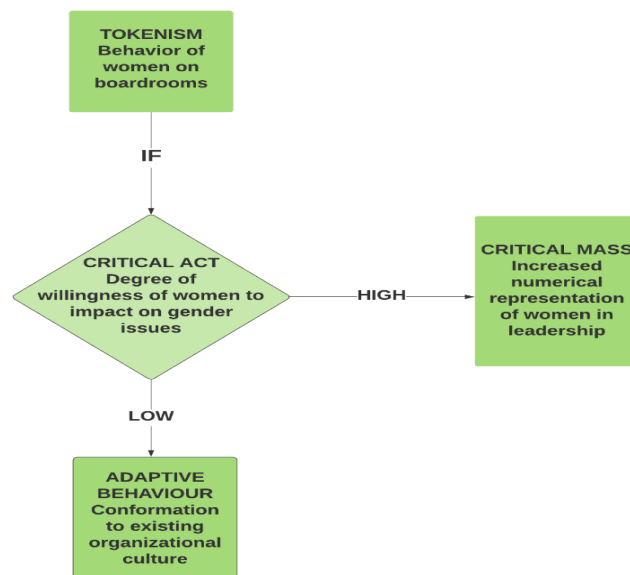


Figure 2.9 Emerging conceptual framework

2.8 GAP IN LITERATURE

The representation of women on boards is perhaps one of the most studied topics in board-governance research, however much is unknown about female leaders' behaviour and task engagement in senior management (Weck et al., 2022), with most studies on female leader behaviour and their actions towards the advancement of female subordinate focusing on the 'queen bee' phenomenon (Kirsch, 2021). Although there is a growing awareness of the slow rate of increase in the number of female board directors, there is limited research focusing on how women in senior management relate to aspiring women in their organizations, and their stance on advocating for diversity issues (catalyst ,1993; Vinnicombe et al., 2009). Also, studies on women in senior management and boards mostly focus on the leadership style of women in senior management or 'glass ceiling' research (catalyst ,1993; Lämsä & Sintonen 2001; Terjesen et al., 2009; Vinnicombe et al., 2009), and are lacking in useful development of theory (Terjesen et al. 2009). In Gabrielsson and Huse (2004),

findings suggest that studies on the behaviour of female board of directors tend to assume the behaviour and conduct of these directors is linked to their individual demographic characteristics and not influenced by other factors such as agency and social identity. Dahlerup (1988) suggests the existence of other less obvious factors tied to social attributes and the societal culture of the individuals themselves and calls for more studies aimed at explaining the lack of change in the rate of female advancement into leadership positions as the number of women in leadership rises (Sarah & Mona, 2008). Proponents of the critical mass theory submit that organizational change with regards to diversity and inclusion in senior management and boards can take place if the number of women represented in senior management grows from a few individuals into a noticeable minority (Dahlerup, 1988; Childs & Krook, 2006; Beckwith, 2007). This was strongly debated in Ayata and Tutuncu (2008), Sarah and Mona (2008), Pini et al. (2011), and Kitchen (2015), as they contend that the relationship between the numerical representation of women and organizational outcomes has not been clearly defined. There are calls in Gabrielsson and Huse (2004) for future research to explore behavioral perspectives such as work relationships, motivations, and capabilities among board members, as these perspectives are relatively unexplored. There is also a call in Campbell and Mínguez-Vera (2008), for the creation of a business case for an increased participation of women on company boards, to redress the perceived underrepresentation of women in business, and in society.

Although there are studies that present other antecedents to the low representation of women in senior management and boards, such studies claim this low representation is due to barriers such as a shortage of qualified women (Burke, 2003; Lakhal et al., 2015), issues in recruitment processes (Glass & Minnotte, 2010; Dittmar, 2015), few women occupying line manager positions that allows them to progress to more senior roles (Linehan, 2001; Schein, 2007), or women are choosing not to go for senior roles due to work/family conflict (Ibrat, 2014). This study aims to explore an alternative argument to this, proposing that although organizational culture exerts influence on workforce behaviour, there are other more prevailing dynamics behind the low representation of women in senior management and boards. In doing this, this study seeks to explore an under-researched area of women in leadership research, focusing on the behaviour of women in senior management and boards, and how this impacts

on the advancement of women into senior management positions in their organization. Hence, this literature review has revealed a need for further research focusing on a broader and integrated approach to understanding women in senior management, and the issues surrounding their career advancements in the UK (Belasen, 2017).

2.9 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This review has presented studies that show organizations are most effective when diversity policies are addressed and actively adopted as organizational culture (Forbes & Milliken, 1999). However, minority groups within organizations are increasingly expected to adapt to the dominant organizational culture (Ragins et al., 1998). This suggests adaptive behaviour is encouraged as a means of advancement in senior management. Organizational culture notwithstanding, the critical questions this research seeks to answer revolves around the motivations or factors behind behaviours exhibited by women in senior management and boards.

Following insights gained from discussions in this chapter, this study proposes that the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards plays a role on the slow advancement of women into senior management. This then results in the low representation of women in senior roles. Hence this research seeks to answer the following questions: -

- 1. Are forces such as the need for territorial protection, personal agenda to succeed, and collegiality, the prevailing influences behind the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards?*
- 2. Does the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards influence the rate of women advancing into senior roles, hence impacting on the low representation of women in senior management?*

As highlighted in the reviewed literature, the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards can manifests itself in a lack of support for the advancement of women into senior roles within their organization, (Quine, 1999; Hoel et al., 2001; Lee, 2002; Lewis & Orford, 2004). Hence there is a need to explore this behaviour to

show its impact on the advancement of women aspiring for such roles, hence impacting on the low representation of women in senior management in organizations.

2.10 SUMMARY

In summary, there is evidence of a low number of women in senior management and boards, and a need to evaluate the causes of such low representation (Hawarden, 2010). This study seeks to purpose that one of the most prevailing barriers to the advancement of women into senior roles is the overlooked adaptive behaviour of the women in senior management (Esser et al., 2018). This study seeks to evaluate the adaptive behaviour exhibited by such women, and to use its findings to present additional factors behind the slow rate of women advancing into senior management.

The premise for this study's claim comes from evidence in the literature showing several barriers for the advancement of women into senior management (Harlan & O'farrell, 1982). However, these barriers have been surmounted by a few women, and according to studies there is a positive relationship between having women on boards and the number of women in senior position within organizations (Bernardi et al., 2006; Adams & Ferreira, 2009; Lückérath-Rovers, 2011; Post & Byron, 2014). However, the presence of these women has had no impact on the appointment or nomination of more women to senior roles, as there is still a persistent low representation of women in senior management in the UK and globally (Brammer et al., 2007; Watts, 2010; Sheridan & Milgate, 2003; Hofmeyr & Mzobe, 2012). This indicates the existence of other prevailing factors. This study investigates the reason for the slow rate of women advancing into senior roles of management by accounting for the impact actions taken by female senior managers has on the career advancement of women in their organization. Hence, the premise for the research questions raised is: -

By conforming or adapting to the prevailing male-dominated organizational culture and generally accepted behaviour found in senior management, do women seek to protect territory, advance themselves or be collegiate to their colleagues, hence becoming barriers to other women aspiring for senior roles? And if that is the case,

has this impacted negatively on the rate of advancement of other women into senior roles, resulting in the low representation of women in senior management?

In the following chapters, data will be collected and analyzed to investigate this.

CHAPTER THREE PILOT STUDY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Pearson et al. (2020) states that pilot studies are feasibility studies, which allows researchers to conduct small-scale versions of the planned studies, providing trial runs of selected methodologies to identify and address unforeseen problems with the research process. Pilot studies also help to develop better structured research question(s) to guide the development of a more robust research plan (Kim, 2010; Doody & Doody, 2015), and provide an avenue to test the feasibility of research methods for the main study (Prescott & Soeken, 1989; Jairath et al., 2000; van Teijlingen et al, 2001; In, 2017; Pearson et al.,2020). The logic of discovery for this research topic is focused on an under-researched area of inquiry into understanding the adaptive behaviour of women in boards. Hence, it was pertinent to test my proposed approach in gathering data that would generate insights which justify an investigation into the subject matter.

In this study the pilot study was produced as part of the year-one Doctor of Business Administration Course. Its purpose was to allow me to gain an initial experience of research as well as helping focus my study and research objectives presented in chapter two. In section 3.1 of this chapter, the pilot study conducted is presented in detail, expanding upon data gathering and analysis processes followed. In section 3.2, the achievement of validity and reliability in the pilot study will be discussed. Modifications introduced to the main study process will be discussed in section 3.3 based on insights gained from the pilot study conducted. These insights will also aid in the expansion of the study's conceptual framework presented in section 3.4. In section 3.5, the chapter ends with concluding statements on the pilot study.

3.1 PILOT STUDY

Having gained approval from the general university ethics panel, I embarked on a pilot study. As I would be conducting and analyzing data from interviews of selected participants and gaining insights from the interpretation of my findings, the research

takes an interpretist and exploratory nature. Hence a qualitative approach to the research was taken. This pilot study had three objectives, namely: -

1. To identify and test the suitability of research processes adopted for data collection and analysis in the main study.
2. To identify resources required and cost implications of carrying out activities necessary for collecting and analyzing data for the main study.
3. To explore management strategy for processes and resources that will ensure I plan for data optimization i.e. how data will be generated, analyzed, stored, and managed.

3.1.1 Pilot study research process adopted

The pilot study research process refers to a series of steps or procedures adopted in data generation and analysis that will be applied in the main study to ensure reliability in research findings. As interviews were considered as the data collection technique to be used, three guidelines for generating data and analysis data using interviews were considered and followed. These guidelines are: -

1. Identify the sectors of industry that participants will come from and develop a roadmap for recruiting participants.
2. Develop and select questions that ensure data generated address the research questions raised.
3. Analyze data generated.
4. Adopt a verification process to ensure quality data is generated and reliable analytic processes were followed.

The procedures in collecting and analyzing data followed using these guidelines is expanded below.

3.1.1.1 Recruitment of participants

In recruiting participants for the pilot study, I needed identify and recruit participants that provide a sample size which adequately represents the target population for the study (Keith, 2001; Patel et al., 2003; Hulley et al., 2013). Sampling is the process of selecting a subset group of participants that will adequately represent a larger population for the study (Hulley et al., 2013). In quantitative research mathematical or systematic processes are usually used to make sample size

selections, using random sampling methods (Omona, 2013). However qualitative research involves not only considering what and how many participants to sample, but also, the conditions under which this selection will take place that adequately capture their lived experiences (Curtis et al., 2000; Omona, 2013).

In order to get an accurate sample, it is essential to define my study population and the criteria for participant selection (Woods et al., 2000). This is an important stage in research, as challenges with recruiting the right participants can not only disrupt the timetable for the study but can impact on the validity of findings the sample represents (Guest et al., 2015). In defining the criteria for participant selection, I considered a sample population that will ensure participants for this study are participants that are most representative of women in senior management in the public, private and third sectors within the United Kingdom.

In considering the sample size, I evaluated both random i.e. probabilistic and non-random i.e. non-probabilistic sampling methods (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Random sampling methods such as simple random sampling, stratified random sampling, cluster random sampling, systematic random sampling, and multi-stage random sampling, are adopted when external statistical generalization is the goal of the study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). However non-random sampling methods such as homogenous sampling, theory-based sampling, snowball sampling, or criterion sampling, are more suited for interpretivist studies seeking insights into a phenomenon, individuals, or events (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Suri, 2011; Omona, 2013).

For the pilot study a snowball sampling method was used to recruit five participants, with two participants recruited through networking with my supervisor, and three recruited by myself through individuals I had met at various business activities organized by the University. Participants were recruited from the following sectors:

- Education services – 2 Participants
- Business/corporate management – 1 participant
- Arts and entertainment – 1 participant

- Financial services – 1 participant

An overview of the research using participation information sheets was communicated to participants to clarify the purpose of the research and to stimulate interest. On receiving positive responses, participants were asked to sign consent forms in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

3.1.1.2. Development of pilot study questions and interview guide

Using the second guideline face-to-face interviews were considered. I sought to explore and interpret meaning from participants' perspectives in understanding the phenomenon being studied. I selected semi-structured interviews as my mode of questioning, as responses generated followed a flexible structure that allowed for probing questions (Adams et al., 2015; Moser & Korstjens, 2017)..

An interview guide is the list of questions to be used in an interview in the order they would be asked (Whiting, 2008). By developing and utilizing an interview guide it was possible to determine the direction of the interview, while still giving the participants control over their answers (Whiting, 2008; Krauss et al., 2009). Kallio et al. (2016) presented five stages in the development of an interview guide namely: -

i. *Identifying appropriateness of semi-structured interviews:*

Begin by identifying the appropriateness of the semi-structured interview method for data collection in relation to the study's research questions raised. As the phenomenon being researched will utilize analysis of participants' perspectives and opinions on the subject matter, semi-structured interviews will ensure focus on the issues that are meaningful for the participant in the study is kept, while allowing for different perspectives to be expressed freely (Cridland et al., 2014).

ii. *Retrieving and using previous knowledge:*

Empirical knowledge gained and Insights from the literature review provides critical analysis and information that allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the essence of the study without the influence of existing preconceived concepts in the formation of interview questions.

iii. Developing initial semi-structured interview guide

At this stage a working interview guide was developed using insights gained from the study's literature review. The form of questions in a semi-structured interview guide are open-ended to allow for dialogue and free expression (Krauss et al., 2009). Two subgroups of questions are developed namely: -

- A. Main themes questions - These questions address the main content of the research. All participants will be asked these questions, which are based on topics that are familiar to the participant and are central to the subject area. See appendix 3 for interview questions.
- B. Follow-up questions - Follow-up or probing questions will be used to clarify the main theme questions to the participants, drawing out more responses from participants if needed.

iv. Testing interview guide in pilot study:

Once the interview questions are developed and sequenced, they were tested out in the pilot study to determine their proficiency in generating data for the main study. By testing the formulated questions in the pilot study, I can identify any need for modifications or adjustments to the interview questions for the main study.

v. Presenting completed interview guide:

At this stage, a clear and logical interview guide is developed for data collection, providing a structure to utilize in the main study.

Figure 3.1 below is a schema of the five stages I followed in developing the semi-structured interview guide for the study.

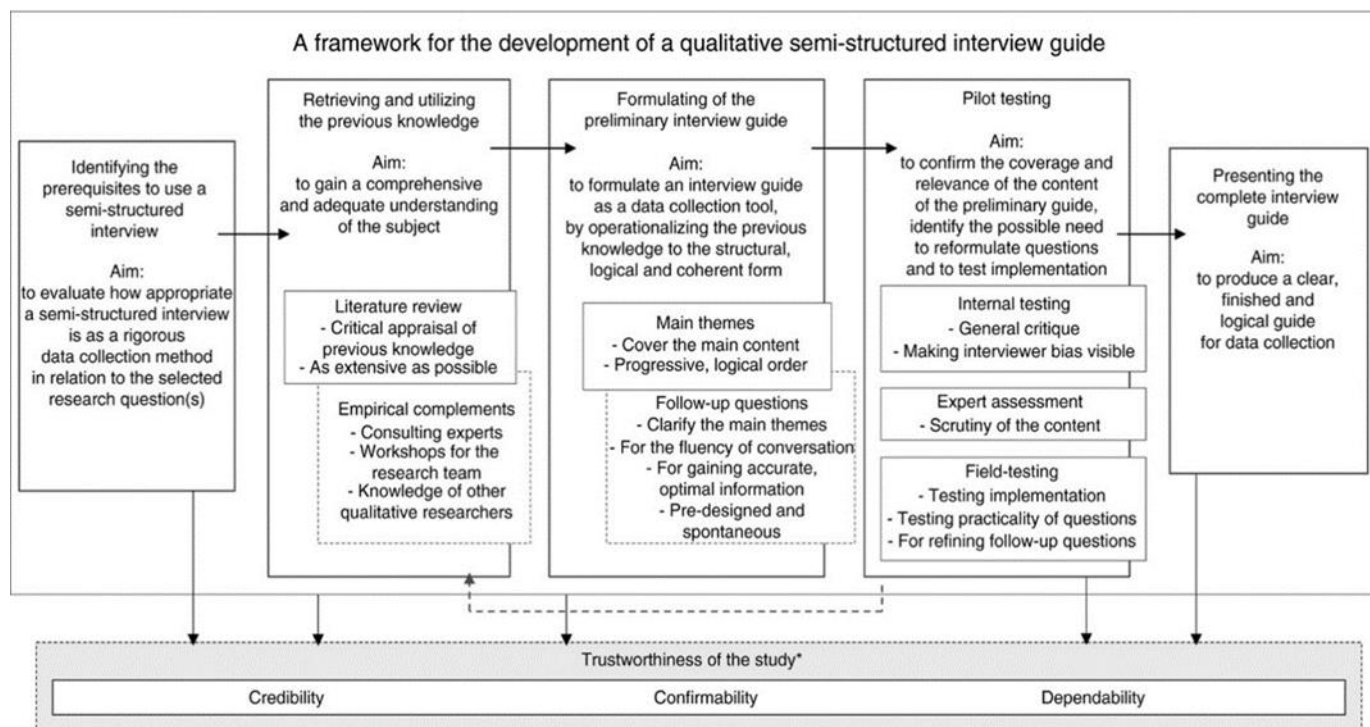


Figure 3.1: Stages in the development of a semi-structure interview guide
Source: (Kallio et al. ,2016, p. 2962)

3.1.1.3 Timing of interviews and transcripts generation

Following the development of my interview questions, interviews were conducted. The initial duration earmarked for each interview was 45 minutes, however timing of each interview varied due to the length and nature of responses offered by participants. The first Interview (INT1) took approximately 24 minutes, the second interview (INT 2) took approximately 52 minutes, while the third interview (INT 3), fourth interview (INT 4), and fifth interview (INT 5) took 1 hour: 28 minutes, 54 minutes, and 32 minutes respectively. I recognized that due to the semi-structured nature of interview questions, it was hard to control the duration of the interviews as each participant's response varied. This impacted on my time management. Hence I will make allowance for the varying length of responses when communicating timing of interview to participants, and when generating interview transcripts in the main study. As interviews were conducted face-to-face, trust was established as I discussed my research and its process in detail at the start of our interviews. The establishment of trust encourages participants to share in-depth information about their experiences (Knox & Burkard, 2008). Also, social cues such as participants' facial expressions, gestures, and other paraverbal

communications, presented as a source of extra information, which further enhanced meaning to participants responses (Knox & Burkard, 2008). The interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and subsequently transcribed. I then began to generate data for analysis from the transcripts. See appendix 4 for the interview guide developed.

3.1.1.4 Data analysis process

The analytic strategy utilized in this pilot study relied on a constant comparative analysis approach (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). Using constant comparative analysis involves comparing interviews with each other to develop conceptualizations of any possible relations by identifying common patterns and themes in the data (Boeije, 2002; Glaser & Strauss, 2017). This process determines whether the analysis of data is inductive and will generate concepts or build a theory for a particular context in qualitative research (Boeije, 2002; O'Connor et al., 2008; Fram, 2013; Glaser & Strauss, 2017). Constant comparison analysis is well suited for this study as it is generally used to study human phenomena relating to behaviour and experience, creating knowledge that is more generally descriptive or interpretive (Glaser & Strauss, 2017).

In this study analyzing data utilizing the constant comparative approach will be done using a thematic analysis process. Thematic analysis is considered an appropriate process of analysis for studies seeking knowledge generation through interpretation (Ibrahim, 2012). In Namey et al. (2008), thematic analysis was described as a process focused on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas through codes. These codes are developed from concepts which are then linked by comparing their relative occurrences within a data set (Namey et al., 2008). Steps in the data analysis process I followed were highlighted in Castleberry and Nolen (2018), and are expanded on below: -

3.1.1.4.1 Compiling data

Data compiled from interview transcripts were categorized and coded. This allowed the outlining and connection of emergent themes. I generated a word cloud of the five interview transcripts to give me some insights on the emergence

of certain words or phrases found within the responses. This enabled me to identify potential words or phrases to utilize as codes. Figure 3.2 shows the word cloud generated from the interview transcripts.



Figure 3.2: Interview responses word cloud

By disassembling and reassembling the generated data, I could identify emerging concepts that will be integrated into prominent themes. Having studied each transcript, I reviewed the responses and used codes to categorize information. The coding process adopted in this pilot study is discussed in the following sub-section.

3.1.1.4.2 Assembling, disassembling, and reassembling data.

In Gläser and Laudel (2013), qualitative content analysis approach focuses on extracting and processing relevant information from the original text while determining specific patterns in the use of words or concepts within the text (Gläser & Laudel, 2013). As this approach focuses on evaluating the meaning of words or text through the inductive development of codes (Gläser & Laudel, 2013), it is an appropriate approach to coding for this pilot study.

Coding is an important step in qualitative data analysis as it is used to classify and derive meaning from textual content (Wicks, 2017). The objective of qualitative data analysis is to identify categories, relationships or assumptions that may influence or impact on the interpretation of data (Dey, 1993; Basit, 2003; Gioia et al., 2012). Hence the process of coding in this pilot study involves subdividing data and assigning them into categories as first order codes, which are allocated either descriptive meanings that are easily deduced by the research audiences or inferred meaning more specific to the research context (Dey, 1993; Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Gough & Scott, 2000; Boyatzis, 2009; Miles et al., 2014; Vaughn & Turner 2015; Stuckey, 2015). These codes identify important text in the interviews that not only describe, but present text in a way that allows the further theoretical and analytical development of second-order themes (Gibbs & Gibbs, 2012). This process is further expanded on below:

(i) First order code analysis

For the first-order codes, several labels used appeared in the text as the participants' own words (Gioia et al., 2012; Clifford et al., 2016). Subsequently, more analytic codes were further generated from analyzing commonalities between first-order descriptive codes utilizing insights from the literature review (Clifford et al., 2016). Using the NVivo 12 software was essential in helping me organize my codes and design models that enabled me segment and identify concepts. Each transcript was loaded into the program and coded using selected segments of highlighted text within the transcripts. Using the software, I identified and allocated descriptive codes to the text, which were presented as nodes within the NVivo 12 program. I was also able to generate models showing codes belonging to each transcript identifying the commonalities and emerging concepts within the transcripts. Figure 3.3 shows codes allocated to transcript INT1 (See appendix 5 - 9 for all diagrams of codes allocated to interview transcripts).

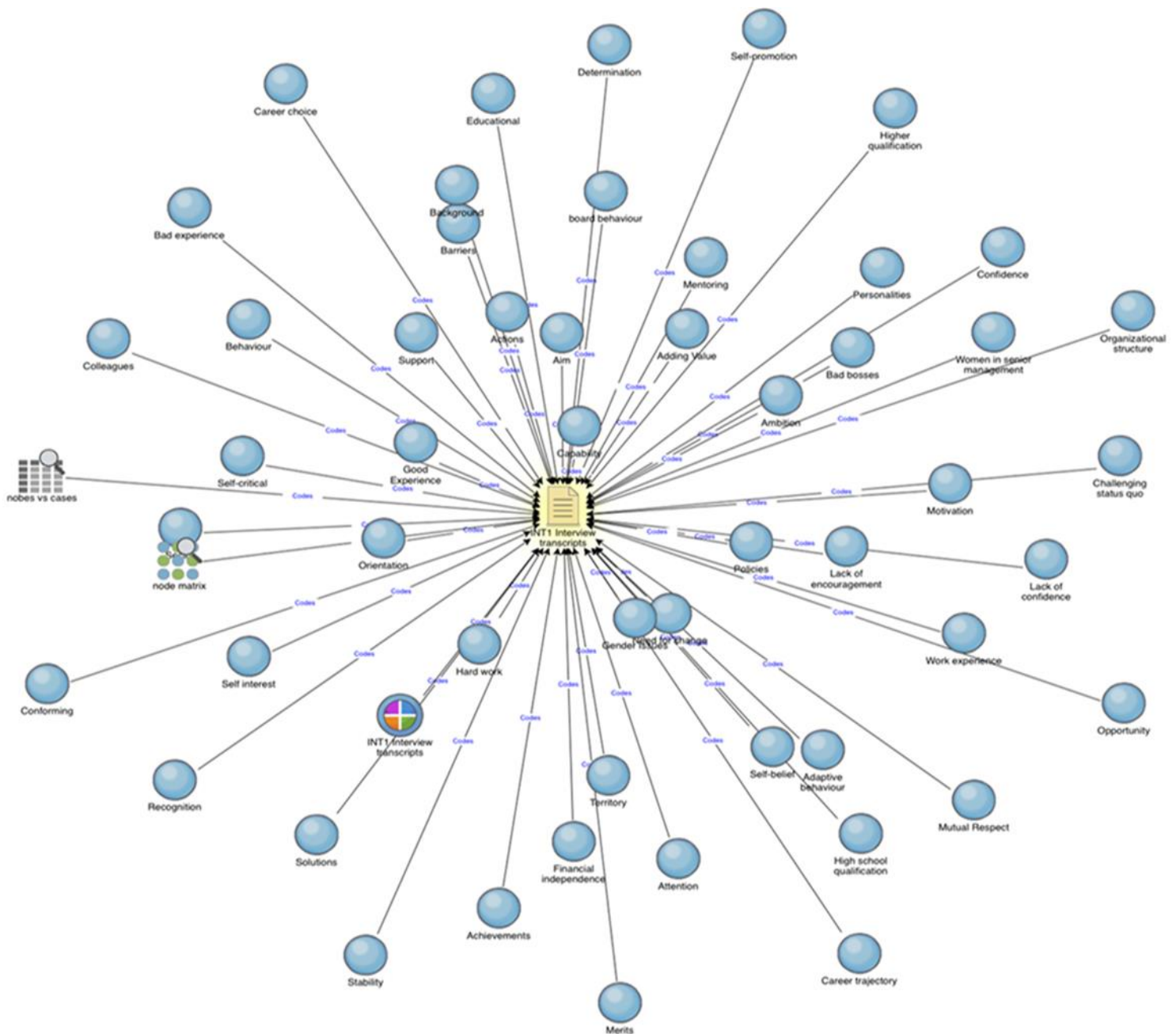


Figure 3.3: Codes allocated to INT1

Highlighted words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs within the transcripts were assigned as the main nodes as displayed in figure 3.3 above. These nodes were further broken out into 'sibling' nodes and child nodes stemming from the 'sibling' nodes either through description or inferred meaning. The process produced a codebook showing each code, their descriptions, and their emergence within the transcripts. See appendix 10 codebook for detailed descriptions of codes. Common codes identified from comparing all five interviews were: -

1. **Background** – Responses describing participant's up-bringing and gives some insights with regards to **support** participants received with their careers from family or **mentoring**. The responses further highlight the benefits of being mentored by **male** mentors.
2. **Barriers** – Where barriers participants faced during their career trajectory were referenced.
3. **Behaviour** – Where participants discussed their perspectives or understanding of certain behaviours. The **need for change** in behaviour highlights participant's perspectives on their behavioral changes. Need for change focused on **aggression** as an act of defense of **territory**. Differences in **personalities** were also referenced.
4. **Career choice** – Participants' responses on chosen career paths, with emphasis on **career trajectory** and **opportunity** for advancement.
5. **Motivation** – Where participant's motivation to pursue careers and advancement in Management was referenced. Participants placed referenced **adding value** as a motivation for career.
6. **Confidence** – Highlighted from responses on participants' **determination** to succeed, and the degree to which a **lack of confidence** had impacted on them as individuals. Participant's capability for **self-promotion** in their careers was also referenced.
7. **Educational level** – Participants referenced their educational qualifications in each interview.
8. **Gender issues** – References on diversity in participants' organizations and their perspectives on the lack of *women in senior management*.
9. **Achievements** – References made regarding participants' merits and achievements during their career trajectory.
10. **Capability** – References regarding participant's capabilities to achieve or deliver objectives.
11. **Sector** – References regarding the sectors or industries participants worked in and peculiarities found in such industries.
12. **Solutions** – Participants' perspectives on solutions to the issue of low representation of women in senior management and their support for diversity and inclusion **policies**.

13. **Work experiences** – Participants referred to their work experiences. They mostly reflected on the **good experiences** they had.

Apart from the above prominent responses, there were other descriptive codes that did have a relatively high level of reference. However, these codes featured in individual interviews and were not common to all five interviews, such as ‘ambition’ and ‘recognition’.

Table 3.1 and 3.2 below shows a cross section of the pilot study’s codes assembled into descriptive and analytic codes, after identifying my first order codes, I began to group and label codes with commonalities and similarities. I gradually narrowed down these new groupings to identify second-order themes using the hierarchy of code reference prominence discussed below.

DESCRIPTIVE CODES	DESCRIPTIVE CODES SUBGROUPING			ANALYTICAL CODES	ANALYTICAL CODES SUBGROUPING	
Barriers	Bad bosses					
	Colleagues					
	Lack of encouragement					
	Limitations					
	Self-belief					
Behavior	Adaptive			Vilified		
Background	Support	Mentoring	Female mentors	Nurturing		
			Male mentors	influence		
				Mutual respect		
	Networking	Boys club				
Boardroom behavior				Conforming		
				Male colleagues		
				Choice		
				Cultural factors		
				Need for change	Attention	
					collegial	
					Territory	Actions
						Aggression
				Personalities	identity	
Psychological factors						
Societal factors				Institutional factors		
				Social class		
				Stereotypes	Expectations	
Career choice				Authority		
				Career trajectory		
				Financial independence		
Job satisfaction				Lack of job satisfaction		
Motivation				Adding value		
				Ambition		
				Autonomy		
				Development		
				Moving social class		
				Opportunity		
Principles				Moral		
				priorities		
				Recognition		
				Self interest		
				Stability		
Change						
Confidence				Challenging status quo		

Table 3.1: Generated descriptive and analytic codes

DESCRIPTIVE CODES	DESCRIPTIVE CODES SUBGROUPING			ANALYTICAL CODES	ANALYTICAL CODES SUBGROUPING	
				Lack of confidence	Lack of courage	
					Self-critical	
				Self-promotion		
				Strong confidence		
Education				High school qualification		
				Higher qualification		
Gender issues				Challenges		
				Family obligations		
				Lack of women		
	New generation			Lack of knowledge		
				No gender issues		
				Too many women		
Women in senior management						
Merits				Achievement		
				capability		
				competition		
				determination		
Hard work						
Organizational structure				Sector	Orientation	
Solutions				Accountability		
				involvement		
				Lead by example		
				Life balance		
				policies		
Work experience				Bad experience		
				Good experience		

Table 3.2: Generated descriptive and analytic codes cont.

Using a reference matrix generated with the NVivo 12 software, I analyzed the level of inference of the first order codes in the interviews. These codes were represented as squares within the matrix. Squares with larger areas on the matrix represented these codes that had higher levels of reference within all five interviews, with their commonality standing out as prominent emerging concepts. I then extracted these concepts into second order themes. The NVivo12 code matrix representing the level of word reference is presented in figure 3.4 below.

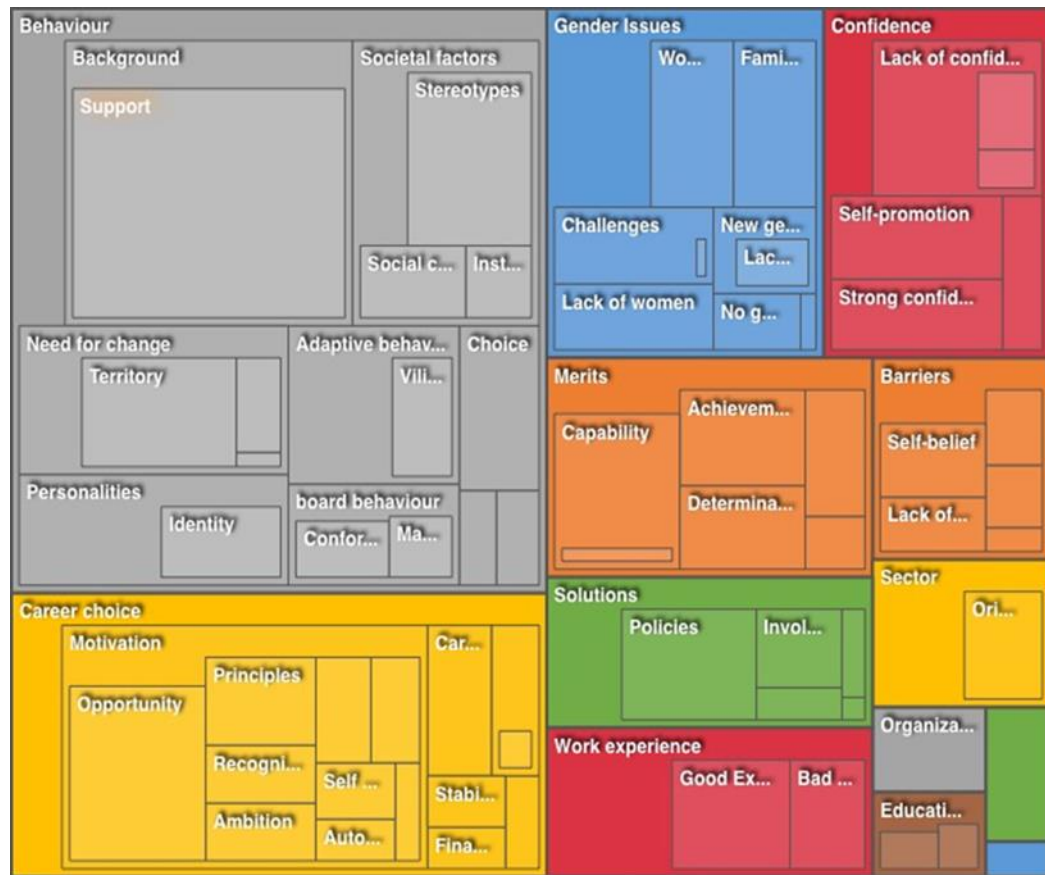


Figure 3.4: NVivo12 code matrix

(ii) Second order theme analysis

These analytical codes further highlight the existing relationships in the words or phrases within the interview transcripts through meaning (Bryant et al., 2007; Gibbs, 2007; Clifford et al., 2010). They highlight important trends within the data in relation to the research questions, and present patterns or emerging themes in the responses within the interview transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The second order themes identified were: -

- Behaviour; references on Influences on behaviour resulting in change.
- Confidence; references on confidence levels of women presenting as barriers to advancement.
- Career choice and progression; references on factors behind career choices.
- Work experiences; references on work experiences regarding colleagues and job roles during career trajectory.

- Challenges and opportunities; references on career paths and advancement.
- Barriers; references on barriers in career advancement.
- Gender issues; references on the recognition/awareness of the low representation of women in senior management and other diversity and inclusion issues in organization.
- Sector; references on the varying sectors and organizational cultures existing in certain sectors.
- Merit; references to the acknowledgment of women's achievements and capability to effectively execute roles in senior management.
- Recommendations; references on solutions to women's career advancement issues.

In addition to further understand the concepts within these codes, I used the NVivo software in generating word trees to investigate the use of the words and phrases identified within the interviews.

I began with the word behaviour. Interview questions such as; ***what managerial style do you prefer?*** or ***what do you think were the key changes you made to help you succeed in your role?*** were focused on generating insights into participants' behaviour and attitudes at work as they progressed into senior management. Using the word tree for 'behaviour', I was able to draw out all inference of the word in the interviews, see the context it was used and what meaning could be derived from it. A word tree showing the use of the word behaviour' can be seen in figure 3.5 below.



Figure 3.5: Word tree for behavior

In analyzing the use of the word 'behaviour' in participants' responses, it was interesting to discover that their reference to behaviour suggests that there is a recognition of a change in behaviour by women in senior management, and that change in behaviour may be brought about by a need to conform, to meet the expectations of other people, or in order to execute a job role more effectively. These responses also suggest that the change in the behaviour of participants' female superiors has had a negative impact on participants' perspectives regarding women in senior management. A few of such responses are shown in the table below.

MAIN/FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS	RESPONSES
<i>"...the adaptive behaviour...the changing of your behaviour was to get you to face the objectives more properly...so that you can be able to surmount a particular problem.....?"</i>	<i>" Yeah....exactly, and also to enable me to deliver in my job in the best possible way"</i>
<i>" Do you think that your experiences caused you...to change the way you act...the way you do things....the way you relate with your colleagues?"</i>	<i>" To a point...I had to become quite autocratic....you had to say either shut up or put up....You've had to say.... the decision is made. Normally I wouldn't do that, but I had to in order to express an authority that they would not allow me"</i>
<i>" Do you think that this particular behaviour actually impacts on the low representation of women in those levels?"</i>	<i>" I think that it's a prerogative....I think that what they are doing is they're trying to achieve some sort of status...some sort of position by undermining other individuals rather than using their own capabilities to get to the position..."</i>
<i>"....How things are done?"</i>	<i>"I was really struggling and realizing that around me....the women who were getting on were getting on because they would mimic that sort of passive aggressive or aggressive behaviour that the men did...and they were better at it?"</i>

Table 3.3: Example of responses referencing 'behaviour'

Although used in varying contexts, patterns on the inference of the word 'behaviour' focused on the concept of 'a change in behaviour of women in senior management' as a prominent theme in all the interviews, whether participants' own change or the change in behaviour of other women.

Following this, I then analyzed the use of the word 'confidence'. Interview questions such as; ***When you gained employment how did you progress in your career trajectory?*** focused on factors or characteristics that influenced participant's progression in their career. Responses highlighted participants' perspectives on their confidence as they progressed through senior management. Figure 3.6 below is the word tree for 'confidence', displaying the context in which the word was used in the interviews.

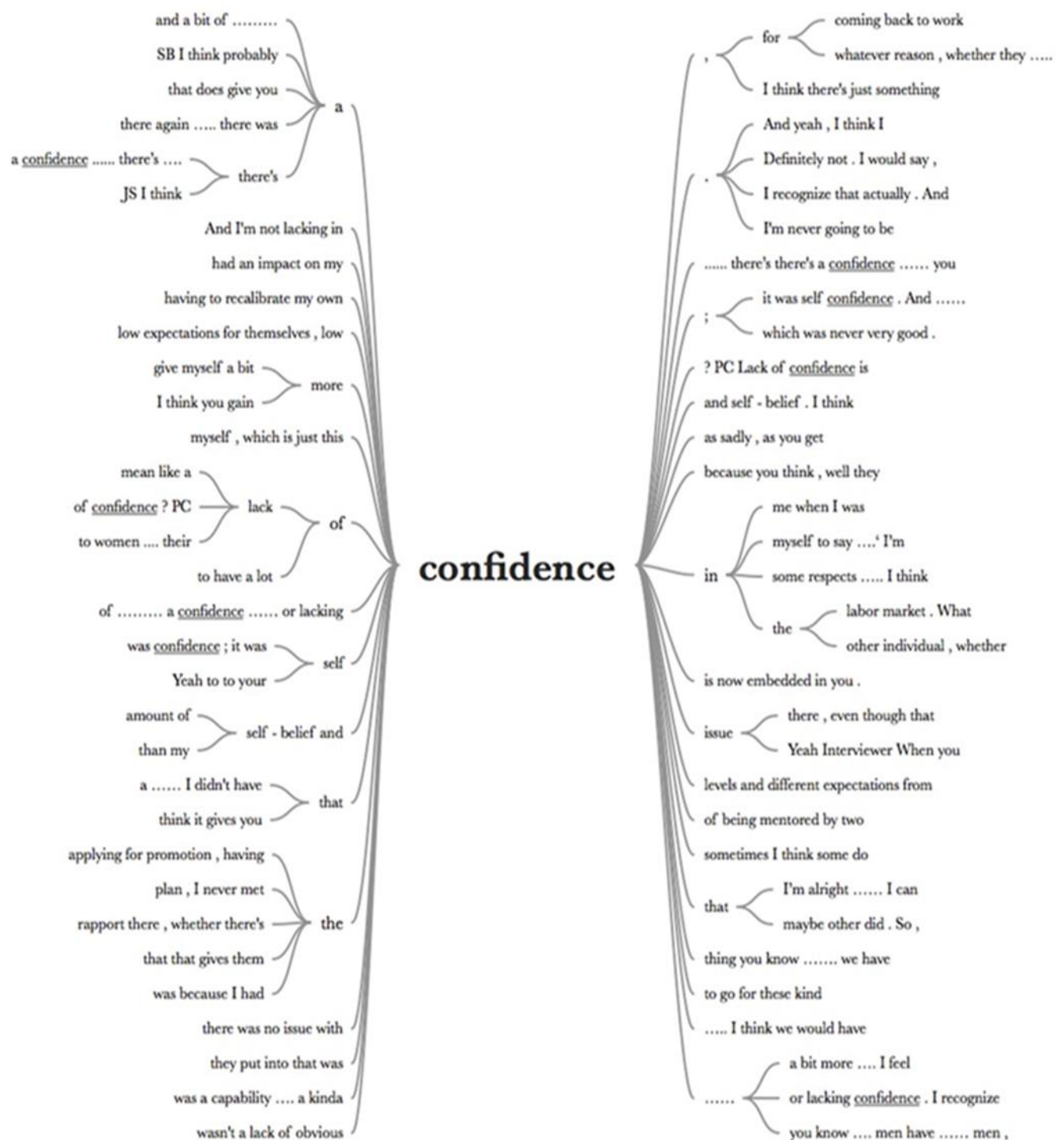


Figure 3.6: Confidence word tree

Interestingly, my interview questions had yielded responses that suggested participants perceived a lack of confidence borne by aspiring women to seek progression into senior management. This is a significant concept in exploring

the factors behind the low representation of women in senior roles. My participants' responses infer they acknowledge their own lack of self-confidence, which had impacted negatively on how quickly they had advanced. A few of such responses are shown in the table below.

MAIN/FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS	RESPONSES
<i>"What are the barriers to progression you faced in your career trajectory</i>	<i>"...Maybe one of the barriers is actually me.... lacking confidence... I recognise that actually"</i>
<i>"...the reason for few women in boards?"</i>	<i>"... I think you have to see that its not cultural. It's a combination women drive this as much as men.... And because it is so institutionalized women have low expectations for themselves..... low confidence levels and different expectations from life"</i>
<i>" So you feel the low representation of women in senior management is due to their lack of confidence to go for these jobs?"</i>	<i>" Yeah"</i>

Table 3.4: Examples of responses referencing 'confidence'

I then analyzed the phrase 'career choice and progression' in the interview responses. Interestingly the word that was highly linked to this phrase was the word 'opportunity'. Interview questions asked focusing on career choice and progression generated insights on how participants sought out employment and the factors behind participants' career choices such as: **how did you get this role?** or **was it your initial career choice?** Figure 3.7 below shows the word tree for 'opportunity' and the context in which it was used.



Figure 3.7: Word tree for 'Opportunity'

Responses had generated inferences that suggest career choices made by participants as well as their advancement to senior management, was mostly influenced by availability of opportunity and referrals from mentors or by their predecessors. A few of such responses are shown in the table below:

MAIN/FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS	RESPONSES
<i>“ what made you choose you career?”</i>	<i>“ I got an opportunity because my....someone I knew”</i>
<i>“ So, there were no barriers on your way..... You just chose this career?”</i>	<i>It was largely through my own choice. I was never overtly aware of being denied opportunity”</i>

Table 3.5: Examples of responses referencing ‘opportunity’

As I continued to analyze prominent words and phrases in the second order themes, further evaluating the meaning to the inferences of these words and phrases, I identified the following emerging concepts: -

- i. Focus on behaviour: There is a strong focus on ‘behaviour’ as participants spoke on their perception of the behavior of other people towards them, and the recognition of their behaviour toward others in the workplace. Participants recognize that they are expected to act in accordance with workplace values or audiences, to ensure ‘organizational fit’. Participants infer their behaviour in the workplace is not motivated by a need to protect their positions, and that if they have adapted their behaviour, it was an unconscious occurrence.
- ii. Background: This focuses on participants’ backgrounds and how their personalities and behaviours were somewhat shaped by their upbringing with influences from society, family economic status, education institutions attended or support systems around them involving parents, teachers, mentors, or friends.
- iii. Demography: Participants inferred that factors such as age, religion, marital status/family commitment, gender, or race may influence their behaviour in society and in their places of work.
- iv. Conforming to stereotypes: Participants spoke on expectation of behavioral characteristics based on their gender. They infer that as women, their subordinates and sometimes colleagues expect them to exhibit more nurturing and less aggressive behaviour.
- v. Traits of successful managers: Participants acknowledge that certain traits or characteristics are viewed as favorable managerial traits such

as confidence, ambition, sternness. They recognize that their behaviour may change depending on the managerial styles they adopt to address a situation or function.

- vi. Career choice: Most participants inferred they chose careers based on opportunities that presented themselves either through their experience or referrals from mentors. Other participants stated luck was the factor behind their career choice or progression.
- vii. Work experience: This theme mostly developed from inference regarding challenges participants faced or barriers to their progression in senior management. They spoke on their experiences as women in the workplace and the alliances or networks they forged to progress in their careers. Participants inferred that a lack of confidence was the biggest challenge they had in going for the senior jobs. They rarely self-promote or showcase their achievements because of this.
- viii. Need to support woman to advance: Participants acknowledge there is a lack of networking and support for aspiring women in sectors they have worked in. Participants elaborated on a need to develop networks and mentorship to create opportunities for women seeking to advance into senior management and boards.

3.1.1.4.3 Findings from emerging themes

After identifying the emerging themes, I began to evaluate the interpretation of my findings. I had interacted with the text, codes, and themes in relation to the study's objectives (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Hence the emergent themes identified had been allocated succinct phrases to describe the meaning that underpinned them. I then scrutinized the previous coding stage to ensure that the themes generated are representative of my data code analysis.

My findings consisted of the identification of factors that impact on the propensity for adaptive behaviour exhibited by women in senior management and boards, as highlighted within the concepts in the emergent themes. I identified factors such as the impact of a participant's background on the development of their personalities, values, and behaviour. I also identified influences from demographic factors such as participant's age or marital status, and factors that

influence participants views on propitious behaviour based on their perspectives on the traits of successful managers. These factors can be grouped as either sociological or psychological influences, and they offer insights into both social and psychological conditions that affect behaviour.

Earlier in section 2.6 of my literature review, I had identified and highlighted on three potential factors influencing the adaptive behaviour exhibited by women in senior management and boards, namely: -

- The need for territorial protection.
- Personal agenda to succeed.
- The need for collegiality with their colleagues

My findings suggest that the degree to which these influences impact on the actions of these women in senior management depends on their willingness or their propensity for critical acts which sees them push for positive changes in diversity and inclusion policies within their organizations. My initial inclinations were anchored on the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards being a barrier to the advancement of women to senior management, however, my findings highlight the multifaceted nature of behaviour, giving me insights to the sociological and psychological factors that influence changes in the behaviour of women in senior management and boards. These sociological and psychological factors are discussed below.

i. Sociological factors

In this study sociological factors are variables that influence interactions between individuals and their environment, such as socio-cultural, communal, family, organizational (Turner, 2006; Schaefer, 2018). Findings from my analysis suggest strong influences by sociological factors on participants' behaviour such as: -

- Background – Findings highlight participants upbringing, and the impact of such upbringing on their personality. It also highlights the level of support they received from family and mentors, as well as the degree of influence such family members and or mentors had on their career choice or

trajectory. Opportunities available to them due to their family status or background were also highlighted.

- Demography - The pilot study generated insights through participants' references on their age, gender, and marital status. These factors need to be evaluated to see if they have a direct influence on participants' interaction with other individuals or groups, shaping their behaviour in both personal and work environments (Williams & O'Reilley, 1998).
- Stereotypes - Inference to stereotypes in the findings relates to participants' acknowledgement that behaviours or attitudes are based stereotypically on the male and female genders (Cann & Siegfried, 1990; Basow, 1992). Participants perceive that these stereotypes may have impacted on their behaviour with regards to how others expect them to behave when executing a role (Cann & Siegfried, 1990). Participants were of the view that male managers are expected to show high degrees of ambition, aggressive competitiveness, while female managers are expected to be supportive and nurturing in their management styles (Mihail, 2006). Hence, findings suggest participant behaviour results from expectancy fueled by gender stereotypes, and may be the catalyst for women adopting behaviour that match organizational role specifications or objectives.

ii. Psychological factors

In this study psychological factors refer to influences related to an individual's thinking or perceptions of behaviour, attitudes, or experience (Rogentine et al., 1979; Kalat, 2014), that impact on the behavioral expectancies of participants and groups they belong to (Kalat, 2014): -

- Perception – This is the process of interpreting what we see or hear in our mind and using it later to judge and give a verdict on a situation, other people, or groups (Cann & Siegfried, 1990). My findings suggest participants perceive certain traits as necessary to succeed in senior management. Participants acknowledged that the possession of such traits determine achievements or status reached either in society or their organizations (Alexander & Andersen, 1993; Sczesny et al., 2004). Traits

such as confidence or ambition impact some influence on participants' career choices and trajectory in management (Heilman, 2001; Embry et al., 2008).

- Attitude - This factor relates to the abstract learnt reaction or response of my participants' cognitive processes over a time span (Eagly & Chaiken, 2007). Attitudes are general evaluations participants have regarding people, places, or experiences (Briñol et al., 2019). My findings suggest participants showed varying attitudes and behaviour depending on their perspectives, social situation, or circumstances (Pratkanis et al., 1989; Shrigley, 1990; Eagly & Chaiken, 2007; Di Martino & Zan, 2009; Briñol et al., 2019). Attitudes influence and guides choices and actions taken by participants as they interact with their environments and others, while giving them a sense of identity (Briñol et al., 2019).
- Attribution – This was identified in the findings as a factor relating to how participants behave or change behaviour to reflect different situations or perceptions, and inference about other people or themselves (Weary et al., 1989; Hollyforde & Whiddett, 2010).
- Personality – Relates to participants' characteristic patterns of thought, emotion, and behaviour, in addition to the psychological systems that develop such patterns (Mayer, 2007). Findings show that participants exhibit inherent traits that impact on their behaviour (Bergner, 2020).
- Values - These are the beliefs systems that influence participants' perspectives, judgments, and behaviour across various situations (Wilbur & Vernon, 2015). Findings highlight that participants' beliefs act as guiding principles in their behaviour (Mumford et al., 2003). Values can be learned and are often influenced by other individuals such as family members, teachers, colleagues/mentors, or friends (Mumford et al., 2003).

These findings helped focus my research and provide support for the feasibility of carrying out further investigations in this subject area. I deliberated on whether the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards was influenced by participants' individual personalities, or whether adapting their behaviour is their attempt to act as they are expected to act. These findings

allowed me to consider modifications to my initial conceptual framework earlier presented in chapter two and expanding the framework to include all factors highlighted as influences on the behaviour of women in senior management and boards.

3.1.1.5 Adopted verification process

This final guideline enabled me to ensure reliable analysis processes were followed. Although I maintained consistent and rigorous analysis of my data and identify salient concepts within the emerging themes, I was nonetheless aware of the limiting effect the selection and presentation of my interview questions had on my logic of discovery. Considering the volume of data collected, I discovered some of the questions I presented generated data that was not useful to the research. I also acknowledge there I may have had preexisting concepts regarding this topic that may have impacted on my analytic coding labelling. To overcome this, I undertook a verification process to establish rigor.

The verification process involves cross-checking, confirming, and being certain of the data and the process I followed in identifying and presenting findings in this pilot study (Morse et al., 2002). This involved ensuring all instruments used and processes followed during the research contribute to establish reliability and validity, hence ensuring the rigor of the study (Kvale, 1994; Morse et al., 2002; Creswell, 2003). As qualitative research follows an iterative rather than linear path of progression (Morse et al., 2002; Spiers et al., 2002), I went back and forth between the selected research design and implementation process to ensure congruence among interview questions prepared, my literature review, participant recruitment, and my data collection and analysis process. This iterative progression enabled me to identify either to continue, stop, or modify the research process to establish reliability and validity in my findings.

The verification process I adopted in my pilot study was in two stages, expanded on below: -

1. *Researcher's responsiveness* - This is a measure of my creativity, flexibility, and skill in using the verification process, which determines the reliability and validity of the study (Morse et al., 2002). For instance, my

ability to remain open minded, sensitive, and insightful during interviews, and my ability to recognize and abandon any concepts or themes that are poorly thought out or unsupported is essential for ensuring rigor.

2. *Implementing verification Strategies* - Verification strategies ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected. The four verification strategies I adopted through my research process are: -

- (i) Ensure I develop methodological coherence by ensuring congruence between the research questions, the selected methodology, the data sources, and the analytic processes. To achieve this, I recognized questions that may have to be changed or modified to ensure the data meets the analytic goals, while verifying the methodological assumptions of the research.
- (ii) Ensure I verify that the sample size of five for the pilot study was appropriate. The sample size for participants for this pilot study was adequate as it consisted of participants who best represented and had knowledge across a range of contexts within the study area.
- (iii) Ensure the selection of participants who were most likely to have varying interpretations and understanding of the study area, to ensure validity by providing insights on aspects of the study that were initially not obvious.
- (iv) Ensure my data collection and analysis allowed integrated theoretical thinking, by verifying emerging themes in the data with insights from existing theory identified in the literature review. This ensured the formation of a conceptual framework that provided a foundation for further theoretical framework development in the study (Spiers et al., 2002).

3.1.2 Resources required for study

This relates to the materials or resources I will utilize to effectively carry out activities in collecting and analyzing my data. The pilot study allowed me identify timing and budget problems that can occur during the main study, such as the varying duration of interviews, cost of travel to and from interview venues, participants recruitment processes etc. The resources I identified were regarding Financial/material cost implication of study. This included the cost of conducting the interviews, which were

minimal as all five participants were in the same geographical location. I was able to schedule two interviews a day and procured minimum cost travelling to venues. The interviews were conducted at the office premises of the participants. No refreshments were required. This further ensured my costs were kept at a minimum. However, I am now mindful that varied costs/resources will need to be considered when accessing participants in varying geographical locations. I may also need to consider the cost of providing refreshments.

3.1.3 Management strategy for processes and resources

The pilot study helped identify potential data optimization problems such as data management issues or complications to the process brought on by my own personal circumstances as a researcher. These are expanded below: -

(i) Data management

A large amount of data was generated from the interview. The interviews were all recorded using a digital recorder and note taking by myself. After the interviews were transcribed, and data extracted, I had a large quantity of confidential material needing safe storage. A larger quantity of confidential data would be generated in the main study, hence I am aware of the importance of storing and processing data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Audio recordings were copied to the University of Stirling research drive and deleted from my recorder after transcripts are made.

(ii). Researcher's circumstances

During the pilot study, I developed good work discipline and ethics. I now understand how to manage my time and resources effectively and efficiently during a research. My work discipline allowed me to focus on meeting deadlines and achieving set milestones. I was also made aware of any preexisting bias I might have inadvertently had with the research topic and allowed myself to expand my logic of discovery by considering alternative or divergent directions of inquiry into the research topic. I became aware of my strengths in my analysis skill, work ethics and focus, and identified how I could maximize these strengths in the main study. I also identified my weaknesses in my interviewing skills and

learnt how to minimize such weaknesses by researching how to conduct successful interviews and attending workshops.

The verification strategies I utilized in checking my data collection and analysis processes ensured the validity and reliability for the pilot study. The validity and reliability of this pilot study will be further discussed in the section below.

3.2 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

In qualitative research validity and reliability ensure trustworthiness by ensuring findings are dependable, credible, transferable, and confirmable (Sinkovics et al., 2008; Yilmaz, 2013). This is essential as a researcher's subjectivity can easily cloud the interpretation of the data (Sinkovics et al., 2008). In Yilmaz (2013), credibility describes the true value of findings. Hence participants will find the results of the study true. He also argues that transferability is achieved if the findings are transferable to varying but similar settings, and that dependability is achieved if the processes of selecting, justifying, and applying research methods are clearly presented or explained (Yilmaz 2013). He also argues confirmability can be achieved when findings are based on the analysis of the collected data and examined via an auditing process, hence inferences based on the data are logical and have clarity (Yilmaz 2013). Based on these insights, validity and reliability of the pilot study was established as findings accurately represent the data of the phenomenon being studied (Kumar, 2018).

Findings also generated useful insights on addressing the research questions raised. I ensured all adopted procedures for conducting interviews and the analysis of data generated were accurately adhered to, ensuring validity of the research content. Credibility of the research was established by using multiple participants, conducting member checks, structuring of interview questions aimed at providing extensive, consistent, and dependable findings that generate accurate interpretations or descriptions of the phenomena being studied. Transferability of findings is established through clear and detailed description of analytic constructs, premises, terms, and definitions. Methods of data collection and analysis are explicitly documented and explained to allow testing or applying findings to another context. Dependability was

accomplished by ensuring the consistent and transparent adherence to data collection and analysis processes, hence ensuring trustworthiness of findings. As findings in the pilot study are based on the analysis of the collected data, I ensured that all inferences to the data are presented in clear and logical sequence to achieve confirmability. Validity and reliability in research will be further discussed in chapter four.

3.3 MODIFIED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: ELUCIDATIONS FROM PILOT STUDY

In conducting a pilot study, I Identified potential issues such as barriers with regards to selecting and recruiting participants for the research, weaknesses of the use of interviews as a technique for data collection, the costs involved in organizing and conducting interviews, challenges I may encounter during the development and analysis of codes, and ensuring bias is not introduced in my interpretation of findings. Hence the pilot study allowed me to identify ways of modifying instruments and processes such as interview questions to develop more effective lines of questioning. This led to improved insights into the research topic. It also allowed me to identify my strengths and weaknesses as a researcher with regards to the skills required to conduct a successful and qualitative interview and being aware of my proclivity to answer the questions for the interviewees or to ask leading questions. I must clarify that although the pilot study interviews were conducted on a face-to-face basis, was modified to telephone interviews for the main study due to travel restrictions and lockdowns introduced at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Regarding resources utilized in conducting the pilot study, I was able to identify ways of minimizing wastage on time and cost involved in the data collection and analysis process. I was able to contact and recruit participants for the main study utilizing the network established with the pilot study participants. By snowballing and referring me to their colleagues and associates, I was able to recruit the required number of participants for the main study. The snowball sampling method is a non-probability sampling method where the probability of any participant being selected for a sample cannot be calculated (Wolf et al., 2016). Unlike random sampling, this snowball sampling allowed me use my judgment to choose participants rather than utilizing sampling methods that rely on a level of probability. This is because recruiting potential participants for this study was challenging owing to a lack of access to such women

and their availability due to their status in their industries. The snowball sample method of recruitment also minimized the cost of participants' search and recruitment as I was referred by the pilot study participants to their peers. This also allowed the establishment of trust.

In addition to this, the pilot study also allowed the building blocks for the modified conceptual framework of this pilot study to be identified. This conceptual framework captures the coming together of concepts from elements identified in the literature review, and findings from the analysis of the emergent themes identified in the pilot study. In labeling and linking these concepts as 'elements' and 'factors', further comprehension of the direction of my inquiry can be seen. The pilot study conceptual framework will be discussed in the following section.

3.3.1 Pilot study conceptual framework

Figure 3.8 below shows the linking of the three principal 'elements' identified in the literature review conceptualizing the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards, with the 'factors' influencing the adaptive behaviour identified in the pilot study findings. Hence presenting a modified conceptual framework for the study.

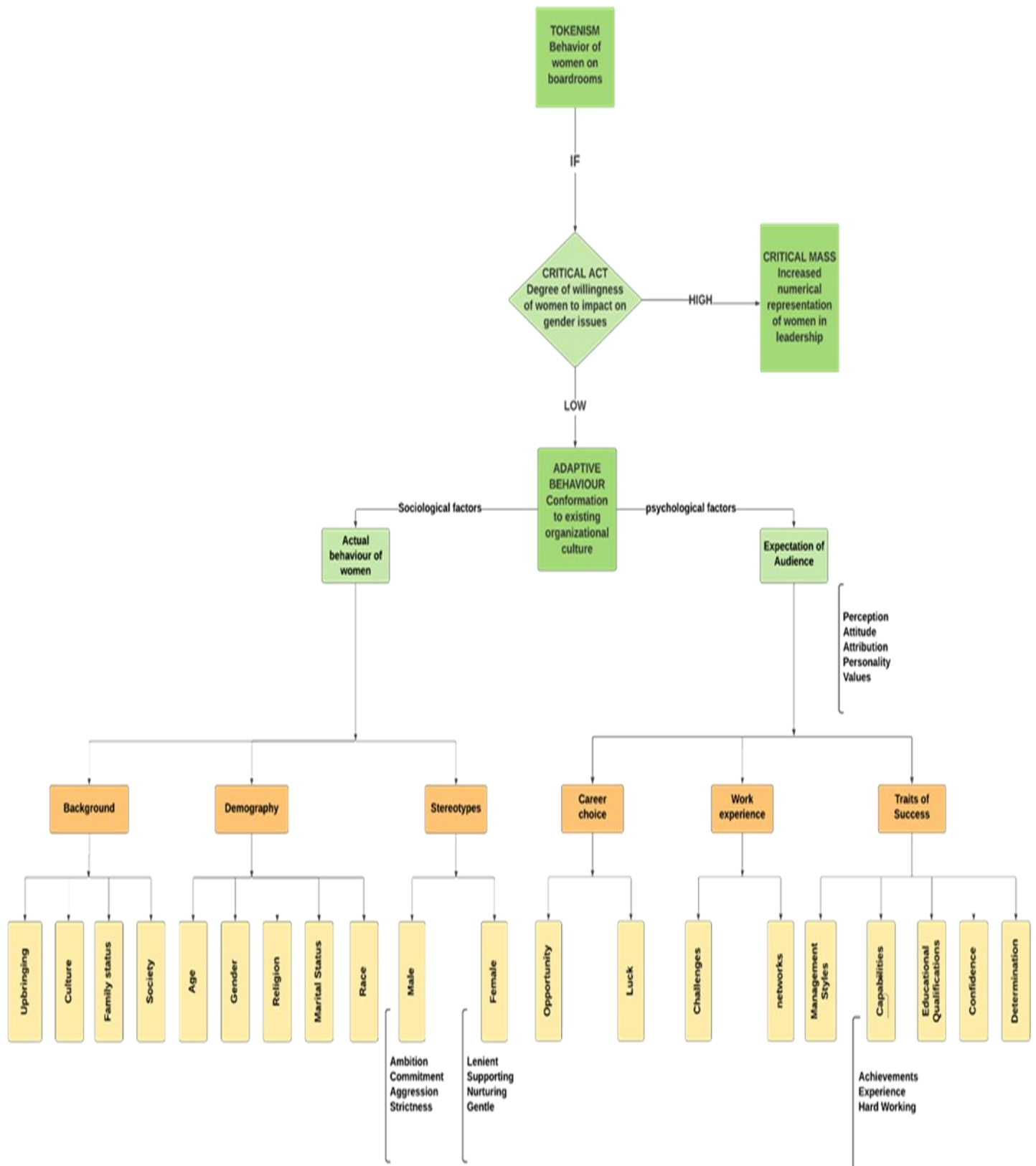


Figure 3.8: Modified conceptual framework

3.4 SUMMARY

In summary, this chapter presents the pilot study conducted in fulfillment of year two DBA course work. The pilot studies allowed for the development and testing of research instruments to confirm their suitability and effectiveness for the main study (Morin, 2013; Hazzi & Maldaon, 2015; Pearson et al., 2020). Conducting pilot studies provides an avenue to assess the feasibility of the main study through: -

1. The selection of suitable research designs,
 2. The testing of processes for the main study,
 3. Providing a practice run for collecting and analyzing data,
 4. Being a source of training/experience for researchers
- (Morin, 2013; Hazzi & Maldaon ,2015; Pearson et al., 2020).

This pilot study justified the feasibility of my research and indicated the appropriate research design and methodology I should adopt. By conducting a study at a smaller scale than the main study, I have been able to identify and improve on processes to follow and gain experience in interviewing techniques, data collection and analysis..

With regards to the feasibility of my study, the pilot study allowed me to verify if my interview questions will generate data required for the main study. This verification was made through the collection and analysis of data which can address the research questions raised. Participants for the pilot study came from the same population participants for the main study will be recruited from. The sample size was large enough to ensure the strengths and weaknesses of the selected methodology were identified. The use of interviews as the data collection technique was tested and found to be effective in generating data required for the main study. Conducting an initial pilot study also allowed me to recognize and make modifications to my instruments and processes such as modifying interview questions to generate data and timing allotted to each participant. My research processes which included the study's selected research design and methodology were also tested and found effective in generating data and analytical insights, and wastage of resources such as time and finances were minimized.

The pilot study showed me how to ensure reliability and validity of the research and ethical considerations. Trustworthiness of both data and analysis was achieved by ensuring transparency of the data and reflexivity of my analysis process to ensure findings from this pilot study do not allow for bias in my interpretation for the main study. By conducting a pilot study, I learnt how to further avoid bias by ensuring I am always aware of my position with regards to the subject matter, and carry out member checks, and audit trails that clearly ensure confirmability. This ensures my findings are a result of the enquiry carried out in this study and not based on any preconception or any bias I may have.

Finally, this pilot study was used to clarify the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the main study and assisted in indicating the methodology for the main study to be discussed in chapter four. By defining the subjectivity of the study and its impact on the study's findings, this pilot study assisted in refining the positioning of this research, leading to the selection and utilization of the most effective methodology for the main study.

CHAPTER FOUR METHODOLOGY

4.0 INTRODUCTION

To further understand the adaptive behaviour exhibited by women in senior management and boards, it is essential that the characteristics and behaviour of such individuals within groups are identified, and the circumstances surrounding such behaviour are explored (Whitmarsh et al., 2007). This will be achieved through the exploration of themes that emerge in the data analysis, pointing towards links or relationships between the variables identified (Burnard et al., 2008; Cliff, 1998; Thomas, 2006; Kothari & Garg, 2004; Singh & Richards, 2003). The methodology of the study can be described as the logic and process of inquiry leading to the discovery of knowledge (Kaplan, 1998; Holden & Lynch, 2004). It is the enterprise in which knowledge for a study is generated through the description, explanation, and justification of the selected methods of inquiry, and the elaboration of the limitations and resourcefulness of these methods (Hatch & Yanow, 2008; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Hence in this chapter the appropriate methodology of discovery, logic, and analysis to be utilized in addressing the research questions developed from the literature review will be determined (Bryman, 2007).

In section 4.1, I begin the chapter by presenting pathways this investigation will take, laying a foundation to the sequence of discovery in the following sections. In section 4.2, guidelines followed in adopting an appropriate approach to this research are discussed, with the selection of a methodological approach and the philosophical positioning of this study presented in section 4.3. In section 4.4 the process for the selection of a research design adopted for this study is considered, and an appropriate design is selected and presented. Justification for my research design choice is also discussed in this section, as well as discussions on data sources, data collection techniques and data analysis adopted in this study. The process of participant recruitment will also be presented in this section. In section 4.5 reliability and validity of the study will be discussed, with possible limitations to the research that may arise presented in section 4.6. Lastly in section 4.7, ethical considerations made which ensure this research follows processes and produces findings that meet the objectives

of this research without infringing on or violating the rights of participants are discussed.

4.1 RESEARCH PATHWAYS OF INQUIRY

The research questions raised in this study will lead the investigation along the following pathways of inquiry: -

1. The concept of agency or social identity explored within the 'adaptive behaviour' element of this study as identified in the literature review, as I seek to identify the motivational factors for the adaptive behaviour exhibited by women in senior management and boards.
2. The concept of the response and willingness of women in such roles to act regarding the advancement of women into senior management, explored within the 'critical act' element of this study as identified in the literature review.
3. The concept of the resulting impact of such actions on the representation of women in senior management, explored within the 'critical mass' element of this study as identified in the literature review.

To address the research questions, I investigate the prevailing factors instigating the adaptive behaviour in women in senior management to determine if these stem from a need to secure and protect their positions/territory, a personal agenda/ambition to succeed, or a need to be collegial and function as a member of the team. I will then investigate the existence of a link between the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards and the low representation of women in these levels of management, as indicated by findings from my pilot study.

4.2 CONSIDERATION OF GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH PROCESS ADOPTED

The process and findings in the pilot study indicates the methodology for my main study should utilize an approach which is exploratory in nature and gives the necessary flexibility given the tensions and gaps found in the literature (Moustakas, 1990; Hiles, 2001; Kenny, 2012; Haertl, 2014; Sultan, 2019). With this exploratory approach to methodology, I inquired into the research using guidelines presented in Kleining and Witt (2000) which are: -

1. The researcher should be open-minded, exploring new concepts and reconsidering preconceptions in accordance with insights revealed by data.
2. The initial topic of research can be subject to change during the research process. Hence, I should be prepared change topics or direction of inquiry as the research proceeds.
3. Data and insights should be collected from a wide range of sources in a wide range of organizational contexts, to avoid one-sided perspectives.
4. The analysis should be focused on the discovery of ideas and issues in the data that may be insightful in overcoming differences. The build-up of codes and themes should progress to present an overall pattern which produces the structure and logic of discovery for the research.

Following the above guidelines allows for a more cohesive understanding of the research topic using a flexible research framework, integrated with my reflection on self, approach, and process (Pieper, 1989; Moustakas,1990; Nuttall, 2006; Rumi, 2019). The guidelines allowed me to remain focused on achieving rigor and trustworthiness in my investigation (Blessing & Chakrabarti, 2014).

4.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

In selecting methodological approaches, an evaluation of research paradigms is essential (Suharsaputra, 2014). Research paradigms present a frame of thinking that describes how researchers view and treat facts within reality, building on principles that form a basis for logical and systematic reasoning (Ramdhani & Ramdhani, 2014). Qualitative research methodology approach on the other hand is used for investigating phenomena that can neither be observed nor easily measured objectively (Cameron & Miller, 2007; Tuli, 2010; Ogharanduku et al.; Paterson et al., 2016), hence qualitative research explores why things are, why they are what they are in a social context, and why individuals behave in the way they do (Liedtka, 1992; Ogharanduku et al.; Paterson et al., 2016). This type of research takes a subjective position, allowing for various interpretations of phenomena and experiences, with both researcher and participants interacting at various levels (Cameron & Miller, 2007). The quantitative and qualitative division in research is a long-standing point of debate (Kelemen & Rumens, 2008; Klaes, 2012), with focus being on the epistemological and ontological

viewpoints to inquiry and knowledge generation between quantitative and qualitative research methods (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Gage, 1989; Oakley, 1999; Alasuutari et al., 2012). To embark on a successful course of discovery, a researcher must first consider both epistemological and ontological paradigms of knowledge generation, to identify which paradigm their area of research should be positioned (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

On the epistemological level, focus is on the nature, limitations, and justification of human knowledge which poses the question of the relationship between the researcher and what is known, or what and how knowledge is discovered (Tuli, 2011; Klakegg et al., 2015; Hathcoat et al., 2019). The positivist epistemology and interpretivist epistemology are based on contrasting general theoretical and methodological viewpoints, such as social interactionism, phenomenology, and approach to social action (Klaes, 2012; Alasuutari et al., 2012). Positivism explores knowledge from a realist standpoint and purports that reality exists independent of consciousness (Cohen et al., 2018). It is not a construct of our senses (Scotland, 2012). Interpretivism, on the other hand, explores individual meanings that are inherent within a broader generalization, by shying away from the scientific base of knowledge toward relativism (Scotland, 2012). Relativism is the view that reality is subjective from individual to individual (Denzin et al., 1994), and our realities are a construct of our senses (Scotland 2012).

At the ontological level, focus is on contrasting beliefs based on the existence of the realm of reality (Hameed, 2020). Reality could be objective and exist independently or be the product of social processes and interactions (Tuli, 2011; Klakegg et al., 2015). For objective ontology the 'realm of reality' is made up of hard tangible structures yet to be defined, while for a subjective ontology reality is made up of varying conceptual constructs on social interaction between people and their environment (Tobin & Begley, 2004; Klaes, 2012; Hameed, 2020). This contrast is also drawn between objective and subjective accounts of the nature of society (Newman & Benz, 1998; Alasuutari et al., 2012) where an objective ontology considers reality as external, existing independent of consciousness or knowledge of it (Tobin & Begley, 2004), and a subjective ontology considers the influence of the social environments on individuals such as the general social and historical cultures to which they belong (Scotland,

2012). Hence as most human behaviour is influenced by emotion, experience, and habit, reality is subjective (Weber, 1922; Mills, 1959).

The debates on research paradigm are focused on the philosophical path of discovery, leading towards considerations of methods (Klaes, 2012). Arguments in these paradigm debates show a move from a scientific approach or an interpretive approach to knowledge utilized by quantitative and qualitative research methods, to the viability and alternative use of mixed methods (Klaes, 2012). By arguing and evaluating the pros and cons of varying methodology, researchers can select a suitable research design that adequately elucidates the rationale for the nature of their research and how it should be conducted (Morgan, 2000; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2011; Creswell & Poth, 2016).

4.3.1 Positioning of this study

Positioning this study is done through careful consideration of the underlying ontological and epistemological underpinnings that guide understanding into the nature of reality and the understanding of knowledge discovery (Symon et al., 2012). Research philosophies not only represent a viewpoint for researchers that defines the nature of reality, but also the researchers' perspectives and place within this reality among the varying range of possible relationships and interactions (Tamminen et al., 2020). This influences understanding in that space leading to knowledge discovery (Symon et al., 2012; Tamminen et al., 2020).

With the positivism paradigm, generation of knowledge is grounded in scientific methods of investigation (Poonamallee, 2009; Punch, 2014). In this paradigm reality is tangible, real, and external. Hence reality is measurable, objective, unchanging and dependent on universal laws (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). The interpretivism paradigm sees research as the free flow of consciousness (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). In this paradigm reality varies, hence ultimate truth is regarded as not existing, with reality being subjective and ever changing (Bunniss & Kelly, 2010). As entities only exist in the minds of the individuals thinking them, interpretivism involves the development and interpretation of the subjective meanings and understandings of the participant's experiences based on their social and historical background (Tubey

et al., 2015). The pragmatism paradigm addresses gaps in both the positivism and interpretivism paradigms, with assumptions that reject the positivist notion that social science inquiry cannot uncover the 'truth' about the real world. This paradigm invalidates the need to locate research either in the positivism or interpretivism paradigms (Tubey et al., 2015; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Here knowledge is discovered through methods of inquiry that enables researchers to explore the questions being investigated using both quantitative and qualitative methods of inquiry (Tubey et al., 2015; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018; Maarouf, 2019).

The Critical realism paradigm underpins a realist stance where researchers believe that an independent reality exists (Scott, 2005). However, they question the view that absolute knowledge of the way such a reality works is possible (Scott, 2005). Hence, they acknowledge the existence of an external reality, but are critical of our ability to access and measure such knowledge (Scott, 2005; Wiltshire, 2018; Bogna et al., 2020). This paradigm assumes any entity can be real and independent of our conscious awareness and introduces subjectivity to the positivistic assumptions of full objectivity and the role of scientific methods of inquiry (Oliver, 2011; Wiltshire, 2018; Danermark et al., 2019). In this paradigm, reality exists independently of human perceptions, however access to this reality is limited and distorted by bias and individual perceptions. For knowledge to be generated from observations grounded in reality, the assumption is made that reality is temporary and may differ based on perspective (Oliver, 2011; Gorski, 2013; Wiltshire, 2018; Danermark et al., 2019; Lawani, 2020).

In developing the argument for the appropriateness of my research, I have compared the varying assumptions of each paradigm. Reflecting on their philosophical underpinnings, I found that this study is best positioned within the interpretivism paradigm. The relevance of interpretivism to my study can be found in the subjective epistemology existing within this paradigm which allows me to interpret data through my own perspectives being informed by my interactions with research participants (Punch, 2014; Paterson et al., 2016). Hence this research approach is more apt in capturing the specific complexity and dynamics of insight sought in this study (Nordqvist et al., 2009), as knowledge is constructed based on my understanding of

real-life experiences within the natural settings being investigated and engagement with participants (Punch, 2014). This will allow for an interactive process in which data is generated through dialogue, questioning, or listening to research participants' perspectives. In addition, the subjective ontology allows for the consideration of multiple realities based on participant's experiences, which can be investigated to draw meaning constructed through interactions between the participants and myself (Bunniss & Kelly, 2010; Johannesson & Perjons, 2014).

Hence in this study, the process of interpreting the data is a combination of my own cognitive analytic capabilities and participants' perspectives, drawing meaning from subjective inferences of participants' accounts of their experiences through interviews. These accounts are shaped by participant's individual responses to the questions raised based on their experiences and perceptions. No suppositions are formed prior to the collection and analysis of my data (Punch, 2014). The participant's viewpoint is the focus here, not pre-existing assumptions of concepts from my own understanding of the phenomenon. In so doing, I accept that the reality of events is a social construct of my participants' experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Hence, I acknowledge that there would be multiple realities to this subject, formed through participants' perception of their social interactions with their environment (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

As stated earlier in this chapter, the combination of this study's philosophical paradigm and the insights identified in the literature review establishes this research as exploratory (Mason et al., 2010). Hence the investigation adopts an interpretivism epistemology, seeking to investigate a social issue, where the logic of the inquiry and responses collected from participants are subjective in nature (Kumar, 2018).

This study's objectives were set out earlier on page seven in chapter one, as specific actions that will lead to a resolution to the research questions of this study. In achieving the first objective, the first research question is addressed my objective is to explore if identified agency or social-identity forces are the prevailing influences behind the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards. Achieving my second objective addresses the second research question which seeks to establish

links between the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards with the low representation of women in senior management within the United Kingdom. The third objective is aimed at providing insights that contribute to future studies and debates on diversity and inclusion in management, and the career advancement of women into senior management and boards both in the United Kingdom and globally. I proceeded to select a research design that will enable me achieve these objectives. My selection process is expanded below.

4.4.1 Selection of study's research design

I considered three research designs predominately used in research for selection, namely: -

1. Quantitative research design
2. Qualitative research design
3. Mixed methods research

Each research design differs from the other with regards to the nature of inquiry to be investigated, types of data to be analyzed, and the type of research questions to be answered (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Tashakkori et al., 2010; Goertz & Mahoney, 2012). The choice of a research design can also be seen from a technical viewpoint (Bryman, 1984; Abbott & McKinney, 2013; Marczyk et al., 2021). These instruments could be surveys, interviews, or observations (Bryman, 1984; Abbott & McKinney, 2013; Marczyk et al., 2021). An effective research design choice produces the highest quality of evidence essential to validate the study, hence it is a crucial element to any study (Høye & Severinsson, 2007). The three research designs considered for selection are further evaluated in the following sub section.

4.4.1.1 Quantitative research design

Quantitative research design stems from acquiring knowledge for the existing state of reality which uses deductive logic, it is objective in nature, and follows the model of inquiry of the natural sciences (Ryan, 2006). Techniques used in quantitative research such as surveys or questionnaires can and often do use pre-existing statistical data, and data collection is often used to evaluate propositions related to an existing theory (Sogunro, 2002; Al-Busaidi, 2008).

4.4.1.2 Qualitative research design

Qualitative research design lends itself more to the exploration of knowledge through the description and interpretation of variables or phenomena with subjectivity and inductive logic (Choudrie & Dwivedi, 2005; Paterson et al. 2016). Techniques that lend themselves to this approach are observation, interviews, or focus groups (Sogunro, 2002; Al-Busaidi, 2008).

4.4.1.3 Mixed methods research design

A mixed methods research design involves generalizing findings from the analysis between a specific and general position of an area of study, starting with the presentation of unpredicted facts followed by a research process geared towards offering elucidations to those facts (McCrudden et al., 2019). The research process is abductive in nature as it works through interpreting or re-contextualizing phenomena within a contextual framework (Kovács & Spens, 2005). Mixed methods are used where there is initial uncertainty in research and used to subsequently test outcomes with a larger sample (McCrudden et al., 2019). A summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the three research designs discussed are listed in table 4.1 below.

METHODS	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Quantitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data can be collected relatively fast. Data samples are usually randomized, so allows a degree of representation It offers reliable and repeatable data. Data can be collected anonymously Findings can be generalized <i>(Muijs 2011, Slife and Melling 2011, Cooper and Schindler 2014, McCusker and Gunaydin 2014, Rahman 2016)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avenues for researcher to ask probing questions and follow-ups are limited. Data collection and analysis can be costly due to the scale of sampling. <i>The characteristics of the survey participants may not apply to extended population.</i> <i>(Muijs 2011, Slife and Melling 2011, Cooper and Schindler 2014, McCusker and Gunaydin 2014, Rahman 2016)</i>
Qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides avenues for researchers to explore topics in more depth and detail through probing to provide understanding of participants personal experiences It allows for tentative and inductively produce descriptive theory. It is relatively less expensive than quantitative research It allows flexibility with regards to as locations and timing for data collection It is more effective for in-depth study of minimum number of participants It is more effective for conducting cross-case assessment and analysis. <i>(Slife and Melling 2011, Cooper and Schindler 2014, McCusker and Gunaydin 2014, Rahman 2016)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It has less statistical characteristics by way of providing means to quantify how many participants answer one way or another compared to quantitative approaches. It may allow for higher levels of bias. Findings usually cannot be generalized. Qualitative predictions can be difficult to make, and it is not as effective for hypotheses testing. Data collection can be time consuming <i>(Slife and Melling 2011, Cooper and Schindler 2014, McCusker and Gunaydin 2014, Rahman 2016)</i>
Mixed methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It combines the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research using one method to counter the weaknesses of another. Researchers are able to apply figures to words and narratives It can provide stronger evidence in conclusions through the convergence and collaboration of findings. It allows for insights that might be omitted when only one method is used. Researchers can much easily generate and actually test a grounded theory using mixed methods. Allows for use of wider techniques as the researcher will not be only confined within the tenets of a particular method of research <i>(Driscoll et al. 2007, Malina et al. 2011, Cooper and Schindler 2014, McCusker and Gunaydin 2014, Hesse-Biber 2012)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It could be a cumbersome process due to the amount of data generated to be analyzed. A researcher would have to be conversant to some degree with the tenets of numerous methods in research. It tends to be an expensive and more time consuming compared to other methods individually. Interpretation of data and finding may be difficult as conflicting results can and may occur. <i>(Driscoll et al. 2007, Malina et al. 2011, Cooper and Schindler 2014, McCusker and Gunaydin 2014, Hesse-Biber 2012)</i>

Table 4.1: Strengths and weaknesses of research methods

4.4.2 Justification of design selection

To select my research design, I considered the nature of this research and the nature of the data to be collected. As this study follows an interpretivist epistemological standpoint, the nature of the quantitative methods of inquiry cannot adequately allow for capturing subjective insights (Weber, 2011). This eliminates the use of a quantitative research design.

In contrast, qualitative research design methods seek to gain understanding on a particular phenomenon from the perspective of the study's participants (Streubert & Carpenter, 2010). Focus on exploring emergent similarities in data and the notion of flexibility is essential in qualitative research design (Vaismoradi et al., 2013; Holloway & Todres 2003). The qualitative research design allows for the provision of an inductive and interpretive methodology to research, where insights are drawn from

both the subjective perspectives and experiences of the study participants, and the views of the researcher (Riege, 2003; Paterson et al. 2016; Cassell et al. 2018). As this study sits within an interpretative paradigm, the choice of using a qualitative research design is plausible (Riege, 2003; Cassell et al., 2018).

I then considered the mixed method research design. This approach, which utilizes both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis, appeared efficacious for this study (Kovács & Spens, 2005). This is because themes generated from the analysis of qualitative data can be validated using quantitative data and method (Kovács & Spens, 2005). Hence, combining both methods allows the generating of more holistic information. However, I recognized that the convergence or corroboration of data and analysis involved in triangulation would be both expensive and time consuming for the scope and period allocated for this study, hence decided against utilizing a mixed research method at this stage.

Having weighed the strength and weakness of these methods, considering factors such as the tensions and dilemmas in the literature with the corresponding calls for further research, the nature of the data, and the philosophical stance of this study, it became clear that adopting a qualitative research design for this study was appropriate.

4.4.3 Data sources

There are two prominent sources of data in research namely primary and secondary sources of data (Glass, 1976). Primary sources are gathered first-hand using procedures that generate new insights and information that adds to existing knowledge (Flowerdew & Martin, 2013). Secondary data is information already existing independently of the researcher, and that could be reused or reanalyzed in research (Flowerdew & Martin, 2013). Secondary data are sourced from both published and unpublished material that relies on primary data (Rabianski, 2003, Hox & Boeijs, 2005). This study will utilize both primary data sourced from responses generated from interviews of participants giving first-hand accounts of their experiences, and secondary data sourced from information extracted from reports published in the public domain such as the Hampton-Alexander review (2021) on FTSE Women Leaders, and the Grant Thornton report (2020) on women in business.

4.4.4 Data collection

Having selected a qualitative research design, techniques for collecting primary data for qualitative research were considered. This is discussed below.

4.4.4.1 Interviews

Interviews can be defined as the process of gathering data by way of talking and listening to participants. Data is collected through conversation either face to face or with the use of a medium such as phones or the internet (Clifford et al., 2016). The researcher is often the interviewer, acquiring data from the responses participants give to their questions (Clifford et al., 2016). This technique ensures the researcher acquires detailed and personalized information about participants' feelings, beliefs, perceptions, and opinions, and provides the necessary anonymity needed to ensure participants' safety (Clifford et al., 2016). Three forms of Interviews exist, namely: -

(i) Structured interviews

Gill et al. (2008) describes structural interviews as interviews where questions asked are standardized. An interview schedule is designed and followed by the interviewer to ensure that the same sequence of questioning is followed. The questions used are close ended with limited flexibility for responses. This usually makes the interview rigid and does not allow for further probing. However, this form of interview allows the interviewer to have control of the topic being discussed and responses received (Gill et al., 2008).

(ii) Semi-structured interviews

This interviews are not standardized (Gill et al., 2008) . Although the interviewer has a list of key themes to be explored, probing questions may be asked in addition to the main questions on the interview schedule (Gill et al., 2008). This form of interview is much more flexible and allows for deeper understanding and insights as it allows for probing and rephrasing of questions (Gill et al., 2008).

(iii) *Unstructured interviews*

This form is much more casual in nature than the structured and semi-structured interviews (Gill et al., 2008). It is flexible, allowing a great amount of leeway between the interviewer and the interviewee, with each interview different from the next. Participants are encouraged and allowed to speak as freely and as frankly as possible, sharing their unrestricted experience and opinions (Gill et al., 2008). The interviewer has no control over the interview, or the topic discussed but takes his/her cues from the participants (Gill et al., 2008).

4.4.4.1.1 Strengths of interviews

Interviews have the following strengths: -

1. Interviews provides avenue for direct interaction between participant and interviewer (Hollowaay & Fulbrook, 2001).
2. Interviews allow for obtaining highly personalized data.
3. It creates opportunities for seeking further information by asking probing questions
4. Interview allows for subjectivity by allowing insights to be drawn from meanings and understandings participants ascribe to the phenomena being studied (Broom 2005).
5. Interviews allow for the development of interpersonal skills such as the ability to listen, memory development, or the ability to think fast on one's feet.

4.4.4.1.2 Weaknesses of Interviews

Interviews have the following weaknesses: -

1. It is not objective as questions might be leading, or the interviewer's verbal and nonverbal cues (body language) can introduce bias and influence responses (Leech, 2002).
2. Interviews do not allow for replication, hence ensuring reliability might be challenging (Kvale, 1994).
3. Interviewer requires interpersonal skills. The interviewer must have good listening skills, be able to know when and how to ask probing questions (Kvale, 1994).

4. Mostly related to the small sample sizes, generalization of findings can be achieved if all participants answer the questions in the same way and manner. This is seldom achieved with interviews as findings are subjective, relating to each participant's experience or knowledge.

4.4.4.2 Observation

This is a method of gaining insight through collecting and analyzing data through observation (Research-Methodology, 2019). Here the researchers use all their senses e.g., sight, smell, taste, feeling, or hearing, to observe participants in their natural state of being or their behaviour in particular situations (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2019). In Mcleod (2015), three major types of observation are presented namely: -

(i) Participant Observation

Here the researcher actively participates in some form along with the participants being studied, while maintaining a level of distance and objectivity that allows for adequate capturing and recording of data (Fetterman, 1998; Savage, 2000).

(ii) Non-participant observation

This form of observation allows limited interaction with participants. Here data can be collected discreetly, and participants are sometimes not aware there are being studied.

(iii) Naturalistic Observation

This is a form of non-participant observation, where the researcher observes the spontaneous behaviour of participants in their natural surroundings, by recording what they see in the manner they see it.

4.4.4.2.1 Strengths of observations

In a report presented by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2019), the strengths of observations are presented as: -

1. Observation allows for direct access to participants.
2. It allows the researcher lengthy periods of immersion and prolonged involvement with participants which can build rapport and trust between

participants and researcher. This encourages free and open conversations.

3. Observation allows for deeper understanding of a phenomenon, as data is gathered directly from the source of behaviour or environment of study.
4. Observation allows the researcher to see through the participant's eyes and to walk in their shoes, gaining a unique understanding of the issue. Hence, it can provide a strong foundation for the development of theory or hypothesis.

4.4.4.2 Weaknesses of Observation

Observations have the following weaknesses: -

1. Observation involves relatively lengthy periods of time. The researcher will have to observe a phenomenon in the timeline the phenomenon occurs (Research-Methodology, 2019).
2. The researcher might exhibit higher levels of bias especially if it is a participatory observation (Research-Methodology, 2019).
3. The presence of researchers may influence the behaviour of the participants. 'Demand characteristics', or 'good subject effect' may set in, where participants begin to behave in a manner they think the researcher would like them to (Nichols & Maner, 2008).

4.4.4.3 Focus groups

A focus group involves selected individuals, assembled under the guidance of a researcher, to discuss or comment on a topic or area of study (Mansell et al., 2004). Unlike interviews data is generated when the researcher asks a group of participants to respond to questions, encouraging them to talk to each other or ask questions, exchange points of view, and comment on each other's experiences (Kitzinger, 1995; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2013). It is a useful technique for gaining insights not only on what people think but how they think and why they think that way (Kitzinger, 1995). Although participants sometimes change their consciousness by adopting collective ideologies in a focus group (Montell, 1999), they gain access to new information, and new ways of thinking,

which can facilitate the uncovering of new meanings and new subjectivities (Goss & Leinbach, 1996).

4.4.4.3.1 Strengths of Focus groups

Focus groups have the following strengths: -

1. Focus groups use open-ended questions to encourage participants to express the issues of importance to them, in their own language (Kitzinger, 1995).
2. Participants usually generate new questions that pursue their own priorities, leading to new and unpredictable insights on the area of study (Kitzinger, 1995).
3. Focus groups are cost effective and easier to organize (Bertrand et al., 1992; Acocella, 2012). It is more convenient for both researchers and participants, as data is collected from all participants using the same venue and timeframe (Kenny, 2005).
4. Focus groups allow researchers tap into the many different forms of communication for interaction such as jokes, anecdotes, teasing, and arguing (Kitzinger, 1995).
5. Focus groups highlight cultural values or group norms, hence being an effective technique for capturing sensitive cultural variables or workplace cultures (Kitzinger, 1995).

4.4.4.3.2 Weakness of focus groups

Focus groups have the following weaknesses: -

1. The group dynamics produced by participants may give room to articulations of certain viewpoints that may silence individual voices of dissent (Acocella, 2012).
2. Confidentiality of participants is compromised due to the presence of other participants and researchers, hence leaving certain participants exposed to reprisals or repercussion due to their participation (Acocella, 2012).
3. Communication can become an issue among participants of focus groups as the meaning attributed to terms or phrases or expressions used in the discussions may differ depending on the number, demography, and cultural background of participants (Acocella, 2012).

4.4.4.4 Case Study

A case study is the analysis of an aspect of a historical episode within the context of a historical event (Gerring, 2004). This technique utilizes intensive investigation of a specific component of an organization or aspects of a phenomena, for the purpose of understanding a larger organization or phenomena (Gerring, 2004). It is a multi-faceted in-depth exploration of the actual complexity and uniqueness of a phenomena, organization, policy, or system (Keeves & Sturman, 1997; Simons, 2009; Starman, 2013). Case studies can be a single, multiple, or a combination of numerous levels of analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989).

4.4.4.4.1 Strengths of case study

Case studies have the following strengths: -

1. With case studies multiple sources of evidence exist, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion (Yin, 2014). This allows for exploratory identification of new variables and hypotheses through the study of unexpected data or outliers (Gummesson, 1991; George & Bennett, 2004).
2. Case studies are good for capturing inherent or emergent concepts as well as for capturing activity within groups or organizations (Cassell & Symon, 1994; George & Bennett, 2004).
3. Case studies are effective in a technically distinctive situation in which there are more variables of interest than there are data points (George & Bennett, 2004; Yin, 2014)

4.4.4.4.2 Weakness of case study

Case studies have the following weaknesses: -

1. Case studies have been characterized by ambiguities and discrepancies in understanding the area of study and methodology (Verschuren, 2003).
2. As case studies cannot be replicated, they can sometimes be misleading and run the risk of over-generalizing (Verschuren, 2003).
3. Although bias can be encountered in other methods of inquiry, case studies are particularly prone to versions of selection bias and are less frequently addressed (George & Bennett, 2004; Yin, 2014).

4. Case studies are extremely time consuming and difficult processes that generate substantial documentation (Yin, 2014), making it difficult to summarize (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

In selecting a qualitative data collection technique, I had considered the above strengths and weaknesses of each technique and focused on their suitability for this study as expanded below.

4.4.5 Comparisons of qualitative techniques

The purpose of interviews is to explore the perspectives, experiences, and beliefs of individuals (Gill et al., 2008). Interviews provide an in-depth understanding of social phenomena and are more appropriate in studies where little or no knowledge is known regarding a subject where detailed insights are required from individual participants (Gill et al., 2008; Peters & Halcomb, 2015; King et al., 2018). With structured interviews, defined questions are asked of all participants. Preparing a structured interview can lack flexibility in the choice of responses offered by participants. Semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to encourage participants to respond freely and use probing questions to further explore the meaning of responses (Gill et al., 2008). However, interviews can be costly and time-consuming (Gill et al., 2008). This method of data collection may allow the researcher's subconscious bias to manifest in the interview if not checked (Gill et al., 2008; Alshenqeeti, 2014). This may result in information being skewed. In interviews, data gathered from each participant's response is based on their unique life experiences and perspectives, and are subject to interpretation (Alshenqeeti, 2014).

Unlike interviews, the collective nature of focus groups does not allow for disclosure of personal, sensitive information from participants (Powell & Single, 1996). This is because focus groups primarily generate a collective and public dimension of opinions (Acocella, 2012). With focus groups, researchers have more control when observing many interactions in a short period of time (Kitzinger, 1994; Broom, 2005; Morgan, 2009). However, with focus groups the individual expression of viewpoints can inhibit or distort influencing factors within the study area. Participants might not agree with each other, or could misunderstand one another, question each other, or try to dominate or persuade each other (Kitzinger, 1994).

Observation is an ideal technique for studying phenomena relatively unexplored, as it provides the researcher an overview of the area of study through the analysis of interaction between organizations and participants, or interactions between individuals within an organization (Liedtka, 1992). However, it is only a snapshot of the participants and their activities within the observed environment in a certain place in time (Liedtka, 1992). Latent social phenomena such as the existence of a gender discrimination culture, glass ceilings or the adaptive behaviour of women in leadership may not be easy to observe. This is because crucial variables within the area of study might be embedded in the cognitive processes of participants and may not easily be observed (Liedtka, 1992). In considering the use of observations as a data collection technique in my study, I would need access into boardrooms during active sessions, or would need to shadow senior managers. This will not currently be possible, as I have been unable to enlist willing participants for observation.

Case studies are effective tools for the study of complex phenomena, looking inward at varying contexts of the phenomena using a variety of data sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008). It enables investigations to explore either the study's participants or organizations, through relationships, structure of communities and their internal/external interactions (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2014). Although case studies investigate a study area within its real-life context, even when boundaries between phenomenon and context are not well-defined (Yin, 2014), it utilizes multiple sources of data, which makes this technique extremely time consuming. (Tellis, 1997).

Having looked at the strengths and limitations of qualitative research design techniques, focused on selecting a suitable method to generate data that effectively provides insights regarding the research questions raised (Gioia et al., 2012), I determined that interviews were the more suitable data collection technique for this study. A summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the qualitative techniques discussed, and their implications for my research can be found in table 4.2 below.

TECHNIQUE	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	IMPLICATIONS TO MY RESEARCH
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High rate of response It allows for obtaining highly personalized data. It creates opportunities for seeking further by asking probing questions Participants have an opportunity to have basic information such as the purpose of the interview, venue, timing etc. Interview allows for subjectivity. Interviews allow for the develop of interpersonal skills such as the ability to listen, memory development, the ability to think fast on one's feet and the ability to be open-minded. <p>(King, Cassell and Symon 2004; Opdenakker 2006; kendall; Coiro et al. 2008; Alshenqeet 2014; Phellas et al.; Seale 2017; Roulston and Choi; Flick 2018)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is not objective as questions might be leading. It does not allow for hypothesis testing The need for interpersonal skills. The interviewer must have good listening skills, be able to know when and how to ask probing questions. Insights gotten via interviews cannot be generalized. <p>(King, Cassell and Symon 2004; Opdenakker 2006; kendall; Coiro et al. 2008; Alshenqeet 2014; Phellas et al.; Seale 2017; Roulston and Choi; Flick 2018)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I will be able to obtain insights directly from participants that have extensive experience in management. As insights are drawn from their narrative, insights would be subjective I will endeavour to ensure I do not introduce my bias or preconceived notions on the area of study I must ensure my data collection and analysis establishes reliability and validity through the establishment of rigor and trustworthiness
observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observation gives a better description and analysis of behavior Observation allows you to observe, analysis and interpret actual situations Observation is effective for use with nonverbal communication Observation provides a more reliable measurement of actual consumer behavior, rather than self-report metrics. <p>(Angrosino; Arthur et al. 2012; Jamshed 2014; Phellas et al.; Seale 2017; Wasterfors; Flick 2018)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observation research can include a high degree of researcher bias The method also relies on the interpretation of observation which can be subjective Observation research relies heavily on chance and can be subject to obstruction <p>(Angrosino; Arthur et al. 2012; Jamshed 2014; Phellas et al.; Seale 2017; Wasterfors; Flick 2018)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although observation will give me a front seat to observing the phenomena, obtaining access to participants to allow observation will be challenging as gaining access to shadow or attend a board of directors meeting will be difficult. Interpretation of my observations may be susceptible to my existing bias
Focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It provides a wider source of participants They are both convenient and fun They provide a certain level of anonymity Questioning can be changed according to the discussion <p>(Morgan and Spanish 1984; Robinson 1999; Hines 2000; Mansell et al. 2004; Litosselli 2007; Morgan and Hoffman; Flick 2018)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A group answer can be developed. The results can be altered with dominate participants Some participants may not participate Group dynamics sometimes create bias, including moderators. Non-verbal may be misinterpreted. <p>(Morgan and Spanish 1984; Robinson 1999; Hines 2000; Mansell et al. 2004; Litosselli 2007; Morgan and Hoffman; Flick 2018)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This technique would be cost effective for me as it will allow my to gather data from all participants in the same place and time. This will reduce logistic costs of getting data from individual participants as in interviews. Participants will have a higher level of anonymity as data will be gathered from the group discussion. Considering the status and locations of the participant, organizing a focus group meeting at a certain time and venue that will be convenient for all participants will be difficult.
Case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> observations are turned into useable data, and opinions into facts. It generates relevant information for all participants It uses different research methodologies for analysis. It can be done remotely. Access to information is easy <p>(Yin 1981; Baxter and Jack 2008; Crowe et al. 2011; Tetnowski 2015)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It can draw on influence factors within the data set. It's time consuming as it is labor intensive. It can be ineffective with large data sizes <p>(Yin 1981; Baxter and Jack 2008; Crowe et al. 2011; Tetnowski 2015)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although this method allows me to collect and analyze data remotely, it may provide general information about the participants and phenomenon being studied but may not provide deeper insights sought. Considering the limited timeframe of this study, undertaking a case study may not be suitable. The quality of data I will seek out may not be readily available using case study technique

Table 4.2: Summary of strengths and weaknesses of qualitative technique

4.4.6 Participants' recruitment

In this study It is essential that the inclusion and exclusion criteria for recruiting participants allows for the selection of individuals that will ensure data which generates insights into the past and anecdotal experiences of women in senior

management and boards. The process and considerations made regarding sample population selection and size, and the recruitment participants are the same as those followed in the pilot study in section 3.1.1.1 of chapter three of this study. As this main study aims to develop insights and concepts from common themes found in analyzing interview transcripts, it utilizes the participants' perspectives in creating an opportunity for the discovery of new concepts rather than the affirmation of existing ones (Gioia et al., 2012). Hence, participants will come from varying sectors of industry and senior management, providing varying perspectives that may present similar or divergent viewpoints. As highlighted in the pilot study, I was able to contact and recruit participants using a snowballing sampling technique that saw me being referred to prospective participants by previously interviewed participants.

The sample size was thirty-three participants recruited with varying economic backgrounds and working in varied industries. Twenty-two participants came from working class family backgrounds, seven from middle class and four from upper class backgrounds. Other demographic grouping categories were identified and presented in appendix 11. With regards to management roles held or career trajectory, participants in this study are made up of the following: -

- 11 CEOs
- 8 Varied roles in senior management
- 6 Heads of Division
- 4 Board members; 2 of which are sitting chairpersons
- 2 Directors
- 2 Members of Parliament

Interviews were timed for 45 minutes, with insights from the pilot study allowing for the restructuring of my research's instrumentations and processes, which streamlined the direction of the conversation and allowed for generating relevant data. However, I still faced challenges in keeping to allocated time slots, as interview timing varied. See appendix 12 for the table of participants' interview durations.

4.4.7 Data analysis

The data analysis process followed in the main study is identical to the process adopted and outlined in the pilot study. The NVivo 12 software was also utilized in

my analysis in this main study. Outlining the data analysis process in the main study is essential to demonstrate transparency and integrity of my research. Hence rigor is demonstrated through the achievement of integrity and competence within this study (Schütz et al., 1982). By preserving the participant's subjective point of view and acknowledging the context within which the phenomenon was studied, interpretive rigor in this study is demonstrated by illustrating findings with quotations from the raw data in showing how interpretations of the data have been achieved (Liamputtong, 2019). Patton (2002) argues that the use of participants' reflections conveyed in their own words strengthens the validity and credibility of the qualitative research. The process of data analysis outlined in this study demonstrates this by utilizing excerpts from the raw data generated in the interviews to ensure that interpretation remains directly linked to the words of the participants in providing support to meaning ascribed to identified themes (Patton, 2002).

I began the data analysis process by identifying the approach I would take in addressing the research questions as expanded in the sub-section below.

4.4.7.1 Addressing research questions.

The methodology of this research will be tailored to address the research questions in the following manner: -

1. *Are forces, such as the need for territorial protection, personal agenda to succeed, and a need to be collegial, the prevailing influences behind the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards?*

Three factors that motivate the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards were identified in earlier chapters namely, '**need for territorial protection**', '**personal agenda to succeed**', and '**need to be collegial**'. I will explore these factors and investigate if there are other more significant factors that impact on behaviour, through insights from existing literature and the analysis and evaluation of themes emerging from data generated from interview responses.

2. *Does the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards influence the rate of women advancing into senior roles, hence impacting on the low representation of women in senior management?*

Drawing insight from an analysis of the social identity, agency, tokenism and critical mass theories, this research question should trigger thoughts and responses from the participants which becomes the basis for coding, interpretation, and conceptualization of findings regarding the inquiry on the rate of advancement for women in senior management and boards in varying sectors in the UK. The analysis of the data generated from thirty-three interview transcripts will allow for the identification of insightful concepts used in addressing this question.

4.4.7.2 Generating transcripts and data coding.

Thirty-three transcripts of participants' interviews were translated from the audio recordings of the interview sessions. Data is analyzed using these transcripts to identify and describe codes. As in the pilot study, the coding process for the main study involves recognizing important concepts in the interview transcripts (Boyatzis, 1998). These concepts are then organized, so it becomes easier to develop themes or patterns that not only describes these concepts, but also highlight possible interpretation to aspects of the phenomenon being studied (Boyatzis, 1998; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

Both descriptive and analytic coding will be applied to the transcripts, utilizing the NVivo12 software to generate word maps to identify themes that can be further explored, leading to findings that address the research questions. Data analysis will begin with two stages of coding. The first stage is based on the generation and analysis of *first-order* codes, utilizing participant's descriptions and terminologies. Using insights from the first order codes to collaborate concepts (Gehman et al., 2017), the second coding stage generates the *second-order* codes that lead to the identification of emerging themes and analysis. These stages are elaborated below: -

(i) *First- order codes generation and analysis:*

Using the identical process of analysis utilized in the pilot study, a word cloud was generated to give an overview of words that were commonly occurring in the interviews. See appendix 13 for word cloud of main study data. First-order codes utilize participant-centric terms for coding (Gioia et al., 2012). Initial transcripts from interviews in the pilot study generated descriptive terms from the participants' responses, which aided in code creation for the main study. Similarities and differences in the codes are then sought leading to the merging of meanings and descriptions from responses which reduces the number of codes generated. Some labels retain descriptions and terminologies used by participants, present in empirical exemplars which are further analyzed to create structure in the data (Gehman et al., 2017).

There were numerous empirical exemplars common to the statements made across the interviews. Although the word/phrase references made in the interviews generated one hundred and sixty-seven descriptive codes, the description of empirical exemplars identified, and insights generated from the data allowed for further categorization of the data to form a set of first-order codes for analysis. See appendix 14 for codebook with descriptions. The empirical exemplars found in the data are responses by participants with regards to their perspectives on their careers and behaviour, and how that had impacted on their progression and the advancement of other women within their organization. Recurring statements in responses made by participants during the interviews revealed references such as: -

1. Statements regarding adapting behaviour to audience - Recurring statements were made by participants regarding changes in their behaviour being driven by an understanding of how their behaviour was perceived and expected from an audience such as stakeholders, colleagues (male or female) or customers. Empirical exemplars were generated from participant's responses when questions focused on factors influencing the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management.

"People I worked with generally had a view on what an ambitious member of staff looks like...I can think of instances where some of my peers may have adopted behaviour more of a male style because that was what good looks like"...CC

2. Statements on the existence of a 'Boy's club' - Recurring statements regarding the existence of a power groups, or hierarchies in their organizations were made by participants. Empirical exemplars were generated from participant's responses when questions focused on the existence and influence of male network groups and the impact their exclusion from such groups had on their career trajectory.

"With board appointments definitely... people make appointments in their image...so if you have a load of blokes, they appoint a load of blokes"...SM1

3. Statements on the culture of the organization - Recurring statements were made by participants on the influence of work practices on their behaviour and interactions with colleagues. Empirical exemplars were generated from participant's responses when questions focused on the impact the organizational culture within their workplaces has on their behaviour.

"It was certainly a generational and male environment that certainly forced many of us to change behaviour"...AS

4. Statements on change in behaviour based on job description - Recurring statements were made by participants on the influence their jobs had on behaviour. Empirical exemplars were generated from participant's responses when questions focused on the influence their role had on their behaviour.

"So, I didn't change my behaviour in order to get on... I changed my behaviour or grew different behaviours and accentuated others because the role was different"...LM

5. Statements on job security - Recurring statements were made regarding relationships with work colleagues to ensure objectives are achieved. Empirical exemplars were generated from participant's responses when questions focused on changes in their behaviour influenced by a need to be collegiate or ensure job security.

"I would rather stay on somebody else's level and get the success that you're looking for and get the cooperation that you're looking for...then move on"...AC

6. Statements on leadership styles - Recurring statements were made by participants on their management styles and how this influences their behaviour and actions. Empirical exemplars were generated from participant's responses when questions focused on their preferred management styles in executing their roles.

"Am in a role where I need to be the leader...it might be we are going through an emergency or a process...someone needs to take leadership and I will do that"... EW

7. Statements on behaviour synonymous with success - Recurring statements were made by participants associating certain behaviours/traits for success in management. Empirical exemplars were generated from participant's responses when questions focused on participant's perspectives on which characteristic they chose to emulate.

"The general thought process would be to identify a young man... a picture of success would look like that"...CC

8. Statements on personality of individuals – Recurring statements were made by participants regarding the influence of their own inherent personality on their behaviour in the workplace. Empirical exemplars were generated from participant's responses when questions focused on factors that influence their behaviour at work.

"I was naturally competitive anyway because I was in sports...I get a really good feeling when winning....so, it made you quite motivated"...BS

9. Statements on life challenges – Recurring statements on how challenges or lived experiences have impacted on participants' perspectives. Empirical exemplars were generated from participant's responses when

questions focused on the impact life experiences or challenges participants had faced had on their perspectives or behaviour at work.

"...if you had to fight every inch of the way... believe me it wasn't easy".....SM

10. Statements on influences of people - Recurring statements were made by participants regarding the influence certain individuals had on shaping their perspectives and behaviour e.g. family members and mentors. Empirical exemplars were generated from participant's responses when discussion touched on factors that developed the values that govern their behaviour.

"Influences...a huge amount has been men I came across in my early career"...SF

11. Statements on influence of backgrounds of individuals - Recurring statements were made on how their background status and values exposed them to opportunity of influenced the adoption of ethical values that influenced their behaviour. Empirical exemplars were generated from participant's responses when discussions focused on participants' backgrounds and how that shaped their career prospects.

"I think coming from quite a humble background, you have to strive to be the best to get anywhere, and you have to be quite competitive"...BS

12. Statements on Impact of schools - Recurring statements made by participants on the impact of educational and professional institutions on their behaviour. Empirical exemplars were generated from participant's responses when discussions focused on how such institutions shaped their values, perspectives, and behaviour.

"It was an all-women's college.....it's very much to do with empowering women and celebrating ...what people can do. I think all along that has been a really important thing that has guided my attitude"...DAS

13. Statements on impact of educational and professional qualifications on career advancement – Recurring statements were made by participants on the value of their educational and professional qualifications. Empirical

exemplars were generated from participant's responses when questions focused on the impact such qualifications had on their career choice and advancement.

"...wanting to move on...I could choose to do professional banking qualifications or student qualifications and move up the career ladder"...CC

14. Statements on careers status - Recurring statements were made by participants regarding their careers and advancement. Empirical exemplars were generated from participant's responses when questions focused on participants' career paths, specifically regarding their career choices and how their advancement occurred.

"I just followed the career path....went into local government town planning...I took a flying leap in my career and that was what really made the difference...it was the people who knew me who promoted me"...BH

15. Statements on careers as route for economic independence - Recurring statements on factors that motivated participants towards choosing careers. Empirical exemplars were generated from participant's responses when questions focused on why participants chose their careers.

"I saw myself coming from a council house in a small mining village...that made it... leaving easier"...AS

16. Statement on availability of support systems – Recurring statements on support systems available to participants from teachers, family, or spouses, were made by participants. Empirical exemplars were generated from participant's responses when questions focused on support they received when choosing their careers, allowing them focus on advancing, or to take career opportunities available.

"I think my career 's gone so well because of my husband...he's the one who says to me - 'yes, you can' and 'it's all right - "...BH

17. Statement on women lacking skills for senior management roles - Recurring statements on the scarcity of women available who possess the

skills needed for senior roles, and why some women are not prepared for such roles, were made by participants. Empirical exemplars were generated from participant's responses when questions aimed on identifying factors behind the low representation of women in senior management were discussed.

"...if they're not coming up through the ranks there, they don't have the same opportunities to gain boardroom experience"...BS

18. Statements regarding impact of 'age' demographic on women in management - Recurring statements on barriers to gaining experience for senior roles and opportunities available for younger women were made by participants. Empirical exemplars were generated from participant's responses when discussions focused on opportunities for younger women compared to middle aged or older women.

" But I really believe that females are restricted to a degree in going higher at a certain age...people want to have families. If you put a woman in a senior position you then run the risk of that person maybe going off on maternity leave"...AC

19. Statements on behaviour influenced by nature of work sectors - Recurring statements were made how the nature of varying work sectors influences the culture of organizations, and the representation of women in senior management were discussed. Empirical exemplars were generated from participant's responses when questions focused on the various sectors they had worked in.

"Depending on the sector...I was in the sales industry, it was very male centered. In fact, on the management team, I think there were only two out of 11 that were women"...AK

20. Statements on women's Lack of confidence - Recurring statement on the lack of confidence shown by women impacting negatively on their advancement into senior management were made by participants. Empirical exemplars were generated from participant's responses when questions focused on the barriers for women getting nominated to senior roles.

"...You could say that some of that is lack of confidence...you don't necessarily put yourself forward for something that is very different and very challenging"...AS

21. Statements on the need for networks – Recurring statements on the existence of male networks, and a lack of networks for women to expose them to opportunities that impact on their career advancement were made by participants. Empirical exemplars were generated from participant's responses when questions focused on the need to support women seeking advancement into senior management.

"I think there is so much done on the golf course ...in the football changing rooms...and if we don't have that....."...SS

22. Statements on the need for diversity in senior management - Recurring statements on the recognition of diversity in senior management and boards as an essential tool for improved organizational outcomes were made by participants. Empirical exemplars were generated from participant's responses when questions focused on their views on the level of diversity in senior management.

"I know there's been a lot of work being done on getting women onto boards.....But I think it's a bit slow happening"...JH

23. Statements on the need for mentoring – Recurring statements on the need for mentoring aspiring women were made by participants. Empirical exemplars were generated from participant's responses when questions focused on their views on mentoring.

"I think it's really a good thing to mentor...again this is me being controversial...I don't think it matters whether you are mentoring a man or a women"...RH

24. Statements on the need for training – Recurring statements on women needing training to acquire specific skills for senior roles were made by participants. Empirical exemplars were generated from participant's responses when questions focused on their views on the need for capacity building for women to advance into senior management.

"...it's not just the about the fact that you're a woman. You've got to actually have the right experience and capabilities"... CM

Having extracted commonalities in the responses. I merged these commonalities into groups, highlighting emerging descriptions and concepts. This led to the generation of twenty-four first order codes discussed in the following sub-section.

4.4.7.2.1 First order codes

To further categorize this code based on their descriptions, I analyzed the code reference hierarchy and the cross-recurrence matrix generated using the NVivo 12 software. See appendix 15 for pictorial representation of code reference hierarchy, and appendix 16 for code cross-recurrence matrix. The reference hierarchy presented the occurrence of certain statements made by participants. Statements with higher occurrences of references formed the basis for the twenty-four descriptive first order codes generated, namely: -

- (i) *Expectation of audience* – Code identified from participants' inferences on behavioral change being prompted by an expectation from an audience (stakeholders, customers).
- (ii) *Collegiate attitude* – Code identified from participants' inferences, on a need to build relationships to gain support and create synchrony with colleagues to ensure no conflicts in work process, influencing their behaviour.
- (iii) *Organizational culture* – Code identified from participants' inferences suggesting behaviour was shaped by organizational culture and workplace practices.
- (iv) *Role in organization* - Code identified from participants' inferences suggesting change in their behaviour may have been prompted due to job descriptions.
- (v) *Job security* – Code identified from participants' inferences which suggests women in senior management protect their position in the organization by behaving in a manner that does not expose them to negative attention from power groups in their organization.

- (vi) *Managerial style* – Code identified from participants' inferences on leadership style, reflecting on their adroitness to act in a particular manner in executing roles.
- (vii) *Accepted traits of success* – Code identified from participants' inferences suggesting a consensus that certain behaviour associated with men portrays good leadership qualities. Participants suggest behaviours associated with women are more favorable for supportive roles.
- (viii) *Personality of individual* - Code identified from participants' inferences suggesting a perception that an individual's inherent personality impacts their behaviour.
- (ix) *Challenges faced in life* - Code identified from participants' inferences suggesting life challenges and experiences shape their perspectives and behaviour.
- (x) *People that influence perspectives* - Code identified from participants' inferences indicating people in their lives such as parents, friends, colleagues etc., have influenced and helped shape their perspectives.
- (xi) *Background of individual* - Code identified from participants' inferences indicate their upbringing, the societal norms and family economic status, created opportunities and influenced their values and behaviour.
- (xii) *Institutions* - Code identified from participants' inferences suggest their behaviour may be influenced by educational or professional institutions attended.
- (xiii) *Qualifications* - Code identified from participants' inferences indicating educational or professional qualifications help in building capability and honing skills essential for effective execution of roles. Interestingly, some participants also inferred that their qualifications were not too pivotal in their career trajectory.
- (xiv) *Achievements made by individual* - Code identified from participants' inferences suggesting their career status within an organization wields some influence on organizational policy and accorded them a smoother upwards trajectory in management rather than their qualifications.
- (xv) *Factors that influence career choice* - Code identified from participants' inferences indicating their need for economic independence, family commitments, and opportunity influenced their career choice and path.

- (xvi) *Support systems available to individual* - Code identified from participants' inferences indicating support systems available to them from teachers, mentors, or spouses, impacted on their career aspirations, choice, and path.
- (xvii) *Inadequate skill sets and opportunities* - Code identified from participants' inferences suggesting few women possess the skill sets needed for senior management roles. Participants also inferred availability of such roles to women are few and far between.
- (xviii) *Age group of women* - Code identified from participants' inferences suggesting 'age' has a role in the advancement of women into senior management roles or boards. Participants suggest behaviour and career advancements differ for women in different age groups based on the experiences they acquired.
- (xix) *Work sector* - Code identified from participants' inferences suggesting the nature of work sectors and policies on diversity and inclusion implemented influences representation of women in senior management within these sectors.
- (xx) *Level of confidence* - Code identified from participants' inferences suggesting factors affecting the low representation of women in senior management. Participants state that lack of confidence is a barrier to women advancing into senior management. Participants also stated women lack preparation for interviews for senior roles.
- (xxi) *Need for networks* - Code identified from participants' inferences suggesting the need to expose more women to opportunities and influencers who can impact positively on their career trajectory.
- (xxii) *Need for diversity* - Code identified from participants' inferences indicating a consensus that diversity and inclusion is essential for improved organizational outcomes.
- (xxiii) *Need for mentoring* - Code identified from participants' inferences suggesting consensus on the need for mentoring to ensure women acquire essential skills and capabilities to get and execute senior management roles.

(xxiv) *Need for capability and skill building* - Code identified from participants' inferences suggesting capability building for aspiring women is essential to secure, maintain and succeed in senior management roles and boards.

Further analysis of commonalities found in the description of the first-order codes facilitated the establishment of the analytic second-order codes, where more analytic meaning was identified and ascribed to codes. It is from these second-order codes that the emergent themes for this study are identified. The second-order themes generated are discussed in the following sub-section.

4.4.7.2.2 Second-order themes and analysis:

The second-order codes allow for insights leading to the identification of new concepts, that ensure focus on tentative relationships emerging from the data in the main study's interviews (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). Here, the emerging themes present concepts that do not have theoretical referents in the existing literature (Corley & Gioia, 2004), but stand out in their relevance to the area of study (Gioia et al., 2010).

Six second order codes have been identified, presenting emergent themes which are strongly featured in statements made by participants within the interviews. An analysis of these themes provides the basis for the interpretation of my findings, utilizing participants' perspectives (Gioia et al., 2012; Gehman et al., 2017). By linking the data, inductive insights and identified themes qualitative rigor is ensured (Gioia et al., 2012; Gehman et al., 2017). These second-order codes which highlighted six emerging themes for further analysis are: -

1. Conformation to status quo.
2. Associating behaviour with success.
3. Influences on personality leading to behaviour.
4. Drive for career progression.
5. Willingness to support/promote progression of women to top roles
6. Women's responsiveness to the low number of women represented in senior management and boards.

Composition of these codes highlighting the recurring concepts and themes identified will be discussed in the following section below.

4.4.7.3 Establishing composition of emergent themes

This study's findings were informed by insights gained from the identification and exploration of recurring concepts emerging from the empirical data generated from interview responses. These concepts establish themes utilized in addressing the research questions raised in this study. In chapter two of this study, I had initially highlighted that the agency and social identity factors identified as the motivation behind the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards were (i) the need for territorial protection, (ii) a personal agenda to succeed, and (iii) the need for collegiality. These factors were assessed against insights gained from analyzing empirical data, where six emerging themes highlight other factors motivating the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management. The concepts that make up these themes are elaborated in the following subsection.

4.4.7.3.1 Composition of 'Conformation to status quo' theme

I had earlier suggested that the adaptive behaviour was brought about by the 'need to protect territory' established by women in senior roles. However, this concept was not supported by the empirical data, hence was eliminated as a prominent motivation for adapting behaviour in this study. I then considered the concept of the adaptive behaviour being motivated by a 'personal need to succeed'. Participants' ambition to succeed was evaluated using insights from the empirical data and literature review. Most participants stated they are not ambitious, nor are they influenced by ambition for career progression to change their behaviour, hence I found no evidence to support that concept. Although the adaptive behaviour exhibited during varying periods in participants' career trajectory may be influenced by some desire for career progression, it was not driven by a personal need to be successful. Consequently, this concept was dismissed.

I then explored the concept of 'the need for collegiality' as a factor for the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management. A recurring concept in the data suggests participants adapt their behaviour to appear more agreeable with

colleagues. This concept highlights changes in their behaviour occurred to ensure collegiate work and decision-making processes are maintained. This suggests participants adapt their behaviour to ensure they execute their roles within the group effectively to achieve organizational objectives and reduce potential conflict in the work environment.

Another emerging concept relates to participants recognizing their behaviour reflects some conformation to existing organizational cultures in the workplace, where participants may have made efforts to change their behaviour in order to conform to the prevalent or existing organizational culture or work processes in their organizations. This concept emerged from the analysis of responses made by participants regarding the influence of organizational culture within the workplace. In this study organizational culture constitutes shared values, work processes and behavioural expectations that guide employees in an organization on how to act within the organization (Schein, 1990; Ogbonna & Harris, 2000; Ke & Wei, 2008; Baumgartner, 2009). Hence this concept also highlights that participants may adapt their behaviour to reflect 'the expectation of their audience', where they act in accordance to how they are expected to behave by colleagues and stakeholders.

Hence the conformation to the status quo theme identified, consists of concepts that highlight the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards is influenced by:-

- A need to conform to existing organizational culture,
- A need to reflect the expectation of their audience, and
- A need to effectively execute job roles.

There were other concepts that were identified within the data that relate to factors that motivate participants to adapt their behaviour. However, these concepts were not common across all interviews, hence they were not further developed. For instance, concepts such as 'Unconscious bias' relate to participant's acknowledging change in their behaviour was unconscious. Recurring statements that produced this concept were generated from

participants' responses from discussions regarding changes that may have occurred in the way they behaved towards their subordinates. Participants had indicated that any change in their behaviour was not deliberate but may have occurred unconsciously over time. See appendix 17 for table showing concepts that make up the composition of 'conformation to status quo' theme

4.4.7.3.2 Composition of 'association of behaviour with success' theme

The second theme identified from my analysis relates to participant's associating certain behaviours with success. The association of behaviour with success theme suggest influences on the adaptive behaviours exhibited by women in senior management, may be linked to their perception of what makes a successful manager. This concept highlights adaptive behaviour exhibited by women in senior management occurs through their choice of managerial style and is a means to emulate certain behaviours they perceive are qualities of a good leader.

Concepts in this theme highlight behaviours such as confidence, competitiveness, assertiveness, aggressiveness, and sternness, were all necessary for a successful career in senior management. Insights from my literature review show characteristics of leaders are stereotypically grouped under male or female behavioural traits. My data analysis generates insights that support this, as concepts that emerged from participants responses indicate participants recognise that characteristics of leaders are associated with the leader's gender. Participants recognize that male traits are considered desirable for potential leadership roles, hence adapting these characteristics will enable them to be more effective in their roles or succeed in their objectives.

However, it is worth highlighting that the data shows participants also perceive that there are other characteristics necessary for success in management which are classified as female traits such as empathy, nurturing, listening skills, authenticity, self-awareness, and resilience. This is a particularly interesting concept as studies on leadership styles argue there is a shift or transformation from masculine leadership styles to more feminist leadership styles in organization (Shaed, 2018). Studies also argue that leadership style trends have

been moving towards feminist leadership styles such as democratic, participative, delegative management approach (Lazzari et al., 2009; West, 2012; Varje et al., 2013; O'Connor & Goransson, 2014; Peterson, 2018; Shaed, 2018). Participants' responses indicate their acknowledgement of this trend.

This suggests adaptation of behaviours seen as characteristics for successful managers by women in senior management can inadvertently influence their choice of managerial style. This concept highlights adapting varying managerial styles by participants enable them effectively execute work processes such as service delivery or project management etc. The managerial styles identified in participants' responses were:-

- (i) Democratic managerial style - The manager invites participation and contributions from other members of the team with regards decision making, even though the final decision is ultimately the reserve of the manager (Bhatti et al., 2012). This style of leadership allows the manager to distribute responsibility between team members, essentially empowering individuals by developing their decision-making abilities and acquiring buy-in/commitment from the team (Gastil, 1994; Kocher et al., 2013).
- (ii) Autocratic managerial style - The manager stands as the authority figure, makes decisions, and then cascades the decisions to other team members for execution. This management style utilizes a top/down communication approach with minimal or no interaction or consultation carried out with team members (Kocher et al., 2013).
- (iii) Laissez faire managerial style - The manager gives team members the freedom to carry out their responsibilities without interference and is effective when team members are experts in their fields (Kocher et al., 2013).

A recurring concept in this theme indicates the democratic managerial style was highly favoured by participants, as their responses show they mostly adopt inclusive and approachable behaviour towards staff. However, the autocratic style of management has been found to be highly effective in crisis situations, as participants acknowledge they had to be assertive and stern towards team members and subordinates in times of crisis. This suggests that the exhibition of

such autocratic behaviour by participants was intentional, intermittent, but temporary. However, as highlighted in the literature review, behaviour is formed from a combination of factors such as individual's beliefs, function, and environment (Holdershaw & Gendall, 2008), and adapting behaviour over a period of time may lead to the establishment of such behaviours as a norm. See appendix 18 for table showing concepts that make up the composition of 'association of behaviour with success' theme

4.4.7.3.3 Composition of 'Influences on personality leading to behaviour' theme

The third theme identified relates to participants' inherent personalities and how that impacts on their behaviour. Analysis of participants responses suggest their inherent personalities impacts their behaviour and may influence their propensity to adapt their behaviours according to circumstances or situations they face. In their responses, participants state that although they have determined and self-driven personalities, a lack of confidence in themselves and their ability to execute roles has impacted their behaviour and may have been a barrier to their advancement into more senior roles. This lack of confidence also influenced their career choices.

Another recurring concept in this theme relates to the impact challenges faced by participants in their work or personal life had on their behaviour. The influence people or institutions such as family and friends, mentors, or values learned from educational and professional institutions attended, have impacted on participants' personality development and behaviour. It is worth noting participants acknowledged that most of the mentors or predecessors that impacted on them in their careers were men. This concept also highlights factors in participants' background such as upbringing, family economic status or family ethics, that impact on the development of values upheld by participants. Hence such influences should be considered factors when evaluating motivations for the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards. See appendix 19 for table showing concepts that make up the composition of 'influences on personality leading to behaviour' theme.

4.4.7.3.4 Composition of 'drive for career progression' theme

The fourth theme identified relates to participants' drive for career progression. Questions were asked on how participants gained employment and what were the factors that saw them progress in their career trajectory. Insights from this theme focused on the impact participants' career choices, qualifications, achievements, or support had on their career progression. This concept highlights the career trajectory of participants was hindered by a few barriers as they progressed in senior management and boards. A recurring concept in this is participants acknowledgement that although they possess some drive for career progression and although they possess varying educational/professional qualifications, the prevalent factors behind their career progression was the availability of opportunities, their interest, and sometimes sheer luck. Insights from my analysis suggest that even though participants have extensive achievements in their careers, they rarely celebrate their achievements. This may reflect some form of modesty exhibited by participants, and by not celebrating their achievements they do not promote their capabilities for other more senior positions.

Another notable concept in this theme is the concept of the support systems available to participants that impact on their career trajectory. This concept highlights the availability of such support systems positively impacts on women's career progression, as it enables women take up opportunities available to advance in their careers. Most participants' responses indicate they had support from spouses, extended family members, and mentors. These support systems allowed them to focus on their career progression and to take up opportunities as they become available. The concept also highlights support from spouses or partners plays a vital role in women's career trajectory and progression, as such spouses/partners often act as soundboards for ideas, share in family commitments, offer guidance and encouragement, and sometimes advise participants on their behaviour. See appendix 20 for table showing concepts that make up the composition of the 'drive for career progression' theme.

4.4.7.3.5 Composition of 'willingness to support/promote other women progressing and securing top roles' theme.

In this theme, concepts identified relates to the willingness of participants to support or promote other women to advance to senior roles in their organizations. When asked about gaps in diversity and inclusion within their organizations and if they have acted to push for the implementation of policies addressing such gaps, participants' responses suggest they have strong views on women advancing to senior roles and have actively supported this push in their organization through mentoring. Analysis of participants' responses also suggest mentoring is an important means of building up skills and capability for women to qualify for very senior management and board membership. Another recurring concept in this theme was the importance of networks. This concept highlights networking as an important avenue and tool for the advancement of women into senior roles and boards, as this ensures aspiring women gain exposure to opportunities available.

However, an interesting discovery was the identification of women in senior management with neutral views on supporting women to advance in management. This was of interest as it highlights the existence of women in senior management who are not too concerned with the slow rate of women advancing into senior roles, and do not actively involve themselves with policies aimed at bridging diversity and inclusion gaps in their organization. Analysis of participants responses suggest such women are more focused on achieving organizational objectives rather than pushing diversity agendas. Instead, they focus on recruitment of the 'best candidates' for the roles regardless of gender, in direct contrast to the responsiveness of other women in senior management who recognize the importance of supporting the advancement of aspiring women into senior management and boards. This is a very intriguing stance, because in the previous concept, a need to actively pushing for the advancement of women in senior management was highlighted. Mentorship and networking were also identified as important avenues for women to gain access to available opportunities. See appendix 21 for table showing concepts that make up the composition of 'willingness to support/promote other women progressing and securing top roles' theme.

4.4.7.3.6 Composition of 'women's responsiveness to the low number of women represented in senior management and boards' theme

The theme relates to participants' responsiveness to the low number of women represented in senior management and boards. When questioned on their perspectives on the low representation of women in senior management and boards, participant responses indicate they are aware such an issue exists. When asked the reason for such a low representation of women in senior roles, participants' responses indicate a perception of there being higher a representation of women in certain roles such as human resources, nursing, social care, or charities etc. Participants also perceive that more women are seen to occupy middle management roles rather than senior roles or board membership. Insights from my data analysis and the literature review suggest the representation of women in senior management and boards in both the private sector and public sector are negligible when compared to the representation of women in the third sector.

Participants also perceive that factors behind the low representation of women in senior management were a lack of women who possess the required experience for these roles, and the low confidence of aspiring women. An interesting perception uncovered in the analysis was that some participants linked these two factors to the age of these aspiring women. These participants suggest younger women will encounter varying challenges and experiences in their career trajectory as they possess less experience needed for those roles. They also perceive that younger women may be more susceptible to challenges that might hinder the rate of their advancement such as family care, which may hinder succession and limit the experience they may gain from these career stages.

These participants suggest this break in succession may not allow younger women forge relationships with potential mentors who are usually their line managers. Such younger aspiring women seldom gain mentorship from individuals at very senior management as they are usually not in their line of succession, and do not move within the same networks to gain access to such individuals. This concept highlights most of career networks are male dominated

and revolve round groups or activities that most women have little interest in or are excluded from such as memberships such as clubs or associations. To gain admittance into such circles, women pick interest in such activities or find congruences that will make them appear more congenial to gain acceptance into these male-dominant spaces and networks. See appendix 22 for table showing concepts that make up the composition of 'women' responsiveness to the low number of women represented in senior management and boards' theme

Having analyzed these six themes, the distillation of insights from my data and literature review ensured I had reached a stage of saturation. From these emergent themes, I was able to uncover findings which provided further guidance for the development of my conceptual framework and address the research questions raised in this study. Figure 4.1 below is a schema of the process discussed above, showing the derivation of first order and second-order codes (emergent themes) from the analysis of insights from empirical exemplars. My findings will be presented in chapter five of this study.

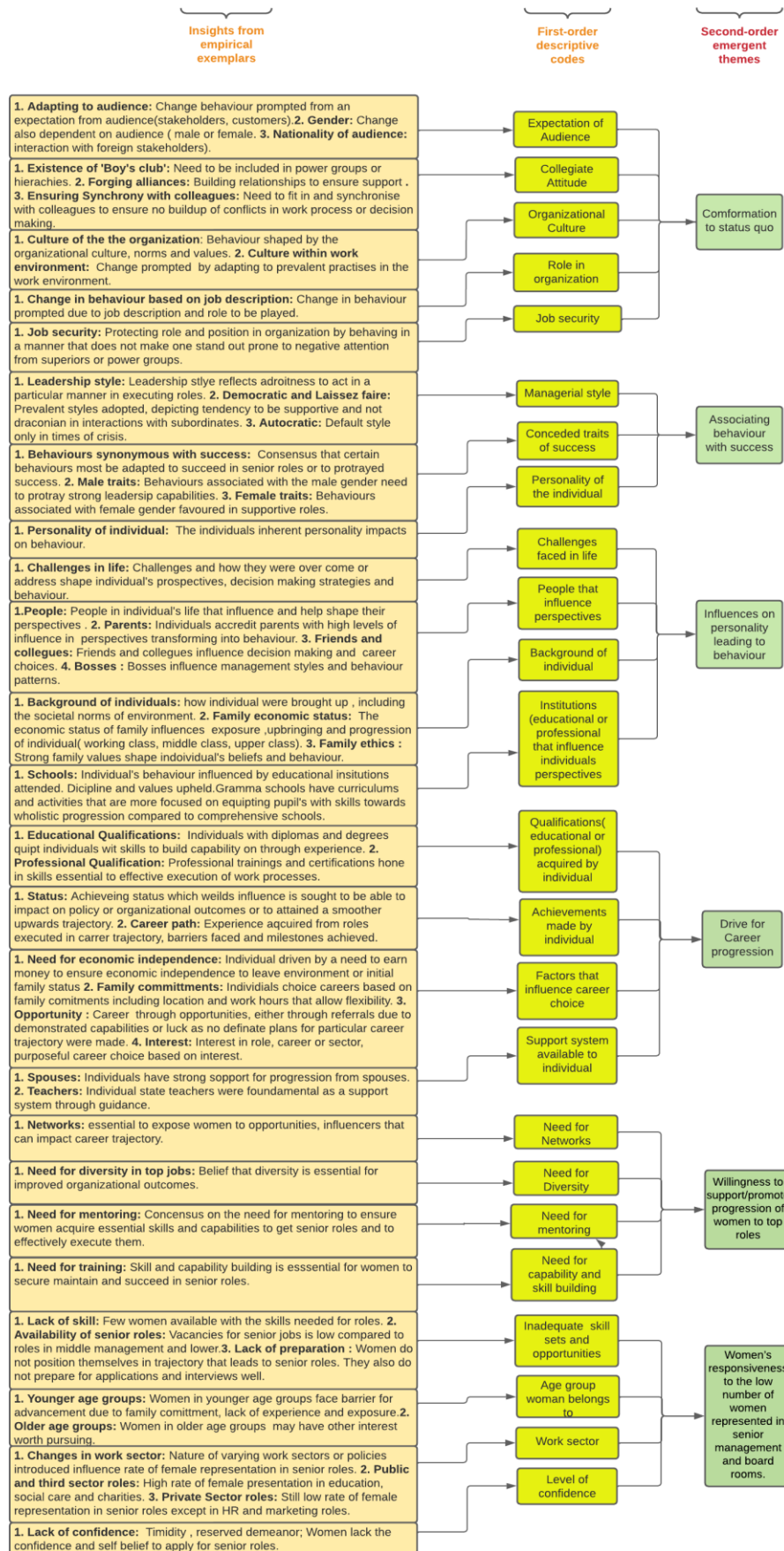


Figure 4.1: schema of empirical exemplar descriptive code and second-order emergent theme

4.5 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

Selecting a research design involves the consideration of the research questions raised. Such considerations should be based on the viability of the method to ensure the reliability and validity of data collection and analysis (Golafshani, 2003; Spiers et al., 2002; Zohrabi, 2013; Cassell et al. 2018). Hence selecting processes to ensure rigor and trustworthiness of a study is essential (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Stiles, 1993; Hoepfl, 1997; Winter, 2000; Roberts et al., 2006; Gioia et al., 2012; Glesne, 2016). The concept of reliability and validity in qualitative research will be elaborated below.

4.5.1 Reliability of study

Reliability relates to the accuracy and trustworthiness of the procedures followed, data generated, analysis, and the interpretation of findings (Stiles, 1993; Roberts et al., 2006). It has been argued that due to the narrative and subjective nature of data in qualitative research, reliability may not be so easily determined, as achieving identical results in repeated processes within social constructs may be challenging (Whittemore et al., 2001; Zohrabi, 2013; Anderson, 2017). However qualitative researchers have been able to establish reliability through the establishment of dependability and consistency of their data, by ensuring the data collection, analysis and findings are consistent, transparent, and replicable (Collingridge & Gantt, 2008; Zohrabi, 2013; Grodal et al., 2021). Reliability within a qualitative research context is achieved when rigor is demonstrated in the study (Brizuela et al. 2000; Davies & Dodd, 2002; Stenbacka, 2001; Gioia et al., 2012).

Rigor is considered the thoroughness and appropriateness of the selection and use of research methods (Kitto et al. 2008; Cassell et al, 2018). This ensures all processes are conducted in a consistent manner free from undue variation which may exert an effect on the nature of the data (Long & Johnson, 2000). In this study, rigor was achieved through member checking, which is the process of checking the interpretation of data on completion of collection or confirming findings with participants (Mays, 2000; Noble & Smith, 2015). Rigor in this study is also achieved through peer debriefing by exploring my analysis and conclusions with my supervisor on a continuous basis (Mays, 2000; Noble & Smith, 2015). My own self-description and reflexivity through the keeping of journals enabled me to reflect on my own

beliefs and preconceptions in this study and allowed me to understand any preconceptions I may have that may cause bias (Mays, 2000; Noble & Smith, 2015).

4.5.2 Validity of study

Validity in qualitative research relates to evaluating to what degree the research generates understanding of concepts being studied (Stenbacka, 2001; Gioia et al., 2012). Validity places emphasis not on the replicability of a result, but on the transparency of data collection and analysis, as well as the trustworthiness of theorizing (Hoepfl, 1997; Winter, 2000; Glesne, 2016). Trustworthiness of the study can be achieved through ensuring credibility, which relates to the degree to which the findings are relevant, have meaning, or are well presented (Byrne, 2001; Kitto et al., 2008; Patton, 2015). This is achieved through the ability and effort of the researcher to ensure the dependability of their findings which relates to the consistency and transferability of findings (Seale, 1999; Mays, 2000; Byrne, 2001; Spiers et al., 2002; Kitto et al., 2008).

Two forms of validity were achieved in this study namely: -

- (i) **Credibility (Internal Validity):** Internal validity relates to the similarity of my research findings with reality and the degree to which I measure accurately what is supposed to be measured (Merriam, 1995; Mays, 2000; Zohrabi, 2013). This involves establishing that the results of this study are believable from the perspective of the research participants. Hence participants were asked to read transcripts of the interview to check and confirm what was recorded and transcribed was indeed what participants intended to say (Merriam, 1995; Mays, 2000; Zohrabi, 2013).
- (ii) **Transferability (External Validity):**
This relates to the degree to which the applicability of my research findings can be applied to other contexts or settings (Merriam, 1995; Burns, 2005). Transferability was achieved in this study by ensuring the detailed description of the study context, process, and the assumptions that were central to the research were presented.

In establishing reliability and validity for this study, the methodology and process of the research ensured clarity in its progression from data collection through to the identification and interpretation of findings, in a credible and defensible manner (Gioia et al., 2012; Grodal et al., 2021).

4.6 LIMITATIONS OF METHODOLOGY

Limitations to this methodology come in the form of limitations arising from the use semi-structured interviews in collecting data for this study, and challenges encountered during the process of the research. These limitations are: -

- (i) *Focus on factors impacting on behaviour* : There were demographic factors that were identified within the data that indicate a degree of impact on the behaviour of participants' behaviour such as age and ethnicity, or the levels of agency of women in senior management stemming from the roles they have held and its impact on their behaviour. These factors were not fully explored as their inference was not featured across all thirty-three interviews. However, this study would have benefited from a deeper exploration into such factors. For instance, the age factor was highlighted in this study as some participants have inferred middle-aged women may be restricted towards advancement due to family commitments, while younger women may lack the experience required for senior roles (Sieffert, 2022). This factor was not fully focused on as perspectives offered were from participants in an older age group. This study would have also benefited from acquiring perspectives from participants from varied ethnic backgrounds, looking into the influence of culture or religious affiliations on participant career choice, career advancement and family commitments, and on their behaviour. Also, the lack of male participants in this study restricts the study to a singular viewpoint as understood by women. Exploring perspectives held by men regarding this phenomenon would have offered a broader insight to the study. Hence findings are based on analysis of part of the possible variations of factors to be explored. This gap leaves an opportunity for further research.

- (ii) *Sampling method:* This study would have benefited from utilizing a sample population with varied demographic. The use of 'snowball' sampling method to select and recruit participants for the study raised limitations in determining the sampling error or making inferences about populations based on the obtained sample. This method of sampling may be biased as it is not random, and participants are selected on the basis of their social network which may hinder wider representation in the sample selected (Browne, 2005). Participants for this study comprised of thirty-three women of white ethnicity, predominantly in their early to late fifties. As I was using the snowballing method to recruit participants, participants in younger age demographics or from varied ethnic groups have not been represented in this study. This gap leaves an opportunity for further research.
- (iii) *Research methodology and design of study:* This study follows an interpretivist philosophy that comprises of a subjective epistemology and a subjective ontology. However, future research can benefit from the analysis of data using a mixed method approach which provides an additional test for validity, as the convergence of both qualitative and quantitative data allows for testing findings in different contexts.
- (iv) *Limitations due to researchers perspectives:* In this study, the coding of data and identification of themes was my sole effort. However, I had discussions on my analysis process and findings with my supervisor. Because analysis and interpretations were done by one person consistency in the method was maintained. However, perspectives from others with differing expertise was lacking. In future research, I am mindful of seeking insights from other researchers or experts in the field of study with regards to generating codes and interpretation of meaning.
- (v) *The researcher's academic background:* Not having a background in sociology and psychology was a limitation for me in this study. A background in such fields would have given me a deeper understanding in the concept of 'behaviour' beneficial to my analysis. Claims I made in this study such as "*the higher the propensity for critical acts, the more willing women in senior management are to actively support aspiring women through mentoring, networking, or the implementation of policies regarding diversity and inclusion in their organizations*", or my findings that suggest "*the nonchalant*

stance towards supporting the advancement of women into senior management and boards has a negative impact on the rate of women getting into senior management” could benefit from the use of sociological and psychological tools of measurements such as ‘Functional Behavioral Assessment’ or ‘Five-Factor Model of Behavior’ assessments, to support such statements. This gap can be addressed in further research where such sociological and psychological tools are used to either confirm or refute propositions and claims presented in the study in order to achieve further validation and present grounds for theory development.

- (vi) *Nature of interviews:* Responses from Interviews are not objective but are subjectively based on the participants’ perspective on the subject matter. However, I will strive to extract and analyse common themes from responses, ensuring that I understand the meaning of the interviewee’s responses by seeking clarification from them when needed. It is seldom the case to get all participants answering the questions in the same way and manner. Also, it is most likely that divergent themes and topics emerge from each interview, which may be an issue regarding generalization (Boyce & Neale, 2006). However, I have digitally recorded my interviews and used the NVivo 12 software to ensure accuracy and transparency in my data collection and analysis process.
- (vii) *Influence of verbal and nonverbal cues or mannerism:* A researcher’s body language can introduce bias and influence responses. Hence, I shall be aware of such behaviour, keeping questions clear and simple. I shall ensure I do not lead participants to give specific answers, rephrase their responses, nor assume I know what the participant is feeling.
- (viii) *Adequacy of researchers interview skills:* A good interviewer needs to possess interpersonal skills such as good listening and communication skills to be able to effectively generate and capture viable data (Kvale, 1994). Interviewers should also know when and how to ask probing questions (Kvale, 1994). I will utilize the initial pilot study to bolster such skills for subsequent interviews.
- (ix) *Risk of distress to interview participants:* I recognise experiences or topics relating to discrimination, harassment, propositioning or assault, may emerge during interviews and may cause some form of distress to

participants. To minimize such risks, I will provide each participant an abstract of the study, detailing the topic being investigated, aims and benefits of the study, explaining how the investigation would be analysed, how their data will be secured. Consent forms would be filled and signed off by both the participants and myself to ensure confidentiality and ethics are upheld.

4.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

The code of ethics are guidelines followed by researchers which balance and produce outcomes that meet the needs and goals of the research without infringing on or violating the rights of participants (Orb et al., 2001). The ethical issues most likely to be experienced in this study are: -

(i) *Confidentiality of the participants to be interviewed:*

Some responses to questions asked might be sensitive. The identification of participants by other parties could place participants at risk of reproach or experience negative repercussions either through employers or colleagues. The interviews are initially proposed to take place at participant offices to allow for privacy, and to provide a conducive and safe environment for participants to be at ease to speak freely. However, due to the Covid pandemic interviews were conducted via telephone. I will ensure participants' identities are protected with the use of alphabetical initials instead of their names, with all data collected and stored using a secure medium.

(ii) *Need to ensure voluntary participation:*

Participation in interviews are voluntary, hence participants can withdraw from the study at any time (Marshall et al., 2014).

(iii) *Need for consent from participants:*

Full consent must be sought and obtained from all participants to avoid any legal issues that might arise from the findings.

(iv) *Need for acknowledgement of researcher's own bias:*

Bias is a deliberate attempt to either conceal or highlight certain themes or responses based on existing or pre-conceived interest I may have in the

topic (Kumar, 2018). Care will be taken to ensure any bias identified does not influence my interview questions, data collection and analysis, or the interpretation findings. The interpretation of my findings will be derived from my data and its analysis.

As a preface to presenting my findings in the following chapter. I was informed by the interpretive theory of social action with proponents such as Max Weber and Alfred Schutz. They argued that social phenomenology is a descriptive and interpretive theory of social action which explores subjective experience within the daily lives of individuals (Heap, 2009). In his study, Schutz expanded on his theory of social phenomenology as both a philosophical framework and a methodology which focuses on the multidimensional and temporal aspects of experience and social relationships (Schutz,1982). He argued that social phenomenology takes the view that people can ascribe meaning to situations and can make logical and reasonable judgments. Hence, he argued that subjective interpretation is in line with preserving the participant's subjective point of view and acknowledging the context within which the phenomenon was studied (Schutz,1982; Leininger, 1994; Horsfall et al., 2001; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

I was very conscious to allow transparency in presenting my finding using quotations from the raw data, to ensure the interpretation of these findings remains directly linked to the words of the participants, in achieving interpretive rigor (Rice & Ezzy, 1999). Hence I utilized participants' reflections conveyed in their own words to strengthen the validity and credibility of the interpretation of my findings (Schutz,1982; Patton, 2002).

CHAPTER FIVE FINDINGS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards is a phenomenon introduced by Kanter (1977) in her investigation of the effects of the numerical representation of individuals in groups and their social interactions. Kanter argues that the interactions and behavior of women in senior management is influenced by organizational culture created largely by the preponderance of male dominance in senior management (Kanter, 1977; Ibarra, 1993). Kanter (1977) also argued the stereotypical beliefs embedded in such male-dominant organizational culture creates restricting prospects for the progression of women in senior roles of management (Lewis & Simpson, 2011).

Expanding on this, Dahlerup (1988), argues that by achieving a 'critical mass' of substantive increase in the representation of women in senior roles, changes in organizational culture and an increase in women advancing into senior management in organizations will be achieved. In the decades that followed Dahlerup (1988), there has been a growing representation of women in senior management and board (Singh & Vinnicombe, 2004; Baker & Cangemi, 2016). However, the rate of advancement of women into senior management remains slow (Singh & Vinnicombe, 2004; Baker & Cangemi, 2016). There has also been limited research on how the behaviour of women in senior management and boards has impacted on the advancement of women aspiring to senior roles (Fischlmayr, 2002; Ellemers et al., 2012). Hence the call for further research looking at varying factors that act as barriers in achieving a 'critical mass' women represented in senior management and boards (Burke & Vinnicombe, 2005; Ezzedeen et al., 2015; Ganiyu et al., 2018; van 't Foort-Diepeveen et al., 2021).

In this study, participants recruited were women in senior management positions in varying work sectors within the United Kingdom. Insights from their perspectives were used to explore factors that influence the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards. This study also seeks to establish a relationship between the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management, and the low representation

of women in senior management. Hence, this study addresses a call for further studies into the factors affecting the behaviour of women in senior management and boards (Kanter, 1977; Bilimoria & Wheeler; Davison & Burke, 2000; Fischlmayr, 2002), offering new theoretical and practical implications for the study area.

In section 5.1 of this chapter, findings from my data analysis or data collected from thirty-three interviews are presented, using insights gained from the literature review and pilot study in identifying the emerging concepts. In section 5.2 findings from emergent themes and their significance are discussed with implications to the study. The emergent themes present factors that motivate women in senior management and boards to adapt their behaviour, and highlights connections that show the relationship between the adaptive behaviour and the slow advancement of women into senior roles of management.

5.1 STUDY FINDINGS

This study's findings provide insights that are essential for the development of a theoretical framework which presents factors motivating the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management alongside its impact on the advancement of women into senior management roles.

As seen in the previous chapter, my analysis of the first order codes had enabled me to identify six emergent themes, namely:

- (i) Conformation to status quo,
- (ii) Associating behaviour with success,
- (iii) Influences on personality leading to behaviour,
- (iv) Drive for career progression,
- (v) Willingness to support/promote other women progressing and securing top roles.
- (vi) Women's responsiveness to the low number of women represented in senior management and boards.

Examining these themes generated findings that identified the factors that influence the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards, uncovering the relationship between this behaviour and the low representation of women in senior management. These findings are discussed in the following subsections.

5.1.1 *Conformation to status quo*

This was the first theme identified within the data. Findings show that participants' had adapted their behaviour at some point in their careers and had behaved in a manner that conforms to prevalent organizational cultures or work processes within their organizations. Findings also show that participants may have changed their behaviour to conform to how they were expected to act by group members or stakeholders.

"The culture of the organization always trumps the process. I think it would have been difficult to be successful in that role had you not been culturally sensitive in the way you adapt"...CM

Further analysis of this theme found that participants acknowledged their behavioural change was not always comfortable. This finding suggests that participants perceived adapting their behaviour was not by choice but stems from the necessity to effectively carry out their roles.

"I have to adapt my behaviour...put myself in a position that I'm not 100% uncomfortable with"...JS

Hence my findings indicate participants' change in behaviour not through a conscious effort but happens unconsciously over time. This change can be attributed to three major factors influenced by agency and social identity forces namely:-

1. Adaptive behaviour brought on by the need to conform to the expectation of an audience.
2. Adaptive behaviour brought on by the need to fit in the prevailing organizational culture and present a collegiate attitude in the work environment.
3. Adaptive behaviour brought on by the need to execute their role or job description and responsibilities in the organization.

5.1.2 Association of behaviour with success

The second theme identified emerged from participants' perspectives on how leaders should act, and what their preferred managerial styles are. Responses in this theme presents a contradiction to the earlier finding that participants' adaptation of their behaviour was reluctant, as an analysis of responses show participants had imbibed behaviours based on their perception that such behaviours portray the characteristics of a successful leader or are synonymous with success.

"My male colleagues would be described as ambitious...they would talk about their successes....I was able to apply that learning to help my career...it gives me an extra tool in my toolbox!...CC

Hence the findings in this theme indicate that participants had deliberately adapted their behaviour to emulate certain behaviours to ensure success in executing their roles, and as a means of ensuring career progression in senior management.

"So sometimes the nature of the job that you're doing will either bring out the monster in you or the little cat"...AK

Hence analysis of findings from this theme allowed me to identify two motivations behind the emulation of behaviours associated with success by participants, namely:-

1. Participants adapt to behaviours generally viewed as accepted traits of successful leaders within the organization.
2. Participants adapt behaviour to accommodate a style of management which will allow them to effectively execute roles.

5.1.3 Influences on personality leading to behaviour

The third theme I had identified highlights the impact of experiences and influences on the personality of participants and their behaviour. Analysis of participants' responses showed strong influences from their background, people in their lives, educational or professional institutions they had attended, and lived experiences that had shaped their perspectives and values.

"I think most successful women...have been through some horrible thing in our lives which has driven us to something"...CR

"Depending on the personality of the woman. They can either stand up for themselves or become completely submissive...there's nothing in-between"...JS

Hence my findings in this theme highlight participant's inherent personality influences how they behave, and how they react to situations and others. Findings also highlight four factors that influence the development of such personality namely: -

1. Experiences and challenges faced by participants.
2. People; Individuals in participants' lives (past or present).
3. Background of participants.
4. Institutions; Educational or professional.

5.1.4 Drive for career progression

The fourth theme identified highlights participants' career choices in their responses. My findings indicate participant's career choices were driven by a need to gain economic independence and the opportunities available to them at each stage of their career transition. Findings also highlight that although participants had acquired educational/professional qualifications, and obtained accolades during their career trajectory, these were not necessarily the factors behind their advancement to senior management.

"It's good to have a degree, but I don't think my particular degree really made much difference. It's more about your tenacity"...RC

Findings show that most participants had gained nomination to senior roles through referrals from influential mentors or predecessors. Findings show that most of these mentors and predecessor are men, using their networks to expose participants to job opportunities. Findings also highlight that another factor that impacts on participants' career progression is the availability of support systems such as spouses, which enabled participants take up available opportunities.

"My husband stood by me every inch of the way"...JW

"So actually, being able to gain sponsorship for that role...then that opened up a lot of opportunities for me"...CM

Hence my findings identify four factors that influence participants' career choice and their drive for career progression, namely: -

1. Economic independence.
2. Opportunities available.
3. Mentors or sponsorship.
4. Support systems available to participants.

5.1.5 Willingness to support/promote other women progressing and securing top roles.

Analysis of the fifth theme reveal insights into participants' viewpoints on the advancement of women into senior management. Participants responses indicated varying support for policies that promote diversity and inclusion in senior management. Findings show that while most participants were inclined to push for the advancement of women through mentoring and networking, a few participants had varying views on this, questioning the necessity and suitability of female networks in providing the necessary exposure women need to advance.

"I don't agree with tokenism or 'we've got to have a woman'...I just think that completely undermines the fact that women are perfectly capable of getting there on their own"...BH

"They might be able to talk the talk, but when it comes to walking the walk, they may not necessarily have the capabilities"...AC

Findings in this theme highlights areas that needs to be addressed to improve the advancement of women into senior management. These are: -

1. Actively recruiting or nominating qualified women into senior roles.
2. Mentoring and coaching opportunities offered to aspiring women to develop the capacity and experience essential for such roles.
3. Networking to expose women to high-profile job opportunities. Such networks will grant aspiring women access to power groups and existing opportunities necessary for advancement.

However, my findings have also uncovered a contradiction between participants' acknowledgment of factors influencing the slow advancement of women in senior management and boards, and their actual stance and willingness to act on the

matter. This discovery highlights the existence of women in senior management and boards that adapt their behavior to mimic what they consider are traits of successful managers, and do not readily push for higher levels of diversity and inclusion in senior management within their organizations. My findings show such women do not entirely support agendas or policies focused on the advancement of women into senior management but focus on advancing the 'best candidate' for senior roles. My findings indicate that although they acknowledged the low representation of women in senior management, their views on a push for more women advancing into senior roles are neutral.

"I am definitely of the school of... 'go with the flow... get inside the tent and then change it'... rather than aggressively pursuing a feminist agenda. Because it just makes it difficult for everyone really"...BH

"You know, I speak a lot about gender... and I often get people saying to me 'oh yes.... quotas and tools like that progress gender equality. but they are wrong"...CC

"We are not good at it... when you think about female groups that you could join... well, that's not really what I am"...CR

"I do not believe in quotas"...HG

"I have an issue with the ladies launching the 'women's only' business networking... I will never just want to socialize with just women... and I fought against this revolution of ladies launching and all that stuff for years and years"...SF

"I think 'international women's day' is rubbish. It just does not impact on me or any woman I know"...SS

"If you want emotional solace or a babysitter... I am not the right person.... if you want an introduction... to run your financial numbers... new ideas... I am probably the right person to ask"...VB

"I don't care who is on the board, as long as you are the right person for the job..... I recruit the best candidate. I couldn't give a s- -t if it's a man or a woman"..... So having a percentage of women on the board... I don't agree, cause what you are doing is shoving someone on board who perhaps are seen as token additions"...VM

Hence their actions or lack thereof has a potential impact on the advancement of women into such roles. This indicates a link between their behaviors and the rate of women advancing into senior roles within their organizations. This link is expanded on in discussions in the following chapter.

5.1.6 Women's responsiveness to the low number of women represented in senior management and boards

The sixth theme identified provides findings geared at understanding the level of responsiveness participants have regarding the low representation of women in senior management and boards. These findings indicate while participants were aware of the low representation of women in senior management within their varying organizations, they perceive that the representation of women in senior management depends on the work sector. Participants' responses acknowledge there is a higher representation of women in senior management in some public organizations and the third sectors, but much lower presence of women in senior management in the private sector.

"The HR function is fairly female based"...CM

Findings also show that participants perceive another factor behind this low representation is a lack of experienced women available to take on such roles. Participants suggest this is due to a combination of a lack of mentorship and insufficient job opportunities for roles. Findings show another factor for the low representation of women in senior management is the lack of confidence women have in going for such roles when available. Participants responses indicate this lack of confidence also impacts on women's drive to progress to senior management. Participants responses also indicate that barriers to advancement such as family commitments and lack of experience may be linked to the age of the aspiring women.

"I have been in that place myself where I have looked at a particular post and think I'm not sure if I can do that"...EW

"When I was younger I was probably more uncertain about my own abilities"...JW

Hence my finding identified factors contributing to the low representation of women in senior management and boards, namely: -

1. Limited vacancies or opportunities available for senior management roles.
2. A lack of confidence preventing women from applying for senior roles.
3. A lack of experience - Few women with experience necessary for such senior roles.
4. Limitations due to the candidate's age - such as minimal experience due to short tenure in non-succession roles or family commitments.
5. Lack of support - low mentorship or access to sponsorship opportunities available to aspiring women.

Insights from my findings have provided the essential building blocks for expanding my initial conceptual framework to develop a theoretical framework for this study. The theoretical framework developed in this study expands on Kanter's concept of the adaptive behavior exhibited by women in senior management and boards within organizations (Kanter, 1977), and Dahlerup's concept of the 'critical acts' of women in senior management impacting on the achievement of a 'critical mass' of women represented in senior management and boards (Dahlerup, 1988). This theoretical framework will highlight the factors influencing the propensity for the adaptive behavior of women in senior management and boards and show links between this behaviour and the rate of advancement of women to senior management.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

6.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the six emergent themes identified in my findings represent factors influencing the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards. Four of the themes identified in my findings, namely (i) the 'conformation to status quo', (ii) the 'associating behaviour with success', (iii) the 'Influences on personality leading to behaviour', and (iv) the 'drive for career progression', indicate factors influencing the propensity of women in senior management to adapt their behaviour. This addresses the first research question raised in this study.

Going further in answering the second research question raised, I needed to establish a relationship between the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and the low representation of women in senior management. I proceeded to do this by establishing links between the three principal elements of this study highlighted in my literature review, namely; (1) the adaptive behaviour, (2) critical acts, (3) critical mass, and the four factors influencing the propensity of women in senior management to adapt their behaviour, as well as the fifth and sixth themes identified in my findings namely; (v) the 'willingness to support/promote other women progressing and securing top roles' and (vi) the 'women's responsiveness to the low number of women represented in senior management and boards', that relate to the impact the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management may have on the advancement of women in management. Hence, the three principal elements of this study were the components utilized in building up my initial conceptual framework. They represented the three principal concepts of this study, while the six emergent themes identified in my findings highlight the factors that influence the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management, and the impact this behaviour has on the advancement of women into senior management and boards. Using insights from my findings, I expanded my initial conceptual framework introduced in earlier chapters of this study, and further developed a theoretical framework. By presenting a sequence of connections between the three principal elements of this study, and the six themes from my findings, the theoretical framework maps out links that presents the nature of the relationship

between the adaptive behaviour exhibited by women in senior management and boards, and the low representation of women in senior roles.

It was whilst I was developing connections to establish this relationship, that I discovered and identified the existence of a vicious and virtuous cycle within the relationship. The 'vicious cycle' represents the pivotal point where the adaptive behaviour exhibited by women in senior management is impacted by factors highlighted in the findings, and sees the adaptive behaviour become a barrier to the advancement of women into senior management. Hence negatively impacting on the representation of women in senior management. The 'virtuous cycle' in contrast represents the pivotal point where the behaviour exhibited by women in senior management supports or creates opportunities for the advancement of women into senior management. This can manifest into increased advancement of women into senior management roles, which then positively impacts on the representation of women in senior management.

The discovery of the vicious and virtuous cycles is significant as this is a new concept in studies on the career advancement of women. Existing literature does not present discussions on connections between the behaviour of women in senior management and the rate of women advancing into senior management (Powell et al., 2008; Vinnicombe et al., 2009; Terjesen et al. 2009; Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Burke & Mattis, 2010; Dwivedi et al., 2014; Weck et al., 2022). However, the identification of the vicious and virtuous cycles within the theoretical framework demonstrates such a connection.

Hence discoveries from my findings are in three aspects namely: -

1. The identification of the factors that influence the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards.
2. The identification of a relationship between the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards, and the low representation of women in senior management.
3. The identification of the vicious and virtuous cycles within the outlined relationship.

In this chapter, I have aligned my discussion on findings to reflect these three aspects of my discovery. Section 6.1 of this chapter begins discussions on my first aspect of discovery, which is the '*identification of the factors influencing the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards*'. I presented the interpretation of my findings with a view to answering the first research question raised. Discussions in this section will expand on the four factors identified as prevailing factors influencing the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards. Discussions on how these four factors are connected to the '*adaptive behaviour*' element identified in the literature review of this study are also presented.

In section 6.2, I discuss the second aspect of my discovery by expanding on the '*identification of a relationship between the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards and the low representation of women in senior management*'. The fifth theme highlighted in my findings is linked to the '*critical acts*' element of this study and relates to the propensity of women in senior management to adapt their behaviour. The sixth theme highlighted in my findings is linked to the '*critical mass*' element of this study and relates to the consequences of the actions taken by women in senior management regarding the advancement of women into senior management.

Using insight from theoretical perspectives from the social identity, agency, tokenism, and critical mass theories, connecting the three principal elements of this study to all six themes identified in my findings form the building blocks for the development of this study's theoretical framework. Hence the theoretical framework graphically outlines and presents a relationship between the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards and the low representation of women in senior management, addressing the second research question raised.

In section 6.3, the third aspect of my discovery is discussed by expanding on the '*identification of the vicious and virtuous cycles within the outlined relationship*' presented in the theoretical framework. Both the vicious and virtuous cycles are pivotal points that define the nature of the relationship between the adaptive behaviour of women and the rate of women's advancement into senior management. The discovery of these cycles within the theoretical framework not only gives more insight into the

nature of the relationship between the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and the rate of women advancing into senior management, but it also shows when and how such impact occurs. The chapter concludes in section 6.4 with a summary of the discussions on my findings.

6.1 ASPECT 1: THE IDENTIFICATION OF FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOUR OF WOMEN IN SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND BOARDS

In the previous chapter, my findings had presented six emergent themes. As the first four themes were identified as factors that influence or motivate the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards, they are linked to the '*adaptive behaviour*' element of this study. The linking of these factors to the '*adaptive behaviour*' element is elaborated below: -

6.1.1 Element one: The adaptive behaviour

This is the first principal element in this study's conceptual framework highlighted in discussions on theoretical perspectives in my literature review. This element relates to the change of behaviour of women in senior management influenced by agency and social identity forces. Factors influencing the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management were initially identified in the literature review as a need for 'territorial protection', 'personal agenda to succeed', and a 'need for collegial attitudes'. Also highlighted in the literature review is that the adaptive behaviour of women may develop at the 'entry into the organization' career stage and is established in the 'advancement to top positions in management' career stage.

However, my findings in chapter five highlighted four new factors that motivate the propensity for the adaptive behaviour in women in senior management. These factors relate to this 'adaptive behaviour' element, as the prevailing influences behind the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards, and they are:-

(i) Conformation to status quo

My findings identify this factor as it relates to women conforming to the status quo by changing their behaviour to suit the expectation of the audience, to fit established organizational culture, or to enable them execute the responsibilities of the position

held. Studies show that organizations have become a fertile ground for the establishment and replication of hegemonic masculinities, which drives an organizational culture that is extremely resistant to change (Fogelberg et al., 1999; Rindfleish and Sheridan 2003; Beck 2005). These studies show that there is an expectation that individuals occupying senior roles should be collegiate, fitting into the work environment and the prevailing organizational culture (Clark et al.; Fogelberg et al. 1999; Kouzes & Posner, 2007). My findings have complemented existing studies that indicate a prevalence of male dominant organizational culture in most industries (Carnes & Radojevich-Kelley, 2011; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2015; Suneetha, 2015; Durbin et al., 2020), as participants acknowledge they had adapted their behaviour to fit in such work environments.

My findings also complement existing literature that suggest Individuals that have difficulty in conforming to these expectations tend to either refuse leadership roles, take such roles on with great reluctance and anxiety, or leave the organization all together (Painter-Morland, 2020). My findings indicate that women have had to leave organizations or roles because they perceive a conflict between their personalities or values, and the existing organizational culture in their organization. Finding also indicates that the propensity to adaptive behaviour is brought on by a need to change to suit the expectation of an audience. This complements existing studies that show job descriptions trigger both cognitive and behavioral changes in individuals as a means of executing job roles effectively (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Berg et al., 2010; Demerouti et al., 2015). This was highlighted in my findings as participants' acknowledge they adapt management styles to ensure they carry out tasks and responsibilities effectively.

The significance of these findings is the identification of specific influences on women adapting their behaviour in senior management. My findings show that a prevalent factor influencing the adaptive behaviour in women in senior management and boards is a need to conform to the status quo within the organization, which stems from participants' modifying their behaviour to:

- 1 Meet the expectation of the audience.
- 2 Meet the existing organizational culture.
- 3 Meet the job descriptions for the role held.

Figure 6.1 below is a pictorial representation of these findings.

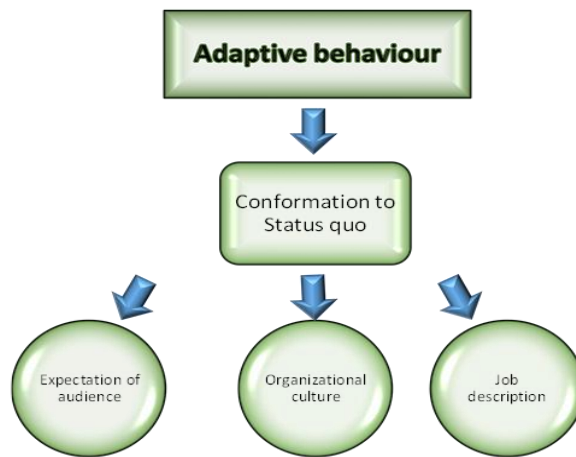


Figure 6.1: Determinants of adaptive behavior

(ii) Association of behaviour with success

This findings highlight that certain characteristics or behavioral traits exhibited by individuals are perceived to be necessary for success as a senior manager. In existing literature, leadership behaviours exhibited by managers are categorized along existing gender stereotypes (Schein, 1975; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Johnson & Powell, 1994; Wood & Lindorff, 2001). Male managers are considered more confident, ambitious, and aggressive, (Wood & Lindorff, 2001), while female managers are considered more nurturing and supportive, and are more inclined to collaborative styles of leadership (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Carland & Carland, 1991; Korac-Kakabadse et al., 1998; Wood & Lindorff, 2001; Mukhtar, 2002). Studies also show that characteristics more commonly ascribed to men are considered to be the characteristics of a good manager (Schein et al., 1989; Rudman & Glick, 1999; Powell et al., 2002).

My findings indicate that working in organizations with masculine cultures influence the mimicking of characteristics exhibited by male managers or mentors by women in senior management. These findings complement existing literature that states organizational cultures are established over time to mimic masculine experiences and men's life situations (Jones, 1998; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000). Hence very senior managers in most organizations reflect masculine traits as a sign of successful

leadership (Connell, 2002; Haslam & Ryan, 2008). However, Helgesen & Saunders, (1995) argue that behaviour exhibited by women during their careers, is developed through learning from experiences encountered in work/life situations, and experiences result in women developing a more nurturing and accommodating management style. This claim is substantiated by my findings, which reveal participants' life experiences have an influence on their propensity to exhibit more feminine behaviour traits when executing their managerial roles. Hence women that adopt democratic or collaborative styles of leadership are more likely to be supportive and nurturing to employees, or be collegial with colleagues (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Chesterman et al., 2005; Paris et al., 2009). However, they may adopt autocratic styles in times of crisis as a last resort (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Chesterman et al., 2005; Paris et al., 2009).

The significance of these findings is in highlighting that behaviours can be developed from gender-specific lived experiences of women, and not necessarily a biological construct of gender (Kapasi et al., 2016; Rosener, 2020). My analysis demonstrates that women favor and exhibit authenticity, self-awareness, and resilience in their behaviour, learning through experiences gained in life. Hence my findings complement existing literature in this regard and expands on this by demonstrating that although behaviours generally associated with success can fall into either male or female trait categories, women adapt their behaviour to emulate those behaviours they believe are synonymous with success due to their lived experiences and influences at their work environment. However, it is worth noting that traits stereotypically associated with women such as collaborative management styles, are increasingly being associated with factors behind good and successful management in today's business (Gardner & Stough, 2002; Cole, 2004; Nass, 2005; Downey et al., 2006; Jogulu & Wood, 2006; Byron, 2007; Powell, 2018). Figure 6.2 below is a pictorial representation of these findings.

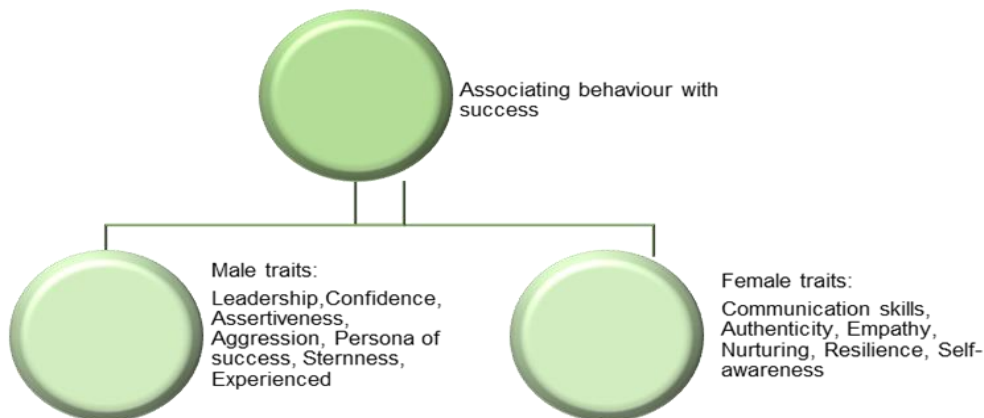


Figure 6.2: Behaviors associated with success

(iii) Influences on personality leading to behaviour.

This finding highlights the influence of personality on behaviour. Factors such as an individual's upbringing, family economic status or socio-cultural belief systems shape an individual's moral precepts and influence their personality (Farmer, 1985; Evetts, 2000; McDonald et al., 2004; Dubey & Tiwari, 2014).

In Poole et al. (1990), findings show that family economic status influences an individual's behaviour through the creation and provision of opportunity and choice. They also argue that socio-economic backgrounds provide differences in the determinants of an individual's orientation with regards to occupational interests, and career achievement (Poole et al., 1990). My findings support this, as participants coming from middle class families acknowledged they had a better opportunity for career aspiration and progression due to the access their family economic status accorded them. They acknowledge they had access through fraternities and sororities memberships in school, which provide networking opportunities that impact on their career aspirations and choice. In contrast, gaining economic independence was a very important factor in seeking a career and advancing into senior management for participants coming from working class backgrounds. Such participants acknowledged their aspirations to get an education or to seek a career were mostly influenced by a need to escape challenges brought about by their

backgrounds. They also acknowledged that the values that impacted their behaviour were developed from family ethics instilled in them by their family members.

The significance of these findings is the highlighting of factors that impact an individual's personality, which influence their propensity to adapt behaviour in their in the workplace. These factors are:

1. Background; Relating to upbringing, family economic status and values that impact on participants' behaviour.
2. People; Mentors or role models. Most career mentors are usually male bosses or predecessor gatekeeper (Dwivedi et al., 2017).
3. Challenges; Lived experiences of participants'.
4. Institutions; Educational or professional, which instill ideologies and disciplines that mold personality.

Figure 6.3 below is a pictorial representation of these findings.

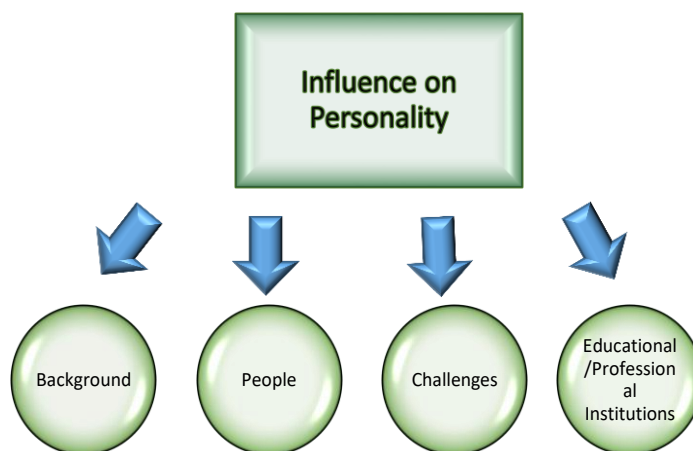


Figure 6.3: Factors influencing personality and behavior.

(iv) Drive for career progression.

McRae (2003) argues that influences on career choice for women is attributed not only to background, educational or professional qualification, and capability, but also to their preferences for differing combinations of family commitment and career aspirations. Kelly and Marin (1998) argue that career progression for women is

obstructed by intangible barriers existing in recruitment processes or within progression pathways supported by organizational culture (Alimo-Metcalf, 1993). Linehan and Walsh (2001) argue that in most organizations, career progression to senior management follows a linear career progression pathway. However, when hindrances in recruitment policies such as relocation, travel requirements, or extensive work hours, combine with existing family commitments, a large proportion of women struggle with progressing in these career pathways (Linehan & Walsh, 2001).

My findings expand on this and suggests that the career progression of women into senior management and boards are not only influenced by predefined career choices or planned interests relating to their educational or professional qualifications, but also influenced by the availability of opportunity and family commitments. My findings also highlight that although studies argue women's progression to senior roles is beset by barriers (Verbos & Dykstra, 2014; Klenke, 2017; O'Lone & Webster, 2019), my participants state their rise to senior management was relatively easy. Participants also assert that most job offers were acquired through opportunities made available by networking and referrals from people of influence. This finding indicates that for aspiring women to progress in their career pathways, they should have a combination of experience, capability, and sponsorship from influential mentors or gatekeepers. My findings also highlight that the availability of support systems is advantageous to the advancement of women in management (Williams et al., 1998). Such systems give women the opportunity to take advantage of career advancement opportunities that present themselves. These systems can come as support from spouses or the wider family or can come from organizations or sectors invested in providing systems to address existing barriers to women's advancement in their careers. There are currently organizations that have systems in place such as paternity leave, flexible working, or job sharing, that provide support to the career advancement of women (Williams et al., 1998).

The significance of my findings is highlighting factors that impact on women's career path/progression, which are:

1. Career choice.

2. Opportunities available.
3. Family commitments.
4. Support systems available.

Figure. 6.4 below is a pictorial representation of these findings.



Figure 6.4: Factors that impact on women's career progression

Highlighting findings in the above four themes abled me address the first question raised in this study, by identifying factors that influence the propensity of women in senior management to adapt their behaviour. I then proceeded to address the second research question raised, seeking to establish a relationship between the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards, and the low representation of women in senior management. This was the second aspect of my discovery discussed below.

6.2 ASPECT 2: THE IDENTIFICATION OF A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOUR OF WOMEN IN SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND BOARDS AND THE LOW REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN SENIOR MANAGEMENT.

In establishing the existence of a relationship between the adaptive behaviour of women and the low representation of women in senior roles, I developed a theoretical framework using insights from my findings and theoretical perspectives discussed in my literature review. These insights elaborate on the significance of the three principal

elements and their importance to the development of the theoretical framework. Insights gained from the theoretical perspectives explored are: -

- (i) *Social identity theory*: Insights from the social identity theory had established that individuals within groups are prone to adapt behaviours based on social identity and emulate the prevalent behaviour of the group. The significance of this insight to this study demonstrates that the adaptive behaviour exhibited by women in senior roles is a means of gaining acceptance into power groups at senior management.
- (ii) *The agency theory*: Insights from the agency theory highlights that due to the agency forces that impact on their perspectives and goals, individuals may act independently of the prevalent behaviour of the group they belong to and make their own choices. The significance of this insight to this study is it indicates some participants are influenced by agency forces and do not conform to prevalent behaviour exhibited by members in their group. Hence, such individuals have a higher propensity for critical acts than others. Their propensity for critical acts also sees them act or exhibit individual characteristics that are attuned to their personality and core values.
- (iii) *The tokenism theory*: This theory establishes women in senior management within organizations as a minority group. Hence their behaviour may change to emulate the existing dominant group in senior management. The significance of this insight to this study is in highlighting that because of the numerical imbalance between women within male-dominant groups in senior management, women become isolated and polarized in workplace settings and adapt their behaviour to mimic the existing culture and organizational structure to gain acceptance by these male-dominant groups.
- (iv) *The critical mass theory*: This theory highlights on the impact an increased representation of women in leadership roles has on the advancement of women into senior management. Its significance for this study is that it highlights the consequences of a numerical increase of women into senior management on group dynamic, as it can trigger a change to the gendered construct of organizational culture.

With these insights, I then proceeded to evaluate the second principal element of the conceptual framework which is the '*critical acts*' element. This relates to the propensity

of women in senior management and boards to support the advancement of women (Dahlerup,1988; Singh, 2008; Terjesen et al., 2009). My findings suggest the willingness of women in senior management to support the advancement of women into senior roles is an indication of their propensity for critical acts. Hence I sought to connect this element to the fifth theme identified in my analysis, namely the *'willingness to support/promote other women progressing and securing top roles'* theme. This process is discussed below.

6.2.1 Element two: Critical acts

The fifth theme identified in my findings is the *'willingness to support/promote other women progressing and securing top roles'* theme. This relates to the willingness of women in senior management and boards to actively push for the advancement of women into senior management. As 'critical acts' represents the propensity of women in senior management or boards to support the advancement of women into senior roles in their organization (Dahlerup,1988), I observe a link between the *'willingness to support/promote other women progressing and securing top roles'* theme and the *'critical acts'* element, with this link demonstrating the importance of the propensity for 'critical acts' in women in senior management and boards.

As highlighted in my literature review, the concept of 'critical acts' is founded on the premise that women in positions of authority have a desire to push for female advancement and are willing to do so (Dahlerup, 1988). My findings highlight women in senior management are aware of the need to support the advancement of women into senior management within their organizations, as participants expressed strong views on diversity and inclusion in senior management. Participants also indicated their willingness to actively supporting the promotion of women to senior roles through mentoring and networking, suggesting such participants have a high propensity for 'critical acts'.

However, my findings revealed that although most women in senior management are committed to supporting women advancing to senior roles, there are women in senior management who are not. Such women possess differing opinion on diversity and inclusion in their organizations. My findings show such women believe gender should

not be a criterion for nominating candidates to senior roles. They contend that capability and experience should be the only indices for progression into senior management and are neutral or even opposed to the development of female networking groups. My findings suggest such women are nonchalant regarding the advancement of women into senior management, hence possess a lower propensity for 'critical acts'. Their stance presents opposing forces acting on the implementation of diversity and inclusion policies and the push for the advancement of women within their organizations (Rindfleish & Sheridan, 2003; Mavin, 2008; Faniko et al., 2016). This contradicts existing studies that argue there is a greater probability of women advancing to senior management in organizations that have women executive directors on their boards (Dahlerup, 1988; Bilimoria, 2006; Beckwith, 2007; Singh, 2008; Terjesen et al., 2009).

The significance of my finding is in highlighting these opposing stances that create forces which inadvertently impacts on the advancement of women into senior roles and impacts on the representation of women in senior management. Figure 6.5 below illustrates the oscillating impact of the opposing forces on the push for the advancement of women into senior management and boards.

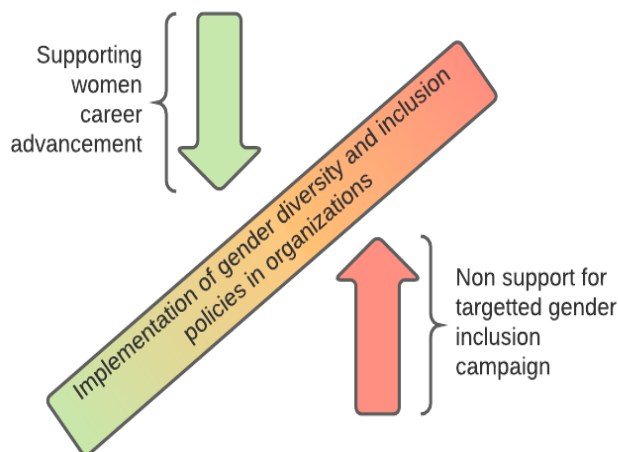


Figure 6.5: Differing perspectives on gender inclusion policies

This finding supports studies that argue an increased numerical representation of women in senior management within organizations alone will not bring about organizational cultural change (Stichman et al., 2010; Trimble et al., 2013; Helitzer

et al., 2017). Studies state that the combination of an increased numerical representation of women and a willingness of such women in positions of leadership to support the advancement of women is what is needed (Childs & Krook, 2009; Helitzer et al., 2017). My findings complement such studies and expand on this by highlighting avenues suggested by participants that can support the advancement of women into senior management and boards namely: -

1. Actively recruiting or nominating qualified women into senior roles.
2. Mentoring and coaching opportunities offered to aspiring women to develop the capacity and experience essential for such roles.
3. Networking to expose women to high-profile job opportunities. Such networks will grant aspiring women access to power groups and existing opportunities necessary for advancement.

However, another significance of my findings is the proposition that women with a lower propensity for critical acts are more prone to adapt their behaviour to conform to the status quo. As they minimize the necessity of providing networking avenues and mentoring to aspiring women, they present an opposing force in the drive to push for the advancement of women into senior management within their organizations. This can inadvertently impact negatively on the advancement of women into senior roles in their organizations. This finding reveals how vital the propensity for critical acts in women in senior management is in the push for the advancement of women into senior management and boards, and enables me to propose that the higher the propensity for critical acts, the more responsive women in senior management are to actively support and push for the advancement of women in their organization, which may lead to a rise the representation of women in senior management.

6.2.2 Element three: Critical mass

Having connected the 'willingness to support/promote other women progressing and securing top roles' theme to the 'critical acts' element, I proceeded to evaluate the third principal element of this study's conceptual framework. The 'critical mass' element, which relates to the impact the advancement of more women into senior management has on the representation of women in senior management, is an outcome of the critical acts of women in senior management (Dahlerup, 1988; Bilimoria, 2006; Beckwith, 2007; Singh, 2008; Terjesen et al., 2009). The sixth theme

identified in my findings namely; the '*women's responsiveness to the low number of women represented in senior management*' theme, relates to the level of awareness women in senior management have regarding the low representation of women in senior management, and the degree of their responsiveness to the issue. This theme highlights actions taken by women in senior management, and the consequences of these action regarding the advancement of women into senior management. As the '*critical mass*' element of this study is concerned with outcomes of increasing the rate of advancement of women into senior management roles, I observe a link between the '*critical mass*' element and the '*women's responsiveness to the low number of women represented in senior management*' theme.

My findings compliment studies that argue that despite the implementation of governmental or organizational policies aimed at increasing representation of women in senior management roles, the rate of women advancing into senior roles is still slow (O'Connor, 2001; Charles & Davies, 2001; Lawrence et al., 2018; Linehan, 2019). My findings also highlight that the disparity in the representation of women in senior management roles depends on the industry or work sectors, with participants acknowledging there is a higher representation of women in senior roles in the public and third sector compared to the private sectors.

Discussions on the prevalence of women in senior management and boards in the UK in my literature review highlighted various barriers to the advancement for women. Two of the barriers are frequently highlighted as prominent hindrances against the advancement of women in existing literature (Linehan et al., 2001; Burke & Mattis, 2005; Straub, 2007; Wood ,2008; Ganiyu et al., 2018; Jauhar & Lau, 2018; Dauti & Dauti, 2020). These barriers are: -

1. Barriers from women's conflicts regarding work/life balance or family commitment.
2. Barriers due to stereotypical gender appropriation of roles in societal and work environments.

In my analysis participants' inferences to these two barriers were very minimal. This finding contradicts existing literature that present these barriers as prominent hindrances to the advancement of women into senior management and boards.

Hence my findings suggest that although family commitment and gender stereotypes barriers exist, they are not currently as prominent as these barriers are often surmounted through progressive family and organizational support systems now available to workers in many organizational settings (Huffman et al., 2013; Forbes, 2021; Dowling, 2021). My findings show that the availability of support systems to women seeking to advance in management has a positive impact on their advancement. Such systems allow women take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves, allowing these women to focus on their career trajectory without being unduly held back by other commitments.

Hence my findings identified five prominent barriers to the current advancement of women into senior management and boards, namely: -

1. Limited vacancies or opportunities available for senior management roles.
2. A lack of confidence preventing women from applying for senior roles.
3. A lack of experience - Few women with experience necessary for such senior roles.
4. Limitations due to the candidate's age - such as minimal experience due to short tenure in non-succession roles or family commitments.
5. Lack of support - low mentorship or access to sponsorship opportunities available to aspiring women.

As my findings suggest participants may not perceive their actions impact on the advancement of other women into senior management, the significance of this finding suggests women in senior management may not recognize or acknowledge any responsibility or impact they have regarding the current state of the low representation of women in senior roles. They may not reflect on the impact their behaviour may have on subordinates or view their behaviour as having any affect or influence on subordinates' aspirations to advance. Instead, participants allude to barriers to advancement as the main cause for the slow rate of advancement of women into senior management and boards. However, as most barriers such as lack of family support and work/life imbalances are progressively being addressed by organizations in today's business environment, these barriers are beginning to be surmounted by women. Hence, it is not entirely accurate to continue giving such

barriers prominence as hinderances to women's progression to senior management in present times.

Having linked all six themes to the three principal elements of my study, I proceeded to map out these connections, enabling me to expand on my initial conceptual framework and develop a theoretical framework that provided a graphic representation of my findings. The process of building the theoretical framework, and the significance of the alignments of the connections established is discussed below.

6.2.3. Building the theoretical framework

In building the theoretical framework, I considered my initial conceptual framework (seen in figure 6.6 below) and expanded this using the connection I have observed between the three principal elements of the study and the six themes, which represent the factors that influence women to adapt their behaviour identified in the findings, the actions taken by women in senior management regarding the advancement of women into senior roles due to their propensity for 'critical acts', and the consequence of these actions resulting in a critical mass of women represented in senior management.

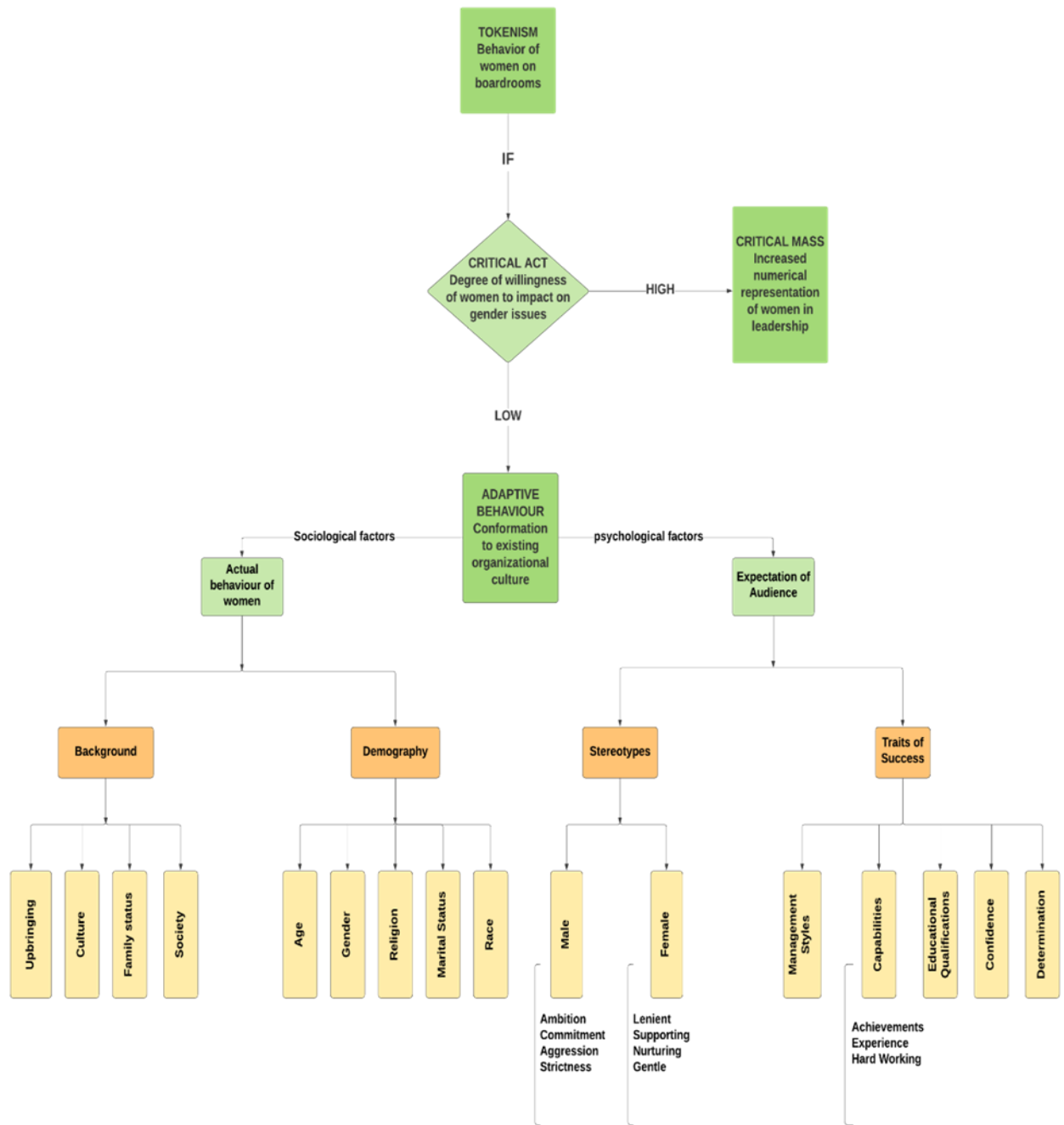


Figure 6.6: Initial conceptual framework

In my initial conceptual framework factors influencing the adaptive behaviour of women branched out into sociological and psychological factors. The sociological factors relate to influences on behaviour from factors such as background i.e. upbringing, family status (economic class), and demography i.e. race, age. As the *'Influences on personality leading to behaviour'* theme relates to influences on an individual's inherent personality that impact on their behaviour, this factor expands on the sociological factors with more factors identified in the findings namely: -

1. Background – Participants’ upbringing and socio-cultural values that shape their perspectives and behaviour (Schoon et al., 2003; Laungani et al., 2013). These values learned can be subjective and flexible depending on changing circumstances and experiences.
2. People - These are people whose influence shaped participants’ perspectives, such as family members, friends, colleagues, bosses.
3. Challenges; This relates to lived experiences that impact on participants’ perspectives and actions.
4. Institutions - These are educational and professional institutions attended by participants, whose ethos/values impacted on participants behaviour (Mumford et al., 2003; Markey-Towler, 2019).

Insights from my literature review allow me to expand on this link as studies show that an individual’s personality influences their predisposition and influence behaviour or perceptions leading to ‘choice’ (Mayer, 2007; Bergner, 2020). Individuals with pliable personalities easily conform to existing organizational status quo as their need to gain acceptance influences their behavioural change (Di Martino & Zan, 2009; Briñol et al., 2019; Bergner, 2020). While individuals with strong personalities resist conformation and are usually unwavering regarding their existing perspectives and behaviours (Mayer, 2007; Bergner, 2020). Using these insights, I expanded on this link, as my findings complement studies that show these factors impact on the development of participants’ personality and perception, which then influences their career choices and trajectory. This allowed me to draw a link between the *‘Influences on personality leading to behaviour’* factor and the *‘Drive for career progression’* factor in the framework.

The *‘Drive for career progression’* factor relates to influences on participants’ career path and progression, such as: -

1. Career choice - The career path chosen by participants.
2. Opportunities available - Availability of jobs or roles in senior management.
3. Family commitments - Responsibilities due to family commitments. Work/life balance.

4. Support systems - Support available to individuals from spouses, family, mentors etc.

These factors influence the direction of participants' career path by breaking the trajectory of an old path and creating a new trajectory for the individual (Lienert, 2015; Barker & Jane, 2016). Insights from discussions on the career transition stages of women in my literature review highlighted that as an individual enters an organization through employment, the individual becomes aware of their potential path to progression and the varying barriers to their advancement (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). They form work relationships and take actions that ensure this career trajectory (Sullian, 1999). As they progress into senior roles they become exposed to varying barriers to their advancement (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). They come under pressure to change their behaviour in some form, with this awareness and need for career progression impacting on their perspectives and influencing their behaviour (Kanter, 1977; Khilji & Pumroy, 2019). This insight enabled me to connect the 'drive for career progression' to the 'adaptive behaviour' element within the framework.

Psychological factors influencing the adaptive behaviour of women in my initial conceptual framework were presented as influences fueled by a need to conform to an expectation to an audience. My findings indicate that the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management is influenced by a need to conform to the organizational status quo. This was also highlighted in my literature review, as studies show conformation to status quo by women in the workplace occurs due to their desire to fit prevailing organizational cultures (Kanter, 1977; McDonald et al., 2004). Insights from my findings suggest there are three motivations for women in senior management to change their behaviour based on perceptions that certain behaviours or attributes as favourable for senior roles. The motivations highlighted in my findings are: -

1. To meet the expectations of the audience.
2. To meet the existing organizational culture.
3. To meet a role or job description.

Expanding on these psychological factors sees me draw a link between the '*adaptive behaviour*' element and the '*conformation to status quo*' factor identified in my findings. This then branches out highlighting the three motivations to conforming to organizational status quo identified in my findings, namely: an '*expectation of an audience*', '*organizational culture*', and '*job descriptions*'.

Still following this sequence of psychological factors, behaviours adapted by women that conform to organizational status quo were identified as characteristics that define a successful manager (Olanrewaju & Okorie, 2019; Em, 2023). Insights from the literature review show that behaviours of good leaders are characterised based on stereotypical gender classifications, with 'male traits' being favoured over 'female traits' (Kremer et al., 2019). My findings further compliment studies that show women in senior management form work relationships and adapt their behaviour to advance and gain acceptance into power groups (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005; Cordova-Wentling & Thomas, 2006; Saadin et al., 2016). Hence I was able to draw a connection from the motivations to conforming to organizational status quo to the '*association of behaviour with success*' factor in the framework. Behaviours associated with successful leadership are categorized as male and female traits within the framework.

My findings had complimented studies that argue male managerial traits are favored above female traits as the characteristics of a good leader (Schein et al., 1989; Rudman & Glick, 1999; Powell et al., 2002), and show women in senior management favor male trait or characteristics associated with male managers such as confidence, assertiveness, and sternness. Some of my participants had suggested such behaviours are necessary to effectively execute their roles, as their perceptions had been influenced by their lived experience navigating prevailing organizational culture in their work environment. Such women imitate admired behaviours of their mentors, bosses, or predecessors (Connell, 2002; Haslam & Ryan, 2008; Tolar, 2012), who are usually male and are part of the prevailing masculine organizational cultures institutionalized within the work environment (Tolar, 2012). As my finding suggest that such women have a high propensity to adapt their behaviour and to mimic male leadership traits, they are primarily focused on effectively achieving successful

outcomes for their organization and themselves. As suggested in my findings, such women aiming at career progression adapt their behaviour to mimic characteristics that are classified as 'male traits', as they conform to existing organizational cultures. This insight allowed me draw a link from the 'association of behavior with success' factor to behaviours categorized as 'male' traits' in the framework.

As such women continue to adapt their behaviour to mimic these males traits they perceive are associated with successful leadership, they continue to conform even further to the existing organizational status quo. Hence I drew a link from the 'male traits' of behavior back to the '*conformation to status quo*' factor, and back on to the 'adaptive behaviour' element once more. As highlighted in my literature review, such women are focused on achieving organizational objectives and outcomes and are very career driven. As my findings suggest that such women are susceptible to follow existing organizational processes and policies that are rarely focused on the development and implementation of targeted diversity and inclusion strategies within the organization, they do not act as change agents but uphold existing norms or practices, conforming even further to the status quo and becoming even more are nonchalant on pushing for the advancement of other women into senior management. Hence they themselves become a barrier to the advancement of women into senior management and boards and contribute to the low representation of women in senior management. This insight allowed me to draw a link from the 'adaptive behaviour' element to the '*drive for career progression*' factor in the framework. Figure 6.7 below outlines the above connections made.

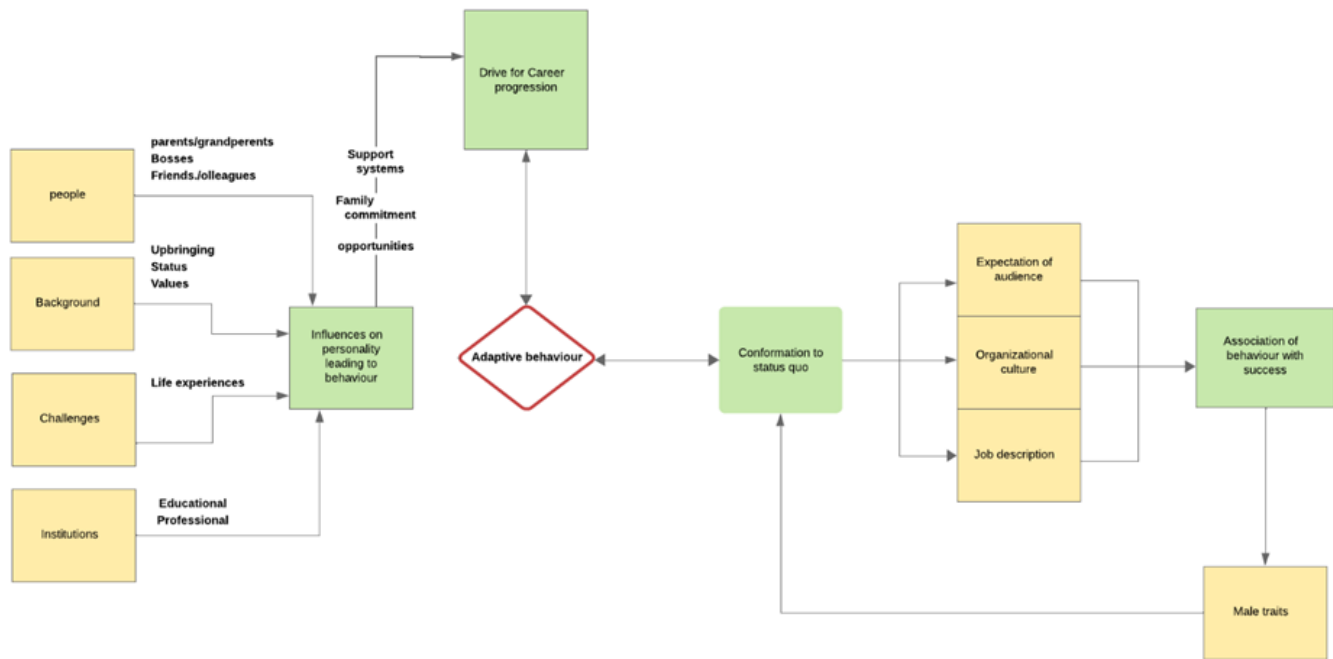


Figure 6.7: Connecting 'influence on personality leading to behaviour', 'drive for career progression', 'adaptive behaviour' element, 'conformation to status quo', and 'association of behaviour with success'

Continuing from the connections established and following insights from my findings, I then considered the 'critical acts' element and how it fits within the framework. This element relates to the propensity of women in senior management to willingly support the advancement of women within their organization. As highlighted in my literature review, the 'critical acts' of women in senior management are more effective in achieving advancements to women's careers in management (Yedidia & Bickel, 2001; Vinnicombe & Singh, 2003; Mavin, 2008; Konrad et al., 2008; Clarke, 2011; Torchia et al., 2011). My findings complement these studies suggest progress in the advancement of women into senior management will benefit from women in senior roles actively supporting policies focused on such advancements. Although this suggestion has been challenged (Childs & Krook, 2006; Sarah & Mona, 2008; Powell et al., 2008; Ayata & Tutuncu. 2008; Pini et al., 2011; Dwivedi et al., 2014; Kitchen, 2015), my findings suggest that as the number of women in senior management increase, they act as change agents to influence existing organizational cultures to be more inclusive and reduce the pressure on women to adapt their behaviour.

Hence the '*critical acts*' element of this study is vital, as my findings suggest women who exhibit a greater degree of critical acts will actively support the advancement of

women into senior management through mentoring or networking. This finding is supported by studies that show organizational change with regards to diversity and inclusion will take place if the number of women represented in senior management increases into a noticeable minority (Dahlerup, 1988, Childs & Krook, 2006, Beckwith, 2007).

As presented earlier in the literature review, women's inherent personalities influence their behaviour (Mayer, 2007; Bergner, 2020). The 'influences on personality leading to behaviour' factor also plays a vital role in the behaviour development (Bergner, 2020), as it influences the degree of willingness exhibited by women in senior management towards the advancement of women's careers (Mayer, 2007; Bergner, 2020). Hence it is linked to the adaptive behaviour element in the framework. Insights from my findings suggests that the higher women's propensity for critical acts the lower their tendency to adapt their behavior to conform to status quo. Hence, I was able to draw a link between the '*adaptive behaviour*' element and the '*critical acts*' element in the framework. The significance of the '*critical acts*' element cannot be understated, as it is vital for achieving an increase in the number of women represented in senior management. This is because the willingness of women in senior management to actively promote the advancement of women, results in more women gaining opportunities to advance to senior roles (Burke et al., 2000; Linehan & Scullion, 2008).

As suggested in my findings, women with a higher propensity for critical acts have a lower tendency to adapt their behaviour exhibit more supportive behaviours to their subordinates and are more willing in supporting aspiring women to advancement of women into senior management and boards and act as change agents within their organizations (Wood & Lindorff, 2001). And as studies have shown that such women generally exhibit nurturing and supportive managerial styles (Oshagbemi & Gill, 2003; Ye et al., 2015; Connerley & Wu, 2016), I was able to draw a link between the '*critical act*' element and the '*Willingness to support/promote other women progressing and securing top roles*' factor in the framework.

Although I had discovered a contradiction where I my findings highlighted that not all women in management exhibit 'female traits' or adopt transformative managerial styles. My findings suggest that it is women with a higher propensity for critical acts that exhibit more supportive characteristics toward their subordinates, as they are more empathic, supportive, nurturing, and avoid conforming to the status quo. My findings also suggest that by exhibiting these characteristics they show a higher degree of responsiveness to the advancement of other women, and exhibit behaviours that are categorized as '*female traits*' of a good leader (Connerley & Wu, 2016). With these insights I was able to draw a link between the '*critical acts*' element and the '*willingness to support/promote other women progressing and securing top roles*' factor within the framework.

I then considered the third and final element of the study. The '*critical mass*' element relates to the consequences of the response of women in senior management in pushing for the advancement of women into senior management. My findings suggest that the willingness of women in senior management to support women advancement, is fueled by their propensity for critical acts in response to their awareness of the low representation of women in senior management and boards. This allowed me draw a link between the '*critical acts*' element and the '*willingness to support/promote other women progressing and securing top roles*' factor within the framework. Such women's push for the advancements of women into senior management roles in their organizations can results in an increased rate of women getting into such roles, which then results in the increased representation of women in such management (Dahlerup 1988; Vinnicombe et al., 2009). This insight now allows me to draw a link from the '*willingness to support/promote other women progressing and securing top roles*' factor to the '*women's responsiveness to the low number of women represented in senior management*' factors within the framework. And as women in senior management continue to push for the advancement of other women, this can ultimately lead to the attainment of a critical mass of women represented in senior management and boards (Dahlerup 1988; Vinnicombe et al., 2009; Post & Byron, 2014). This link then allows me make a link to the '*critical mass*' element in the framework.

As insights from my literature review highlight that the achievement of a critical mass of women represented in senior management and boards, will bring about change to existing organizational cultures (Dahlerup 1988; Vinnicombe et al., 2009). This is because an increased substantial representation of women in senior management can influence change to existing male-dominant organizational culture at senior management (Dahlerup, 1988; Beckwith, 2007). These studies show that this change may usher in a culture of inclusion that reduces the pressure on women to conform as they drive for career progression (Dahlerup 1988; Vinnicombe et al., 2009). Hence my findings suggest their drive for career progression is not fueled by a desire to conform to the organizational status quo, but to achieve organizational outcomes and career advancement within a more inclusive work environment. As these women increase their propensity for 'critical acts' by supporting more women advancing into senior roles, their 'drive for career progression' does not pivot their adaptive behaviour towards 'conformation to status quo', but to 'critical acts'. With this insight, I was finally able to draw a link between the '*critical mass*' element and the '*drive for career progression*' factor within the framework. Figure 6.8 below outlines the connection made above.

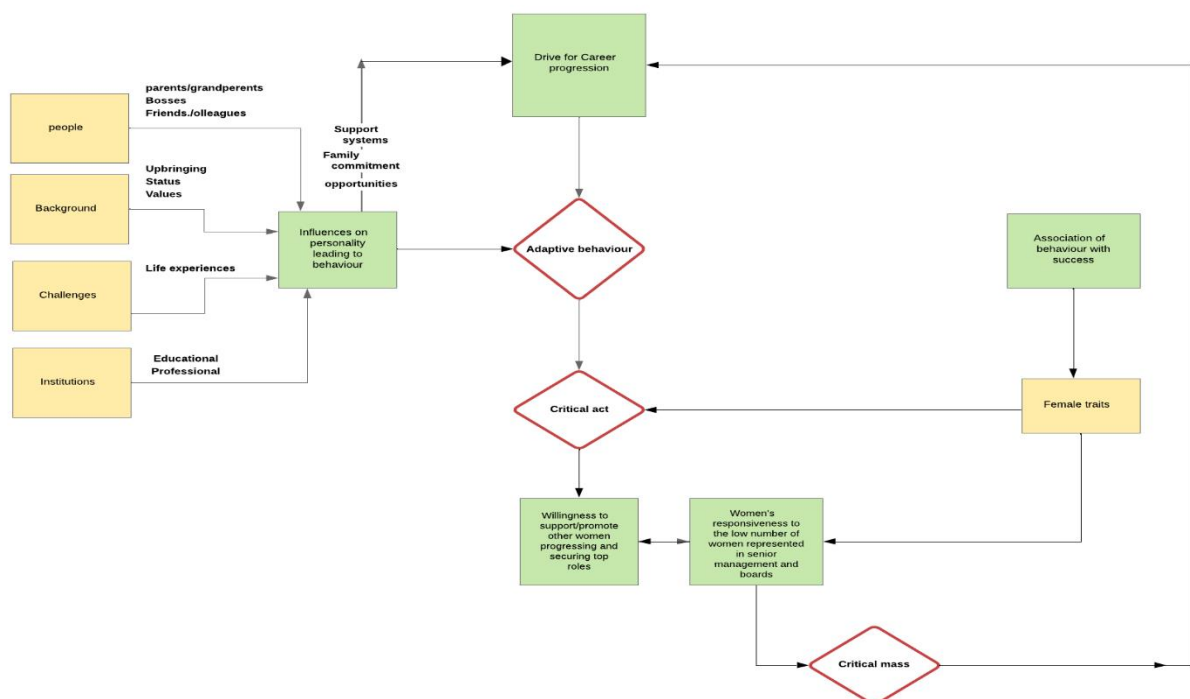


Figure 6.8: Connecting 'influences on personality leading to behaviour', 'drive for career progression', 'adaptive behaviour' element, 'critical acts' element, 'willingness to support/promote other women progressing and securing top roles', 'women's responsiveness to the low number of women in senior management and boards' and the 'critical mass' element

By outlining all the connections identified, the theoretical framework of the study's findings is developed. This framework is a graphical presentation of the connections made between the three principal elements and themes identified in my findings, revealing the relationship between factors influencing the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management, the actions taken by women in senior management; whether a willingness to act or not, and the consequences of their behaviour on the rate of advancement of women. In presenting these connections, I established a relationship between the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards, and the low representation of women in senior management. The comprehensive theoretical framework is presented in Figure 6.9 below.

Figure 6.9: Developed theoretical framework

The 'vicious' cycle indicates a series of factors augmenting the 'adaptive behaviour' element within the framework, contributing to enforce the slow rate of women advancing into senior management and boards. However, a means of countering this vicious cycle is presented by the identification of a virtuous cycle, which indicates a series of factors augmenting the 'critical acts' element within the framework to bring about a positive effect on the rate of women advancing into senior management, fostering factors that augment the 'critical mass' element within the framework. These factors address barriers to women's career advancement and creates avenues or organizational cultures that support the increased representation of women in senior management and boards. These cycles will be further expanded below.

6.3 ASPECT THREE: THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE VICIOUS AND VIRTUOUS CYCLES WITHIN THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The process of developing the theoretical framework saw me expand on the factors that influences women in senior management to adapt their behaviour to conform to existing organizational status quo. Factors namely; (i) the 'expectation of the audience', (ii) existing 'organizational culture', or (iii) the need to effectively execute a 'job description', influence women's behaviour and causes them to mimic traits or characteristics that they associate with successful management (Haslam & Ryan, 2008; Tolar, 2012). These characteristics are representative of the characteristics of good leaders and are generally stereotypically male traits (Powell et al., 2002). By associating such behaviours with success, such women further conform to the organizational cultures and status quo (Khilji & Pumroy, 2019).

My finding presents such women as nonchalant in supporting the advancement of women into senior management and are mostly driven to achieve organizational objectives and their career progression. Their drive for career progression pushes them to adapt their behaviour even further as they progress in the organization. As this nonchalant stance towards supporting the advancement of women into senior roles may have a negative impact on the rate of women getting into such senior roles, it consequently impacts on the representation of women in senior management. Hence a loop emerges, which feeds back on itself as women in senior roles continue to adapt

their behaviour and focus on achieving organizational outcomes, becoming more nonchalant of their role in the drive for to support the advancement of women into senior management and boards. I denoted this first loop identified in the theoretical framework as the ‘vicious cycle’. Seen figure 6.10 below.

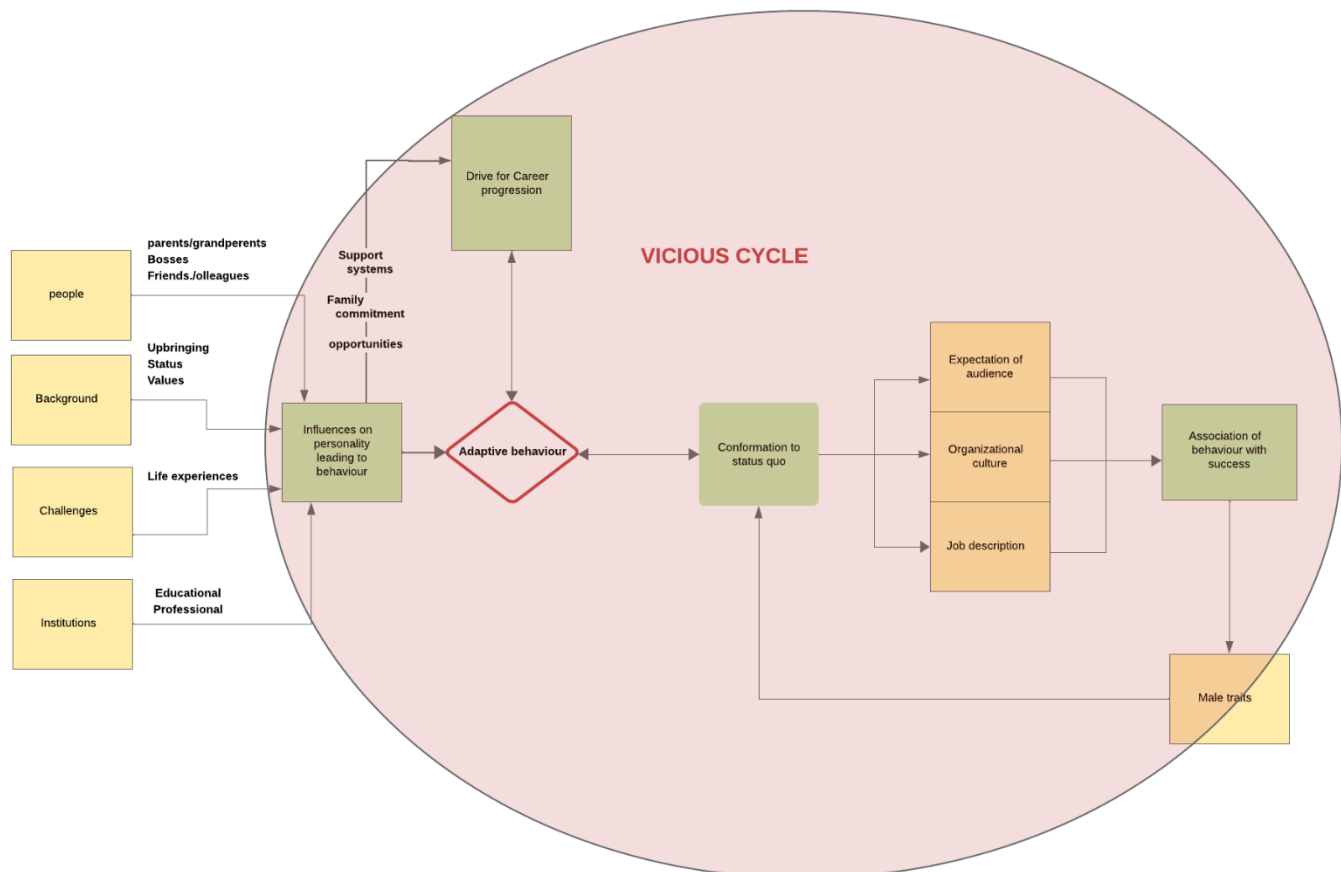


Figure 6.10: Highlighting the Vicious cycle

My findings highlight that as such women in senior management and boards conform to the status quo within an organization, they are more susceptible to following existing processes and policies that are rarely focused on the push for the implementation of inclusion strategies within the organization. Such women do not act as a change agent in this regard but have opposing views to the implementation of diversity and inclusion policies (Kanter, 1977; McDonald et al., 2004). By upholding existing norms or practices and conforming to the status quo even further, they are less likely to actively support career advancement campaigns for women in their organization (Kanter, 1977). And as such women lose the power to change the vicious circle, the loop is sustained, contributing to the slow rate of women advancing to senior roles,

inadvertently impacting on the numbers of women represented in senior management and boards within organizations. Hence my finding compliments studies that argue having women in senior management and boards does not necessarily pave the way for an influx of other women but may have an opposing effect on the future advancement of other women into top management roles (Bratton, 2005; Mavin, 2008; Joecks et al., 2012; Krook, 2015).

However, as propositioned in my findings, women with higher propensity for 'critical acts' exhibit traits that are empathic or nurturing in nature and show an increased willingness to support colleagues and subordinates. Outlining the vicious circle within the framework, we see that factors such as 'people', 'background', 'challenges' and 'institutions', impact on participants' personality and influences their drive for career progression. As suggested in my findings, participants' with personalities with a higher propensity for 'critical acts' do not adapt their behaviour to conform to status quo but emulate behaviour which are classified as female traits or adapt transformative, collaborative, and supportive managerial styles. My findings suggest that as such women become more aware of the slow rate of women advancing into senior roles within their organizations, they willingly support/promote aspiring women through mentorship or networking towards improving diversity and inclusion levels in their organization. This drive results in more women advancing into senior management, causing an increased representation of women in such management. And with more women advancing into senior management in their organization, a critical mass of women in senior management is attained.

Hence the premise of my proposition is that the propensity for 'critical acts' is the catalyst for women in senior management to actively push for the advancement of women in their organization, as such women act as change agents within their organizations and push for changes to existing organizational cultures, And as more women with a propensity for critical acts progress into senior roles, they in turn push for change to existing masculine organizational culture. This change then decreases pressures put on women to adapt their behaviour to conform to organizational cultures and status quo. This sees the formation of another loop, as these sequence of occurrence feeds back on itself and impacts positively on the rate of women advancing into senior management and boards. I denoted this second loop identified in the

framework as the 'virtuous cycle.' Figure 6.11 below outlines the virtuous cycle identified.

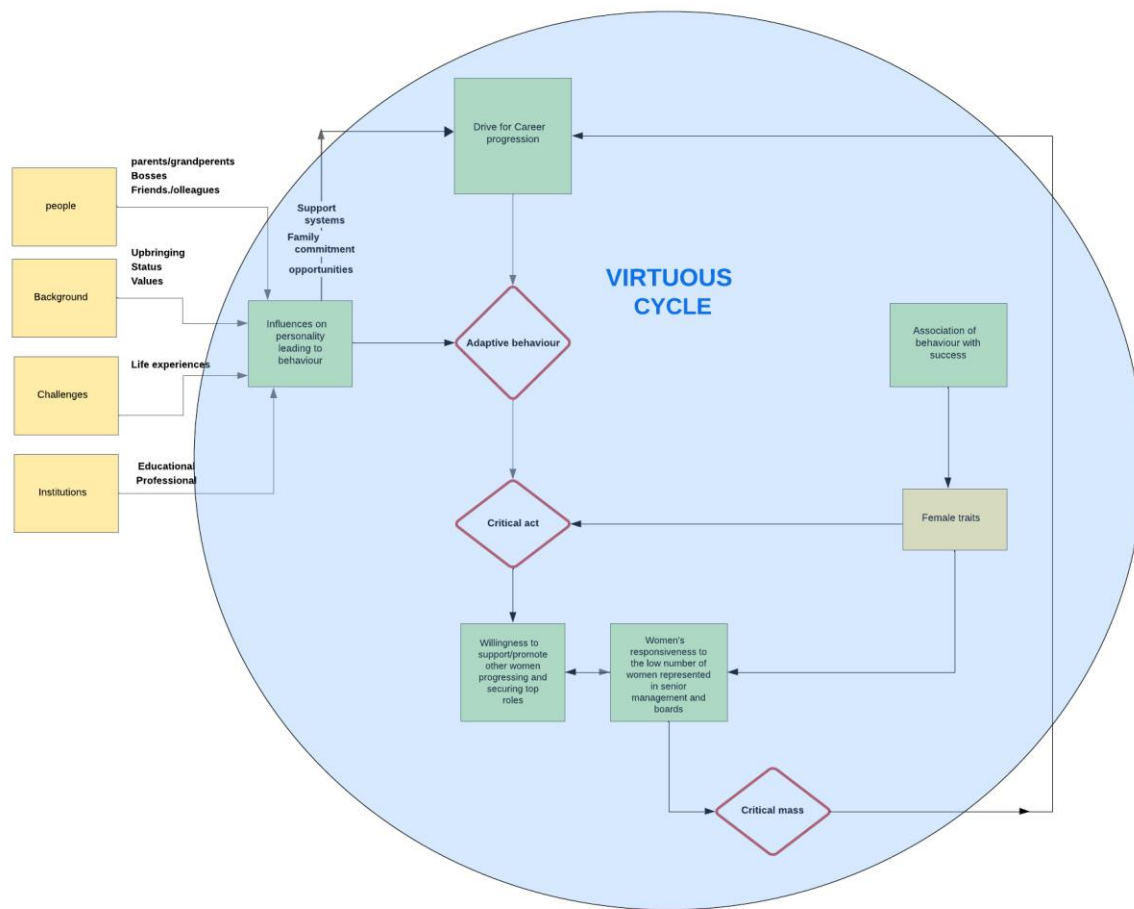


Figure 6.11: Highlighting the Virtuous cycle

The significance of the discovery of both 'vicious' and 'virtuous' cycles is in highlighting how and when the adaptive behaviour exhibited by women in senior management becomes an obstacle affecting the advancement of other women into senior roles in management negatively, and how and when the behaviour exhibited by women in senior roles through critical acts impacts positively on the advancement of women into senior management and boards. Figure 6.12 below presents my theoretical framework, highlighting both the vicious and virtuous cycles.

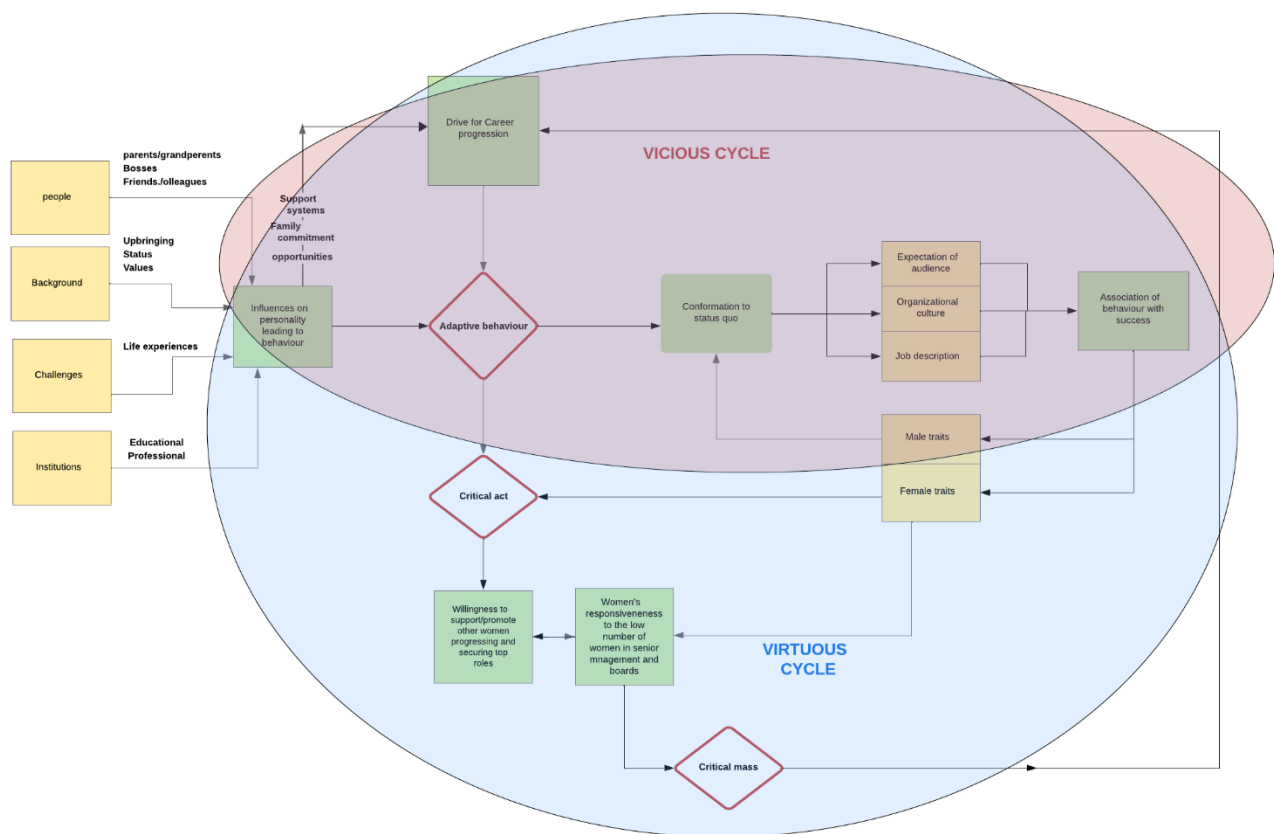


Figure 6.12: Theoretical framework highlighting vicious and virtuous cycles

Considering the series of links within the theoretical framework, I can surmise that inflection points at which either a vicious or virtuous cycle would occur is located where a 'drive for career progression' is reached. This inflection point is influenced by factors that influence the degree to which 'adaptive behaviour' occurs, namely: -

1. Influences on their personalities leading to behaviour.
2. Conformation to status quo.
3. Association of behaviour with success.

Hence my study proposes that, depending on the determinants of these factors, if the propensity for 'adaptive behaviour' is high, behaviour is influenced by 'conformation to status quo' and 'associating behaviour to success' factors, with the propensity for adaptive behaviour being fueled by a vicious cycle starting from a 'drive for career progression' leading back to the 'conformation to status quo' factor. However, if the propensity for adaptive behaviour is low, behaviour branches out of the vicious cycle,

as women exhibit a higher level of 'critical acts'. This is influenced by the 'willingness to support other women progressing and securing top roles', and 'women's responsiveness to the low number of women represented in senior management'. These factors influence action that pave the way to achieving a 'critical mass' of women in senior management. And as more of such women are supported to advance into senior management and boards, their drive for career progression is not influenced by the adaptive behaviour element, but circles back in a virtuous cycle, with even more women in senior management exhibiting an increased tendencies for critical acts.

6.4 SUMMARY

In utilizing insights from my literature review and findings, this study has achieved all three objectives outlined in chapter one. The two research questions raised have also been addressed as I have identified the prevailing factors that influence the adaptive behaviour of women in management and boards and established the existence of a relationship between the adaptive behaviour exhibited by women in senior management and boards with the low representation of women in senior management. This was done by evaluating six themes identified in my findings and linking these themes with the three principal elements of this study identified in my literature review. These links allowed me to further expand on my initial conceptual framework to develop a theoretical framework which outlined the connections, presenting the nature of the link between the adaptive behaviour exhibited by women in senior management and boards and the low representation of women in senior management. This relationship lies in the connections between the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management, their actions (willingness to act or not), and the consequences of their actions on the rate of advancement of women into senior management and boards.

In addition to establishing the existence of this relationship, I also identified the pivot point within the framework where the adaptive behaviour affects the rate of advancement of women into senior positions negatively through the inaction and lack of support exhibited by women in senior management. My finding highlights connections between factors and sequences of events that constituted a 'vicious

cycle', that see women in senior management adapt their behaviour and distance themselves from addressing barriers to the advancement of women into senior roles. Their nonchalant stance or neutrality regarding the implementation of policies that influence or impact on diversity and inclusion in their organization, sees them becoming barriers themselves to the advancement of women. Hence they inadvertently contribute to the low representation of women in senior management.

I had also identified the point within the theoretical framework where the behaviour of women in senior management plays a pivotal role in positively affecting the rate of advancement of women into senior positions. This point also presents itself as a loop, constituting a sequence of factors and occurrences which interact to create a 'virtuous cycle'. The most essential element in this cycle is the 'critical acts', which represents the willingness of women in senior management to support the advancement of aspiring women into senior roles within their organization. These women push for the advancement of women into senior management and boards by mentoring and offering coaching opportunities to aspiring women. They also create networking avenues to expose women to existing power groups and opportunities. Their actions impact the rate of women advancing into senior roles positively by supporting the progression of qualified and capable women into their ranks. This influx of women creates a critical mass of women represented in senior management, which further affects change in existing organizational cultures and reduces the pressure on women to adapt their behaviour to conform to such existing organizational culture.

The significance of this study's findings is that it enhances existing research in the subject area, answering a call to explore behavioural perspectives of women in senior management and boards and its impact on the career progression of women into senior roles (Gabrielsson & Huse, 2004; Campbell & Mínguez-Vera, 2007; Sarah & Mona, 2008; Nielsen, 2010; Dwivedi et al., 2014; Belasen, 2017). Hence this study provides insights posed to enrich the debate on diversity and inclusion in senior management. The identification of factors that influence the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards, and the establishment of a relationship between the behaviour of women in senior management and the low representation of women in senior management provides both theoretical and practical implications to this field of research. Findings in this study enhances research on women's career

advancement, by providing a framework that allows the development of theory on the behaviour of women in management. It also provides data and information for the development of tools for generating workable solutions or strategies aimed at addressing reforms on diversity and inclusion policies in management. This study also challenges existing studies on women in management that focuses only on barriers to advancement or behaviour linked to their individual demographic characteristics such as race, age, or creed.

My findings support the proposition that a substantial increase in the representation of women in senior management and boards can bring about change in existing organizational culture (Dahlerup, 1988; Beckwith, 2007), and further expands on this to propose that the higher the propensity for 'critical acts' exhibited by women in senior management and boards, the greater their push for the advancement of women into senior management. Hence the virtuous cycle highlighted demonstrates how a rise in the number of women advancing to senior roles in management, resulting in an increased representation of women in senior management can be achieved. Further details on the significance of my findings and this study's concluding statements will be presented in the concluding chapter of this study.

CHAPTER SEVEN CONCLUSION

7.0 INTRODUCTION

As highlighted in this study's literature review, there is still a low representation of women in senior management and boards in organizations within the United Kingdom (House of commons: UK parliament, 2021). This is despite the implementation of business led and governmental policies to see growth in the representation of women in senior management this last decade (Davies Review, 2015; Grant Thornton, 2020; House of commons: UK parliament, 2021). The rate of women advancing into such senior management roles also remains slow (House of commons: UK parliament, 2021). As highlighted in my literature review, studies on the experiences of women in senior management and boards that may shade light on this issue are few, with most studies mainly focused on leadership style of women in senior management or organization performance (Lämsä & Sintonen, 2001; Terjesen et al., 2009). There a limited studies that focus on the impact of behaviours of women in senior management and boards on diversity and inclusion outcomes in organizations (Longman et al., 2018; Place & Vardeman-Winter, 2018). Hence, existing studies are lacking in theory development regarding women in senior management and their impact on the advancement of women into senior management (Terjesen et al., 2009).

This study contributes to existing literature, by exploring the behaviour of women in senior management and boards in the United Kingdom, with a view to determining prevailing factors that influence their adaptive behaviour and seeks to understand how this behaviour impacts on the rate of women advancing into senior management. In Ellemers et al. (2012), findings show that by increasing the representation of women in senior management, a growth in the rate of advancement of women into senior roles will occur. This was anchored on a premise that promoting a small number of women into senior roles in male-dominated organizations will automatically improve opportunities for aspiring women, as women in senior management will support these subordinates to advancement (Ellemers et al., 2012). However, current statistics disputes this with the rate of women advancing into senior management remaining low even in organizations where women occupy senior roles (Derks et al., 2016).

To investigate this, I sought insights into the experiences and perspectives of women in senior management and boards in the UK, regarding the advancement of women in their organizations. My investigation into the experiences and behaviours of women in senior management and boards also saw me explore existing literature, which revealed women in senior management exhibit three forms of behaviour namely; (i) An overachieving behaviour, (ii) An invisibility behaviour, and (iii) an adaptative behaviour (Kanter 1977). Of these three behaviours, studies indicate that the conscious, or unconscious adaptation of behaviours by women in senior management, impacts negatively on the rate of women advancing into senior management within organizations (Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Campbell, 2004; Mavin et al., 2014).

In investigating this adaptive behaviour, my findings had revealed four factors influencing women in senior management and boards to adapt their behaviour, which are:

1. They adapt their behaviour to conform to status quo or existing organizational cultures.
2. They adapt their behaviour to emulate behaviour they associate with success.
3. Their propensity to adapt their behaviour is Influenced by their inherent personality.
4. They adapt behaviour as a means or drive for career progression.

My findings also suggest that although adapting their behaviour may allow women in senior management to be effective in delivering organizational outcomes and raising their profile, it may result in them not supporting the advancement of aspiring women in their organizations. This complements studies that argue women in senior management adapt their behaviour to enhance their own comparative worth and appear unemphatic towards other women in their line of succession, resulting in the devaluing of the competency of other women aspiring to advance (Elsesser & Lever, 2011; Loyd & Amoroso, 2018). And as women leaders in male-dominated organizations reproduce rather than challenge the existing gender-hierarchy, they become barriers to such advancements themselves (Mizrahi, 2004; Elsesser & Lever, 2011; Latu et al., 2013; Derks et al., 2016).

My findings suggest in addressing the low representation of women in senior management and boards, a conscious effort to increase the rate of women advancing into senior management in organizations must be made. This can be achieved if women in senior management actively support this drive through the mentorship, networking, and sponsorship of their aspiring subordinates. Such schemes and avenues can ensure aspiring women gain the necessary capabilities and experience needed for senior roles and expose them to opportunities for advancement.

This chapter is a summary of this study's discoveries, and it begins with a summary of the research questions, research analysis and findings in section 7.1. I recap and summarize the three aspects of discovery discussed in chapter six namely:

1. The identification of the factors that influence the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards.
2. The identification of a relationship between the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards and the low representation of women in senior management.
3. The identification of the vicious and virtuous cycles within the theoretical framework.

Summarized in this section is also the significance of my findings highlighting the presentation of the theoretical framework outlining the factors that influence the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management relationship, the establishment of a relationship between the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards and the low representation of women in senior management, and the discovery of both 'vicious' and 'virtuous' cycles in the framework. These cycles identified represent the points where the adaptive behaviour exhibited by women in senior management affects the rate of women advancing into senior roles either positively or negatively, hence impacting on their representation in senior management.

In section 7.2, the research implication and contribution of this study is presented, with discussions on this study's research significance for practice. Recommendation on way forward in addressing the negative impact of the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management regarding the advancement of women into senior roles is also presented in this section. In section 7.3, reflections on my research process showing

new learning and development through my journey of exploration and discovery are discussed. These reflections also highlight my transformation from preconceived perspectives regarding the phenomenon studied, to new understanding from insights gained. Lastly, I will present my concluding statement for the study in section 7.4.

7.1 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

The study follows an interpretivist epistemology, where the logic of inquiry and responses collected from participants are subjective in nature. The study sought to investigate a social phenomenon by exploring the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management, seeking to identify the factors influencing such behaviour and to establish a relationship between this behaviour and the low representation of women in senior management. The purpose for pursuing this investigation was laid out in three objectives, namely:

1. To explore the factors influencing the adaptive behaviour exhibited by women in senior management and boards within the United Kingdom.
2. To investigate links between the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards, and the rate of women advancing into senior roles. Hence its impact on the representation of women into senior management and boards.
3. To contributing insights towards the growing discussion on women in management, by being the first step in bringing awareness regarding this behaviour and presenting it as a potential barrier to the advancement of women into senior management.

Hence two research questions were developed from the literature review and addressed within the study. These research questions were: -

1. Are the forces such as the need for territorial protection, a personal agenda to succeed, and collegiality, the prevailing influences behind the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards?
2. Does the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards influence the rate of women advancing into senior roles, hence impacting on the low representation of women in senior management?

As highlighted in the literature review of the study, this is an area of study where little knowledge exists (Gabrielsson & Huse, 2004; Bilimoria; Vinnicombe et al., 2009), with calls for more research exploring the behavioral perspectives of women in senior management, and the impact of these behaviours on women's career advancements issues (Gabrielsson & Huse, 2004; Campbell & Mínguez-Vera, 2007; Nielsen, 2010; Belasen, 2017). Hence, this study takes an exploratory stance in its investigation, commencing with a review of existing literature in this field, then proceeding with the interview of five participants in a pilot study. The pilot study was used to test the practicality of research methods and identify any modifications that might be required to the process of the investigation for the main study. The literature review allowed me highlight three principal elements of the study which became the core components of the initial conceptual framework namely:-

1. The adaptive behaviour element- Relating to the change in behaviour of women in senior management and boards. This element is seen in this study as a change in behaviour by women in senior management and boards influenced by agency and social identity forces
2. Critical acts element - Relating to the propensity or willingness of women in senior management and boards to support or push for the advancement of women into senior management
3. Critical mass element - Relating to the consequences of the response shown by women in senior management regarding the advancement of women into senior management. This is in the form of an increased representation of women in senior management and boards.

Findings from the data analysis generated from the pilot study enabled me to modify interview questions for the main study and adjust the structure of my initial conceptual framework introduced in chapter two.

In the main research, insights from data generated from interview responses of thirty-three participants were evaluated and analysed. Participants in the main study were women occupying roles in senior management and boards in varying work sectors in the UK. The findings from the analysis of data from interview transcripts provided further guidance for the direction of inquiry in the main study. This analysis led to the identification of six emergent themes. The first four themes identified highlighted

factors influencing the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards namely:

1. Conformation to status quo.
2. Association of behaviour with success.
3. Influences on personality leading to behaviour.
4. Drive for career progression.

The fifth and sixth themes identified related to the propensity of women in senior management and highlighted the impact of their actions on the advancement of women into senior management namely:

5. Willingness to support/promote other women progressing and securing top roles.
6. Women's responsiveness to the slow rate of women represented in senior management and boards.

By connecting these themes to the three principal elements highlighted in the literature review, I was able to develop this study's theoretical framework. Through this theoretical framework I was able to outline and present a relationship between the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards, and the low representation of women in senior management. In this study, my discoveries were in three aspects which will be summarised in the following sub-section

7.1.1 Aspect 1: The identification of factors influencing the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards

This aspect relates to the discovery of the factors influencing the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards. Hence, addressing the first question raised. Insights from the literature review and pilot study had initially indicated that the prevailing influence impacting women's propensity for adaptive behaviour were the need for territorial protection, personal agenda to succeed, and a need for collegial attitudes toward colleagues. Investigating these, I utilized insights from four theoretical perspectives namely: -

1. Agency theory - Which indicates that individuals are generally opportunistic, and constantly aim to maximize their own interests, hence conform, and act in the best interests of either themselves or a dominant group (Bøhren, 1998).

2. Social Identity theory - Which indicates that depending on the prominence of the circumstance, an individual's personal identity or their social identity drives their behaviour (Trepte & Loy, 2017). The motivation for adapting behaviour is found within the social group which promotes commonality in behaviour, perspectives, and association (Hogg et al., 1990; Hogg, 2001).
3. Tokenism theory - Which indicates unequal group memberships ratios create and reinforce behaviour of members within organizations (Poutanen & Kovalainen, 2013).
4. Critical mass theory - Which indicates the need for a numerical threshold for the representation of women in senior management. This creates a conducive environment that balances the power dynamics of groups and allows agency forces to bring out the individuality of women in these groups (Terjesen & Singh, 2008; Celis & Childs, 2008; Madera et al., 2019).

Exploration of the above theoretical perspectives enabled me gain understanding on factors that influence behaviour in individuals. As I considered the first principal element of the study, which was the adaptive behaviour of women itself, I was able to identify four new prevailing factors from my data analysis. The first four themes identified in my findings indicated factors influencing the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management namely: -

1. Adapting behaviour due to 'conformation to status quo'.
2. Adapting behaviour due to an 'association of behaviour with success'.
3. Adapting behaviour due to 'influences on personality leading to behaviour'.
4. Adapting behaviour due to a 'drive for career progression'.

Figure 7.1 below is a pictorial presentation of the adaptive behaviour element and the identified factors that influence the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards.

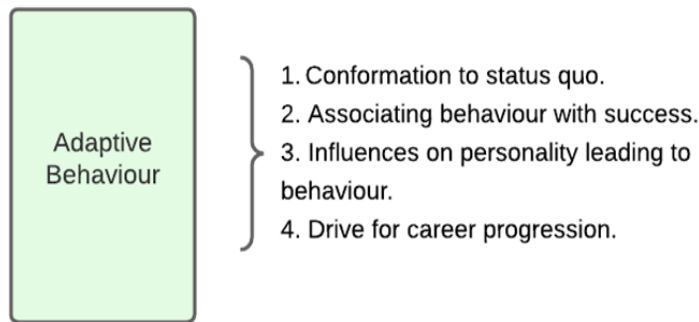


Figure 7.1: Adaptive behaviour element and related themes

7.1.2 Aspect 2: The identification of a relationship between the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards and the low representation of women in senior management.

In addressing the second question raised, I utilized insights from the literature review and the interpretation of findings. I outlined a series of connections between the three principal elements of the study and the six themes identified in my data analysis and developed a theoretical framework to establish a connection between the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards and the low representation of women in senior management.

Having identified the factors that influence the ‘adaptive behaviour’ element of this study, I then evaluated the ‘critical acts’ element of the study. The fifth theme identified in my findings namely, *‘willingness to support/promote other women progressing and securing top roles’*, was connected to this element as it relates to women in senior management actively supporting the advancement of women into senior roles. Figure 7.2 below is the pictorial representation of the ‘critical acts’ element and its related theme.

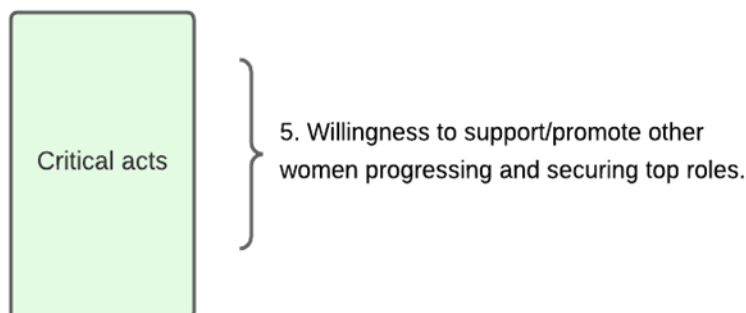


Figure 7.2: Critical acts element and related theme

As the 'critical acts' element of this study represents the propensity to act in response to the advancement of women, my findings suggest that the propensity for critical acts in women in senior roles is vital in the push for the advancement of women into senior management and boards. My findings propose that the higher the propensity for critical acts, the more willing women in senior management should be to actively supporting aspiring women advance, or to push for the implementation of policies regarding diversity and inclusion in their organizations.

My findings also suggest that the reverse is the case for women in senior management with a lower propensity for critical acts. My findings highlight that such women hold the opinion that purposeful and focused policy regarding diversity and inclusion issues are not essential to organizational outcomes. They contend that recruitment processes should focus solely on experience, skill, and capability, and exhibit a nonchalant stance towards pushing for change in recruitment processes or other organizational policies that impact on the advancement of women into senior management roles. My finding suggests such women are more prone to adapt their behaviour to conform to the status quo and minimize the importance of networking and mentoring to aspiring women. This inadvertently impacts negatively towards the advancement of women into senior management.

The sixth theme identified in my findings was the *'women's responsiveness to the low number of women represented in senior management and boards'* theme. This relates to the degree to which women in senior management are aware and responsive to the low representation of women in senior management. My findings suggest an awareness of the low representation of women in senior management prompts women with a higher propensity for critical acts to respond by supporting the advancement of women into senior management. This proposition allows me to connect this theme to the critical mass element of the study, as my finding suggest that a push for the advancement of women into senior management will result in more women advancing into such roles, which then increases the substantive representation of women in senior management. My finding also highlights that achieving a critical mass of female representation in senior management can lead to

changes in organizational culture that further supports the advancement of more women into senior roles. Figure 7.3 below is a pictorial representation of this element and its related theme.

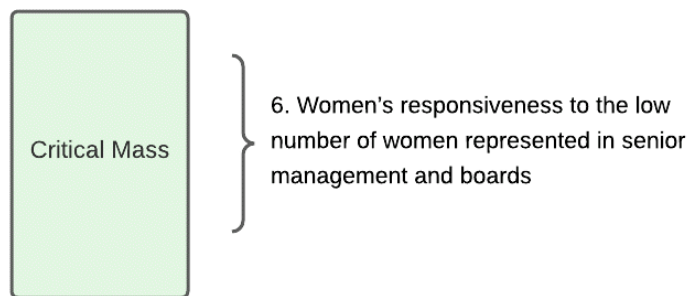


Figure 7.3: Critical mass element and its related theme

Outlining all these connections enabled me build a theoretical framework, which mapped out and highlighted a relationship between the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards, and the low representation of women in senior roles, hence addressing the second question raised. See figure 7.4 below for the theoretical framework developed.

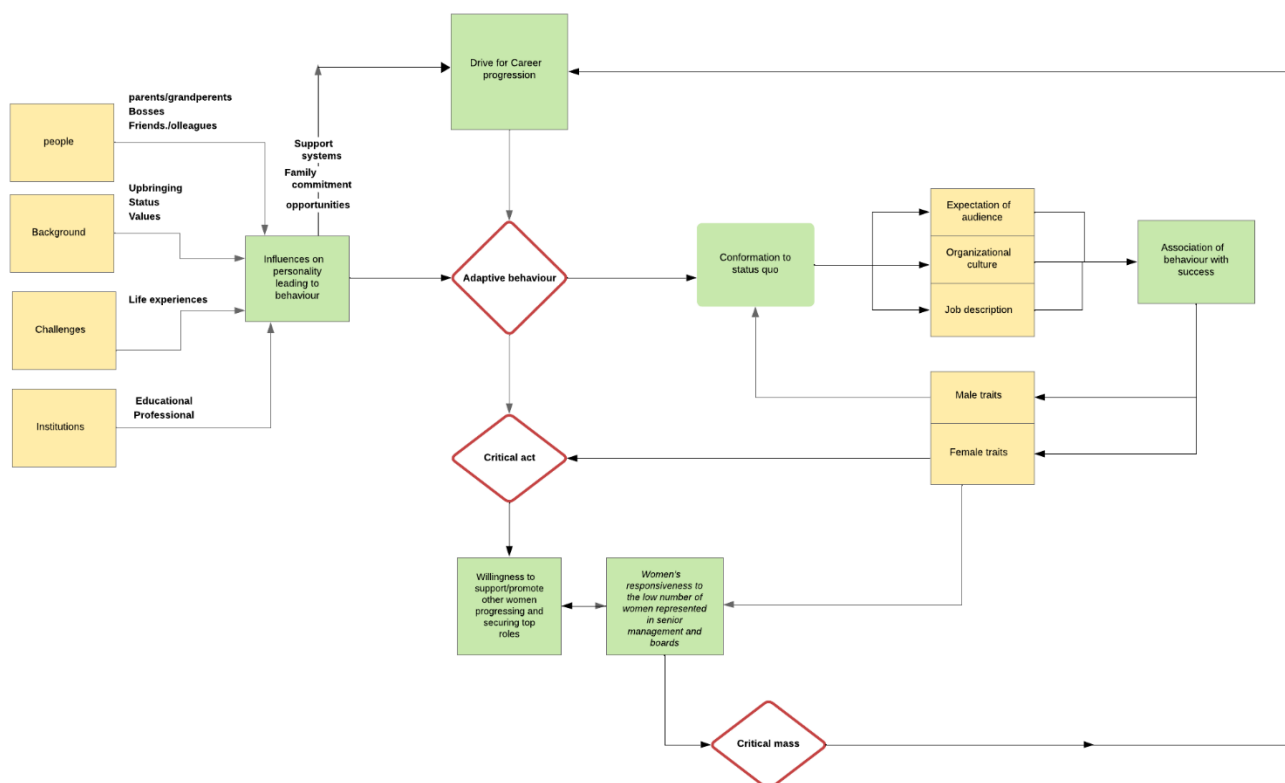


Figure 7.4 Developed theoretical framework

7.1.3 Aspect 3: The identification of the vicious and virtuous cycles within the theoretical framework

While developing the theoretical framework, I discovered the existence of a 'vicious cycle' that perpetuates the low representation of women in senior management and boards. In the framework, this loop initiates where women in senior management are motivated to adapt their behaviour to conform to the existing status quo in their organization. As highlighted earlier, such women conform to organizational status quo and emulate traits or characteristics they perceive are qualities of a successful manager. These traits are generally the traits possessed by their mentors or superiors who are usually men.

As propositioned in my findings, such women may have a lower propensity for critical acts, and as they further conform to the status quo, it impacts positively on their standing with organizational power groups and drives their career progression. Their drive for career progression once again pushes them to adapt their behaviour as they progress in the organization and conform even more to the status quo. As such women are nonchalant towards supporting the advancement of women into senior management, their actions have a negative impact on the rate of women advancing into senior roles, consequently contributing to the low representation of women in senior management. Hence this negative loop feeds back on itself, as women in senior management continue to adapt their behaviour and conform even further to the status quo. Figure 7.5 below outlines the vicious circle identified.

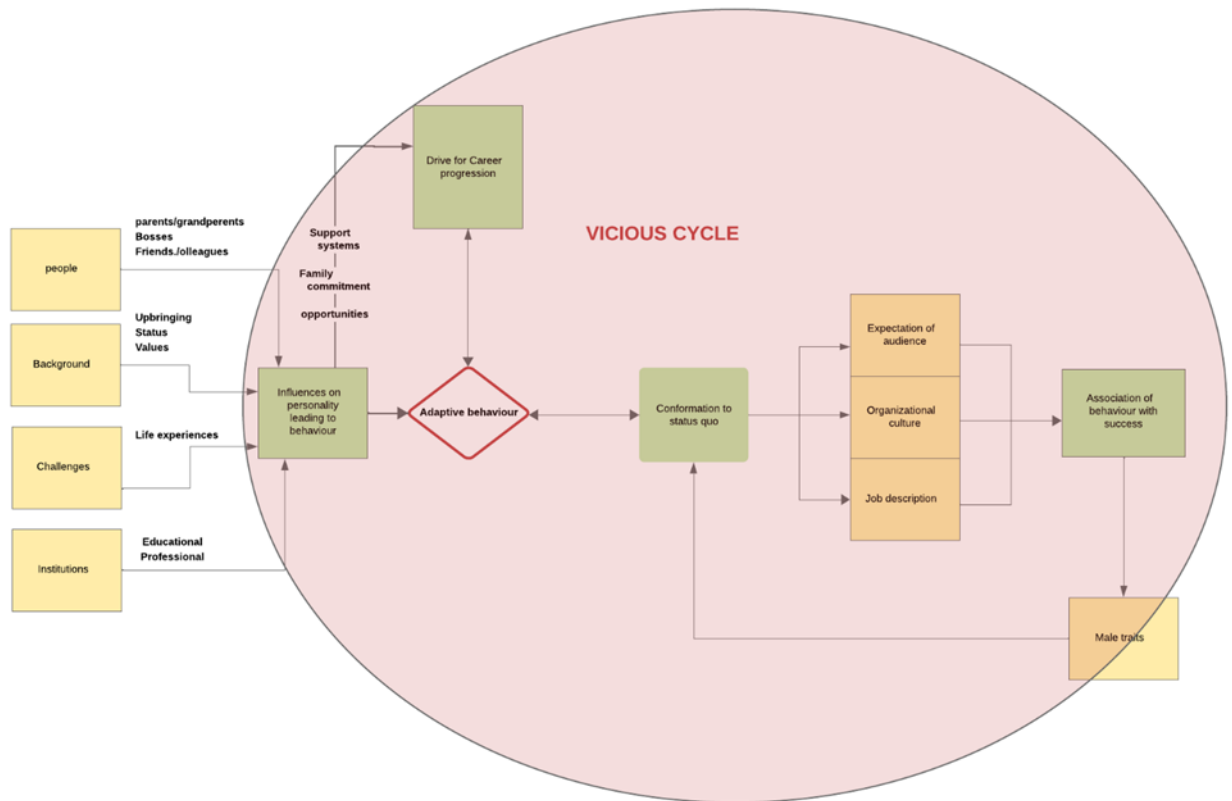


Figure 7.5: The vicious circle

However, I had also discovered a point in the theoretical framework where the behaviour exhibited by women in senior roles affects the advancement of women into senior management positively. This ‘virtuous cycle’ is a sequence of occurrences where women in senior management with a higher propensity for critical acts, are willingly supporting the advancement of women into senior roles. They do not adapt their behaviour to conform to status quo but emulate behaviours which are classified as ‘female traits’ or adapt transformative, collaborative, and supportive managerial styles (Sarah & Mona, 2008; Paris et al., 200; Connerley & Wu, 2016). Their actions can see more women advancing into senior management, which creates an increased representation of women in senior roles, resulting in the attainment of a critical mass of women represented in senior management and boards (Dahlerup 1988; Vinnicombe et al., 2009).

My finding indicates that as more women with a propensity for critical acts progress in their career, they in turn will impact on existing masculine organizational culture, which can then bring about a decrease in pressures put on women to adapt their behaviour

to conform to the status quo. As this sequence of occurrence feeds back on itself, it impacts positively on the rate of women advancing into senior management and boards, resulting in increased representation of women in senior management and boards. Figure 7.6 below outlines the virtuous cycle identified.

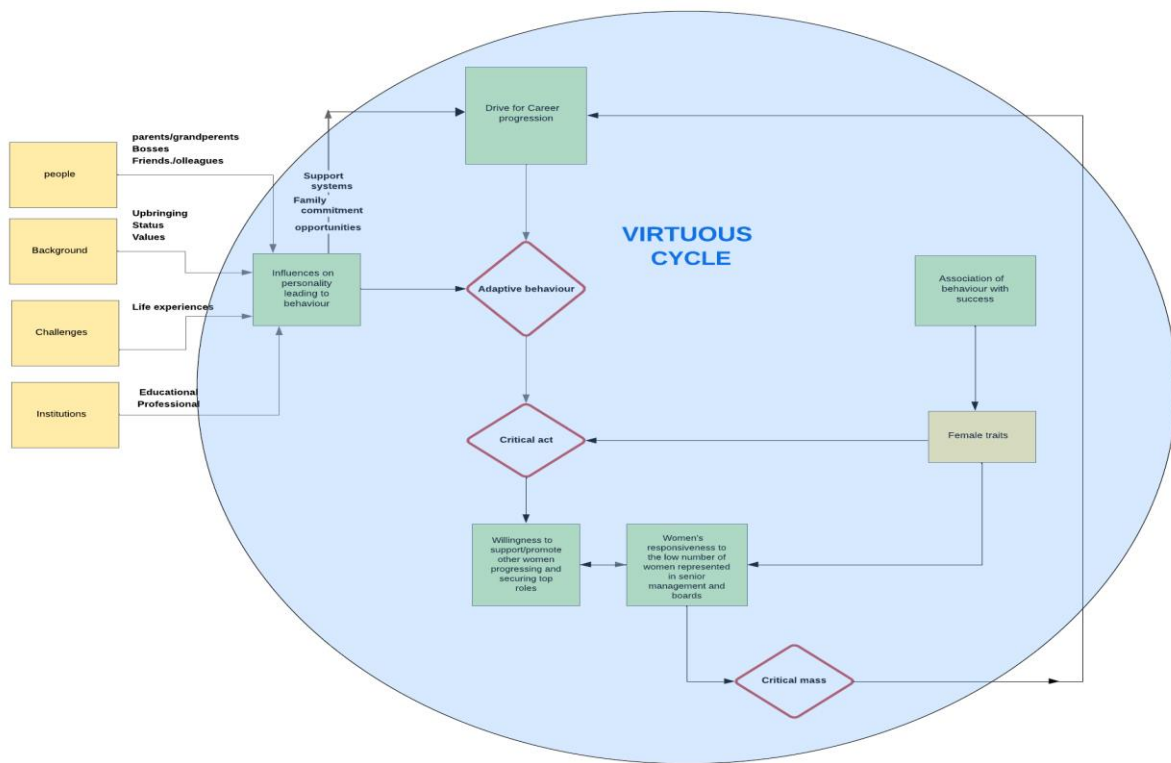


Figure 7.6: The virtuous circle

The significance of the discovery of these cycles is that it highlights :

1. The point where the adaptive behaviour exhibited by women in senior management can become a barrier and negatively impact the progression of other women into senior management.
2. The point where the behaviour exhibited by women in senior management can impact positively on the advancement of women into senior management and boards.

Figure 7.7 below is the theoretical framework displaying both vicious and virtuous cycles

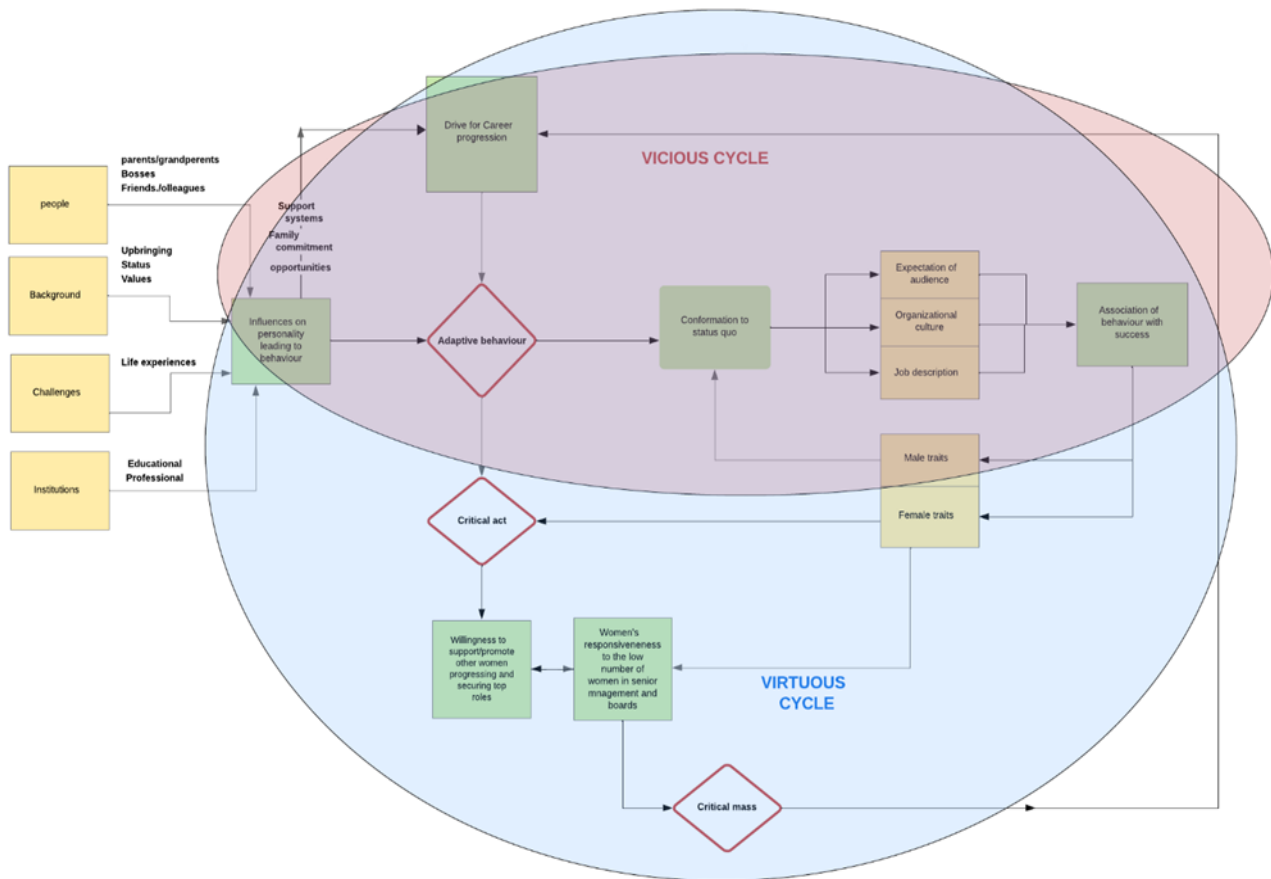


Figure 7.7: The theoretical framework highlighting both vicious and virtuous cycles

7.2 RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

As earlier highlighted in my literature review, existing studies on women in senior management such as Oakley (2000), Schein (2007), Kumra et al. (2016), Burke et al. (2016) and van 't Foort-Diepeveen et al. (2021), focus mainly on identifying factors that present barriers to entry and advancement for women in management. According to Terjesen et al. (2009), Dwivedi et al. (2014) and Vinnicombe (2015), such studies do not focus on the behaviour of women in senior management themselves or how their behaviour impacts on the advancement of other women into senior management. In addition to this, studies such as Ballenger and Stephen (2010), Baker and Cangemi (2016), Hunt et al. (2018), and Rosenbach et al. (2019) argue that existing studies do not focus on factors such as agency or social identity influences that may impact on the behaviour of women in leadership. A study that did investigate the behaviour of women in senior management is Powell et al. (2008), which examined sex effects in evaluations of transformational and transactional leaders. However, in this study

behaviour exhibited by women in senior management was only linked to their individual demographic characteristics. Other studies such as Indvik (2004) which focused on sex differences in socialization and life experience that may result in different mental models or “implicit theories” of leadership among women, Eagly (1987) which was focused on how women were evaluated and expected to engage in activities and actions, and Khilji and Pumroy (2019) which explored the career experiences of women engineers, are among the few studies that focus on the behaviour of women in senior management roles.

My research expands on such studies by identifying factors that influence the behaviour of women in senior management and boards, offering a theoretical framework that allows the further development of theory on the behaviour of women in management. This research provides both theoretical and practical implications to the field of women and organizational studies, by identifying the prevalent factors that influence the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards. It establishes a link between the behaviour of women in senior management and the slow rate of women advancing into senior roles. It also identifies a virtuous and vicious cycle that pinpoints pivotal moments where the rate of advancement of women into senior management can be affected positively or negatively, which impacts on the representation of women in senior management.

7.2.1 Research Implications of study

This study is intended as a first steps in addressing issues relating to the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards, by bringing awareness to this behaviour and presenting it as a barrier that is just as impactful on the advancement of women into senior roles as other recurrently presented barriers in existing studies. There have been calls for research aimed at identifying and exploring factors tied to the social and behavioral attributes of women in senior management and boards (Sarah & Mona, 2008; Dwivedi et al., 2014). According to a study carried out by Catalyst (1993) titled ‘Women on corporate boards: The challenge of change’, a call was made for more studies examining women’s experiences and behaviour in senior management and boards, looking at how women in leadership positions relate to other aspiring women in their

organizations, their views on equality, diversity and inclusion in senior management, and its impact on the advancement of other women into senior management and boards. These behaviours may be rooted in tokenism which was described by Kanter (1977) as a dynamic system of factors and resulting behaviours that perpetuates the short supply and low representation of women in senior management roles.

Kanter (1977) argued that factors in 'tokenism' ensure the presence of a few women in senior management roles who do not necessarily pave the way for the advancement of other women. Studies such as Kanter (1977), Dezső et al. (2015) and Mui and Hill (2020) argue that it is essential that these factors and their impact on the advancement of women into senior management be explored (Gabrielsson & Huse, 2004; Nielsen, 2010).

In my literature review, it was highlighted that existing studies have been multi-disciplinary in nature (Nielsen, 2010), and had only been carried out by a small school of researchers examining women on boards (Vinnicombe, 2015). These studies were either lacking in developed theory or do not define relationship models between factors and outcomes (Terjesen et al., 2009). Existing studies on the rate of women advancing to senior management and boards have argued that external factors such as lack of experience, lack of career opportunities, gender-based stereotypes, and lack of access into the 'old boy' networks, provide barriers to the advancement of women into senior management roles (Oakley, 2000; Broughton & Miller, 2009).

The introduction of three behaviours namely; *invisibility*, *over-performance*, and *adaptive*, exhibited by token women in senior management by Kanter (1977) following her investigation into the behaviour of individuals within skewed groups, brought a focus on the study of the behaviour of women in senior management as an additional factor influencing the advancement of women into senior roles. And of the three behaviours identified, the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards is more under-researched (Vinnicombe et al., 2008; Hawarden, 2010). This focus on behaviour was extended when a study by Dahlerup (1988) introduced the concept of the 'critical mass theory' suggesting the

key to advancing women into senior management was to increase the numerical representation of women in senior management (Vokić et al., 2019). The premise of this being, having more women occupying senior management roles will in turn bring about a change in policies regarding the advancement of women to senior management and boards within their organizations (Schoen & Rost, 2015; Vokić et al., 2019). However, these claims were debated in subsequent studies, as opponents to these studies claim there is a lack of evidence establishing a relationship between the numerical representation of women in senior management and organizational outcomes (Childs & Krook, 2008; Morrison et al., 2009). Opponents claim if such a relationship exists, there is a lack of empirically derived explanation for the nature of such relationship (Childs & Krook, 2008; Morrison et al., 2009).

Subsequent studies, which often misconstrued contributions from both Kantar (1977) and Dahlerup (1988), had crucial implications for research on the relations between the numerical representation of women and organizational outcomes (Childs & Krook, 2008). Statistical evidence shows many organizations with women in senior management roles still have fewer women advancing into senior management (International Labour organization, 2019; Catalyst, 2020). This highlighted a need for research to focus on the impact of increased substantive representation of women in senior management, rather than the numerical representation (Chaney, 2006; Childs & Krook, 2008). Hence a call studies that offer coherent and specific findings on women's advancement to senior management and boards (Childs & Krook, 2008).

My research answers this call by developing a theoretical framework that identifies factors that motivate the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards, as well as identifying '*critical acts*' as a catalyst to the achievement of the critical mass in women in senior management. My study proposes that an increase in the willingness of women in senior management to actively push for the advancement of women into senior roles, will result in more women gaining opportunities into these positions. The implication of this is that this study presents a theoretical framework that shows women in senior management and boards can either propagate the vicious cycle by conforming to the status quo of the

organization and upholding prevailing organizational cultures, or they can propagate the virtuous cycle by acting as change agents that actively push for transformation and implementation of policies with regards to diversity and inclusion. This push for the implementation of diversity and inclusion policies in organizations can impact on the advancement of women into senior roles, resulting in increased representation of women in senior management.

By identifying and outlining the relationship between the behaviour of women in senior management and boards and the low representation of women in senior roles, this study provides new insights into barriers to the advancement of women in management.

7.2.2 Research Contributions of study

This research offers theoretical contributions to studies on women leadership and women's career advancement as it contributes to existing literature on equality, diversity, and inclusion(EDI) in senior management. This research not only provides evidence of the relationship between the 'numbers' of women and 'outcomes' towards the advancement of other women, but also outlines the nature of this relationship. By presenting this phenomenon in the form of 'cause' and 'effect', it provides theoretical underpinnings on the factors influencing the adaptive behaviour of women in management, and the resulting impact on the rate of women advancing into senior management.

In responding to calls for increased exploration into identifying factors that impact on the behaviour and experiences of women in senior management (Bilimoria and Wheeler; Davidson and Burke 2000; White; Davidson and Burke 2000; Sarah and Mona 2008; Dwivedi et al. 2014; Seierstad 2015; Glass and Cook 2016), my research expands on the following studies: -

- (i) Dahlerup (1988) and Vokić et al. (2019) - These studies explore the extent to which an increase in the proportion of a minority group might lead to changes in organizational culture. They present findings that purport an increase in the substantial representation of women in leadership results in change in organizational culture. However, they do not identify how this increase in this

female representation can occur. My research expands on these studies by identifying a route to achieving not only an increased numerical representation, but also a substantive critical mass of women in senior management and boards within organizations.

(ii) Powell et al. (2008) – This study explored the effects of gender in the evaluations of transformational and transactional leaders in organizations. The study identified that behaviour exhibited by women in leadership was linked to their individual demographic characteristics. My research expands on this by identifying additional factors that impact on women's behaviour in senior management and boards.

(iii) Khilji and Pumroy (2019) - This study explored the career experiences of women engineers, focusing on barriers women faced in their careers. These barriers were explored with a view to demonstrate how women constantly navigated gendered social and organizational norms to develop their careers. Their findings state women adapt their behaviour in organizations as a coping mechanism. Their study expanded on Kanter (1977) by arguing women conform to organizational norms and play by the rules, negotiate around organizational norms by playing around the rules, or defy organizational norms to establish their own rules. These are all motivated by career development. They argued that the ability to adapt shows both strength and resilience in women in organizations and seek to dispute perceptions that women are fragile and weak. My research expands on their findings by identifying the agency and social identity forces that influence the adaptive behaviour in women and evaluate these factors in the form of 'cause' and 'effect', showing the consequences of the adaptive behaviour on the advancement of women into senior management.

In addition to the implications discussed above, this research also challenges studies such as Bratton (2005), Mavin (2008), Ellemers et al. (2012), Joecks et al. (2012), Latu et al. (2013), Krook (2015), Derks et al. (2016) who argue having more women in senior management within organizations does not help resolve the

issues these women encounter, nor does it facilitate the advancement of other into senior management in such organizations.

7.2.3 Practical contributions of Study

The practical contributions offered by this study is the presentation of a theoretical framework that outlines factors which can be used as tools for the development of strategy targeting diversity and inclusion issues in management. These tools are developed by focusing on areas needing workable solutions for implementation. Such areas highlighted in this study are:-

1. *The unavailability of vacancies for senior management roles and boards:* There are fewer vacancies in senior management and boards, which limits the available opportunities for women to apply or be nominated to such roles (Mayne, 2022).
2. *The availability of women with necessary experience for roles:* Most women in management do not usually occupy jobs that gives them the experience necessary for senior roles (Salas-Lopez et al., 2011; Holgersson, 2012). Hence fewer women possess the experiences required for such positions. Avenues to allow aspiring women develop capacity and skill; such as communication skills, decision making or strategic thinking skills, are needed.
3. *Lack of confidence exhibited by women:* Women show a higher lack of confidence in their capabilities than their male counterparts which deters them from applying for top roles when available (Kirkwood, 2009). Most women do not prepare well for interviews and appear less capable for roles as their self-doubt plays out during recruitment processes (Baker & Bourke, 2022).
4. *Support show to aspiring women:* There is a need for women in senior management to offer support to aspiring women through mentorship and networking schemes. This enables aspiring women to gain access to power groups or sponsors that can influence their progression, as well as gaining the required experience needed for such roles (Bruce, 2021).

This study provides a visible tool for the development of policies focused on decreasing factors that promote a vicious cycle in the advancement of women, and supporting factors that promote a virtuous cycle within organizations. These

policies can target vacancy creation and recruitment processes and see the introduction of coaching/mentoring/shadowing schemes within organizations aimed at building capacity for aspiring women in UK organizations. Insights on the factors influencing the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards presented in this research are beneficial for the creation of strategy focused on diversity and inclusion within organizations in the UK and globally.

7.3 RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The implications of this study for practice are highlighting practical and strategic recommendations that lead to the design and implementation of policies which promote diversity and inclusion within organizations. These implications provide insights that can be used to create methods or avenues needed for culture change within the organization. Hence ensuring the adoption of values and objectives that support the bolstering of virtuous cycles in the development and implementation of organizational strategy for the advancement of women into senior management and boards. The implications for practice highlighted in this study are as follows: -

1. The first implication for practice highlights the need to address gender stereotyping in education from an early age. Participants in this study acknowledged that the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) industry is highly male dominated due to an extreme scarcity of women with the interest and qualifications to succeed in such domains. As stated by participants, the existence of gender segregation of extracurricular activities based on widely shared gender beliefs and stereotypes has far reaching implications in society and has an impact on young women's perspectives, career selection and career trajectories.

Studies show that although there has been a rise in women showing interest in science, they pursue science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) degrees at much lower rates than men (Legewie & DiPrete, 2014; Catalyst, 2018). This is due to gender-specific curriculum and study plans in high schools and higher education which reflects the local environment (Legewie & DiPrete 2014; Catalyst, 2018). As highlighted in participants interview responses, an avenue in

addressing gender stereotypes in education, programs or schools' curriculums is to encourage girls and young women pick up interests in STEM as early as possible.

Hence it is my recommendation that in creating a supportive social and educational environment towards the interest and performance of girls in STEM, there should be strong science curricula, starting from elementary through to high school education, which can have a profound effect on the STEM orientation of women in the long run . This will also play a key role in weakening gender stereotypes in society as a whole.

2. As highlighted in my literature review and findings, women in management measure themselves against prevailing male stereotypical organizational cultures as they seek career progression into senior management (Ragins et al., 1998; Kholis, 2017; Ganiyu et al., 2018). Hence, they feel pressured to adapt masculine traits to conform and fit in (Einarsdottir et al., 2018). Participants agree that focus on organizational cultural change by women in senior management acting as change agents is an essential step forward in building confidence and exposing aspiring women to advancement opportunities. Participants acknowledge that by acting as mentors and coaches to aspiring women, they can help build their capacity to execute senior roles:

Hence it is my recommendation that women in positions of influence should champion the introduction of development programs that focus on capacity building to equip more women with the required capacity and experiences for such roles within their organizations.

3. Organizations can further implement work models that provide a better work/life balance for women as an incentive to pursue senior roles (Da Silveira et al., 2014). However, participants highlighted that more women go for support functions like administration, human resources, and marketing. These designations have seen a salary drop over the last decade leading to the development of wide gender pay gaps (Bolton & Muzio, 2008; Scarborough, 2018). Existing studies have also shown that by engaging in feminized roles, women do not gain multi-functional skills and operational outlooks acquired from occupying

operational functions that provide critical experiences required for senior management roles and board positions (International Labour Organization, 2019).

My participants acknowledge that there are some existing measures currently being implemented by organizations to provide a better work/life balance for women such as flexible work models which allow individuals to work remotely from home, or job sharing. However, participants commented that care should be taken to prevent the feminization of certain job roles. Feminization of professions and job roles refers to the over-representation of women in certain roles, as well as the exhibition of 'female traits' by men within such roles in the workplace (Arthur et al., 1996).

It is my recommendation that women in senior management, especially in organizations where more women occupy minority positions, should push for policies such as improved and transparent recruitment processes or restructure job roles to recognize differences in male and female management styles (Clisbee, 2005; Schoen & Rost, 2015). Such policies can move organizations away from the sustenance of the vicious cycle of 'conforming to status quo'.

4. Implementation of quota systems should be a means to ensure women that possess the required qualifications and skills get the opportunity and access to such positions (da Silveira et al., 2014). As stated by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2005), the adoption of quota systems by organizations can be an effective tool in closing gender gaps in managerial positions (Da Silveira et al., 2014). However, studies have argued that quota systems should not only be seen as a means to increase the numerical representation of women in senior management, as this may lead to the hiring or nominating of less qualified women to senior roles, resulting in a deterioration in operating performance (Broughton & Miller, 2009; Ahern & Dittmar 2012).

Existing literature on women in management seem to hesitate regarding quota legislative measures used to increase the number of women on corporate boards (Jewson & Mason 1986; Teigen, 2000). However, some studies argue that the

UK government can make quota systems effective by acting as external policy makers and regulators, and by enforcing sanctions on organizations that fail to meet such targets (Da Silveira et al., 2014; Bekdemir, 2015). As gender-based quotas may be considered symbolic of a struggle for a paradigm shift in gender equality, proponents of quotas seek to replace the classic liberal notion of equal opportunities with the notion of 'equality of result' (Jewson & Mason, 1986; Teigen, 2000).

It is my recommendation that organizations should frame quota systems to include measurable and timebound outcomes targeting the nomination of qualified women to leadership roles. UK governmental policy should be introduced alongside this, with the enforcement of sanctions for non-achievement.

5. My final recommendation is a call for further research. In combination with the factors discovered in this study, further research exploring the impact of other factors that may influence the behaviour of women in senior management and boards such as ethnicity or religion, should be carried out utilizing a mixed method inquiry that will allow for triangulation of data sources to provide further tests of validity, and establish bases for generalization (Clisbee, 2005; Carter et al., 2014).

Following my recommendations, I then reflected on my research process and the journey of discovery I had embarked on for this study. It is important to present such reflections as they show my initial cognitive process and how both my personal and professional perspectives have developed throughout the journey of this research.

7.4 PERSONAL REFLEXIVITY ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

This research began with a single question to myself; why are there still very few women in senior management in organizations? There has been a growth in the number of studies and reports declaring the benefits of having women in senior management to organizations performance and outcomes (Krishnan & Park, 2005;

Dezsö & Ross, 2012; Fine et al., 2019). Women make up nearly half the world population (World Bank, 2019). More women have entered the labour market, actively seeking employment leading to promising and successful careers (GOV.UK, 2022). However, these numbers are not reflected in terms of the representation of women in senior management in the UK and on the world stage (Schein, 2007; Hofmeyr & Mzobe, 2012).

Speaking as a woman who had actively pursued a career in construction, marketing, and sales, I know first-hand how hard it is to advance up the management ladder. I had worked for over 13 years in varying companies and industries, seeking to achieve some form of success and career progression that would see me advance to senior management roles. I had come into the labour market armed with the belief that skill, hard work and determination was all that was required to be successful in any chosen profession, however this ideology could not have been further from reality, as I found that hard work and merit does not always transform into success especially when you were a woman. No matter how hard I tried, no matter how many targets I met or KPIs I achieved, my career trajectory in management was slow and excruciatingly painful. I invariably never broke through the elusive glass ceiling into senior management but spent the best part of my career in middle management roles.

Many female colleagues and fellow professionals I had become acquainted with over the years echoed my experiences. I began to realize that the problem of inequality with regards to gender in the workplace was not a problem fueled by societal and cultural norms associated with my country alone but was a worldwide phenomenon that has stifled the growth of competent women with the potential to lead and contribute to organizational effectiveness and excellence. I became motivated to explore this phenomenon, seeking insights that will not only provide elucidations for the low representation of women in senior management, but will identify the factors that influence the slow advancement of women into senior management.

My purpose was to bring awareness to factors that impact on the slow advancement of women into senior management roles, focusing on a less discussed but equally salient cause. Hence providing additional information to signal a new direction to debates on diversity and inclusion in management. I sought to provide a theoretical

framework that can be used as a source for empirical knowledge for future researchers on this subject, and to contribute practical implications for both public and private organizations in the development and implementation of strategy and policy for diversity and inclusion in management. However, my research also took me on a journey of both personal and academic discovery.

7.4.1 Researcher's personal and professional development

This journey began from investigating gender discrimination in the workplace, looking at the root cause of the phenomenon, the source of its credence and the extent of its influence in the workplace within my country. Motivated by my previous employment experience, I sought to understand why the Nigerian private sector remains a fertile ground for gender discrimination in the work environment. As my investigation broadened and revealed gender discrimination was not limited to my country or continent alone but was a global issue, I began to focus on the barriers for women ascending into senior management and boards globally, I narrowed my scope to look into diversity and inclusion issues within the UK, exploring the experiences of women in senior management and board.

As I reviewed existing literature, I became drawn to look more closely at women in senior management, exploring the factors behind their career progression and how they impacted on the career trajectories of other women as gatekeepers of succession. This led me to discover a gap in the literature that presents in the form of a lack of research exploring women in senior management and boards, relating to the slow rate of women advancing into senior roles. Existing studies had indicated organizations with women in senior role or boards, tend to have a high representation of women in senior roles (Dreher, 2003; Konrad et al., 2008; Ellemers et al., 2012). However, this has been disputed by studies and statistics that show the reverse is the case (Derks et al., 2016; Khilji & Pumroy, 2019; Catalyst 2020). In exploring this contradiction, I discovered a lack of theoretical frameworks elucidating the actions of women in senior management, and its impact on the advancement of women into senior management and boards. Hence, the identification of the vicious and virtuous cycles in my study is pioneering, as it highlights the complexity of the concept of diversity and inclusion in management within organizations.

7.5 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study contributes to the discussion on the inclusion of women in senior management, and their career advancement in management. It presents insights into the career trajectories of women in senior management from their perspective and identifies how their decision making and actions impact on the advancement of aspiring women. By focusing on women in senior management, this study offers new perspectives that leads us beyond factors behind barriers to entry and advancement of women and takes us deeper into the multi-faceted nuances of 'cause' and 'effect' regarding women in senior management roles and their impact on the advancement of other women into senior management.

This research provides theoretical and practical implications to a social phenomenon with limited existing literature focusing on the behaviour of women in senior management and boards and how their behaviour contributes to the rate of advancement of women into senior management. By providing evidence of the existence of a relationship between the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards and the representation of women in senior roles, this study has theoretical and practical implications to policy development with regards to diversity and inclusion in organizations. In addition, this study has theoretical implications for varied schools of research such as women in leadership, EDI , organizational studies, and strategic management.

Given that women represent a formidable and underutilized resource within the talent pool; as companies race to gain competitive advantage in a very dynamic environment (International Labour Organization, 2019), this study's theoretical framework proposes that a high propensity for '*critical acts*' exhibited by women in positions of leadership will see them willingly support aspiring women to advance into senior management. This higher degree of responsiveness to the low representation of women in senior roles drives them towards supporting and pushing for the implementation of policies that create opportunities for the advancement of women into senior management. This can ultimately result in more women advancing into senior management within their organizations, allowing the achievement of a 'critical mass' of women represented in senior roles.

I propose that there can be a change in the rate of advancement of women into senior management and boards if women currently occupying senior management roles develop a sense of purpose for pursuing goals that align with both their personal values and the support for the advancement of aspiring women in management (Ibarra et al., 2013). They must go further and challenge the status quo and be willing to take risks in implementing measures that promote diversity and inclusion within their organizations such as networking and supporting other women on their path to career advancement. The theoretical framework developed in this study provides insights for the development of new theory and research in the advancement of women in management, through the discovery of the 'vicious' and 'virtuous cycles' in this study.

In conclusion, I would reiterate my call for further research expanding on my findings by exploring other factors that may influence the behaviour of women in senior management and boards such as ethnicity, age, religion etc., to investigate their impact on the adaptive behaviour of women in senior management and boards. Such future research should utilize a mixed method of inquiry that will allow for triangulation of data sources to provide further tests of validity and establish bases for generalization.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

TABLE LISTING MERITS AND DEMERITS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER DIVERSITY IN CORPORATE MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGY.

MERITS	DEMERITS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender diversity promotes better Decision making in management, through the utilization of different perspectives (Cox and Beale 2001) It enhances creativity (Cox and Beale 2001) Gender Diversity offers new perspectives to problem-solving (Adams and Funk 2009). Introduction of innovation as diverse skill, experience and knowledge generated through diversity in the workplace, enhances management decision processes (Levin and Mattis 2006) There is greater board effectiveness as diverse boards hold meetings more frequently than those without and show fewer records of lack of attendance (Francoeur et al. 2007). Diverse boards bring significant value to corporate governance (Kramer et al. 2006). Corporations with diverse board members engage more in corporate social responsibility initiatives and philanthropy (Williams 2003). Controversial issues and difficult problems tend to get full attention (Konrad et al. 2008). There is less aggression and more collaboration in the board dynamics (Eagly et al. 2003). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender diversity can result in a lack of work commitment from minority groups (Cox and Beale 2001; Marimuthu and Kolandaisamy 2009) Diversity allows for development of cliques who influence decision outcomes (Westphal and Milton 2000; Nielsen 2010). Time wastage with regards to decision making, due to the generation of a diverse number of opinions and critical evaluations that may be time consuming (Smith et al. 2006).

APPENDIX 2

TABLE LISTING STUDIES SHOWING THE BENEFITS OF THE INCREASED REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND BOARDS

	AUTHOR	TITLE OF STUDY	JOURNAL	YEAR OF PUBLICATION	CONTRIBUTION	SIGNIFICANCE
1	Eagly, A., Johannesen-Schmidt, M. And van Engen, M.	Transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles: A meta-analysis comparing women and men.	American psychological association: Psychological Bulletin	2003	Explores Transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles with focus on gender. Result establishes leadership styles the use of which women surpassed men relate positively to leaders' effectiveness.	Leadership style of female managers surpassed male managers and relate positively to leaders' effectiveness.
2	Adams, R. And Funk, P.	Beyond the Glass Ceiling: Does Gender Matter?	Social Science research Network Electronic Journal (SSRN)	2009	Explores impact of an increase in female representation in top corporate officer positions. Findings show female and male directors differ systematically in their core values and risk attitudes.	Findings show female directors adhere to core values more than male directors and have lower risk attitudes in management.
3	Ronald J. Burke	Benefits of Women on Corporate Boards of Directors as Reported by Male CEOs	Psychological Reports,	1994	Study examines views of 66 male CEOs, each with women on their boards of directors, regarding benefits of having women as members of boards.	Study shows positive benefit from having women as board directors and their influence on organizational outcomes
4	Catherine M. Daily and Dan R. Dalton	Women in the boardroom: a business imperative	Journal of Business Strategy	2003	Studies focus on gender diversification of corporate boards to be a business imperative.	Female directors possess skills and expertise that allows them to serve boards effectively and contribute to the board considering a wider variety of customer needs and interests
5	Eugene Kang, Davis K. Ding & Charlie Charoenwong	Investor reaction to women directors	Journal of Business Research	2010	Study not only tests the theory of gender diversity in an Asian context but also examines whether investors react systematically to the different positions that women directors hold on corporate boards	The presence of Female Board members generates positive response from investors to the appointment of women dependent and independent directors in Singaporean firms
6	Mijntje Lückeraath-Rovers	Women on boards and firm performance	Journal of management and governance	2013	Study investigates the financial performance of Dutch companies both with and without women on their boards.	Findings show organizations with female directors generally perform better than those without boards.
7	Ardito, I., dangelico, r. M. And messeni petruzzelli, a.	The link between female representation in the boards of directors and corporate social responsibility: Evidence from B corps	Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management	2020	Study aims at elucidating the varying mechanisms underlying the effects of the presence of women on board of directors and several dimensions of corporate social responsibility performance and testing these effects considering multiple CSR performance measures.	Female representation in the board of directors is positively associated with organizational customers' management and community engagement,
8	Hoogendoorn, s., oosterbeek, h. And van praag, m.	The Impact of Gender Diversity on the Performance of Business Teams: Evidence from a Field Experiment	Management Science	2013	Experiment conducted to estimate the impact of the share of women in business teams on their performance	Teams with an equal gender mix were found to perform better than male-dominated teams in terms of sales and profits
9	Simionescu, I. N., gherghina, s. C., tawil, h. And sheikha, z.	Does board gender diversity affect firm performance? Empirical evidence from Standard & Poor's 500 Information Technology Sector	Financial Innovation	2021	Study investigates the influence of the board gender diversity on firms' accounting and market-based performance using a sample of Standard & Poor's 500 companies belonging to the information technology sector over 12 years	A positive influence of the number and percentage of women on board on price-to-earnings ratio was found.
10	Tewari, q., decourcy, e. And urena, s.	The Ethics of Gender Narratives for United States Corporate Boards	NYU Journal of law and business	2019	Gender narratives are essential in corporate boardrooms from the perspective of ethical and narrative inclusivity	Increased gender equity in boardrooms should be seen from the viewpoint of its impact and benefits to corporations and their staff as well as the society at large, and not merely as the implementation of quota and target systems.

APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Opening

The opening statement should contain the aim of the interview, topics to be discussed during the interview and the estimated length of the interview.

A. Establishment of rapport

(Interviewer approaches, smiling and shaking hands of the interviewee if permitted)

My name is Keziah Nyam Jim. I am a research student at the University of Stirling writing a dissertation on the adaptive behavior of women in board rooms and how that relates to the low representation of women in senior level management in organizations, in partial fulfillment of a doctor in business administration degree. I am of the opinion that you are uniquely positioned to offer valuable insights to this study due to the experience you have gained through your position in senior management / board membership in this organization.

B. Purpose of interview

I would like to ask you some questions about your career and your transition to senior level management, your experiences as a member of the board / senior level manager, and discussion on any influences you might have had on organizational policy.

C. Motivation for interview

I hope to use this information to help gain a deeper understanding into the adaptive behaviours that help advancement for aspiring female managers, experiences faced by women as they transit from one stage to the next in their career, the factors or influences on their decisions made or actions taken, especially with regards to gender issues, through first hand accounts from women in senior management.

D. Timeline

The interview should take about 45 minutes. Are you available to respond to some questions at this time?

(Transition into interview: Let me begin by asking you some questions about your career background)

Body

Contains the core discussions of an interview along with the main questions and follow up questions

A. Career (relevant to section 5 of literature review)

1. Tell me about your career and your experience entering the labor market.
2. Was it your initial career choice?
3. What were the choices that influenced their career path
4. How did you get this role?
5. What are the barriers to progression you faced in your career trajectory?

(Transition to the next topic: _____)

C. Adaptive Behavior (relevant to section 4 and 5 of literature review)

6. *When you gained employment how did you progress in your career trajectory?*
7. *What were the influences on your behavior (background, people, institutions etc.)?*
8. *How would you characterize a successful senior manager*
9. *Do you think that your experiences caused you or influenced you to change the way you act*
10. *What do you think were the key changes that you made to help you succeed in your role?*
11. *What managerial styles do you prefer?*

(Transition to the next topic: _____)

D. Views on gender diversity (relevant to section 2,3,and 4 of literature review)

12. *Tell me how you feel about diversity and inclusion in senior level management in your organization.*
13. *What is your opinion on the low representation of women on board rooms?*
14. *What do you think can be done to improve the low rate of representation?*
15. *Can you mention any policies you developed or influenced on board level aimed at improving the advancement of women into senior level management?*
16. *Tell me how you feel about mentoring other women to aspire to top positions in your organization?*

(Transition: *Well, it has been a pleasure finding out more about you. Let me briefly summarize the information that I have recorded during our interview.*)

Closing

Wrap up of the interview containing the summary of the points discussed during the interview.

A. Summary

You joined this company in and attained a senior management in, you faced /did not face various obstacles in you climb to senior management, and you had to/ did not have to change your behavior to suit the organizational culture. You have/do not have views on gender diversity in senior levels of management in your organization. You feel the reason for the low representation of women on board rooms is due to..... and can be surmounted through..... You have/have not actively pushed for policy to address gender diversity issues in your organization. You belong/do not belong to any women empowering group and are /not currently mentoring women as they aspire to advance to top positions in your organization.

B. Maintain Rapport

I appreciate the time you took for this interview. Is there anything else you think would be helpful for me to know with regards to your experience as a board member?

C. Action to be taken

I should have all the information I need. Would it be alright to call you at home/Office if I have any more questions? Thank you once again for your insightful input to this study.

APPENDIX 4

INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Icebreaker

Thank you for having me and thank you for giving me this opportunity to interview you. My name is Keziah Nyam Jim. I am a research study at the University of Stirling, writing a dissertation on the adaptive behaviour of women in boardrooms, and how that relates to low representation of women in senior level management in organizations. This is in partial fulfilment of my doctorate in Business Administration. And I'm of the opinion that you are uniquely positioned to offer valuable insights to this study based on the experience you have gained through your position in management.....

TOPIC AREA	Purpose for question	Question	Follow-up	Probe
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How participant identifies self Pride/self-worth in identity 	Tell me about yourself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was your family background? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What values did your family instil in you?
Personality - Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strength of personality on behaviour 	Are you a confident person?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If yes, why? If no, why? 	
Qualification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational Professional 	What is your educational background?		
Career - Choice - Transition upwards - Experiences in senior management - Barriers faced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gain insight on participant's career transition into senior level management. Experiences as a member of the board or senior level management 	Tell me about your career	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What were your choices? How did you progress from one level to the next? Did you face any barriers in your progression into senior management? 	Was you upward movements based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity Qualification Experience Hard work Achievement Referral
Work sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To understand the differences in work environment. Work culture and experiences in sector participants have worked in. 	What sectors have you worked in?	What were the reasons for leaving previous sectors?	
Value of success - Ambition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition of male-dominant organizational culture Need for recognition Need to belong 	Did you enjoy working in these organizations?	Did you fit in?	
Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants links behaviour to success Propensity to adapt behaviour 	What were the key changes you made that helped you succeed in your role?	What were the changes you made to you? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personality 	Did you change? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To succeed/be promoted? To be effective in role?
Relationship with colleagues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acceptance by male colleagues Acceptance by female colleagues 	What was your working relationship with colleagues?	Was your working relationship different with female colleagues?	If yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How? Why?

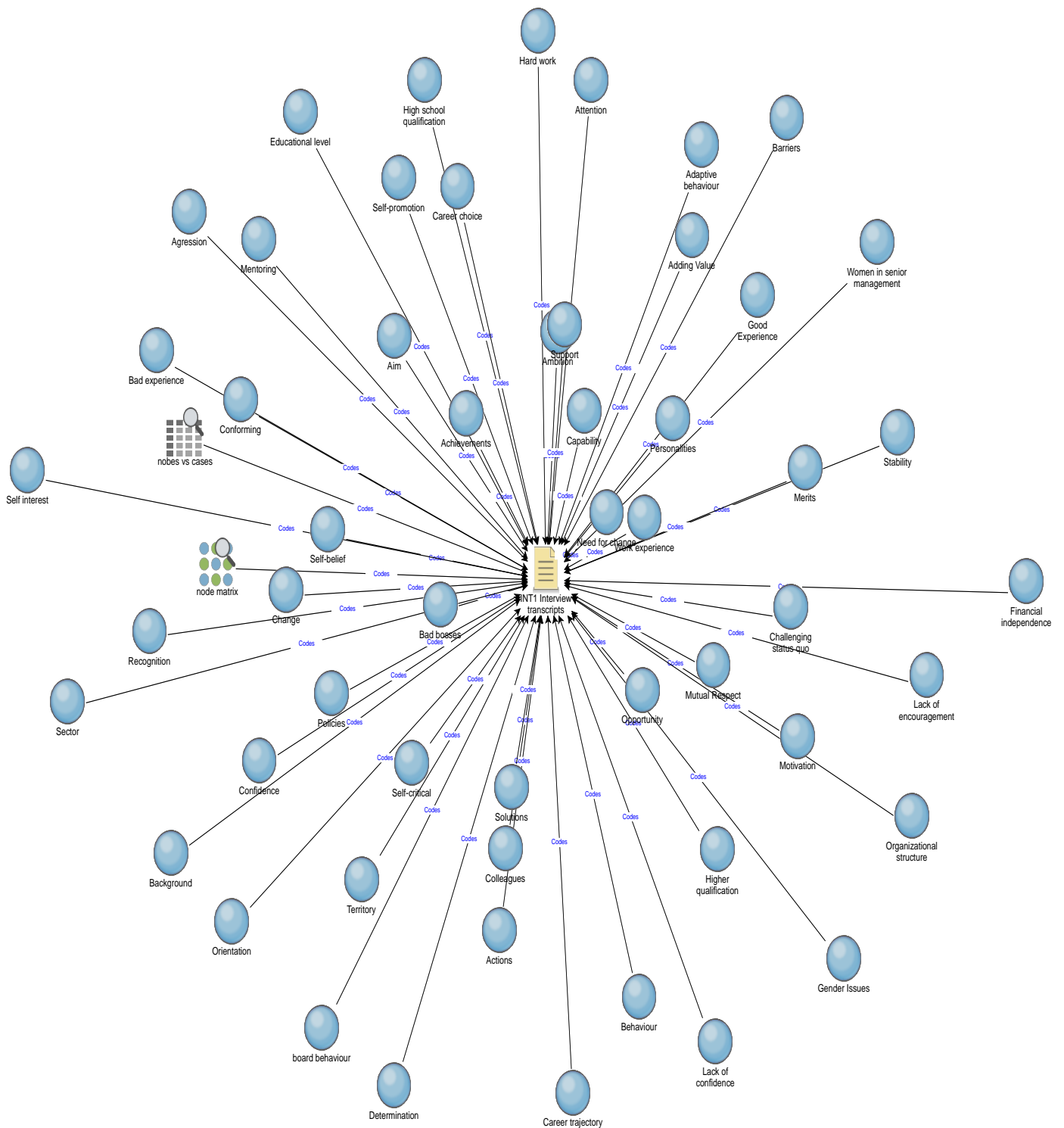
Behaviour of colleagues - Male - Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived behaviour of colleagues towards participant 	Do you think you colleagues' behaviour towards you was because of your gender?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If yes, why? If no, why? 	
Behaviour of female bosses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiences working with female bosses Experience working with male bosses 	How was your working relationship with male or female bosses?	Did you prefer working for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Male bosses? Female bosses? 	Why?
Impact of leadership style of female bosses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant aware of an impact working relationship with female bosses has on her advancement Participant aware of an impact working relationship with female bosses has on other women's advancement 	Do you think their behaviour impacts on the low representation of women in those levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If yes why? If no, why? 	
Gender diversity and inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants stance on gender diversity and inclusion 	How do you feel about gender diversity in senior level management in your experience?	What has been your experience of gender diversity in senior management?	
Awareness of the low/slow rate of women advancing in management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants views on the numerical representation of women in leadership positions 	Do you think there's a low representation of women in senior level management?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If yes, why? If no, why? 	
The advancement of women into senior management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants stance on the advancement of women into senior management 	Do you support the advancement of more women into such levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If yes, why? If no, why? 	
Involvement in gender diversity and inclusion solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree to which participants are actively involved in supporting the advancement of women. 	What do you think about mentoring other women aspiring to rise to the top positions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If for it why? If not for it why? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were there any policies you developed or influenced, in addressing gender diversity issues in your organization

CLOSING STATEMENT

Is there anything else you think you would like to add?.....

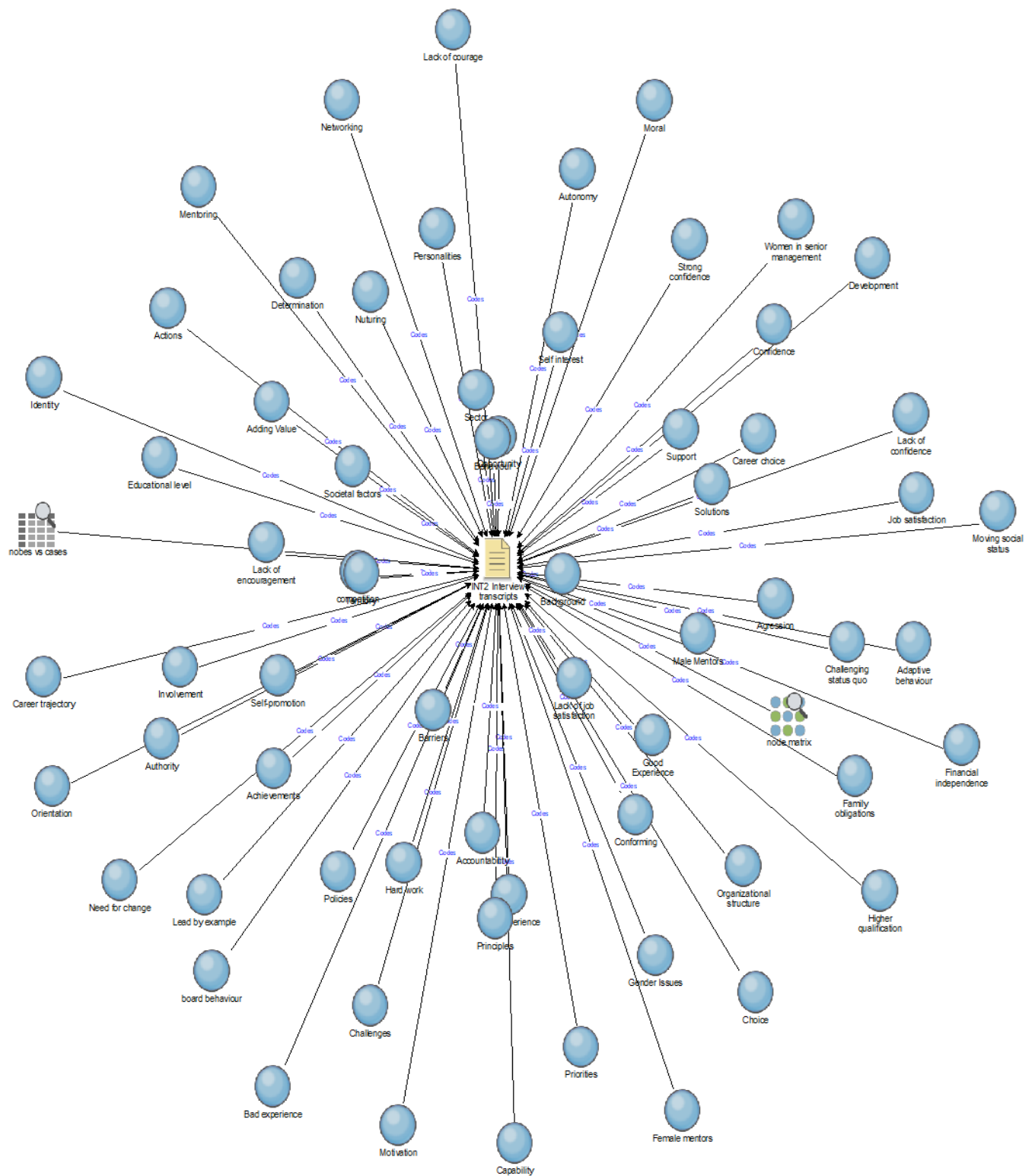
If I have any further question, would it be alright if I contact you?.....

APPENDIX 5



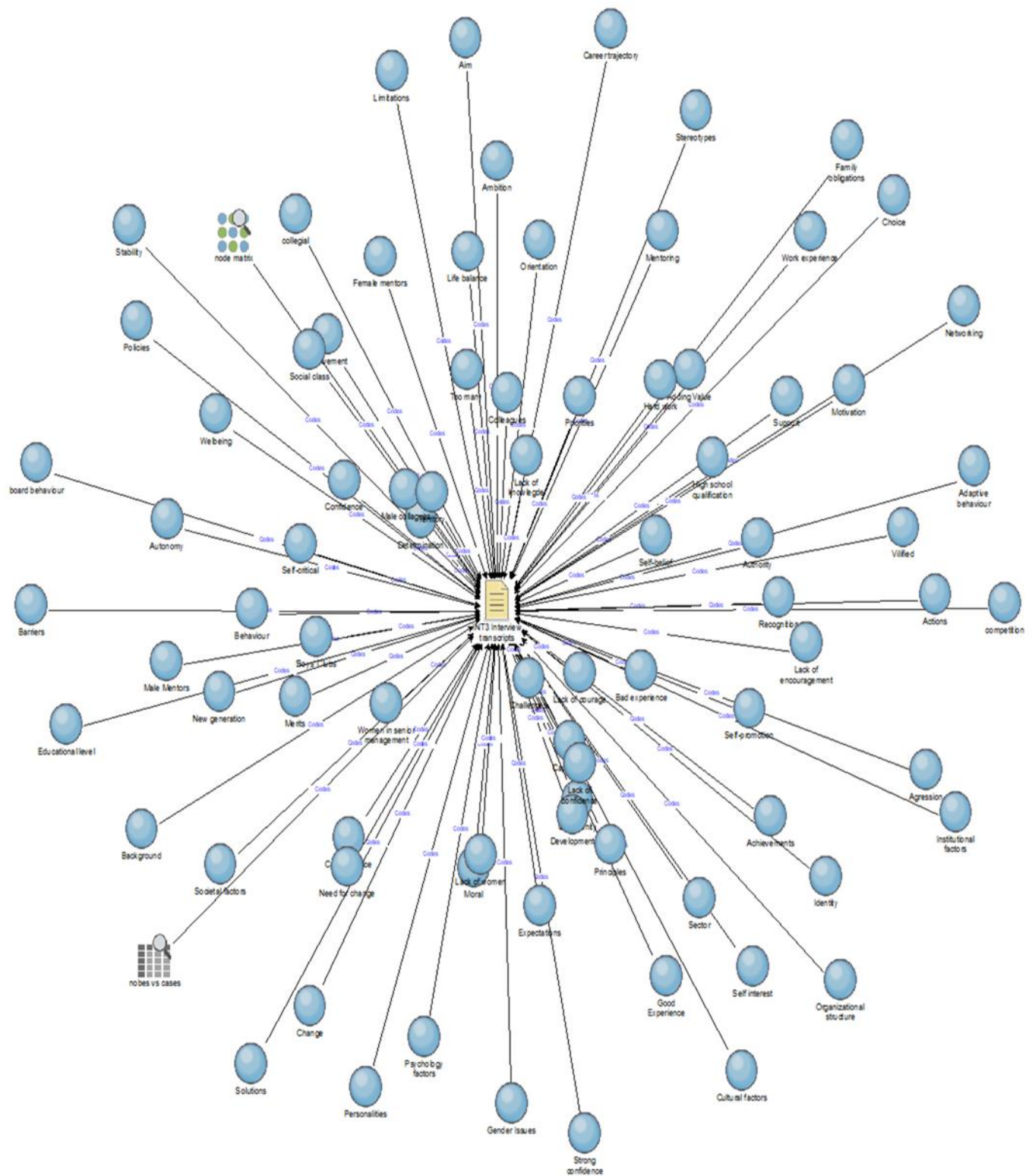
INT1 Allocated code diagrams

APPENDIX 6



INT2 Allocated codes diagrams

APPENDIX 7



INT3 Allocated codes diagrams

INT4 Allocated codes diagrams



INT5 Allocated codes diagrams



APPENDIX 10

PILOT STUDY CODEBOOK

CODEBOOK

Code Name	Code Description	Files	References
Background	background of participants in terms of family and society they grew up in	5	94
Support	Encouragement of support from family	5	88
Mentoring	Mentoring aspiring female managers by women in boardrooms and senior level management	5	35
Female mentors	women who have given support to participant	3	6
Nurturing	Nurturing characteristics of female mentors	2	3
Male Mentors	Male mentors that support	2	13
Mutual Respect	individuals in a mentoring relationship should respect for each other	1	1
Networking	Relationships forged that help advance participant	3	24
'Boys' Clubs	Groups and networking avenues solely available for men	2	5
Barriers	obstacles faced by participant in advancing to senior management	5	37
Bad bosses	Line managers that oppress participant's advancement or subdue progression	1	2
Colleagues	Attacks or obstacles placed by colleagues	2	5
Lack of encouragement	no support from line management or colleagues	3	8
Limitations	Limitation that acted as barriers to advancement	2	6
Self-belief	Participants need for self-belief	4	11
Behavior	behavior of other people or Changes in behavior participants made during their transition from level to level during their career	5	214
Adaptive behavior	Women change behavior and adapt to succeed	5	31
Vilified	Women become vilified for acting in ways they are not expected too	3	12
board behavior	Characteristics of a boards or senior level management in terms of behavior	4	20
Conforming	adapting organizational culture or behavior to allow smooth sailing	2	11
Male colleagues	Behavior of male colleague	2	8
Choice	Conscious decision to not change behavior	3	15
Cultural factors	Cultural norms and stereotypes	3	4
Need for change	Reason a change in behavior was necessary	5	64
Attention	Women acting in certain way to seek attention	1	1

Code Name	Code Description	Files	References
Background	background of participants in terms of family and society they grew up in	5	94
Support	Encouragement of support from family	5	88
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Barriers	obstacles faced by participant in advancing to senior management	5	37
Bad bosses	Line managers that oppress participant's advancement or subdue progression	1	2
Colleagues	Attacks or obstacles placed by colleagues	2	5
Lack of encouragement	no support from line management or colleagues	3	8
Limitations	Limitation that acted as barriers to advancement	2	6
Self-belief	Participants need for self-belief	4	11
Behavior	behavior of other people or Changes in behavior participants made during their transition from level to level during their career	5	214

APPENDIX 11

PARTICIPANTS DEMOGRAPHY

S/NO	Participants	Age Group	Marital status	Qualification	Children	Origins	Highest designation	Race
1	SF	50-59	Married	Higher education	2	Scotland	Heading division	White
2	RM	40-49	Married	Graduate	3	England	CEO	White
3	EW	50-59	Married	Higher education	Unassigned	Scotland	CEO	White
4	VB	40-49	Married	Higher education	Unassigned	England	CEO	White
5	LM	50-59	Married	Post graduate	2	England	CEO	White
6	LO	40-49	Married	Graduate	Unassigned	Scotland	Director	White
7	JB	50-59	Married	Graduate	Unassigned	Ireland	CEO	White
8	LD	50-59	Married	Higher education	2	England	CEO	White
9	VM	40-49	Married	Graduate	2	Scotland	Heading division	White
10	SC	50-59	Married	Higher education	0	Scotland	Senior management	White
11	SS	50-59	Divorced	Higher education	2	England	Board member	White
12	AK	40-49	Married	Graduate	2	Foreign	Heading division	Black African or Black Caribbean
13	WF	60-69	Married	Higher education	2	England	Director	White
14	HG	50-59	Married	Higher education	2	England	CEO	White
15	LA	40-49	Married	Higher education	Unassigned	Foreign	Senior management	Black African or Black Caribbean
16	JS	60-69	Married	Higher education	2	Scotland	Senior management	White
17	SMI	60-69	Married	Higher education	1	Wales	Board member	White
18	RC	50-59	Married	Higher education	Unassigned	England	Heading division	White
19	RH	40-49	Divorced	Graduate	1	Foreign	Senior management	Black African or Black Caribbean
20	CC	50-59	Married	Professional qualifications	0	Scotland	Heading division	White
21	BS	50-59	Single	Higher education	3	Scotland	Board member	White
22	BH	60-69	Married	Post graduate	0	England	CEO	White
23	RCR	60-69	Married	Higher education	2	England	CEO	White
24	CM	50-59	Married	Graduate	2	England	Heading division	White
25	TF	60-69	Divorced	Graduate	1	England	CEO	White

APPENDIX 12

PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEW DURATION

SNO	PARTICIPANTS' INITIALS	DURATION		
		HOUR	MINUTE	SECOND
1	AK	0	26	54
2	AC	0	32	4
3	AS	0	42	41
4	BS	0	19	59
5	BH	0	46	9
6	CC	0	58	27
7	CR	1	12	25
8	CM	0	19	2
9	DAS	0	32	49
10	EW	0	28	3
11	HG	0	15	45
12	JB	0	27	52
13	JW	0	49	7
14	JS	0	33	17
15	JH	0	34	39
16	LA	0	27	40
17	LD	0	56	7
18	LO	0	32	16
19	LM	0	24	19
20	RC	0	42	49
21	RM	0	30	9
22	RH	0	30	45
23	RC	0	26	43
24	SM	0	41	2
25	SM	1	27	55
26	SC	0	26	28
27	SF	0	23	11
28	SS	0	32	47
29	TF	0	43	37
30	TNG	1	2	37
31	VB	1	12	15
32	VM	0	46	8
33	WF	0	21	59

MAIN STUDY DATA - WORD CLOUD



APPENDIX 14

MAIN STUDY CODEBOOK AND CODE DESCRIPTION

Folder	Name	Description	Files	References
Nodes	Adapting behavior	Participants changing behavior to fit in	33	824
Nodes	Adapting behavior\Conform to status quo	Participants felt they had to conform to status quo to succeed	33	291
Nodes	Adapting behavior\Conform to status quo\Expectation of Audience	Change in behavior because there is an expectation to behave in a certain manner at this level	33	281
Nodes	Adapting behavior\Conform to status quo\Expectation of Audience\From men	Change in behavior because there is an expectation to behave in a certain manner by men at this level	17	39
Nodes	Adapting behavior\Conform to status quo\Expectation of Audience\From women	Change in behavior because there is an expectation to behave in a certain manner by women at this level	8	17
Nodes	Adapting behavior\Conform to status quo\Expectation of Audience\Societal culture	Societal norms that influence for behavior	30	111
Nodes	Adapting behavior\Conform to status quo\Expectation of Audience\Societal culture\Gender Stereotypes	Change in behavior because there is an expectation to behave in a certain manner by societal and gender stereotypes at this level	26	59
Nodes	Adapting behavior\Motivation for adaption	Reasons participants adapt behavior	33	444
Nodes	Adapting behavior\Motivation for adaption\Career progression	Behavior help progress participant's career	31	70
Nodes	Adapting behavior\Motivation for adaption\Career progression\Ambition	Wanting to acquire and achieve success	7	8
Nodes	Adapting behavior\Motivation for adaption\Career progression\Job security	To ensure participants keep their jobs and ensure income generation	14	17
Nodes	Adapting behavior\Motivation for adaption\Collegial attitude	Participants behaving fit in group, adapting so as to gain acceptance of understanding from group	30	128
Nodes	Adapting behavior\Motivation for adaption\Collegial attitude\Boy clubs	Fit in and belong to the group	15	26
Nodes	Adapting behavior\Motivation for adaption\Collegial attitude\Resistance	Resentment or resistance to change from other colleagues	14	24
Nodes	Adapting behavior\Motivation for adaption\Foreign nationality	Immigrated to the UK	3	6
Nodes	Adapting behavior\Motivation for adaption\organizational culture	Organizational culture, Participants trying to stay updated and relevant with the times and the changing industry or work culture	33	185

Nodes	Adapting behavior\Motivation for adaption\organizational culture\Job description	The role and duties required a change in attitude or behavior or communication technique	25	62
Nodes	Adapting behavior\Motivation for adaption\organizational culture\Work Environment	Differences in work environment	27	66
Nodes	Adapting behavior\Motivation for adaption\Territory	Participants trying to create and protect territory	13	40
Nodes	Adapting behavior\Motivation for adaption\Unconscious bias	Participants have changed behavior or are motivated to do so without being aware of the change.	7	11
Nodes	Adapting behavior\Non-confirmative behavior	Participants refuse to conform to status quo	18	46
Nodes	Associate behavior with success	Participants believe behaving in certain ways presents success	33	531
Nodes	Associate behavior with success\Female traits	Behaviors associated with women	32	204
Nodes	Associate behavior with success\Female traits\Authenticity	Being open and true to one's self, having integrity	15	33
Nodes	Associate behavior with success\Female traits\Communication skills	Effective communication skills	9	14
Nodes	Associate behavior with success\Female traits\Empathy	Empathy, compassion to others	25	77
Nodes	Associate behavior with success\Female traits\Empathy\Accommodating	Empathy and a accommodating nature	8	22
Nodes	Associate behavior with success\Female traits\Empathy\Accommodating\Listening skills	Good listening skills	6	14
Nodes	Associate behavior with success\Female traits\Empathy\Cautious	cautious in decision making	3	4
Nodes	Associate behavior with success\Female traits\Empathy\Courtesy	Courteous	1	1
Nodes	Associate behavior with success\Female traits\Empathy\Fairness	Being fair to others	2	2
Nodes	Associate behavior with success\Female traits\Empathy\Nurturing	Caring behavior for others	9	13
Nodes	Associate behavior with success\Female traits\Intuitive	Participants have strong intuition	3	4
Nodes	Associate behavior with success\Female traits\Persuasive	Being persuasive especially with men	2	4
Nodes	Associate behavior with success\Female traits\Problem solving	Ability for problem solving or need to solve a problem	6	11

<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Associate behavior with success\Female traits\Reserved demeanor</i>	<i>Quiet and laid-back</i>	11	13
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Associate behavior with success\Female traits\Resilience</i>	<i>Participants do not give up easily</i>	12	18
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Associate behavior with success\Female traits\Self-aware</i>	<i>Knowledge on self-awareness; Self value, and worth, knowing 'what makes you tick', sense of being valued for work well done</i>	16	26
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Associate behavior with success\Male traits</i>	<i>Behaviors associated with men</i>	32	277
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Associate behavior with success\Male traits\aggressive</i>	<i>Being aggressive</i>	12	24
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Associate behavior with success\Male traits\Ambitious</i>	<i>Being ambitious</i>	6	9
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Associate behavior with success\Male traits\Assertiveness</i>	<i>Projecting a forceful presence</i>	21	45
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Associate behavior with success\Male traits\Bully</i>	<i>Bullying staff or others</i>	6	8
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Associate behavior with success\Male traits\Commitment</i>	<i>Commitment to tasks, role</i>	5	6
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Associate behavior with success\Male traits\Confidence</i>	<i>Projecting confidence</i>	26	71
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Associate behavior with success\Male traits\Confidence\Loud</i>	<i>Being loud and brass</i>	8	10
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Associate behavior with success\Male traits\Confidence\Strong</i>	<i>Strong character</i>	4	5
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Associate behavior with success\Male traits\Control</i>	<i>Having control of one's self and situations</i>	2	6
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Associate behavior with success\Male traits\Disciplined</i>	<i>Keeping to and completing allocated tasks before/on deadlines. High standard of work</i>	2	2
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Associate behavior with success\Male traits\Egotistic</i>	<i>People craving attention, thinking they know better</i>	6	9
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Associate behavior with success\Male traits\Experience and knowledge</i>	<i>Participants have extensive experience and knowledge of function or being capable</i>	20	27
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Associate behavior with success\Male traits\Inpatient</i>	<i>Very dismissive and inpatient attitude</i>	1	3
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Associate behavior with success\Male traits\Leadership</i>	<i>Capability for leadership</i>	4	10
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Associate behavior with success\Male traits\Persona</i>	<i>Who participants look or present themselves whether real or not</i>	18	39
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Associate behavior with success\Male traits\Sternness</i>		9	15
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Behavior</i>	<i>Behavior of participants while executing a role</i>	31	119

Nodes	<i>Behavior\Managerial style</i>	<i>How participants behave or act with/to staff</i>	31	119
Nodes	<i>Behavior\Managerial style\Autocratic</i>	<i>Authoritative decisive and dictatorial</i>	11	17
Nodes	<i>Behavior\Managerial style\Democratic</i>	<i>Participatory, collaborative</i>	24	55
Nodes	<i>Behavior\Managerial style\laissez-faire</i>	<i>Delegating responsibility</i>	13	27
Nodes	<i>Behavior\Managerial style\Motivation for style</i>	<i>Why participants prefer managerial style</i>	12	16
Nodes	<i>Career</i>	<i>Career trajectory of participant</i>	33	797
Nodes	<i>Career\Career Path</i>	<i>Choice of career and trajectory</i>	33	766
Nodes	<i>Career\Career Path\Achievement</i>	<i>Participants achievements relative/compared to other family members</i>	30	125
Nodes	<i>Career\Career Path\Achievement\Career Experiences</i>	<i>Career experiences of participants</i>	20	60
Nodes	<i>Career\Career Path\Achievement\Career Experiences\Barriers</i>	<i>Had bad experiences in her career that had a negative impact on her progress</i>	16	36
Nodes	<i>Career\Career Path\Achievement\Career Experiences\Positive</i>	<i>Had good experiences in her career</i>	11	18
Nodes	<i>Career\Career Path\Reason for career</i>	<i>reason for participant's career choice</i>	33	569
Nodes	<i>Career\Career Path\Reason for career\Economic empowerment and independence</i>	<i>Participants seek economic empowerment and freedom to stand alone</i>	15	38
Nodes	<i>Career\Career Path\Reason for career\Environment</i>	<i>The reputation and practice of the organization or the actions of people in an organization that made participant choose career or choose to leave</i>	20	54
Nodes	<i>Career\Career Path\Reason for career\Family commitments</i>	<i>She is taking care of children and being a support system for the family</i>	25	102
Nodes	<i>Career\Career Path\Reason for career\Family commitments\Commitment issues</i>	<i>Issues complicating commitment to work</i>	4	6
Nodes	<i>Career\Career Path\Reason for career\Family commitments\Flexible Work hours</i>	<i>Flexibility of work hours for certain roles</i>	10	16
Nodes	<i>Career\Career Path\Reason for career\Family commitments\Impact of work on family</i>	<i>Work impacting on family commitment</i>	5	7
Nodes	<i>Career\Career Path\Reason for career\Interest</i>	<i>Participants pick jobs due to interest or a need for variety</i>	19	43
Nodes	<i>Career\Career Path\Reason for career\Lack of support</i>	<i>Participants did not have support to pursue career or progress</i>	11	19

Nodes	Career\Career Path\Reason for career\Leaving home	Moved away from home for new opportunities, experiences and perspectives	10	22
Nodes	Career\Career Path\Reason for career\Need for progression	Participant's need to progress influenced her career path	18	37
Nodes	Career\Career Path\Reason for career\Need to impact positively	Participant choice career so as to impact positively to the community	23	46
Nodes	Career\Career Path\Reason for career\No plans	Career choice because of a lack of defined plans or opportunity	15	33
Nodes	Career\Career Path\Reason for career\Opportunity	How participant came into career	31	175
Nodes	Career\Career Path\Reason for career\Opportunity\Capability	Participants capable of role or self-belief in capabilities	22	53
Nodes	Career\Career Path\Reason for career\Opportunity\Location	Location of job	9	15
Nodes	Career\Career Path\Reason for career\Opportunity\Luck	Participants happened on role by chance or count it as luck.	13	22
Nodes	Career\Career Path\Reason for career\Opportunity\Qualification	Opportunities from educational qualification	9	9
Nodes	Career\Career Path\Reason for career\Opportunity\Referrals	Someone referred participants for position	19	40
Nodes	Career\Career Path\Reason for career\Opportunity\Through school	Participants had a chance to start careers through school placement for graduate schemes	7	8
Nodes	Career\Early work life	Work as children or teenagers	12	22
Nodes	Current positions held	Current positions held by participants	33	410
Nodes	Current positions held\Board member	A member of boards past of present	8	13
Nodes	Current positions held\Board member\Executive	Executive board members	1	3
Nodes	Current positions held\Board member\Volunteer	Volunteer board members	1	1
Nodes	Current positions held\Senior Management Role	A role in Senior management	33	397
Nodes	Current positions held\Senior Management Role\CEO	CEO Position	8	10
Nodes	Current positions held\Senior Management Role\Director	Director	33	364
Nodes	Current positions held\Senior Management Role\Director\Reason for representation of women	The reason there is either a high of low representation of women in senior levels in an organization or sector	33	357
Nodes	Current positions held\Senior Management Role\Director\Reason for representation of women\High representation of women	Reason for high representation of women	14	31

<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Current positions held\Senior Management Role\Director\Reason for representation of women\Low representation of women</i>	<i>Reason for low representation of women</i>	30	124
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Current positions held\Senior Management Role\Director\Reason for representation of women\Sector of work</i>	<i>What sector of work/ industry does participant work in</i>	32	202
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Current positions held\Senior Management Role\Director\Reason for representation of women\Sector of work\Private sector</i>	<i>job roles in Businesses, corporations etc.</i>	21	84
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Current positions held\Senior Management Role\Director\Reason for representation of women\Sector of work\Private sector\Banking, accounting, and finance</i>	<i>The banking and finance industry</i>	6	8
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Current positions held\Senior Management Role\Director\Reason for representation of women\Sector of work\Private sector\Business, marketing, sales</i>	<i>Working in Business, Marketing or sales</i>	5	9
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Current positions held\Senior Management Role\Director\Reason for representation of women\Sector of work\Private sector\Engineering, Science and Technology</i>	<i>working in science and Technology sectors</i>	8	18
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Current positions held\Senior Management Role\Director\Reason for representation of women\Sector of work\Private sector\Entertainment and media</i>	<i>Working in the media or in entertainment</i>	2	7
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Current positions held\Senior Management Role\Director\Reason for representation of women\Sector of work\Private sector\HR</i>	<i>Human resource department</i>	4	7
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Current positions held\Senior Management Role\Director\Reason for representation of women\Sector of work\Private sector\Sports</i>	<i>Sporting industry</i>	5	18
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Current positions held\Senior Management Role\Director\Reason for representation of women\Sector of work\Public sector</i>	<i>Roles in government work or public institutions</i>	20	66
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Current positions held\Senior Management Role\Director\Reason for representation of women\Sector of work\Public sector\Education</i>	<i>Working in the education sector</i>	8	22
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Current positions held\Senior Management Role\Director\Reason for representation of women\Sector of work\Public sector\Politics</i>	<i>Politician</i>	4	12

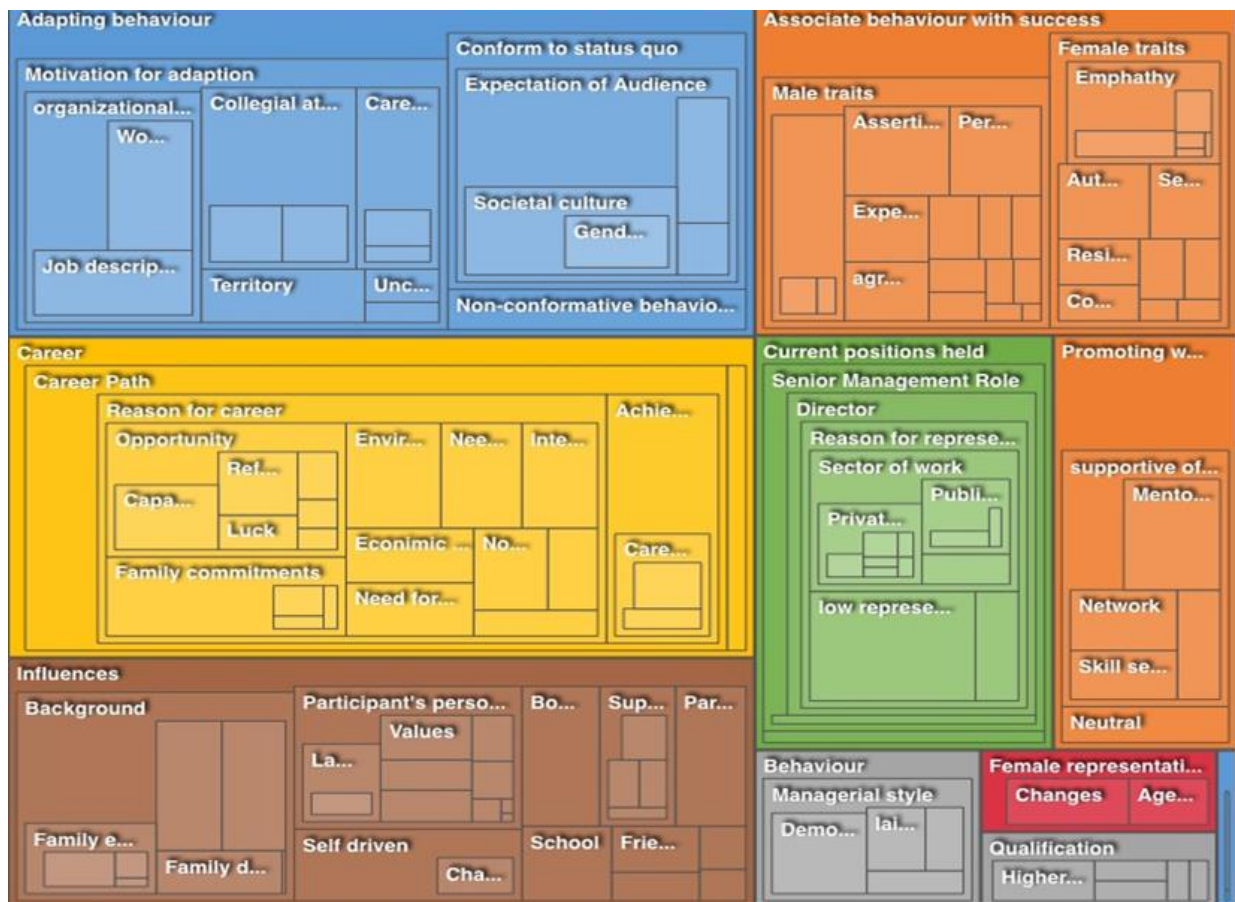
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Current positions held\Senior Management Role\Director\Reason for representation of women\Sector of work\Third sector</i>	<i>Charities, voluntary bodies</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Female representation in management</i>	<i>Level of female representation in senior management or boards in the organizations they worked for</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Female representation in management\Age group</i>	<i>Age group participants fall under</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Female representation in management\Changes</i>	<i>Changes in sector with regards to gender disparity in work place</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Influences</i>	<i>People that influenced ambition of career moves or choices</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>624</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Influences\Background</i>	<i>Differences in participant's background</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>231</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Influences\Background\Family drive</i>	<i>Family pushing for participants to achieve</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Influences\Background\Family economic status</i>	<i>Economic status of participants background</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Influences\Background\Family economic status\Middle class</i>	<i>Working class family. Reasonably comfortable</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Influences\Background\Family economic status\Upper class</i>	<i>participant from wealthy family</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Influences\Background\Family economic status\Working class</i>	<i>Participant from working class families</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Influences\Background\Family ethics</i>	<i>Family structure that taught strong values to participants</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Influences\Background\Religion</i>	<i>Participants religious background</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Influences\Background\Upbringing</i>	<i>Participant's general upbringing</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Influences\Bosses</i>	<i>Participants superiors encouraged them to go for roles</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Influences\Children</i>	<i>Participants have children</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Influences\Friends and colleagues</i>	<i>Friends or colleagues that influenced perspectives in life</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Influences\Grandparents</i>	<i>Grand parents influenced achievement</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Influences\Parents</i>	<i>Both or either parent motivated career choice or ambition</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Influences\Participant's personality</i>	<i>Participant's personality</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>130</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Influences\Participant's personality\Caring</i>	<i>Participants care about people and are nurturing</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Influences\Participant's personality\Competiveness</i>	<i>Participants are competitive by nature</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Influences\Participant's personality\Determination</i>	<i>Participants focus</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>16</i>

Nodes	<i>Influences\Participant's personality\Hard working</i>	<i>Participants are hardworking</i>	11	16
Nodes	<i>Influences\Participant's personality\Holds grudges</i>	<i>Participants hold grudges against people and act's on it</i>	1	1
Nodes	<i>Influences\Participant's personality\Lack of confidence</i>	<i>Participants lack confidence in themselves</i>	12	35
Nodes	<i>Influences\Participant's personality\Lack of confidence\Insecurities</i>	<i>self esteem issues, Self consciousness and self awareness</i>	7	18
Nodes	<i>Influences\Participant's personality\Privacy</i>	<i>Participants are private</i>	1	1
Nodes	<i>Influences\Participant's personality\Self reliance</i>	<i>Participants are extremely self reliant</i>	8	11
Nodes	<i>Influences\Participant's personality\Values</i>	<i>Moral code born by participants</i>	18	24
Nodes	<i>Influences\School</i>	<i>Influences from educational institutions attended</i>	10	27
Nodes	<i>Influences\Self driven</i>	<i>to succeed at doing a great job and advancing one's skills</i>	21	64
Nodes	<i>Influences\Self driven\Challenge</i>	<i>Participants have a drive to achieve or accomplish</i>	12	23
Nodes	<i>Influences\siblings</i>	<i>Siblings influence some aspect of participants life</i>	4	8
Nodes	<i>Influences\Support system</i>	<i>Support systems foe participants</i>	16	42
Nodes	<i>Influences\Support system\Friends</i>	<i>Friends that offer support</i>	7	9
Nodes	<i>Influences\Support system\Role models</i>	<i>Role models that influenced participants</i>	3	5
Nodes	<i>Influences\Support system\Spouses</i>	<i>Participant's spouses being their support system</i>	7	14
Nodes	<i>Influences\Support system\Teachers</i>	<i>Teachers that influenced participants to progress</i>	5	10
Nodes	<i>Marital status</i>	<i>Marital status of participants</i>	7	10
Nodes	<i>Marital status\Divorced</i>	<i>Divorced</i>	1	1
Nodes	<i>Marital status\Married</i>	<i>Married</i>	7	8
Nodes	<i>Marital status\Single</i>	<i>Single</i>	0	0
Nodes	<i>Promoting women</i>	<i>Participants Inclined to promote women advancement in management</i>	33	254
Nodes	<i>Promoting women\Neutral</i>	<i>Neutral, not concerned with pushing for more women representation just the best person for the best role</i>	13	24
Nodes	<i>Promoting women\supportive of women's progression</i>	<i>Supportive of women's progress up the ladder</i>	33	172

<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Promoting women\supportive of women's progression\Diversity</i>	<i>Need for diverse perspectives in decision making in management</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Promoting women\supportive of women's progression\Mentors</i>	<i>Had mentors or was mentored</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Promoting women\supportive of women's progression\Network</i>	<i>Opportunities through networks</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Promoting women\supportive of women's progression\Skill sets</i>	<i>Participants supportive of capabilities not gender</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Qualification</i>	<i>Level of educational qualification attained</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Qualification\Graduate</i>	<i>Masters</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Qualification\High school</i>	<i>School leaving qualifications</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Qualification\Higher education</i>	<i>Diploma or degrees</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Qualification\Post graduate</i>	<i>PhD, Doctorate</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Nodes</i>	<i>Qualification\Professional certifications</i>	<i>Participants didn't go to university but acquired Internships or professional certifications</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>10</i>

APPENDIX 15

PICTORIAL REPRESENTATION OF MAIN STUDY'S CODE REFERENCE HIERARCHY



APPENDIX 16

MAIN STUDY'S CROSS MATRICES NODES AND REFERENCE

Nodes	Participants Reference	Reference Total
Adapting behavior	806	806
Conform to status quo	287	287
Expectation of Audience	278	278
From men	39	39
From women	17	17
Societal culture	110	110
Gender Stereotypes	59	59
Motivation for adaption	437	437
Career progression	70	70
Ambition	8	8
Job security	17	17
Collegial attitude	125	125
Boy clubs	26	26
Resistance	24	24
Foreign nationality	6	6
Territory	40	40
Unconscious bias	11	11
organizational culture	184	184
Job description	62	62
Work Environment	66	66
Non-confirmative behavior	46	46
Associate behavior with success	517	517
Female traits	199	199
Authenticness	33	33
Communication skills	14	14
Empathy	76	76
Accommodating	22	22
Listening skills	14	14
Caution	4	4
Courtsey	1	1
Fairness	2	2
Nurturing	13	13
Intuitive	4	4
Persuasive	4	4
Problem solving	11	11
Reserved demeanor	13	13
Resilience	18	18

Self-aware	26	26
Male traits	272	272
Ambitious	9	9
Assertiveness	45	45
Bully	8	8
Commitment	6	6
Confidence	71	71
Loud	10	10
Strong	5	5
Control	6	6
Disciplined	2	2
Egotistic	9	9
Experience and knowledge	27	27
Inpatient	3	3
Leadership	10	10
Persona	39	39
Sternness	15	15
Aggressive	24	24
Behavior	111	111
Managerial style	111	111
Autocratic	17	17
Democratic	55	55
Motivation for style	16	16
laissez-faire	27	27
Career	777	777
Career Path	749	749
Achievement	122	122
Career Experiences	57	57
Barriers	36	36
Positive	18	18
Reason for career	560	560
Economic empowerment and Independence	38	38
Environment	54	54
Family commitments	102	102
Commitment issues	6	6
Flexible Work hours	16	16
Impact of work on family	7	7
Interest	43	43
Lack of support	19	19
Need for progression	37	37
Need to impact positively	46	46
No plans	33	33

Opportunity	173	173
Capability	53	53
Location	15	15
Luck	22	22
Qualification	9	9
Referrals	40	40
Through school	8	8
leaving home	22	22
Early work life	22	22
Current positions held	402	402
Board member	13	13
Executive	3	3
Volunteer	1	1
Senior Management Role	391	391
CEO	10	10
Director	358	358
Reason for representation of women	352	352
High representation of women	31	31
Sector of work	198	198
Private sector	80	80
Banking, accounting, and finance	8	8
Business, marketing, sales	9	9
Engineering, Science and Technology	18	18
Entertainment and media	7	7
HR	7	7
Sports	18	18
Public sector	66	66
Education	22	22
Politics	12	12
Third sector	26	26
low representation of women	124	124
Female representation in management	64	64
Age group	23	23
Changes	36	36
Influences	591	591
Background	220	220
Family drive	28	28
Family economic status	47	47
Middle class	10	10
Upper class	4	4

Working class	29	29
Family ethics	42	42
Religion	1	1
Upbringing	44	44
Bosses	43	43
Children	10	10
Friends and colleagues	16	16
Grandparents	7	7
Parents	40	40
Participant's personality	128	128
Caring	4	4
Competiveness	9	9
Determination	16	16
Hard working	16	16
Holds grudges	1	1
Lack of confidence	35	35
Insecurities	18	18
Privacy	1	1
Self reliance	11	11
Values	24	24
School	27	27
Self driven	64	64
Challenge	23	23
Support system	42	42
Friends	9	9
Role models	5	5
Spouses	14	14
Teachers	10	10
Siblings	8	8
Marital status	9	9
Divorced	1	1
Married	8	8
Single	0	0
Promoting women	251	251
Neutral	24	24
supportive of women's progression	170	170
Diversity	25	25
Mentors	55	55
Network	34	34
Skill sets	27	27
Qualification	59	59
Graduate	10	10

High school	6	6
Higher education	28	28
Post graduate	5	5
Professional certifications	10	10
Total	12269	12269

APPENDIX 17

COMPOSITION OF 'CONFORMATION TO STATUS QUO' THEME

S/NO	1st order codes	Participant's reference	Reference total	Coverage of Theme(%)
1	Adapting behavior as means to conform	1093	1093	40.9
2	Expectation of Audience	509	509	19
3	Job Description	499	499	18.7
4	Career progression	87	87	3.3
5	Ambition	8	8	0.3
6	Collegial attitude	175	175	6.5
7	Territory	40	40	1.5
8	Organizational culture	250	250	9.4
9	Unconscious bias	11	11	0.4
			2672	100

APPENDIX 18

COMPOSITION OF 'ASSOCIATION OF BEHAVIOUR WITH SUCCESS' THEME

S/NO	1st order codes	Participant's reference	Reference total	Coverage of Theme (%)
1	Behavior synonymous with success	1532	1532	68.3
2	Managerial style	226	226	10.1
3	Participant's personality	484	484	21.6
		TOTAL	2242	100.0

APPENDIX 19

COMPOSITION OF 'INFLUENCES ON PERSONALITY LEADING TO BEHAVIOUR' THEME

S/NO	1st order codes	Participant's reference	Reference total	Coverage of Theme (%)
1	Influences from background	1016	1016	50
2	Bosses	43	43	3.6
3	Children	10	10	0.8
4	Friends and colleagues	16	16	1.4
5	Grandparents and parents	47	47	4
6	Challenge	23	23	1.9
7	School	27	27	2.3
		1182	1182	100

APPENDIX 20

COMPOSITION OF 'DRIVE FOR CAREER PROGRESSION' THEME

S/NO	1st order codes	Participant's reference	Reference total	Coverage of Theme(%)
1	Career consciousness	777	777	18.2
2	Career Path	749	749	17.6
3	Achievement	122	122	2.9
5	Career Experiences	111	111	0.0
7	Reason for career	560	560	13.1
8	Economic empowerment and independence	38	38	0.9
9	Environment	54	54	1.3
10	Family commitments	115	115	2.7
13	Flexible Work hours	16	16	0.4
14	Interest	43	43	1.0
15	Lack of support	19	19	0.4
16	Need for progression	37	37	0.9
17	Need to impact positively	46	46	1.1
18	No plans	33	33	0.8
19	Opportunity	173	173	4.1
20	Capability	53	53	1.2
21	Location	15	15	0.4
22	Luck	22	22	0.5
23	Qualification	9	9	0.2
24	Referrals	40	40	0.9
25	Through school	8	8	0.2
26	leaving home	22	22	0.5
27	Early work life	22	22	0.5
28	occupying senior positions	1178	1178	27.6
			4262	100.0

APPENDIX 21

COMPOSITION OF 'WILLINGNESS TO SUPPORT/PROMOTE OTHER WOMEN PROGRESSING AND SECURING TOP ROLES' THEME

S/NO	1st order codes	Participant's reference	Reference total	Coverage of Theme (%)
1	Favorable to the promotion of women	251	251	42.8
2	Actively supportive of women's progression in their organization	170	170	29.0
3	Neutral on the gender diversity issues in management	24	24	4.1
4	Need for Diversity	25	25	4.3
5	Need for Mentors	55	55	9.4
6	Need for Network	34	34	5.8
7	Building capacity and Skill sets	27	27	4.6
			586	100.0

APPENDIX 22

COMPOSITION OF 'WOMEN'S RESPONSIVENESS TO THE LOW NUMBER OF WOMEN REPRESENTED IN SENIOR MANAGEMENT' THEME

S/NO	1st order codes	Participant's reference	Reference total	Coverage of Theme (%)
1	High representation of females in management	31	31	2.9
2	low representation of females in management	188	188	17.7
3	Private sector	122	122	11.5
4	Public sector	118	118	11.1
5	Third sector	33	33	3.1
6	skills set of women	352	352	33.1
7	Sector of work	198	198	18.6
8	Age group	23	23	2.2
			1065	100.0