

Representation of female academics in senior positions in institutions of higher learning in South Africa: The case of a semi-metropolitan university in Limpopo province.

By

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DECLARATION

I, Abgirl Muleya, hereby declare that this thesis titled – **Representation of female academics in senior positions in Institutions of higher learning in South Africa: The Case of a semi-metropolitan university in Limpopo Province**” - for a Doctor of Philosophy in Gender studies, submitted to the Institute of Gender and Youth Studies at the University of Venda, has not been submitted previously for any degree at this or another University. It is unique in conception and execution, and all cited sources have been properly acknowledged.

Signature *Amuleya*

Date 04 August 2023

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my father, Pastor N.J. Sinyosi, and my mother, Dr L.B. Sinyosi who have supported me throughout the journey of my studies. I appreciate their emotional and financial support that they continued to offer me even under adverse circumstances. They have been a pillar of strength when I wanted to give up. May they continue to be blessed.

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ABSTRACT

Employment opportunities for women have been made available in recent years around the world. However, female academics are still disadvantaged when it comes to promotions. This is evidenced by the higher number of male academics who occupy most of the senior positions in institutions of higher learning. This study explores how the academic promotion criteria is a factor that determines senior positions for men and women at a particular semi-metropolitan university situated in Limpopo province in South Africa. Feminist theories of gender, such as intersectionality, liberal feminism, African theory, Standpoint theory and Feminist theory, were used as frameworks for the study. The study uses a qualitative approach in collecting and analysing the data. In particular, focused ethnographic research was embarked upon as this method is applicable to any discipline whenever there is a desire to explore specific cultural perspectives held by groups of people (in this instance, female academics) within a specific problem-focused framework such as those female academics who are facing challenges when it comes to promotions. The population of the study comprised female academics aged between 25-60 years. A non-probability purposive and convenient sampling was used to select 20 female academics for semi-structured interviews which helped the researcher to evoke female academics' voices on issues that affected them regarding promotions. Female academics were selected from both high and low levels of employment categories to establish reasons that appeared to negatively impact their upward mobility in academic achievements. Thematic analysis was applied, meaning that results are presented and discussed as themes and subthemes in this study. The study has the following findings: Most of the female academics continue to hold lower positions at work because of the promotion criteria which seems hostile towards their experiences and their roles as wives and their household responsibilities. It is therefore recommended that Universities should enforce a friendly environment that allows for gender parity, rather than the one that hinders women's personal, intellectual, and professional development. The community leaders and policymakers should also work together in advocating for gender-inclusive policies and legislation that promote equal opportunities for women in all spheres of life, including in institutions of higher learning and TVET's (Technical and Vocational Educational Training Institutions).

Key words: Gender Equality, Gender Equity, Gender representation, Promotion criteria, Glass ceiling

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CHE- Council of Higher Education

EEA- Employment Equity Act

ED- Education

EU- European Union

HEIs- Higher Educational Institutions

HESA- Higher Education South Africa

HOD- Head of Department

IHL- Institutions of Higher Learning

UNIVEN- University of Venda

UN-United Nations

US- United -states

SA- South Africa

SADC- South African Developmental Community

SAHE-South African Higher Education

WHO- World Health Organisation

VC- Vice-Chancellor

PHD- Doctor of Philosophy

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

Many institutions of higher learning have opened their employment doors for women around the world. However, they still experience under-representation when it comes to promotions. Women in academia are not visible enough in high positions as compared to their male counterparts. According to Airin et al, (2011), female academics often face limitations regarding promotions. Mohajeri (2015) argues that, although, gender equity programmes and legislative actions such as Affirmative Action were designed with the purpose to ensure that men and women receive equal treatment in recruitment, hiring, appointment, and promotion in job situations, including Institutions of Higher Education, these policies have not completely improved gender equity. There still remains a myriad of obstacles against women who wish to advance their careers in senior/ management positions in these institutions.

This section gives a comprehensive overview of the global, regional, and local trends on the under-representation of female academics in senior positions. Justification for the study, the problem statement, aim, objectives and the significance of the study, as well as definitions of key terms used are also highlighted. The chapter ends with a brief summary.

1.2. Background of the Study

Despite the increase in women representation in workplaces in recent years, women academics remain under-represented in senior academic positions (Yousaf and Schmiede, 2017; Xiang, Ingram and Cangemi, 2017). Women continue to face different types of challenges in breaking the glass ceiling (Williams, 2017). Women now are employed in large numbers in these institutions, and they add enormous contributions, yet the balance of power is still skewed towards men. Men continue to dominate, hence, the practices and norms at most universities are based on men's life experiences and these are deeply entrenched in the misogynistic culture that prevails in many institutions of higher learning (Mohajeri, 2015).

Women continue to be disadvantaged regarding participation in decision-making within the public and private sectors of the society as they still face gender-based discrimination such as in hiring and promotions (Hesse-Biber, 2014). It is the same case within institutions of higher learning (Molla and Cuthbert, 2014). Scholars such as Khosrojerdi (2015); Khuzwayo (2018) add that the United Nations and its specialized agencies, for example, have been giving preferences to women. This is seen or is evident, especially, regarding women participation in top decision-making positions, where females suffer from discrimination, thereby,

preventing them from occupying high ranking positions (Rezai-Rashti, 2011; Khosrojerdi, 2015). The lack of women in senior positions, such as, Professors, Deans, HODs, and Directors of Institutes in institutions of higher education is a fact well documented (Alwahaibi, 2017; Barbar, 2017).

Generally, women are faced with too much work, particularly, family demands which hinder their career advancement (O'Connell and McKinnon, 2021). They are expected to accomplish various tasks and responsibilities at the same time, such as homemaking, childrearing, and workplace-related duties (Molotsi, 2016). In most instances, family roles clash with their career advancement goals. According to Kibaara (2014) Women experience a lot of stress and pressure because of the conflict between their work/family duties, since these roles, usually, are unable to coexist. Molotsi (2016) maintains that African academic women, like other women, are also affected by the conflicting roles of work and family. Parlea-Buzata, (2010) argues that women experience both external and internal barriers towards their career advancement. According to previous research findings, external barriers that have impact on women's career advancement and are clear evidence of gender inequalities faced by women are the employment conditions and promotion criteria (Molotsi, 2016).

Research has proven that women are still under-represented in both developed and under-developed countries regarding promotions (Saleem, Rafiq and Yusaf, 2017). Barbara (2017) states that in the United States (US) women continue to struggle climbing the academic ladder especially up to the professoriate level. Research in this regard has identified a diverse set of discrete factors demonstrating the continuing barriers to the advancement of female academics. These include, among others - gender bias, discrimination (conscious and subtle/unconscious), salary inequality, service obligations, teaching assignments, workload, promotion criteria and processes, mentoring, and work/life balance (Barbara, 2017; Zuckerman, 2017).

The increase in female participation in higher education has not changed women's academic representation at senior levels in universities, for example, in Australia; this is similar in other Western countries (Morley, 2013; Aiston, 2015). In Australia, the career trajectory for female academic women stalls at a lower level than that of their male counterparts. Parker, Hewitt, Witheriff and Cooper (2018) state that due to concerns regarding the above situation, one of the Australian universities designed and delivered a career progression programme in order to support women's advancement from senior lecturer to associate professor positions. Statistics show that women represented 18% (6 women) of Vice-Chancellors in Australian universities in late 2009 and 34% of Deputy Vice-Chancellors, in Australian universities (Odhiambo, 2011 and 2014). Regarding professoriate positions in Australia, women were only 19.8 per cent of the full professors and 28 percent of associate professors (Cama, Jorge and

Pena, 2016). In addition, White (2017) reveals that women only make up about 30% of university leadership positions in Australia. Similarly, women make up only 16.9% of professors and associate professors in New Zealand (Odhiambo, 2014). Women were underrepresented at all levels of university leadership in England, according to Shepherd (2017), with only about 13% of women promoted to full professorship position. The situation is similar in many parts of the world, and it is even worse in developing countries like South Africa. Women's underrepresentation in senior management positions within educational institutions continues to be a source of concern, especially since the teaching force is usually largely dominated by women, both nationally and internationally (Cama, Jorge and Pena, 2017).

The fact that women are underrepresented in universities in Europe, where gender equality is supposedly higher, means that in other places, for instance, Asia, particularly Pakistan, women suffer a similar fate (Yousaf and Schmiede, 2017). Women hold only 15% of full professorships or tenured positions in twenty-seven European Union (EU) countries (European Commission 2012; Yousaf and Schmiede, 2017). Likewise in the higher education sector, in South Africa, women make up only 33% of researchers, 20% of full professors, and 15.5 percent of institution heads.

Female researchers continue to struggle to reach decision-making positions, with only one woman for every two men on science and management boards across the EU, despite their numbers growing faster in the workplaces than their male counterparts (+5.1 per cent for women annually, compared to +3.3 per cent for men from 2002 to 2009) in all sectors. Women make up 21.8 percent of professors in Scottish universities, although women make up 45 percent of the university population (Herald Report 2015; Yousaf, 2018). In terms of gender equality in Europe, Sweden is often described as exceptional, with high overall rankings and even the reputation of being a "pioneer in the gender equality area," but until 2011, only 22% of professors were women (Yousaf, 2017). This shows that despite having an ambitious gender equality policy, there is still a long way to go before the goal of gender equality in Swedish higher institutions is achieved (Peterson, 2014). The UK's situation is similar to that of the rest of the EU member states: women make up only one in every five professors, despite accounting for nearly half of the non-professorial academic workforce (Yousaf, 2017). In all UK higher education institutions, women make up 46.8% (76,500) of non-professorial academic staff, but only 19.8% (3450) of the professoriate. According to a report published by the University College Union (UCU) in 2013, it will take nearly 40 years for the proportion of female professors in UK universities to reach the same level as the proportion of female staff (Yousaf, 2018).

Only three out of 30 professors at Bournemouth University are women; this shows the extreme gender inequality on the professoriate list. In 2011–12, the percentage of women at a few of

the world's top-ranked institutes, such as Imperial College London and the University of Cambridge, was 14.1 percent and 15.6 percent, respectively (Peetz *et al.*, 2014; Munar, Khoo-Lattimore, Chambers and Biran, 2017). These statistics reflect or demonstrate that even the most developed countries face great challenges in terms of female academic representation in their institutions of higher learning.

The under-representation of women in university senior management positions also remains a challenge across the globe, although the situation in many African universities appears to be worse (Mbepera, 2015; Nyoni and He, 2019). This is a result of patriarchal practices in institutions of higher learning (Olaogun, Adebaya & Oluyemo, 2015). In Africa, historically, senior management and leadership positions have always carried the notion of masculinity and the belief that men make better managers and leaders than women (Eboiyehi, Fayomi & Eboiyehi, 2016). Gender equity gaps in universities' management in Africa are linked to pre-colonial patriarchal arrangements whereby occupational skills within the family are given mostly to boys, whereas skills relating to reproductive functions are given to girls, such as housekeeping and child-rearing (Mayimele, Ndudzo and Ndlovu, 2020). These distinctive gender roles equipped young men for production work, yet it failed regarding young women as it only focused or restricted them to household chores and reproduction (Aina, Ogunlade, Ilesanmi & Afolabi, 2015).

The Ethiopian government has made commitments to various national, regional, and international initiatives to eliminate gender-based disparities in various sectors by introducing various policy directions and institutionalizing ministerial offices, however, the Ethiopian government continues to face challenges (Molla, 2013; Ademe and Singh, 2015). Women's representation in senior positions in higher education institutions is still low, hence, only 1.1 per cent of women in executive positions, such as universities' board council, are female, compared to 99.9% of men in the same groups (Asmamaw, 2017). From research, women occupy the majority of junior positions in university management in Ethiopia; women are under-represented in top management positions at six universities (four public and two private), according to a survey on university staffing positions conducted (Tadesse, 2017). Many universities' board councils, which decide who manages the institution, are dominated by men (Labiso, 2020). In Hawassa University, for example, none of the fourteen members of the council are female. This clearly demonstrates that all policies are structured to benefit and suit the needs of men only (Eboiyehi *et al.*, 2016). Addis Ababa University and Debremarkos University were in a similar situation (Odhiambo, 2014). According to the survey by Asmamaw (2017), only one of the ten deans of faculties in the institutes of language studies was a woman, and only six of the 42 department heads were women. The fact that women are underrepresented in university policy and decision-making forums has an impact on women's recruitment and advancement opportunities (Tadesse, 2017). This reflects the fact that in

Ethiopian higher education, gender inequality has remained a major issue (Ademe and Singh, 2015). The Ethiopian government, although, a signatory to the Millennium Development Goals, which has pledged to pursue a series of benchmarking and targets related to gender equality, this is still happening (Labiso, 2020). Due to this obvious male dominance in senior positions in academia and management, some higher education institutions are implementing gender-mainstreaming policies to address gender inequities, which will be covered in greater depth below.

The situation in Kenya is not any different from other countries. Both in private and public universities, women's career mobility is not at the same pace with that of their male counterparts (Kibaara, 2014). Kenyan society is very patriarchal, the status of women which remains relatively low compared to that of men, is evidence of it. Women continue to remain marginalized as gender inequality prevails socially, academically, economically, and professionally (Kibaara, 2014; Odhiambo, 2014). Scholars such as Yusuff, (2014); Chacha, (2021) posit that Governance and management of education are equally male dominated in Kenya. Dahlvig and Longman (2020) argue that most heads of institutions, especially, of higher learning institutions, are males. In the seven Kenyan public universities, there were only three female Deans recruited by Kenyatta University and Jomo Kenyatta University of Science and Technology, respectively (Mbirithi, 2013; Kibaara, 2014).

The public universities of Ghana have significant similarities in their scheme for promotions, (Oforiwaa, 2014). Research in academia continues to be the pursuit of new ideas and knowledge and publishing in peer-reviewed journals, whilst teaching is the contribution to curricular development, and in the process coming up with innovations in strategies and incorporating them into the classroom (Chitsamatanga et. al., 2018). With community service, faculty members are expected to provide service to the university, its students, clients, and programmes, as well as the broader community (Oforiwaa, 2014; Sadiq, Barnes, Price, Gumedze and Morrell, 2019). Women continue to be under-represented in these endeavours as due to too much workload in the realms of teaching and supervision, women find less time to concentrate on publishing articles (Muleya, 2017; Chitsamatanga et. al., 2018). This results in women being ignored when it comes to promotion.

Women's access to senior management positions in Nigerian Universities, for instance, is not a different situation when compared to other universities in some countries, as they also face similar challenges in climbing the academic ladder (Oforiwa, 2014; Odhiambo, 2014). This is proven by a study conducted by Kibaara (2014) who observed that years of equal opportunity rule, affirmative action strategies and anti-discrimination legislation in favour of women have failed to deliver the desired rise in hierarchy for female academics. In other words, women are still a long way from participating on the same footing, in academia, as men. Ogbogu &

Awolowo (2011) and Olufemi (2017) reflect that female deans and professors are in the minority, while female Vice-Chancellors are rare. Women in Nigerian universities hold less than 35 percent of academic posts (Eboiyehi et. al., 2016). They are mainly represented in the lower and middle level academic positions and their participation relative to men decreases at successive levels (Olufemi, 2017).

South Africa has made significant progress in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment since the end of apartheid in 1994 (Hills, 2015). The country has implemented various policies and legal frameworks to address gender disparities in all sectors, including education (Sinden, 2017). However, despite these efforts, women continue to face challenges in achieving equal representation and advancement in higher education institutions, particularly in senior positions (Maphalala and Mpofu, 2017). Taking a closer look at South African universities, after the democratic transition in 1994, when the new government came into power, a new emphasis was placed on the need for equality in terms of both race and gender (Segalo, 2015). South Africa introduced a new Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa as legislation to eradicate discrimination and aid transformation after it suffered centuries of patriarchy and white dominance (Act 108 of 1996). This new constitution was based upon equal human rights for all men and women (Meyiwa, Nkondo, Chitiga-Mabugu, Sithole & Nyamnjoh, 2014), however, it was after 20 years of democracy, in 2014, that noticeable changes concerning gender and racial equality in HEIs started to be more visible. In 2015, the spotlight increased regarding the persistent of inequalities as well as the unfulfilled promises that the post-apartheid government had made (Oforiwaa, 2014). According to Walker (2013) the South African's racially segregated past and the effect it still has had in the post-apartheid era is a topic that is still much discussed and researched. It remains a topic to be discussed as many groups as possible of individuals in the workplaces are still being under-privileged, specifically, looking at female academics who are still under-represented in higher academic positions, within institutions of higher learning in South Africa.

1.2.1. Gender equality instruments

There are several instruments that address gender inequality, and these are international, regional and national. This study will only discuss the national instruments which are the constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 and the Employment Equity Act No 55 of 1998 and the institutional policies.

The constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1999

The Republic of South Africa has a democratic constitution which was adopted and passed in 1996. It serves as the supreme law and the most important guiding document to prescribe and lay the foundation for the elimination of all discriminatory practices in the country (Muleya, 2017). It prohibits discrimination based on gender and enshrines the principle of gender

equality. Section 9 (3) of the constitution guarantees that everyone is equal before the law, has rights to equal protection, benefit of the law and the state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on any grounds such as race, gender and culture. The Constitution emphasizes the need for transformation in all sectors of society, including higher education (Zvogbo, 2015). This imperative provides a framework for institutions to proactively address gender inequality by adopting policies and practices that promote the recruitment, retention, and career progression of female academics (Ford, 2016; Bhopal, 2020). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 supports efforts to address the under-representation of female academics in institutions of higher learning. It empowers individuals, institutions, and courts to act and create an inclusive academic environment that promotes gender equality.

Employment Equity Act No 55 of 1998

The Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998's main purpose is to eliminate unfair discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and treatment in the workplace in order to create equity in the workplace. The EEA promotes equality in the workplace by addressing unfair discrimination and ensuring the equitable representation of designated groups, including women, in the workforce (Nzima and Duma, 2014). The Act calls for the implementation of affirmative action, measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups, in order to ensure equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce (Muleya, 2017). South Africa has been trying to address the under-representation of women in the workplace by encouraging organizations to diversify their workforce and implement correct labour policies, such as the Employment Equity Act (EEA) No 55 of 1998 and Affirmative Action. Institutions can develop and implement employment equity plans that specifically target the under-representation of female academics, setting goals and timelines for achieving gender balance in academic positions (O'Connor, 2020).

According to the report of 2003, the achievement of the EEA in South Africa has been slow with some organizations failing to achieve their targets while some organizations simply played a game of numbers. While the EEA offers a framework to combat gender inequality and advance the representation of women in the workplace, particularly in higher education institutions, it is crucial to remember that the success of the EEA depends on how well it is implemented and enforced (Zitha, 2022). Higher education institutions should aggressively implement the EEA's rules and create all-encompassing initiatives to improve gender equality in the academy.

1.2.2. Institutional policies on work life balance and gender equality

This section analysis the policies that the University of Venda uses to address inequalities, the gender equality policy and promotion criteria. Gender issues are gradually gaining credibility in the South African society. Until recently, efforts to bring gender issues into public awareness were met with significant resistance by the patriarchal South African society (Muleya 2017). The University of Venda, which started a Gender Equity Unit in 1996 and adopted equity and sexual harassment rules in May 2009 to build a more formalized support framework in promoting gender issues.

The University of Venda (Univen) as a designated employer applies employment equity policy to all staff appointed on permanent and fixed terms, part-time staff as well as other applicants. The University also acknowledge that there is inadequate diversity in its workforce therefore the policy is designed to rectify the past imbalances by consciously developing and implementing an employment equity plan (Policy on Employment Equity, 2015; Mabokela and Mlambo, 2017). The policy places particular emphasis on the following areas: recruiting, selecting, and deploying employees; utilizing and managing diversity; promoting and advancing equal opportunities; eradicating unfair discrimination; and implementing a focused affirmative action approach.

To redress the past imbalances created by discriminatory legislation through affirmative action, the employment equity policy ensures that competent people from designated groups are presented. The Univen policy also state that it creates opportunities for promotion of current employees from designated groups who meet the requirement as well as developing relevant criteria for selecting suitably qualified persons for appointment, transfer, and promotions (Policy on Employment Equity, 2015; Mabokela and Mlambo, 2017).

The promotion criteria

The University of Venda has got a promotional policy that spells out the criteria for promotion of both academics and administrations staff members. Only when moving from a senior lectureship to an associate professor or from an associate professor to a professor do the promotion criteria apply. The progression process is the method utilized for promotions from junior lecturer to lecturer to senior lecturer, and the position should be developmental. (Appointment and promotions criteria for academic staff, May 2011; Muleya, 2017). In order for a junior lecturer to be promoted to lecture one should obtain a master's degree within four years of employment and the promotion usually takes effect on the 1st of April following the year of obtaining the masters. Further- more, a staff member who is at lecturer position and needs to be promoted to senior lecture, should obtain a doctoral degree using staff development policies.

However, there are cases whereby a lecturer can be promoted to senior lecturer without a doctoral degree but by going through relevant steps for consideration and at least having published an article in a peer reviewed journal (appointment and promotion criteria for academic staff, 2011).

1.3. Justification of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore and examine academic-promotion criteria in institutions of higher learning in South Africa. The under-representation of women in universities, specifically in senior academic positions, remains a challenge across the globe, and the situation appears to be particularly challenging in many African universities, especially with patriarchal practices having serious manifestations in institutions of higher learning (Olaogun, Adebaya & Oluyemo, 2015).

There is, usually, a usage of the same promotion criteria among both female and male academics. This criterion does not take into consideration, the socio-cultural and household baggage that women come with, to their places of employment. That is why most of them are still concentrated at junior or lecturer positions. This is what motivated this study to ask questions such as - *Are the promotion criteria the same for both men and women? If both male and female academics are treated equally regarding promotions, why then do only women remain stagnant at lower positions? If the promotion criteria are considered the same, what are the main causes preventing women from meeting these criteria?*

Therefore, the rationale of this study is to address the persistent gender disparities and underrepresentation of women in academic positions. The underrepresentation of women in senior positions within higher education institutions goes against the principles of equal opportunity and fairness. It is against this backdrop that the study aims to contribute to creating a more equitable and inclusive academic environment that provides equal opportunities for women to be promoted to leadership positions. For instance, analysing the experiences of female academics who have faced barriers in career advancement can shed light on the systemic factors that hinder their progress. Furthermore, the study aims to provide a robust understanding of the factors contributing to the underrepresentation of women as well as to propose evidence-based strategies to foster gender equality and inclusivity within institutions of higher learning.

It is in light of the above that this study focuses on under-representation of women in academic positions, within the institutions of higher learning, particularly at a Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province. Previous studies conducted in South Africa have shed light on the persistent gender disparities in higher education. These studies have highlighted

factors such as gender bias, discriminatory practices, cultural norms, lack of mentorship, work-life balance challenges, and systemic barriers as contributing factors to the underrepresentation of women in senior positions. This study also covers the gap in literature regarding qualifications for promotion in institutions of higher learning as shown in the literature that follows.

1.4. Problem statement

The promotion criteria in institutions of higher learning in South Africa are the same for male and female academics, however, taking a closer look at senior academic positions, such as deans of faculties, directors of institutes and heads of departments in institutions of higher learning, one will come at the conclusion that women are still under-represented. The promotion criteria seem to fail to recognise or accommodate certain special needs/ roles of women; thus leaving many of them unable to meet the required promotion criteria. This results in dissatisfaction and doubts on the part of female academics regarding the promotion criteria used in many institutions of higher learning. The University of Venda, where this study was conducted, also falls within this category. Though there have been some improvements in the university's policies on gender mainstreaming, there are problems when it comes to actualizing and making sure that these policies are put into practice. There is still much that needs to be done to transform the gendered dimensions of promotions not only at this university but in all institutions of higher learning. Looking at the statistics regarding gender parity, the University of Venda has 84 % of professors who are men, while 16% are women; and close to 75% of associate professors who are men while 25% are women. These statistics reflect the university promotions until March 2023. At senior lecturer positions, men held 69% while women held only 31%. This did not bode well for the university regarding gender mainstreaming and gender parity. The recent promotions that were implemented in March of 2023 at this university of Venda saw a lot of female academics being promoted to senior positions. While this is commendable, the study shows that there are still disparities between male and female academic promotions.

1.5. Aim of the Study

The aim of the study was to explore representation of female academics in senior positions in institutions of higher learning, particularly, in a Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province, called the University of Venda.

1.6. Research Objectives

The following undergirded the research objectives:

- To explore the trends, dynamics, and processes involved in promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province
- To probe the perceptions of women in the process of promotion and aspiration towards senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province
- To identify the various challenges or barriers encountered by women in the process of promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province.
- To develop strategies that could be adopted for women's promotion and attainment of senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province

1.7. Research Questions

In order to fulfil the above objectives, the following research questions were formulated:

- What are the trends, dynamics, and processes involved in promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province?
- What are the perceptions of women in the process of promotion and aspiration towards senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province?
- What are the various challenges or barriers encountered by women in the process of promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province?
- What better strategy could be adopted for women's promotion and attainment of senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province?

1.8. Significance of the Study

The study seeks to address the gap in research, pertaining to under-representation of women in academic senior positions in institutions of higher learning especially in South Africa. There has been a significant transformation in institutions of higher learning in South Africa, in terms of research and promotion, however, little progress has been achieved about promotions of women in institutions of higher learning in Africa in general and South Africa in particular. The results of the study will have direct policy implications for South African universities on appointments and promotions. It will also inform policies and interventions that promote equal representation, creating a more inclusive and equitable academic environment. The study will be helpful for the universities to use as the base to amend and improve their promotion rules, regulations, and criteria so that these can be gender-sensitive to avoid under-representation of women in senior academic positions. The study will also add significantly to existing knowledge on gender and promotions in institutions of higher education.

1.9. Definition of Concepts

- **Patriarchy**

Patriarchy is an oppressive system that is male-dominated, male-identified, male-centred, and control-obsessed, characterised by practices and social structures in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women (Johannsdottir, 2009; Johnson, 2014). Langeveldt, (2014) sees patriarchy as a social arrangement in which women and men are stereotyped with gender-acceptable characteristics and behaviours, which they are expected to perform in the societies that they belong. In the context of this study, 'patriarchy' is defined as the male – domination in high positions, within institutions of higher education.

- **Promotion**

This has to do with the advancement of a person to a higher level or position. It is also connected to authority, training opportunities, salary increase and increased job satisfaction (Molotsi, 2016). In the context of this study, 'promotion' refers to making progress academically from lower to higher positions.

- **Promotion criteria**

Promotion criteria refer to the requirements or qualifications that one must hold to be promoted. In the context of this study, 'promotion criteria' mean the required qualifications set for academics to be promoted.

- **Gender mainstreaming**

It is a systemic integration of the respective situations, priorities and needs of women and men in all policies and with a view to promoting equality between women and men; it is mobilizing all general policies and measures, specifically, for the purpose of achieving gender equality (Kibaara, 2014; Anderson, 2018). In the context of this study, 'gender mainstreaming' refers to equal presence of women and men in high positions in institutions of higher education.

- **Gender equality**

Gender equality happens when men and women are given the same opportunities in life (UN, 2002; Kibaara, 2014). In this study, 'gender equality' refers to equal treatment of both men and women regarding promotions, in institutions of higher learning.

- **Intersectionality**

Intersectionality refers to the cross-cutting nature of structures of oppression and the overlapping nature of groups, based on - gender, ethnicity, nation, race, social class, sexuality, and age – to form mutually constructing features of social organization, which

shape the experiences of different people (Davies, 2013; Collins, 2017). In this study 'Intersectionality' refers to female academics who have been lagging regarding higher positions in institutions of higher education.

- **Masculinities**

Masculinity refers to established stereotypes and structures that influence how men think and act in relation to their view of what being a man means (Mackenzie, *et al.*, 2017). In this study, 'masculinities' refer to the structures that influence male academics to dominate in institutions of higher learning.

- **Stand-point theory.**

An important epistemological stepping-stone for creating helpful knowledge from the insights of women's experiences, is the feminist epistemology, or theory of knowledge, which the feminist viewpoint theory seeks to elaborate (Muleya, 2017). The foundation of stand-point theory is the awareness that women have a distinct viewpoint based on their experiences as women (Kowalski-Braun, 2014).

1.10. SUMMARY

This chapter presented an overview of the study. The following chapter gives an outline of the literature reviewed in the study.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This section of the study reviews existing literature on gender, as well as gender mainstreaming in institutions of higher learning. The literature review entails a discussion on the structures of patriarchy and how they exist in institutions of higher education, followed by an exploration of the experiences of gender imbalances in the implementation of the promotion criteria. This segment will also address gender mainstreaming, as well as gender discrimination in higher institutions of education and the challenges facing female academics regarding climbing up the promotion ladder; the mechanisms of the promotion criteria are also discussed. The discussions will, first, look at patriarchy and how it plays itself out in institutions of higher learning. As alluded to earlier, patriarchy, in the context of this study means a system of domination of men over women, and how it manipulates echelons of power to maintain its dominance.

2.2. Patriarchy in institutions of higher learning

Patriarchy and hegemonic supremacy are still experienced by women in institutions of higher learning. Patriarchy is a system of social structures and activities where women are governed, marginalized, and abused by men (Johannsdottir, 2009; Kigodi, 2013). According to Connor (2020) and Davies, Yarrow, and Syed (2020) Patriarchy is a fundamental root cause of gender inequality in various spheres, including academia. It shapes societal norms, cultural expectations, and institutional structures that perpetuate male dominance and limit the opportunities for women to advance into senior positions. Patriarchy in higher learning institutions still plays a vital role in the under-representation of female academics in high positions, although, institutions have the same promotional requirements for male and female academics, particularly, in South Africa (Conner, 2020). Patriarchy seems to have its way manipulating the promotion criteria systems. Patriarchal norms and biases can influence hiring and promotion practices, favoring men over equally qualified women (Moscatelli, Menegatti, Ellemers, Mariani and Rubini, 2020). Research has consistently shown evidence of gender bias in academia, with studies demonstrating that male candidates are often perceived as more competent, confident, and suitable for senior positions. Some claim that the male-dominated field of academia maintains patriarchal ideas and ideologies, elevating men to leadership positions and to a level of recognition over women and disregarding women's abilities and merits; this is posing yet another hurdle to women's advancement in higher education. Patriarchy contributes to a significant gender imbalance in

leadership positions within higher education institutions (David, 2015). Feminist theory argues that patriarchal structures and gendered norms perpetuate inequality and hinder women's advancement in academia (O'Connor, 2020).

Furthermore, Patriarchal structures can create an institutional culture that perpetuates gender bias and discrimination which manifest through implicit or explicit sexism, such as dismissive attitudes toward women's contributions, gender-based stereotypes, and micro aggressions (Davis, 2015). The existence of a male-dominated academic culture can marginalize and undermine the experiences and perspectives of women, making it difficult for them to thrive and succeed (Mahabeer, Nzimande and Shoba, 2018). Patriarchy can also influence the content and focus of academic curriculum and research. Historically, women's contributions and perspectives have been marginalized or excluded from scholarly discourse (Curtis, 2017). This lack of representation reinforces male-centric knowledge systems and perpetuates the idea that women's intellectual contributions are less valuable or significant. Therefore, Patriarchy provides a conceptual framework for understanding the power dynamics and gender inequalities that exist within higher education institutions. In addition, it explains the systemic barriers and biases that hinder the representation of women in senior positions. Analyzing the role of patriarchy helps deepen the understanding of gender discrimination and contributes to efforts aimed at promoting gender equity within higher education institutions. Therefore, the purposes of this study, six patriarchal constructs will be briefly discussed below.

2.3. The patriarchal mode of production

In terms of the patriarchal mode of production, the role of housewives is undervalued, whereas the husbands are the expropriating class (Kigodi, 2013). The job of the housewife is underestimated or undermined as it does not generate income for, she is not paid for the work. Women are doing several jobs, such as taking care of the household roles, caring for their families and productive/office work as well, despite all these, they are still on the periphery of socio-economic development. Promotion requirements in higher institutions of learning do not include women's special needs, so female academics serve long hours of free domestic work, giving them less or no opportunity to be more effective in productive work, primarily in research and publications. In fact, this researcher holds the same opinion with that of the ILO (2017) which argues that women, on a global scale, overwork themselves compared to men. In higher learning institutions, female academics must balance different workloads and be able to meet the promotion requirements irrespective of their conditions. The different types of workloads of female academics, pertaining to patriarchal relations and paid work, will be explored below.

2.4. Patriarchal relations in paid work

Women are often exploited at their workplaces and in addition perform long hours of free domestic work (Sultana, 2010; Wood, 2013). In institutions of higher learning, female academics are more concentrated in junior lecturer and lecturers' positions, compared to their male counterparts; their responsibilities are more focused on the workload of classes and the supervision of large numbers of students, making it very difficult for them to concentrate on such issues as research, writing of articles and publishing as means towards promotions (Merchant and Wallace, 2013; Muleya, 2017). Furthermore, female academics are obliged to carry out household tasks and take care of their families when they get home, unlike their male counterparts who have more time for article writing workshops and publications that give them more opportunities to meet the requisite promotional criteria. This then leads to patriarchal relations within countries / states and how they tend to perpetuate patriarchy, as explicated below.

2.5. Patriarchal relations in the state

The state is basically biased towards patriarchal interests (Wood, 2013). These interests bring a lot of dividends to the state and men in particular. Patriarchal relations in the state provide men with authority and power over women with negative consequences, such as male violence is perpetuated as a technique for submission. This, type of violence is usually unleashed by the state on to those organizations and movements that are not conforming to the dictates of the state.

2.5.1. Male violence

The states' refusal to act against male violence shows their tolerance of violence against women, by men (Klaasen, 2018). Male violence is used as a subordination method, as well as a way to establish an unequal balance of power between men and women. It also serves to induce submissiveness in others; it is defined by some scholars as a system of dominion. In academia, male aggression is expressed in high positions by male dominance, while females concentrate in low positions like junior lecturers and do all the hard work of undergraduate teaching. According to a study conducted by Muleya (2017), a lot of classroom work was allocated to female academics, therefore the males concentrated on postgraduate students who were doing research only. Heterosexuality has been found to also play a part in male domination and hegemony.

2.5.2. Heterosexuality

Sexuality is defined by the dominant patriarchal norms in a patriarchal society which dictates that heterosexuality is and should be the norm (Wood, 2013). Heterosexual relationships between men and women are considered the normal partnership within society. Females must wait for

their husbands to initiate sex and set the conditions for sexual encounters (such as using birth control and protection), and their husbands are supposed to be sexually dominating (Langeveldt, 2014). One can argue that besides heterosexuality there are also LGBTIs, although, patriarchal heterosexuality plays a vital role in stereotyping males as the leaders while females follow (Rudman and Glick, 2021). This is also apparent in institutions of higher learning, where advancement requirements do not consider women's unique needs, but instead expect them to perform both at home and at work, making it extremely difficult for them to meet the standards.

Cultural systems also give a view of the male rule, or what is referred to as “Machismo”, within different cultural institutions and how women have been traditionally displayed by the mass media (Wood, 2013). Cultural systems make it difficult for female academics to be promoted since they spend more of their working time on academic activities compared to male academics who spend more of their time on research activities (Mangolothi, 2019). This study will focus on patriarchy as an institutional structure of male domination in institutions of higher learning. Johnson (2014) explains patriarchy as androcentric and male-centred. Men are believed to be the bearers of authority and power, therefore, insinuating that they are far better leaders than women. Patriarchy deprives women of any authority or power; hence, it is one key aspect that oppresses women as male dominance creates power differences between men and women; as a result, women are treated as inferior in all aspects of their lives (Wood, 2013). In this study, patriarchy, is considered as an institutional structure which hinders female academics from ascending to higher positions. The development of gender disparities and patriarchy will be examined below to further explore patriarchy as an institutional structure.

2.6. The development of gender inequalities and patriarchy

Patriarchy has historically and still is at the heart of women's oppression (Barret, 2014). This is to suggest that, in addition to race, social status, and sexual orientation, patriarchy has long been blamed for many of the problems that women, especially black women, have faced (Akala, 2018). Patriarchy is described as a system of ideologies, values, beliefs, and practices that differentiates and propagates unequal relationships between men and women (ANC Gender Policy Discussion Paper, 2000, cited by Akala, 2016). The development of gender inequalities and patriarchy within institutions of higher learning can be traced back to historical and societal factors that have shaped power dynamics, social norms, and cultural expectations (Hills, 2015). Women have been subordinated by patriarchy in all domains of life (Akala, 2018, Mansingh and Khan, 2020) whether in the private spaces such as the home or public rooms, such as in - the workplace, education, politics and religion. By assigning women roles that are overwhelmingly feminine and inferior, social systems and cultural norms reassert and reproduce male superiority and female inferiority.

Women are largely invisible because they are not involved in major decision-making processes. Institutions of higher learning have traditionally been led and governed by men (Ford, 2019). O'Conner (2019) posits that the lack of female representation in leadership roles has perpetuated patriarchal power structures, where decision-making processes and policies often reflect male perspectives and interests. The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions reinforces gender inequalities within institutions (Chacha, 2021). Social construction theorists support this view, arguing that patriarchy affects gender relations and the determination of privileges and disadvantages in established social spaces (Zulu, 2016). Patriarchy is an ideological construct of a culture encompassing philosophies, views, principles, and behaviors underpinning the organization and structure of society, resulting in unequal power status between women and men, according to the ANC Gender Policy Discussion Paper (2012) and Maseko (2013).

Patriarchal beliefs influence women's subjugation and subordination in all aspects of life, starting with the home. It is a long-standing and pervasive phenomenon that has been reinforced by social activities and institutions, such as education, employment, religion, culture, the arts, and the media, and has come to be regarded as "normal, God-given, or part of the tradition and culture" (Adisa, Cooke and Iwowo, 2019). According to Akala (2016), patriarchy was viewed as a noble obligation bestowed upon men to take over the leadership and security of their families in medieval times.

Zengele (2014) demonstrated that patriarchy bolstered male dominance over female and is a common denominator of the South African nation. Patriarchy supports a falsehood built on a perception of women as mentally and physically inferior, and these falsehoods have been internalized by most women; they have embraced the status quo that has been established and fuelled by gender stereotyping over time even in the institutions of higher learning. Female academics are mostly in low position due to gender stereotyping that has made them not believe in themselves and not to support other female academics who aspire to be leaders (Muleya, 2017).

In a patriarchal higher institution of learning, the peculiarities, multiple roles, and challenges faced by women are often undermined or overlooked when considering them for senior job positions (Morley, 2013). Most senior leadership positions are often dominated by men and this lack of gender diversity in leadership reinforces existing power structures and perpetuates male perspectives and interests (Ford, 2019; Davis et. al., 2020). Women in academia face barriers and biases when navigating these structures, making it more difficult for them to attain senior positions especially when the patriarchal institutions often uphold gendered expectations and

stereotypes that perpetuate bias against women (O'Connell and McKinnon, 2021). De los Reyes (2017) and Kerner (2017) posit that women face challenges in balancing multiple roles, and these challenges are usually dismissed or not adequately accommodated in the evaluation process for senior positions. This bias can lead to undervaluing or dismissing the unique skills, experiences, and perspectives that women bring to the table (Curtis, 2015). She further argues that diverse experiences, such as caregiving responsibilities or work-life balance challenges, are seen as a hindrance rather than valuable assets. The institutions fail to provide resources or support mechanisms that assist women in balancing work and family responsibilities, which can hinder their career progression (Chacha, 2021). Scholars such as Sinden (2017); Hill and Wheat (2017); Khan and Siriwardhane (2021) opine that creating inclusive and equitable environments that recognize and value the peculiarities of women is crucial. This includes implementing gender-sensitive policies, promoting mentorship and networking opportunities for women, ensuring transparent and bias-free evaluation processes, and fostering an organizational culture that respects and accommodates the multiple roles and challenges faced by women (Sinden, 2021; Khan and Siriwardhane, 2021).

2.7. Gender mainstreaming in Higher education

Gender mainstreaming is a systemic integration of women's and men's situations, priorities, and needs in all policies, with the goal of promoting gender equality; mobilizing all general policies and measures, specifically for the goal of achieving gender equality (Zvobgo, 2015; Kameshwara & Shukla, 2017). Gender mainstreaming, therefore, is a policy designed to achieve the goal of equality between the sexes in society. Gender mainstreaming in institutions of higher learning refers to the integration of gender perspectives and considerations into all aspects of the institution's policies, programs, and practices (Andersson, 2018). It involves recognizing and addressing gender inequalities and promoting gender equity as a core principle within the institution. In this study, gender mainstreaming is seen as a means of achieving equity in institutions of higher education by awareness-raising and educating of key stakeholders as the costs of women's marginalization and gender inequalities are paid for by all in the education sector. Gender mainstreaming policies were introduced in South Africa, in 2000s; this incorporated a gender perspective into policies, programmes and projects (Kameshwara & Shukla, 2017). Gender mainstreaming focuses or concentrates more on gender compared to other approaches which focus on women and opportunities that favour women (Ndanduleni, 2017). It begins with the integration of gender considerations into institutional policies and strategic plans. This involves developing gender-responsive policies that explicitly recognize and address gender inequalities within the institution (Segalo, 2015). Kameshwara & Shukla (2017)

argues that policies related to recruitment, promotion, retention, and career development should be reviewed and revised to ensure equal opportunities for men and women. Therefore, gender mainstreaming has been designed as a tool to challenge the rigid and deep-rooted cultural beliefs that continue to perpetuate gender inequality, which remains a major challenge faced by South African society and its institutions (Segalo, 2015). Furthermore, gender mainstreaming is crucial as it involves promoting gender-responsive governance and decision-making within the institution (Goswami, Balakrishnan, Vinotha Chopra, Sivakumar and Chetan (2023). This includes ensuring gender-balanced representation in leadership positions and decision-making bodies. Hence establishing transparent and inclusive processes for decision-making, recruitment, and promotion can help address gender disparities and promote equal opportunities for all (Goswami et.al, 2023).

Gender mainstreaming consists of three perspectives - equal opportunities\equal treatment in policies, the women perspective, and the gender perspective (Andersson, 2018). These three perspectives are discussed in detail below. The gender perspective is formulated to recognize where policies might have a differential impact on women and men and to adjust the policies in question such that they promote gender equality. In this study the notion of gender mainstreaming was helpful because it has relevant perspectives such as “women perspective” which helped in understanding why female academics remain under-represented in senior positions, despite the same promotion criteria being used in institutions of higher learning.

2.7.1. The women perspective “Special treatment”

Special treatment refers to special measures taken on behalf of the disadvantaged, for example, women, to level the playing field with a view of achieving equality of outcome. The implication is that equality for women does not necessarily mean living the same way as men, therefore, all workers should be protected on the basis of their special needs, thereby, advocating for different but equal approach (Walby, 2012). In this study “special treatment” is a means or way of looking at measures taken to help female academics to meet the promotion criteria required. Gender mainstreaming is impossible to achieve without addressing the core causes of gender discrimination in higher education, consequently, gender discrimination in higher education will be examined below.

2.8. Gender discrimination in Higher education

Gender inequality can be traced back to the workforce at certain periods and backgrounds in culture. According to Davis (2015), women continue to face discrimination in job opportunities and disparities in power, based on their gender. Despite several reforms by the government for inclusion of women in employment, women’s promotion rate has always remained behind

compared to men's promotion rate in South Africa; this trend is also taking place in some universities. My opinion is similar to Davis (2015) given some of the current statistics in institutions of higher learning in South Africa, provided by Mangolotho (2019) that, out of 26 higher education institutions, only four are led by women. These are - Thoko Mayekiso at the University of Mpumalanga, Sibongile Muthwa at Nelson Mandela University, Mamokgethi Phakeng at the University of Cape Town, and Xoliswa Mtose at the University of Zululand. This only shows that despite all the attempts made by the government to include women in employment and promotions, female academics in higher education institutions remain under-represented in higher positions.

Kameshwara and Shukla (2017) opine that, although, women's qualifications are increasing, still they remain under-represented concerning management positions, all over the world in all kinds of professions. Numerous studies highlight the presence of gender bias and discrimination in promotion processes within higher education institutions. Research by Khan and Siriwardhane (2021) found that women face systemic barriers, including biased evaluations, limited access to mentorship, and gendered expectations that hinder their progress towards senior positions. Women perceive that promotion decisions are influenced by gender rather than merit, this leads to a sense of disillusionment and reduced aspirations. The authors continue to argue that despite there being no significant difference in productivity between men and women as managers, women suffer from discrimination and gender inequality in all societies. Airini, *et al.*, 2011 as well as Midson and Wilson (2011) report that, although, there are a few women who advance to leadership roles in institutions of higher learning, gender imbalance among senior university academics is still an unacknowledged problem in many countries. The researcher is of the same view as Airini, *et al.*, (2011) as there are more women in academia but most of them are unable to break the glass ceiling to reach top leadership positions, hence, they remain in low positions such as junior lecturers, lecturers and senior lecturers. According to Fotaki (2013), women's relative absence from senior academic roles is a deep-seated problem requiring cultural and generational adjustment, as the situation is not a product of bad policy or erratic implementation.

The lack of female academics in senior positions can be seen at a Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province, where most management positions are filled by men, not because no woman is qualified for the positions, but because the institution may still be adhering to gender stereotypical approaches to electing its top management team. This is supported by the views of Paustian- Underdahl *et al.*, (2014) who assert that, although more women are assuming leadership roles than before, the notion of a woman as a leader is still a foreign concept to many individuals, both male and female alike. This proves that women are not under-represented in

senior positions due to not qualifying but rather are being discriminated against on the basis of their gender (Khan and Siriwardhane, 2021). Discussing gender discrimination in this study is essential since the promotion criteria being used at a Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province, where this study is located, will be used to understand the gendered patterns of promotions since the inception of the University. Therefore, this study emphasizes the need to challenge patriarchal structures and biases within academia that limit women's career advancement opportunities.

2.9. Policy of mainstreaming women in higher institutions

Gender mainstreaming policy is an approach that aims to integrate a gender perspective into all policies, programs, and activities to promote gender equality and address gender disparities (Kameshwara & Shukla, 2017). It involves incorporating a gender lens throughout the entire policy process, from formulation to implementation and evaluation (Segalo, 2012). Mainstreaming women in higher institutions of learning in South Africa is an important step towards achieving gender equality and promoting inclusivity within academia (Mabokela and Mlambo, 2017). In other terms, the primary theoretical purpose of mainstreaming women in higher institutions of learning is to achieve gender equality. By integrating gender perspectives into all aspects of the institution, including policies, programs, and practices, the policy aims to address gender disparities and to create a level playing field for both men and women (Ford, 2016; Tildesley, Lombardo and Verge, 2022). The policy calls for the integration of gender perspectives and the advancement of women in all aspects of higher education, including governance, decision-making, curriculum development, research, and student support (Igiebor, 2021). Mabokela and Mlambo (2017) are in line with the above statement by adding that gender mainstreaming policy seeks to ensure equal opportunities, rights, and access to resources, allowing women to participate fully and thrive in all areas of academic life.

However, despite the existence of this policy, authorities of higher institutions of learning in South Africa often fail to comply with its principles, resulting in ongoing gender disparities and limited progress in gender mainstreaming efforts (Mhlanga, 2013). According to Hills (2015) one of the reasons for the failure to comply with the policy of mainstreaming women in higher institutions of learning is the lack of commitment and awareness from authorities. Arguing that some institutions may not prioritize gender equality as a strategic goal or fail to recognize the importance of integrating gender perspectives into all aspects of their operations (Hills, 2015; Ford, 2016). Therefore, without a genuine commitment to the policy, progress towards gender mainstreaming remains limited. Tildesley, Lombardo and Verge (2022) concur that, while the policy of mainstreaming women in higher institutions of learning exists, its translation into concrete,

gender-sensitive policies and practices is still lacking. Management seems to not have yet developed comprehensive policies that address gender disparities, promote equal opportunities, and foster inclusive environments (Ford, 2016). And this gap in policy development and implementation continues to perpetuate gender inequalities within institutions.

Furthermore, despite the policy of mainstreaming women, women in academics continue to be underrepresented in senior management and decision-making roles (O' Conner, 2019). Indicating that institutional authorities may be failing to prioritize efforts in ensuring gender-balanced representation in leadership positions, limiting the impact of gender mainstreaming initiatives. Eddy and Ward (2017) argue that higher institutions of learning in South Africa were failing to comply with gender mainstreaming policy because they have no robust mechanisms in place to hold institutions accountable for their gender mainstreaming efforts. And without effective monitoring and evaluation, progress remains slow, and non-compliance with the policy goes unchecked (Eddy and Ward, 2017). In addition, resistance to change and underlying gender bias within institutions can also impede compliance with the policy (Mgcotyelwa, 2017). Especially if some authorities and individuals may hold onto traditional gender roles and resist efforts to challenge patriarchal norms. This resistance can hinder the advancement of gender mainstreaming initiatives and perpetuate gender disparities (Mgcotyelwa, 2017). To address these challenges, it is crucial for higher education authorities in South Africa to prioritize gender equality and actively comply with the policy of mainstreaming women (Tildesley et. al., 2022). By taking concrete actions to comply with the policy, authorities can contribute to a more inclusive and equitable higher education system in South Africa. Please find enclosed, comments from the external examiner. Please correct your dissertation quickly as per the comments and also get someone who can help you to bring the turn-it -in report to at least 20% as per the requirements. This then brings us to the discussion of male hegemony and positions of power that are abused especially in institutions of higher learning.

2.9.1. Male hegemony in positions of power in institutions of higher learning

Male hegemony in positions of power within institutions of higher learning refers to the predominant representation and influence of men in senior leadership roles and decision-making positions (Davis, 2015). This phenomenon reflects a gendered power structure that perpetuates the marginalization and underrepresentation of women in academia (Morley, 2013). Male hegemony is evident in the significant underrepresentation of women in top leadership positions, such as university vice-chancellors, DVC's, Deans, and HOD's (O'Connor, 2019). Research consistently shows a gender gap in these roles, with men occupying most positions of power. These disparities result in a lack of diverse perspectives and decision-making processes that

reflect the interests and needs of women (Khan and Siriwardhane, 2021). The glass ceiling is a metaphorical barrier that prevents women from advancing to higher positions in their careers (Johns, 2013). In academia, the glass ceiling manifests as an invisible barrier that limits the promotion and career progression of women (Diehl, 2014; Muleya, 2017). Male hegemony contributes to this effect by reinforcing gender biases, creating an environment that disadvantages women and obstructs their path to senior positions.

Furthermore, there are certain academic disciplines and fields which traditionally have been male dominated, perpetuating male hegemony. For example (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) disciplines, historically had fewer women, and this underrepresentation extends to senior academic positions within those fields (O'Connor, 2020). The dominance of men in specific disciplines contributes to a gender imbalance in positions of power. In addition, male hegemony in positions of power in institutions of higher learning is further perpetuated by gender bias in hiring and promotion (O'conner, 2019). According to Eddy and Ward (2017) biased evaluation criteria, subjective decision-making, and gendered expectations favor men therefore making it more challenging for women to break through the barriers and reach positions of power. However, scholars such as Khan and Siriwardhane (2021) argue that institutions of higher learning can create an environment that encourages women's representation and leadership which contributes to a more equitable and inclusive higher education system through challenging and dismantling male hegemony. To deconstruct male hegemonic rule and egalitarianism in institutions of higher learning Garrett-Walker et. al., (2019) suggest that the Institutions of higher learning should develop and implement gender equality policies that explicitly address and challenge male hegemonic rule. However, Davies, Yarrow and Syed (2020) highlight that deconstructing male hegemonic rule and promoting egalitarianism in institutions of higher learning is a complex and ongoing process which requires sustained commitment, resources, and collaboration to challenge and transform deeply ingrained power structures and norms. Male hegemony can also be associated with toxic masculinities in institutions of higher learning.

2.9.2. Toxic masculinities in the institutions of higher learning

Toxic masculinity refers to a set of harmful and restrictive societal expectations and behaviors associated with traditional notions of masculinity (Garrett-Walker, Broussard and Garrett-Walker, 2019). It is a social construct that places emphasis on certain traits, such as dominance, aggression, emotional suppression, and the need to assert power and control over others (Matos, O'Neill and Lei, 2018). These scholars further elaborated that toxic masculinity was characterized by rigid gender roles and expectations that can be detrimental to both men and women (Matos, O'Neill and Lei, 2018). However toxic masculinities in institutions of higher learning refers to the

adherence to harmful and rigid norms of masculinity that perpetuate gender inequalities and contribute to the underrepresentation of female academics in senior positions (Garrett-Walker et. al., 2019). These norms often reinforce power imbalances, gender stereotypes, and discriminatory practices (O'conner, 2019).

Matos, O'Neill and Lei (2018) further opine that toxic masculinities uphold traditional gender roles and reinforce stereotypes that associate leadership, authority, and power primarily with men. This reinforces the notion that men are more suited for senior positions and marginalizes women. White (2023) argues that toxic masculinity can create an environment that discourages women from aspiring to leadership roles or devalues their qualifications and competencies. Female academics may face exclusion, bullying, or dismissive attitudes, which impede their career progression and ability to reach senior positions (White, 2023). Ford (2019) and O'conner ((2020) argue that toxic masculinities discourage questioning or challenging the existing power structures and gender biases within institutions. This then perpetuate a culture of complacency and resistance to change. Male academics who adhere to toxic masculinity norms may be less likely to advocate for gender equality or actively support the career advancement of their female colleagues (Ford, 2019). The toxic masculinity norms can perpetuate the unequal distribution of labour and hinder women's ability to dedicate themselves fully to their professional development (Matos, O'Neill and Lei, 2018). The preceding discussions demonstrated that female academics encounter problems in advancing to senior positions, hence, the section below covers female academics' challenges in climbing the promotion ladder.

2.10. Challenges in climbing the promotion ladder.

Career advancement for most women is extremely difficult or slow due to multiple societal factors. Women have multiple roles/ tasks which form part of the barriers towards their career advancement or progress. Hui (2014) discovered that long working hours expected at the workplace was a significant contributing barrier to promotions for majority women in the universities. Studies conducted by Mupambirei (2013) and Hart (2016) regarding the experiences of female lecturers in the Universities of Nigeria revealed that women have challenges in fulfilling both cultural and societal roles in addition to their role as lecturers. Many female lecturers are wives and mothers who must find a way to balance between their work and family life. Unfortunately, according to Maseko (2013), most of these women end up with role conflict. Lukaka (2013) and Pierce (2017) reiterate that in addition to the roles many women hold in universities, they also remain the primary caretakers for their families, therefore, this makes it very difficult for them to climb higher in academia as it will demand more of their time and attention.

Maseko (2013) echoes the same line of argument as he points out that women do have the potential to bring about transformation, however, they lack opportunities due to lack of time and given their multiple roles as bread winners, wives as well as mothers (Rafnsdottire and Heijstra, 2013). Other scholars, such as Baker and Saville (2008; 2014) hold a different view and posit that female academics, especially those who are married to male academics, are more likely to increase their productivity in a supportive atmosphere which encourages the advancement of women academics.

The attention and time of female academics are often divided between childbearing, childrearing, and a career. Female heads of academic departments, unlike ordinary women lecturers, experience a 'triple' role conflict, as they must juggle their workplace roles (for example, jobs as lecturers), reproductive roles and community management roles (activities usually carried out by women for the benefit of the community) (Allliyu, 2016; Wilton and Ross, 2017). Other scholars in previous studies contend that men and women experience higher education differently and that social relations within the educational institutions depict inequalities in the operations of power as is evident in the statistics on access, employment, decision-making, welfare and capacity to access research and professional opportunities (Potokri, 2013; Jayachandran, 2015).

My own point of view regarding this matter is that the pattern is changing, albeit exceedingly slowly with more couples sharing domestic responsibilities and juggling careers with great ingenuity and frequently at great cost to personal relationships. Institutions of higher learning could review their promotion criteria and ascertain reasons most female academics fail to meet the criteria unlike their male counterparts; this process would infuse the special needs of women which will make the workload of female academics easier and manageable both at home and institution, only then the presentation of women in higher positions would be achieved. It is in this regard that the promotion processes and criteria at some institutions of higher learning are discussed below.

2.11. Promotion processes and criteria

Universities have their own rules, legislation, and qualifications for promotion. The promotional moves are typically based on joint decisions of various committees, senior academics as well as officials at universities. University boards and officials are usually dominated by males. This has implications for their work, as they set the rules, regulations, and standards for promoting that seem not to meet women's needs. This is supported by Sadiq, Barnes, Price, Gumedze and Morrell (2019) who argue that as much as the system of academic promotion provides a mechanism for the achievements of staff to be recognised, it was also recognised as a mechanism that created or reflected inequalities, especially with certain groups rising to the top more readily

than others. These committees' debates are often dominated by the male perspective; such condition also affect the implementation of the requirements for promotion and the adjudication and evaluation of the promotion process (Subbaye, 2017).

The elevation to full professor also largely depends on the quality of work (Altbach, 2015). Most women have a disadvantage because their research output is usually lower compared to their male counterparts. University committees and officials adjudicating the promotion process seldom consider the output of women which have often been compromised by women's dual or triple roles. This aligns with the quote of Sadiq *et. al.*, (2019) - *"When procedures for promotion decisions are standardized and criteria for decisions are well established, qualified women may fare at least as well as qualified men. When procedures are not standardized, or when criteria for promotion decisions are unspecified or vague, there may be more occasions for gender-related biases favouring men which affect the outcomes of the promotion process"*.

The above quotation clearly brings to light the need to have promotion criteria that benefit both male and female academics. Male-dominated university committees and male officials often, as Altbach (2015) and Subbaye (2017) attest, rely on research output of the individual applicants for appraisal during the promotion process. They emphasise the increasing significance of university rankings, where indicators of university performance focus on research rather than on teaching and learning. This explains the dependence on research as a criterion to assess senior lecturers and professors for promotion, however, this practice is beginning to face criticism because it is seen as discriminating against women for senior academic positions. Sadiq, (2019) maintains that policies that "do not take career interruption into account or which focuses primarily on research as a criterion for promotion disadvantages women and such policies would in effect constitute barriers to their promotion".

One can argue that this kind of discrimination against women climbing the academic ladder seems a deliberate act, otherwise, institutions of higher learning would make it a point that all the necessary needs for women to be productive in research are met. Several universities around the world, however, have begun to create alternative routes and consider more than just work effectiveness for promotions (Probert 2013; Subbaye, 2017). Universities in South Africa recognize teaching as part of their promotion criteria. The application of this law is, however, restricted to junior positions, therefore the minimum requirements for promotion to higher levels are biased towards research, at the expense of teaching (CHE, 2015; Sadiq, 2019). This means that if the requirements of promotion to senior positions is based on research production, men will continue to occupy those positions because they have time to do research, and write articles;

women will, therefore, continue to be under re- represented and do all the teaching at junior positions. The section below addresses the promotion criteria in Limpopo Province's universities.

2.12. Promotion Criteria in Limpopo Province Universities

The promotion criteria at a university in Limpopo, drafted in 2008, covered all the components of academic work - teaching, administrative experience, research output and community engagement (Molotsi, 2016). The barriers to women's advancement in academia is usually, the conflict between their work/life roles, Molotsi (2016) suggests that women who seek to be promoted to senior and leadership positions should be able to balance their academic work and home roles to meet the promotion criteria. I tend to disagree with Molotsi (2016) because women are not failing to meet the promotion criteria due to lack of balance between their work roles but because their workload is excessive and the requirements for research production also put them under pressure. In comparison to their male counterparts, women find themselves overburdened by their double or triple roles and these make it extremely difficult for them to meet the promotion criteria particularly because they fail to produce the research output required.

Most African academic women who are junior lecturers are often given more classes to teach which contributes to poor research output compared to men who have fewer classes and have ample time to conduct research (Mangolothi, 2019). Consequently, women are unable to publish, which adversely affects their career advancement. The promotion criteria can be considered equal for male and female academics if they also embrace all the needs and requirements of women as they do for male academics. This can only be accomplished if women are members of university committees and officials, for the male domination of such bodies has serious implications as the men set the rules, regulations and promotion criteria which barely cater for the needs of women. After discussing the promotion criteria in general, it is critical to determine whether higher education institutions have gender equity policies in place, and if so, whether or not they are used in the creation of promotion criteria. As a result, the following section will discuss this point.

2.13. Gender Equity in South African Universities

Gender equity in South African institutions is a course for concern. Only three of the 26 Vice Chancellors of South African Universities are women, according to the 2007 HESA (Higher Education South Africa) Report (Machika 2014; Sebola, 2015). Women continue to make up a modest fraction of universities' registrars, deputy vice chancellors, and executive directors as compared to men. This result demonstrates that the country still has a long way to go in terms of equating women and men in South African HEIs. Professor Irene Moutlana of Vaal University of

Technology, Professor Nthabiseng Ogude of Tshwane University of Technology, and Professor Cheryl de la Rey of the University of Pretoria are the three women Vice-Chancellors (Higher Education South Africa) Report (Machika 2014; Sebola, 2015). Professor Thoko Mayekiso would have been the fourth female Vice Chancellor of the newly founded University of Mpumalanga if Professor Ogude had not resigned from Tshwane University of Technology, due to a fear of failing to deal with student unrest on campus (Makhanya, 2013). Professor Thoko Mayekiso was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University of Mpumalanga in 2014. Prof Moutlana, like Prof Ogunde, did not have it easy as a female Vice-Chancellors, and have had to deal with student and union protests on a regular basis. The appointment of women as vice-chancellors at two South African institutions (Nelson Mandela University and the University of Cape Town) in 2017 and 2018, however, still demonstrate that only about 19 per cent of vice chancellors in South Africa are females (Toni & Moodly, 2019) and only 27.5 percent of professors (out of a total of 2218) are female (Naidu, 2018). Women's underrepresentation in higher academic ranks contrasts with their presence in greater numbers in the lower ranks (Toni & Moodly, 2019). Burkinshaw and White (2017) found that one of the main causes of women's underrepresentation in universities is the gendered power dynamics in universities, which perpetuate entrenched inequalities.

This demonstrates that female academics have many challenges, particularly when it comes to obtaining senior positions, and even when they do, they must demonstrate their leadership abilities; as a result, universities remain gendered institutions (Moodly & Toni, 2017). Even with the existence of gender-equity rules in higher education institutions, female academics continue to lag significantly behind their male counterparts, and achieving equity will require considerably more than simple regulations on paper.

While much has been stated about the crucial need for women's empowerment via education, less has been said about how negative educational experiences have damaged girls' learning outcomes (Barieya, Sanger & Moolman 2014; Sebola, 2015). Due to its previous apartheid policy, which created racial equality concerns, South Africa scores substantially low on the topic of fairness. In South Africa, the struggle for equality extends far beyond gender to include racial prejudices as well (Dryding, 2019). The foregoing argument by Dryding demonstrates that South Africa still has a long way to go. Gender equality can only be achieved if there is no gender discrimination in leadership, hence the perceptions on leadership gender discrepancies will be examined next.

2.14. Effects of low representation of female academics on South African educational growth and development

Low representation of women in senior academic positions has significant implications for educational development, particularly in relation to girls' education and overall educational growth and development in South Africa (Subbaye and Vithal, 2017). The Under-representations of women in senior positions means that girls and young women have limited access to visible role models in academia (Allen, 2018). Yousaf (2018) concurs that role models play a crucial role in aspiring and empowering girls to pursue higher education and aspire to leadership positions. Therefore, the absence of female role models can hinder girls' motivation and confidence in pursuing academic careers, leading to lower enrollment rates and limited educational aspirations. When women are underrepresented in senior positions, their unique insights and contributions are often overlooked (Davies, Yarrow and Syed, 2020). This lack of diverse perspectives hampers educational growth and development by limiting the range of ideas, approaches, and knowledge available within institutions (Goswami et. al., 2023). More-so it stifles creativity, innovation, and critical thinking that can emerge from diverse voices and experiences (Mahlaula, 2019).

Furthermore Moodly and Toni (2015) add that, the low representation of female academics has greater impact on South African educational growth and development because their under-representations in senior academics positions results in a significant loss of Knowledge, expertise and contributions to research and innovation. Low representation of women further limits opportunities for collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and interdisciplinary research which are vital for educational growth and development (Guerrero, 2017). It undermines efforts to achieve gender equality in education and wider society, hindering progress towards inclusive and equitable educational development. Other scholars such as Nyoni and He (2019) mentioned that the underrepresentation of women in senior positions limits the influence on policy development and decision-making processes within educational institutions. This hampers the development of gender-responsive policies and practices that address the specific needs and challenges faced by girls and women in education. The absence of women's perspectives in policy discussions can perpetuate systemic barriers and impede educational growth and development (Griffin, 2019).

2.15. Perceptions of Leadership and Gender Differences

In South Africa, opinions of gender inequalities in men's and women's leadership abilities are also influenced by race. Stereotyping of black and colored women is rooted in their past work as maids in the houses of white employers. According to Sebola & Khalo (2010), referenced in Mkhonto (2019), South Africa is significantly influenced by gender stereotyping that women are of weaker sex and can rarely succeed in leadership positions. Maseko (2013) and Mkhonto (2019) believe

that there are both sociocultural differences and similarities between South African men and women managers in retail banking, arguing that male managers place greater emphasis on performance, competitiveness, and winning, as well as authority, control, and directive leadership, more than female managers. According to Grant (2005), as mentioned in Msila (2013), women leaders do not always receive the required backing from their communities and must often struggle to establish their leadership abilities in patriarchal societies. The issue of women's underrepresentation in leadership roles appears to be a global issue, as Fapohunda (2018) demonstrates that the proportion of women in paid work is lower than the number of men, worldwide.

According to Siemienska (2005), cited in Maseko (2013), cultural variables determine the degree of support for women candidates, as well as men and women's electoral conduct, while deeply ingrained traditional norms frequently obstruct women's equality in workplaces. Addai, Ofori, Bioh, and Avor (2017), aver that until recently, the prevailing perception of corporate management/leadership was structured and dominated by males with hierarchical, action-oriented, and even quasi-military leadership styles; the ideal leader was viewed as an independent, tough, individualistic hero. South African women suffer identical hurdles to progression and upward mobility as their female counterparts around the world, according to Molotsi (2016). South African career women, despite being talented, educated, and committed to their work, discover that misunderstanding and stereotyping can hamper their upward advancement.

It seems women are not regarded as prospective leaders, and they are frequently informed that their leadership abilities are inferior to those of traditional male leaders (Redmond, Gutke, Galligan, Howard and Newman, 2017). Posholi (2013) also reports on this viewpoint, stating that females complain of not feeling heard at meetings and that their comments and proposals were disregarded or dismissed, whereas men's opinions and proposals had an influence. Aiston and Jung (2015) stated that gender stereotyping plays a significant influence in the discrimination of female academics in top leadership positions. Discrimination, stereotyping, prejudice, family demands, and a lack of opportunity for women, according to Lukaka (2013), cause them to lose their desire to succeed.

Leadership has traditionally been associated with masculinity and the assumption that males are better leaders than women, although the emergence of feminist views in recent years has reduced such strong beliefs (Mollel & Tshabangu, 2014); only recently has it become obvious that women can rise to positions of leadership. Women's leadership has increased in recent decades, particularly in Africa, following the ratification of the Beijing Conference in 1995, but women

representation and involvement in the public arena remain low. People tend to perceive males as knowledgeable, skilled, assertive, and able to get things done, and hence impute leadership to males, while women are perceived as warm, expressive, quiet, soft, and lacking confidence, according to Posholi (2013). Maseko (2013) believes that males lead, and women follow in African society. Women leaders have traditionally been mistrusted and undervalued due to reasons such as culture and customs (Mestry & Schmidt, 2012). According to Odeyinka, Okorie, and Eboiyehi (2019), some women were even denied jobs despite their qualifications because it was thought that they would be a distracting influence, such as in a laboratory where only men worked. According to feminists, men's traditional position as the family's main earner is now increasingly being shared by their wives, while the wife's position as the family's homemaker is rarely shared equally with her husband.

Men are thought to be better leaders than women because of their masculinity. According to Maseko (2013), women held 18.7% of full professorships and only 19.3% of presidency positions (Vice-Chancellors of colleges and universities). Current statistics by Mangolothi (2019) reflect that, out of 26 higher education institutions in South Africa, only four are led by women, showing that men dominate the governing and managerial levels of higher education institutions. More sobering is the possibility that women's interests in institutions would not be adequately protected, and that women will have few or no role models and mentors; something that could have far-reaching implications for the development of future female leaders. From this perspective, accepting the claim of Maseko and Khosa's (2013; 2016) that women professors in higher education do not arise out of nowhere. Other experts think that women must be provided with equal opportunity and training to thrive and compete with their male counterparts. Mathevula (2014) claims that women, despite holding equivalent educational degrees, are under-promoted in comparison to men. Women, it is claimed, are not naturally nor cognitively predisposed to invest time, money, or effort in the success of their professions in the academic field. The next section covers the challenges that women confront in higher education institutions.

2.16. Obstacles that women face in higher education institutions.

Individuals can be provided with the chances, resources, and impetus to realize their professional and personal potential through a training academy; it is the obligation of higher education institutions to guarantee that these chances and resources are available and that growth barriers are reduced (Miller and Miller, 2002; Aleixo, Leal and Azeiteiro, 2018). Many equity theorists consider universities as full of contradictions - one that is complicit with social disparities while still offering mobility and opportunity, according to Morley *et al.*, (2005), cited in Oleksiyenko (2018). While intersectional perspectives in literature highlight how perceptions of promotion and

aspirations are influenced by race, ethnicity, and other intersecting identities. Research by Kim, and O'Brien (2018) reveal that women from marginalized and underrepresented groups may face compounded barriers, including racism and discrimination, which impact their aspirations for senior academic positions. To back up this claim, Adusah-Karikari argues in Muleya (2017) that higher education institutions have come to be seen as necessary for a democratic society and a portal to the good life. He goes on to say that, although universities are typically portrayed as ideal and neutral institutions where men and women may rely on their own merits, this is not the case in most universities, including those in South Africa (Adusah-Karikari, 2008). Most studies/literature show that women in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are at a disadvantage due to restrictions that prevent them from progressing to senior management positions. According to Obonyo (2013), the under-representation of women in senior managerial roles within educational institutions continues to be a source of concern, especially because women make up majority of the teaching force.

Adusah-Karikari, cited in Muleya (2017), explains that economic globalization has resulted in a situation where the most valued activities reflect individualist, rather than community values, and competitive, rather than cooperative behaviors. Scholars are fighting against one another in a society that favours men over women. This competitive environment weakens institutional community and is more likely to showcase aspects of macho culture that are believed to be hostile to women (Muleya, 2017), however, this is not the only challenge that female academics face, as they must also deal with the challenges of parenting, which will be discussed below.

2.16.1. Motherhood challenges experienced by mothers.

Some feminist researchers emphasize the family's oppressive role in women's lives. The theory focuses on traditional gendered roles, such as motherhood's passive and pathologizing function (Stephenson, 2011; Muleya, 2017). Motherhood has been depicted as a biological necessity, an integral part of womanhood, and a requirement for all women. Robinson (2016) posits that motherhood plays a significant role in African women's lives; they have been socialized to believe that childbirth and mothering provide meaning and stability to their lives through various medical and psychological discourses. Makgoka (2016) backs this argument, claiming that due to their upbringing; most female educators prefer to work for their families than look for jobs outside the home. Previously, women professors in Nigeria were denied maternity leave under the university law, and some female academics were not allowed to marry or have children, according to Akahone, Rehman, and Matsoso (2020).

"It is presented as an ultimate expression of femininity and considered a woman's biological destiny that is inevitable and inherent in womanhood. On this basis, a woman is expected to

desire to conceive and give birth as well as develop a bond with the children to whom she gives birth” (Maqubela, 2013).

Gillespie, as stated in Clark (2012) and Sadeghi and Shahabi (2019), narrate that motherhood is regarded as a feminine gender identity, and women who choose not to be mothers face social scrutiny and shame from those who believe motherhood is the natural state for all women. They go on to say that childless women were considered selfish, unfortunate, psychologically defective, aberrant, and abnormal (Boateng, 2018.)

According to literature, both men and women struggle to strike a balance between family and work life as academic professionals and parents, but the challenge for women is higher than for men, given the simple mechanics of women's "biological clock," the physical rigors of pregnancy and delivery, and gendered expectations of family obligations (Ward and Wolf-Wendel, 2012; Rathgeber, 2013). Sometimes it becomes necessary for women's biological clocks, marriage, and childbirth to be postponed until after their careers have established themselves. Women's struggles to manage work and family lives have been documented in dozens of studies. According to a poll done by Rosser in 2004 and quoted by Case and Richley (2014), more than 70% of 450 female scientists and engineers working at research universities identified the need to manage work and family as the most significant impediment to their professional success.

Some women are hesitant to assume higher positions, especially those that require their full-time attention, due to their strong devotion to their families (Rathgeber, 2013). Most women are not prepared to take career developments that will take them away from their spouses and children, (Egunjobi (2009) and Mkhonto (2019), hence when given the choice between job progression in areas away from home and staying at home with their families in lower positions, most women would choose the latter, even though this would have been their best chance to breach the glass ceiling. The unwillingness to be geographically mobile, according to Haile, Emmanuel, and Dzathor (2016), reduces a woman's chances of obtaining suitable leadership positions because there may be several managerial positions in some geographical locations, and only those who are willing and able to relocate will be offered such opportunities. According to Hail et.al., (2016) the burden of combining work and family obligations is a major reason for the shortage of women in senior leadership positions. I agree with the view that female academics struggle to advance in their careers because they have so many tasks on their plates, and they cannot ignore any of them.

Women's multiple obligations, according to Tamir (2007), are stifling their professional growth as they are viewed as incapable of investing effectively in high-ranking, demanding roles because of putting their families first. Research by O'Connell and McKinnon (2021) shows that academic

women with children face more challenges in achieving senior positions, as they are often perceived as less dedicated or less productive compared to their male counterparts or childless women. In academia, the tenure-track process and demands of senior positions often require long hours, extensive travel, and high levels of dedication. Therefore, the perception of women regarding promotion and senior positions is often influenced by family responsibilities and the challenge of achieving work-life balance. Studies by Morley (2013) and Roebuck, Smith and Haddaoui (2013) highlight that women's aspirations may be tempered by concerns about managing multiple roles, including caregiving responsibilities. Women may perceive that senior positions require significant time commitments and sacrifice, making it difficult to reconcile career aspirations with personal life.

This can create barriers for women who are more likely to bear the burden of caregiving responsibilities and face societal expectations related to gender roles (Hail et.al., 2016). As a result, many talented female academics may opt for less demanding roles or choose to leave academia altogether, leading to their underrepresentation in senior positions. This bias contributes to the underrepresentation of female academics in senior roles. Mevers (2017), believes that women can advance to leadership roles in their workplaces if they choose to overcome the challenges that may be facing. Women, therefore, can climb to leadership positions, but only if they receive or have the necessary support, rather than being expected to solve their problems on their own. Ward and Wolf (2012), on the other hand, claim that some of these same women devote all their time to attaining tenure or promotion, leaving no time for networking having fun, or dating.

Uwizeyimana and Mathevula (2014), on the other hand, contend that many women today assume major roles in learning, work, and managerial structures of public and commercial organizations, in addition to being moms and wives. Most women continue to be the primary caregivers for their children in addition to their university responsibilities (Lukaka, 2013; Ngcobo, 2016). As time constraints and job expectations become more severe, many women are forced to choose between family and career. This causes women to multitask, and these numerous roles will be examined in the subtopic below.

2.16.2. Multiple roles

Women's various roles/tasks are seen as an obstacle to their advancement in the workplace. Hui (2014) discovered that for many women in universities, the burden of long hours at the workplace was a major barrier to advancement. Women lecturers in Nigeria face challenges in fulfilling social and cultural roles in addition to their position as lecturers, according to Omar and Ogenyi (2004), cited in Mupambirei (2013). Majority of these female lecturers are wives and mothers who must

find a way to reconcile work and family life, and sadly, women are often forced to play second fiddle in this role conflict (Maseko, 2013). Lukaka (2013), asserts that many women, in addition to their positions in universities, are also primary caregivers for their families, which makes it difficult for them to advance in academia, as the work will require more of their time and attention. This line of argument was further established by Ndangarembwa, as cited in Maseko (2013), who stated that women can transform, but they lack organisation due to a lack of time, given their multiple roles as breadwinners, wives, and mothers. To succeed in academia, according to Mansingh and Khan (2020), female academics must be able to break away from the popular public image of the mothering, nurturing woman whose duty it is to stay at home and care for the family.

Many women tend to prioritize family obligations over personal goals, sacrificing their skills and taking less challenging and prestigious roles to help them manage their various responsibilities (Mkhonto, 2019). Herbst (2020) goes on to say that hostile cultures lead to some women opting out of senior management as a self-preservation strategy; to avoid aspiring for something they believe is statistically improbable. Sadiq, *et al.*, (2019) however, argue that the issue is promotional requirements that do not recognize women's multiple positions nor their needs. Some researchers, such as Castaneda, Isgro and Saville (2013; 2014), disagree, claiming that women academics who are married to academic men are more likely to increase their productivity and that it is a supportive environment that allows academic women to advance.

Women, according to Sousa (2013) and Mansingh and Khan (2020) face the highest levels of tension between work and family since they are always required to carry out majority of family and household duties. To support this argument, Molebatsi, cited in Posholi (2013), states that while girls in Lesotho receive more education than boys, they still often fall into gender-specific Family practices take up a lot of time and prevent female employees from doing research and writing, which are some of the reasons there are so few female professors. Men are voicing support for a more balanced work-family life, since women are still required to perform majority of family and household duties, despite this, more women are still experiencing very high levels of tension between their dual roles (Posholi, 2013; Bhopal, 2020).

Women academics frequently must split their attention and time between childbearing, childrearing, and a career, according to Zulu (2009), cited in Raymond (2016); Mansingh, and Khan (2020); Bhopal (2020). Unlike ordinary women lecturers, female heads of academic departments face a "triple" position conflict. Scholars have argued that women and men have different experiences with higher education, and that social relations within educational institutions reflect power differences, as shown by literature on access, jobs, decision-making bodies,

healthcare, and capacity to access research and professional opportunities (Maseko, 2013). Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2017), believe that women must balance various positions in and out of the academy with little institutional support. This trend is transforming, although slowly, with more couples sharing domestic roles and balancing careers with great creativity and sometimes at great expense. Women as narrated, multitask, and they need support structures, hence, the topic of support structures is addressed next.

2.16.3. Structures that provide support

The lack of support systems adds to the difficulties women face in their career development. Women have several responsibilities and need assistance in achieving a healthy work-life balance. Many women experience a lack of pro-family public policies or support programs such as childcare in some organizations, and this tends to place pressure on women to balance their work and family obligations (Baker, 2017; Ooms, 2019). Mupambirei (2013) claims that women in academia often recognize the value of moral support from colleagues and superiors, in a study she conducted. Some companies provide social and organizational resources to their female executives; some colleges and government agencies have made allowances for more accommodating working arrangements, such as flextime, part-time jobs, job breaks, and family-friendly work practices, (Mupambirei, 2013).

Most lecturers, for example, have been given laptops, allowing them to operate effectively outside of the office. Both female and male lecturers are given laptops to use at the University of Venda, but there is still a shortage of flexi-time and job breaks; there is also sabbatical leave, which, however, does not cover every academic, particularly part-timer, as well as family-friendly policies. There were also a number of women's networks and mentoring programs (mostly at universities) that offer social, personal, and organizational support as well as advice and guidance to female executives (Burkinshaw and White, 2017). In some organization's women, however, are unaware that these programs exist, and they end up with mentors only when they are stressed (Mupambirei, 2013; Nxumalo, 2017). Mupambirei and Nxumalo argue that there is a lack of mentorship and networking; this will be examined as a subtopic below.

2.16.4. Lack of mentoring and networking

Women have the aptitude and capacity to be great leaders, according to Davis (2015), and Kubuabola, Rich, and Shah (2016), but they lack the mentorship, sponsorship, and networking opportunities that their male counterparts have. Smith Mckoy, Banauch, Love and Smith (2018) posit that men who dominate higher education top management are reluctant to mentor women. Thomas, Thomas and Smith (2019) argue that women have limited access to established

networks and collaborations, which impact their ability to publish and disseminate their research. According to Ayyala, Skarupski, Bodurtha, González-Fernández, Ishii, Fivush, and Levine (2019), when a male sponsors a female for an educational leadership position, he prefers to choose and sponsor a woman who appears passive and less intimidating, whom he believes he can manipulate for his gain. Males in leadership positions, according to Ayyala *et al.*, (2019), support and mentor one another and build a network to fill leadership and administrative positions with associates and protégés, while ignoring qualified women for those positions, primarily, to maintain the status quo of males in power over females. In addition, Bear, Cushenbery, London, and Sherman (2017), maintain that women receive less constructive objective feedback, which can help them improve their performance; in other words, women receive less positive and encouraging feedback than men, further exacerbating their disadvantage. The lack of positive feedback has significant implications for the development of women's leadership identities and advancement to senior leadership positions.

When it comes to recruiting processes, this is one of the dominant influences that males are thought to have. This statement is supported by DeFrank-Cole, Latimer, Neidermeyer & Wheatly (2016) who pointed out that when the selections or consideration of candidates to management positions, regardless of one's qualifications, organisations tend to be biased towards masculine qualities that naturally favour men over women. Female leaders face certain hurdles unlike their male counterparts, based on socio-cultural and traditional ideas; females may also face resistance and unwillingness to support that comes from other women who are expected to back them up and provide assistance (Maseko, 2013; Lawrence, 2018). Women who seek help and guidance from within their own ranks find this adversarial attitude on the part of women towards other women to be exceedingly detrimental and difficult to comprehend (Guerrero, 2017; Allen, 2018). I support the above sentiment, as most women when they ascend to leadership positions tend to rule with an iron fist especially towards other women; it is as if women in high positions want to prove the point that they are not as weak as stereotyped, rather, all that they are doing is hurting and discouraging other women who are like them and who need them as role models in order to climb the academic ladder. As a result, aspiring women do not receive the mentoring they require to assume leadership roles, which contributes to women's under-representation in leadership positions.

Yousaf (2018) maintains that most women in leadership positions do not offer aspiring women a helping hand or mentorship opportunities because they are power-hungry; they only want to keep their power by preventing other women from assuming similar positions due to a perceived threat to the formers' positions and authority. These threats originate from a sense and conviction that

there are few power positions available, and that the shared-power concept is not an option. According to Dopwell (2019), women leaders view interactions with other women leaders as unbeneficial and unwelcome, as men are perceived to be more helpful to one another than women. Some female leaders are viewed as envious, undermining, and obstructive, resulting in a low number of women who rise to positions of leadership. Mentoring and networking among women leaders become difficult as a result of this uncooperative behavior, obstructing women's growth since they lack the support, backing, motivation, and connections needed to get access to leadership positions (De la Pena, 2014; Babalola, du Plessis and Babalola 2021). This demonstrates that both women and men have a negative attitude towards mentoring aspiring women to leadership positions, implying that for transformation to occur, both female and male academics, in high positions, must modify their attitudes. Feminist theory emphasizes the importance of mentorship and networking in career progression (Hill and Wheat, 2017). Women in academia often face challenges in accessing mentorship and networking opportunities, which can be crucial for building professional relationships, receiving guidance, and accessing career-enhancing resources. The absence of female role models and mentors in senior positions can further exacerbate the lack of representation for women (Dopwell, 2019). Hill and Wheat (2017) posit that the absence of female role models and limited access to mentorship can impact women's perceptions and aspirations. Studies by Manongsong, and Ghosh (2021) indicate that the underrepresentation of women in senior positions leaves aspiring female academics with limited guidance and inspiration. Without visible role models and supportive mentors, women may perceive that the pathway to senior positions is difficult and uncertain.

2.16.5. Gender stereotyping

Scholars such as Powell (2014); Yousaf and Schmiede (2016) found that the male stereotype was viewed as stronger and more active across cultures. Higher needs for supremacy, autonomy, aggression, and accomplishment characterized the male stereotype, while a strong need for deference, nurturance, and association characterized the female (Muleya, 2017). According to Mathevula (2014) and Akala (2016), stereotyping and biases are linked to women's abilities and attitudes toward advancement. The authors claim that many women have internalized attitudes and role expectations towards men. This is reinforced by Mathevula's statement that "it is not entirely shocking that women are less likely to plan a career that requires leadership in a society where men are more likely to be leaders and where women have been stereotyped into playing a subordinate and supporting roles". Akala (2016) further argues that these stereotypes undoubtedly carry with them negative consequences as they undermine any member of a society of women (Mathevula, 2014). For instance, women who choose to behave in a confident,

aggressive, or independent manner are seen by the society as behaving inappropriately in terms of the societal gender norm (Vial, Napier and Brescoll, 2016). This causes social dissonance towards women as well as a negative perception of women, as certain gender stereotypes seem to imply that women should not exhibit the same violent, confident, and independent behavior as their male counterparts.

Morley (2013) and Nakitende (2019) believe that, even though many women may be trained, they need a specific personality and set of experiences to be efficient and effective as academic executives and managers. Many universities equate masculine traits, such as assertiveness, aggression, and task-oriented leadership skills with performance and achievement (Mayimele, Ndudzo and Ndlovu, 2020). Men view women who excel in managerial roles as being less physically attractive, 'unfeminine,' and having gender issues, according to Mathevula (2014). This is due to the stereotypical perception that women are less capable than men to handle managerial positions (Mansingh and Khan, 2020). Men traditionally had more access to research and publishing networks, as well as more domestic resources to promote research and improve promotion prospects, while women are directed into care, and supporting pastoral positions within universities, limiting their opportunities for self-advancement (Munyai, 2018). In Mahlaula, (2019), Adusah-Karikari (2008) argue that women have less chance of entering the academic profession, and when they do, they are promoted more slowly than men. Research has shown that female academics may receive less recognition and lower evaluations compared to their male counterparts, even when their qualifications and achievements are similar (Nakitende, 2019). Similarly, assigning women to lower classification levels puts them at an institutional disadvantage by lengthening the time it takes for them to advance academically and limiting their access to prominent committees and senior researchers with whom they could network and collaborate (Subbaye, 2017). According to Valerio (2009), quoted in Mkhonto (2019), stereotyping is harmful for both men and women and is responsible for the establishment of the glass ceiling. Women have lost self-confidence because of gender stereotyping; this will be discussed further in the subtopic below.

2.16.6. Absence of self-esteem and self-confidence

From a young age, women are trained to be submissive, whilst men are encouraged to be in command (Makgoka, 2016). Women's perceptions of themselves, according to Mestry and Schmidt (2012) and Msila (2013), influence their representation in leadership roles. Gobena (2014) and Labiso (2020), contend that the inability of most girls to express their personalities and reach their job potential also contributes to female-leadership underrepresentation. Majority of female teachers are progressing academically, although, some still believe women are not

capable of taking on leadership roles (Lumby & Azaols, 2011; Obers, 2014). Most women are afraid of assuming leadership positions, according to Uwizeyimana, Modiba, and Mathevula (2014); Ndebele (2018), because they are afraid that their male colleagues will not follow their instructions because of their gender. According to Webster (2020), Perceptions of self-confidence and impostor syndrome can affect women's aspirations. Research by Mkhonto (2019) suggests that women may experience self-doubt, feel like impostors, and underestimate their abilities, which can impact their confidence in seeking senior positions. Women, on average, tend to exhibit lower levels of self-confidence and self-promotion compared to men. These factors can influence their willingness to submit and promote their work for publication.

Herbst (2020) argues that women have lower expectations of success than men in many areas of achievement, which might be indicative of their tendency to underestimate themselves. While agreeing with both Mathevula and Ndebele's points of view, it must be pointed out that it is not only males who have difficulty following orders from females, women themselves tend to undermine other women in positions of leadership; hence, instead of assisting women in high positions, they employ a "bring her down" strategy. Perceived gender stereotypes and societal expectations may contribute to these perceptions (Krause, 2017). The revelation by Mupambirei (2013), Mbebera (2015), and Mkhonto (2019) that it is difficult for females to take on leadership positions at work until they can trust themselves and change their perceptions of themselves in regard to holding senior leadership positions. This is a powerful motivation that may mitigate their underrepresentation in leadership positions, however, lack of self-confidence or leadership self-efficacy is not the only barrier to women's career advancement, and they must also possess the qualifications required by promotion criteria.

2.16.7. Promotion criteria as a barrier to women carrier advancement

Most large universities and institutions have traditionally been dominated by a particular class of men; hence, university traditions and standards are shaped by men's life experiences; these practices are well-established and difficult to reform (Mohajeri, 2015). Recently, women have been hired in large numbers in institutions of higher learning and have made significant contributions, however, the power balance within these institutions still favours men. Gallant (2014) and Krause (2017) claim that women continue to be underrepresented in top leadership positions in higher education institutions, particularly at the executive levels of leadership, such as deans and chancellors, therefore, female academics face discrimination in terms of pay and promotion (Mohajeri, 2016). The syndrome of promoting 'people like us' leads to poor policies on women and prejudice against women in selection and promotion (Nguyen, 2013; Moodly and Toni, 2017). Gender equity initiatives and policy measures, such as Affirmative Action are

intended to ensure that men and women are treated equally in higher education recruiting, hiring, appointment, and promotion, however, these policies have not fully changed the gender equity situation (Mohajeri, 2016). Women's advancement in senior/management roles can be hampered by policies and promotion procedures in higher education that do not consider women's needs. Feminist theory calls attention to the ways in which institutional policies and practices perpetuate gender inequities. For example, the absence of family-friendly policies, such as flexible work arrangements and parental leave, can create barriers for women who want to balance their academic careers with caregiving responsibilities (Bodkin and Fleming, 2021). Similarly, the lack of transparent and equitable promotion processes can impede women's advancement to senior positions. Research and publishing is an important criterion for academic advancement, and women have a tough time satisfying this criterion because they do not have time to publish, consequently, research and publications will be examined below.

2.16.8. Research and publications

Publication is widely recognized as an important part of an academic career; it is not only a requirement for academic advancement and promotion around the world, but it is also a mark of true academic work (Chitsamatanga, 2014; Chitsamatanga, Rembe, and Shumba, 2018; Nafukho, Wekullo and Muyia, 2019). Various institutional demands, discipline distinctions, and the varying measurement of research performance, mean that the issue of research publications is very complicated. According to the literature, most female academics regard research publication as an obstacle to their career advancement and a mysterious process simply because they have not been exposed to a research culture, as a condition of employment until recently (Chitsamatanga and Rembe; 2019). I agree with the above assertion since many female academics are preoccupied with teaching and have little time to research and write papers, making it difficult for them to meet the promotion requirements. Female academics, according to Gaidzanwa in Chitsamatanga (2014) and Santos (2016), do less research than their male counterparts. Male academics conduct the majority of studies in South Africa, according to a report published in the Mail & Guardian in April 2012.

Female academics are at a disadvantage in terms of career advancement in universities because they are less active in article writing and publications (Chitsamatanga (2014) and Chitsamatanga *et al.*, 2018). Mabokela, cited in Chitsamatanga (2014), indicates that research publication is widely recognized as a core of an academic career and has become a prerequisite for advancement and promotion. Research output, as indicated by publication in peer-reviewed journals and receipt of research funding awards, is one of the indicators of scholarly performance and an essential criterion for academic promotions (Abebe, Tekle, and Sisay, 2021).

Furthermore, work-family friction, a lack of time due to concentrating on completing PhD studies, teaching, and heavy workloads all contribute to research becoming an obstacle to female academics and their career advancement (Chitsamatanga, 2014; Chitsamatanga 2018). Balancing family commitments and professional aspirations can be particularly demanding and may affect the number of articles published. Teaching is essential in every learning institution; however, female academics are disadvantaged as teaching cannot be compared to article writing and it is used as a promotional tool within universities (Chitsamatanga, 2014). Barrett and Barrett (2013) discovered that female academics are given additional workload that is often hidden, undetected, and unchallenged by female academics. Female academics, it seems, are assigned positions that are not conducive to improving their research publication or advancing their careers. Other barriers to female career advancement, according to Wright, Maylor, and Watson (2018), include a lack of senior mentoring colleagues, non-participation in scholarly conferences, language and technological challenges, heavy teaching and administrative loads, and a lack of funding. Some female academics who want to improve their research output continue to be disadvantaged by workload systems.

2.16.9. Organisational culture

Another impediment to women holding top management positions in South African universities is the organizational cultures. Moorosi (2019), states that the some of the challenges that women leaders face are usually embedded in the culture of the organization. Many organizational cultures are shaped by men's perceptions of what constitutes an effective manager and since most universities are dominated by men, in terms of power and influence, the cultures that prevail in them tend to favor men (Eddy, Ward & Khwaja, 2017). Cultural practices, thus, have entrenched structural barriers within organizations that prevent women from advancing to top management positions in universities. Traditional patriarchal structures govern social and work relations in most African countries (Person *et al.*, 2016). The perception of the organizational culture within higher education institutions plays a significant role in shaping women's aspirations (Longman, Daniels, Lamm Bray and Liddell, 2018). Research by Moodly and Toni (2017) emphasizes the importance of inclusive and supportive environments. Women may perceive institutional cultures as hierarchical, male-dominated, and resistant to change, which can dampen their aspirations and hinder their progress towards senior positions.

Workplace relations are another impediment to women assuming top management positions in universities. According to Pereira (20214) most employees, bond over shared interests and since historically, men have held majority of top management positions in universities, many women are unable to find female mentors to help them prepare for top management positions. Many

people prefer to work with mentors who are of the same gender because they are more likely to understand the challenges that they face. Women's mentorship requirements differ from men's requirements (Searby *et al.*, 2015; Mankayi and Cheteni, 2021). Male mentors are less likely to mentor a woman because they see women as more emotional, less skilled at problem-solving, and more vulnerable to workplace issues, as sexual harassment (Burkinshaw & White, 2017).

Previous studies conducted in South Africa have shed light on the persistent gender disparities in higher education. These studies have highlighted factors such as gender bias, discriminatory practices, cultural norms, lack of mentorship, work-life balance challenges, and systemic barriers as contributing factors to the underrepresentation of women in senior positions.

However, there is a need for more focused research specifically examining the representation of female academics in senior positions at the institutional level within South Africa, considering the unique context of a semi-metropolitan university in Limpopo Province. This study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing a detailed analysis of the factors that hinder the progress of women in academia in this specific setting.

By exploring the experiences, perspectives, and challenges faced by female academics in the Limpopo Province University, the study seeks to identify the systemic barriers that limit their representation in senior positions. Additionally, the study aims to propose recommendations and strategies to promote gender equity and create a supportive environment that enables the career advancement of women in academia.

2.15. SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

Firstly, this chapter explored patriarchy in higher education institutions, as well as the constructions of patriarchy and the evolution of gender disparities. Gender mainstreaming and gender discrimination were also delved into so that a clearer understanding of factors that lead to lack of promotion of women, in institutions of higher learning. Using a variety of sources, the chapter highlights empirical evidence to indicate that little has been done in South Africa to improve the under-representation of female academics in higher education institutions.

CHAPTER 3

Theoretical framework

3.1. Introduction

According to Molefe (2013), a theory is "a set of interrelated structures, terminologies, and propositions that give a systematic view of events by identifying relationships among variables with the goal of explaining and predicting phenomena." Delport, Fouché, and Schurink (2011) defined theoretical framework as "a system of ideas, beliefs, and values that constitute a perspective for looking at and interpreting a phenomenon or anticipating something." When investigating a research problem, it is necessary for researchers to have a theory or hypotheses on which to base their research arguments. A theory is critical because it gives the researcher a lens through which to see the subject under investigation; theories aid a researcher in connecting his or her findings to previous studies.

This chapter covers the theories that guide this study. A theory is helpful in explaining and predicting everyday experiences and phenomena of the world (Craib, 2015). Various feminist theories (Masculinity theory, Liberal feminism, African feminism, Standpoint Theory, Intersectionality Theory, and feminist theory) have been used in this study to assist the researcher in examining the pervasiveness of gender inequality in society in general and at institutions of higher learning in particular.

3.2. Brief Overview of Feminism and types of Feminism

Feminism refers to historical political activities carried out by women on behalf of other women (Jayawardena, 2016). According to Ghofhrati and Medini (2015), feminism is a representation of women's struggles and suffering as well as their aspirations for equality. McCann and Kim (2013) assert that the word "feminism" was frequently used in American women's movements starting in the 1970s. The movement showed opposition to or resistance to women's inferior social status, spiritual authority, political rights, and economic prospects. It is important to use feminism in this study to reveal the various obstacles faced by women as they strive for senior academic positions in institutions of higher learning, and what can be done to address these obstacles in a world that still does not pay attention to their needs. Feminism is used to amplify the voices of women and to argue that women's unfair conditions must change.

According to Nyathi (2019), the feminist movement gave rise to a few theories that explained the roots of male dominance. These theories also sought to address outdated presumptions about both men and women and to imagine new types of people in novel situations. The social, political, and economic inequality that perpetuates women's inferior social status are all issues that feminist philosophy seeks to address (Maqubela, 2013). With the help of this philosophy, historical actors can investigate the injustices they face and develop arguments to support their unique requests for change (McCann and Kim, 2013; May 2015).

Feminist theories employ their methods to increase understanding of women's oppression. This knowledge is then used to illuminate strategies for rejecting subordination and improving the lives of women. According to feminist theory, theory should be politically accountable, capable of addressing issues that affect women, and done by women for women (McCann and Kim, 2013). As a result, these feminist theories examine how gender and power relations (where males have more influence than women) might be questioned and changed. Feminist theory in this study will help in unpacking the trends of gender and power relations and how these have affected women's perspectives in accumulating senior positions. It will also assist in making recommendations that apply to women and that can be easily adopted by women.

According to Maqubela (2013), many feminist authors consider their work to be progressive and a crucial intervention in the institution of gender. This is because they seek to produce new information while also querying and transforming the existing different kinds of knowledge production. As a result, feminism can be characterized as a strategy to raise issues and propose solutions that can free women to hold prominent roles in higher education institutions. Engaging female academics who have experienced stagnation in lower ranks would help with this.

Feminist movements have at various points been seen as a series of "waves." The first wave of feminism is described as a movement that meant to stir up suffrage and sought to secure votes for women (Evans and Chamberlain, 2015; Wray, 2018). The second wave was more nuanced because it concentrated on a range of issues affecting women's lives, such as their freedom to decide what happens to their bodies and their right to equal employment opportunities. Focus was also directed toward sexual liberation to eliminate the oppressive gendered double standards the society had (Evans and Chamberlain, 2015; Wray, 2018). The second wave focused on women's enthusiasm to pursue careers, reproductive rights, violence against women, and equal wages (Trier-Bieniek, 2015). The third wave of feminism has a broader focus, and it is faced by feminists who have grown up in the cyber age, it also focuses on the rejection of notions of post-feminism and contentions that feminism is for white women alone (Trier-Bieniek, 2015).

The section below gives a brief overview of some feminist theories that have been formulated to address issues that affect women in the process of promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions. Masculinity theory helps the researcher to uncover the power dynamics at play in gender relations in institutions of higher learning, including how traditional notions of masculinity shape institutional structures and practices (Budgeon, 2014). By examining the expectations placed on men to occupy positions of power and authority, it will help unfold or to understand how these expectations intersect with the under-representation of women in senior academic positions. Liberal feminism focuses on removing all obstacles that prevent women from attaining their full potential as leaders in institutions of higher learning and other organisations (Gouthro, Taber and Brazil (2018). Relevant to this study is the fact that liberal feminism seeks to abolish all structural barriers, advocate for policy changes and most importantly promote inclusive practices within higher learning institutions.

The standpoint theory and Africanism advocate the situated experiences of women and rejects the notion of white women generalising their experiences to the black women and women in Africa (Makama, 2013; Hesse-Bibber, 2014). Therefore, to understand the various challenges or barriers encountered by women in the process of promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions it is important to look at their own experiences based on their positions and their own point of view, because they are the ones to explain circumstances. The Intersectionality approach looks at the multiple sources of oppression for women that act simultaneously to cause disadvantage in their lives. Arguing that gender is not the only factor that puts women at a disadvantage but there are other factors like race, class, gender, and sexuality, hence, emphasising that oppression do not operate in isolation, but rather in interwoven intricate patterns (Collins, 2017). It then proceeds to discuss the feminist theory which underpins this study, it aims to dismantle patriarchal structures, systems of oppression, and gender-based discrimination and seeks to empower women, promote their rights, and create a more equitable society for all genders including in the institutions of higher learning.

3.2.1. Masculinity Theory

Masculinities, according to Maqubela (2019), "relates to preconceived conceptions and ideals about how men should or are supposed to behave in a given society". Men and masculinities are characterized by several characteristics, including dominance, competitiveness, aggressiveness, physical strength, aggression, risk-taking, courage, heterosexuality, and a lack of feminine features. Femininity, on the other hand, has been stereotyped as dependent, submissive, and conforming; as a result, women have been perceived as lacking in leadership qualities which

traditionally have been affiliated with masculinity and the belief that men make much better leaders than women (Rhode & Kellerman in Muleya, 2017; Maqubela, 2019).

Some studies, on the other hand, show that women are better leaders than males, owing to their caring attributes like - kindness, patience, and good listening abilities - which make them more approachable than men (Maqubela, 2013). Gender division of labor has traditionally associated men with breadwinner positions and women with homemaker positions, therefore, women continue to face barriers to advancement (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Maseko, 2013). The traditional belief that a man is always the family's financial provider, which is also an essential trait for masculinities, and that a woman is always regarded as a housekeeper, women have always been dominated by males in the workplace (Birdwell, 2020). Male academics occupy most senior and management roles in most South African institutions of higher learning, while female academics are visible in the lower positions.

It seems that when women hold positions of leadership, they are more likely to face criticism for allegedly violating gender roles, and even though more women are taking on leadership roles now than ever before, many people, both male and female, are still unfamiliar with the concept of a woman as a leader (Paustian- Underdahl *et al.*, 2014). The concept that leadership is synonymous with masculinity is still firmly ingrained in our thinking and language, thus, competitiveness, aggression, and dominance are all masculine words that are frequently used to describe leaders. Paustian- Underdahl *et al.*, (2014), maintain that stereotyping continues to have a tremendous influence and is largely to blame for women's difficulties in achieving leadership roles as well as society's struggle to accept them in that position. According to Maqubela (2019), the existing literature on the under-representation of women in the senior levels of South African academia has argued that the centres of power and excellence in South African universities are dominated and influenced by men; and that masculinized cultures make it difficult for women to enter and succeed in these terrains (Mathevula, 2014). Against this backdrop, the researcher finds this theory suitable for the study since it can explain the experiences encountered by women in the process of promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions in institutions of higher learning, which is objective number three.

Muleya (2017) states that masculinity is considered to be natural, however, this has been problematized through comparisons within and across cultures and seeing variations in the forms of masculinity from one context to another; masculinities are perceived as multiple, diverse, fragile, temporal and fluid. Researchers have concluded that masculinity, as is the case with femininity, is not fixed but is socially and historically constructed and fluid (Muleya, 2017;

Maqubela, 2019). Traditionally, leadership has been associated with masculinity and the belief that men make better leaders than women, however, the rise in feminist ideologies in recent years has weakened such strong opinions (Mollel & Tshabangu, 2014; Makgoka, 2016). Scholars such as Alghofaily (2019), Shava and Chasokela (2020), who established that women have distinct leadership traits and skills in leading especially in educational institutions, have also acknowledged that women face certain difficulties and challenges that impede their leadership effectiveness. Currently, it is clear that women can gain admission to leadership positions. The number of women leaders has improved, especially in Africa, over the last two decades after the ratification of the Beijing conference in 1995, yet women's representation and participation in the public sphere are still minimal. Tanye (2008) and Posholi; (2013) argue that the cultural structure of leadership initiates some differences, as people tend to perceive men as being competent, skilful, aggressive and able to get things done; people, thus, ascribe leadership to men, while women are regarded as warm, expressive, quiet, gentle and lacking confidence. Therefore, exploring how masculine norms influenced career progression and leadership opportunities have provided insights into the barriers that women face and the ways in which traditional notions of masculinity hinders gender equity in institutions of higher learning (Burkinshaw and White (2017). Furthermore, incorporating masculinity theory in research on the under-representation of female academics in senior positions added depth and complexity to the analysis by considering the interplay between gender dynamics and the experiences of both men and women in academia.

3.2.2. Liberal feminism

According to Potokri (2014), feminism is a field of study which began as a fundamental critique of the social world which demonstrates ignorance of women's life situations and upholds men's dominance as its central focus. Cox (2010) in Magkoka (2016) sees feminism as "creating societies that recognise and value roles, tasks, knowledge and skills without gender-based assumptions". She emphasises that "the choices we make are not to be limited, encouraged or penalised just because we are male or female, it means that all spheres of life should be assessed and valued on the basis of what they contribute both to the common good and particular group and individual well-being, not on gender grounds." This should apply in institutions of higher learning so that both female and male academics should be able to access promotions.

Following this notion, this study is conceptualized within five theories - masculinity, liberal feminist, Intersectionality, African feminism, and feminist theory - in order to tackle challenges associated with the promotion experiences emerging from female academics, in institutions of higher learning. Fenwick (2008) cited in Makgoka (2016), elucidates that liberal feminism focuses on the elimination of all barriers that hinder women from becoming effective leaders, and at the

same time strives to alter women's status quo into the existing economic and leadership frameworks. In this study, the barrier to be interrogated is the promotion criteria in institutions of higher learning since they do not cater for the needs for female academics, therefore making it difficult for them to climb the ladder to senior positions. Chabalala cited in Sinyosi and Potokri (2021) argues that women have as much potential as men and should therefore be given equal rights to implement their capabilities to remedy the injustices done to them. As a researcher, I concurs with Chabalala that if female academics are given the same opportunities and their needs catered for, they can meet the promotion criteria for senior positions, just like their male counterparts. Foli, Beland and Fenwick (2018) further point out that if women are given the right platform to express themselves, they can be productive and effective leaders.

The Liberal Feminist Theory is committed to challenging patriarchy, racism, and oppression to uphold social justice. Chitsamatanga *et al.*, (2017, 2018), explain the liberal feminist theory as a tool that challenges the status quo which disadvantages women (Ikpeze 2015). The theory was adopted for this research because it advocates for gender equality while opposing oppression and male supremacy (Enyew and Mihrete, 2018). This theory is relevant in addressing patriarchy which is the root cause of male dominance in institutions of higher learning. A liberal feminist perspective provides space for an exploration of broader questions on social justice, while simultaneously addressing multiple forms of structural inequality bordering on gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality. Research informed by liberal feminist theory fosters empowerment, liberation and emancipation for women and other marginalised groups, and is consistent with the broader aims of gender justice and the theme of this study. Potokri (2014) asserts that applying a feminist approach is a "means of listening to the voices of women and attempting to respond in a way that will navigate their lives towards prosperity". In the case of this study, liberal feminist theory facilitates a positive interpretation of the experiences of female academics which mainly demonstrate gender inequality in the South African education system.

Liberal feminism is based on the political philosophy of liberalism, which commences from the belief that all individuals have rights to freedom and autonomy. It focuses on removing all obstacles that prevent women from attaining their full potential as leaders in institutions of higher learning and other organisations (Gouthro, Taber and Brazil (2018). In addition, the theory proposes that any law, traditions, and activities that hinder equal rights and opportunities for women must be abolished. In the context of female representation in academia, liberal theory promotes equal opportunities for women to access senior positions based on their qualifications and abilities (Mabokela and Mlambo, 2017). It argues that any barriers hindering the advancement of women in academia should be eliminated, such as gender-based discrimination, biases in

recruitment and promotion processes, and unequal access to resources. Since this study will concentrate on black female academics, the African feminism theory is also appropriate for the study as discussed below.

3.2.3. African feminism

African feminism is an epistemology which focuses on the experience of women of Africa and of African origin, against a standard feminist paradigm (Labiso, 2020). African feminism arose as a response to the exclusion of black African women in Africa. The western feminists side-lined the issues that were being faced by black women in Africa by generalising experiences to all women (Motale, 2018). It emphasises the contrast between women who were colonised, the individuals who are considered the colonisers, and a social development imperative that seeks to rise a worldwide awareness which sympathises with African women's histories, present substances, and future desires (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009 cited in Labiso 2020). Mahlaula (2019) supports the above and mentioned that aim of the African feminists is to create a discernible difference between women who were colonised and those deemed as colonisers.

African women's liberation concerns itself, not just with the privileges of women from Africa but also those living in the Diaspora. It is not constrained, in both social and scholastic situations, by geographical area as the name "African" suggests. This means that it is not simply confined to women on the African continent.

The theory is not a philosophy that recognises African women as stereotypical. Rather, the theory deliberately defines women in terms of provinciality, race, and class, as a method of clarifying the current position of women in Africa (Ogbogu, 2012). For instance, in South Africa, the traditions of cultural events and activities which were the prerogative of the black women preceding colonisation, can be identified as feminist activity (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009; Abiodun-Oyebanji and Olaleye, 2011). Numerous women pioneer of worth have existed all over Africa, throughout the ages, despite the fact that authentic confirmation for some, is divided. Booysen and Nkomo (2010; Makama, 2013), believe that patriarchy and how it is interpreted and practised present numerous issues for African women.

Numerous scholars have used the expression "patriarchy" in African contexts to define the association between social life and institutional structures in which men have extreme control over most parts of women's lives and activities; a case in point is the tendency of men to profit from women's work more than the latter themselves (Labiso, 2020). The gendered division of work is composed in such a way that women live at a subsistence level. Analysts of the black experience generally agree on the fundamental elements of an Afrocentric standpoint and despite varying

histories, black societies reflect elements of a core African value system that existed prior to and independently of racial oppression (Kinnear & Ortlepp, 2016; Khuzwayo, 2018).

As a result of colonialism, imperialism, slavery, apartheid and other systems of racial domination, blacks share a common experience of oppression (Khuzwayo, 2018). This Afrocentric consciousness permeates the shared history of people of African descent through the framework of a distinctive Afrocentric epistemology. Feminist scholars such as Tong (2013) assert that women share a history of patriarchal oppression due to the political and economic conditions of sexuality and reproduction. Black women have access to both the Afrocentric and feminist standpoints, hence, an alternative epistemology used to rearticulate the black woman's standpoint reflects elements of both traditions (Grillo, Andrews and Whitehead, 2019). This amalgamation suggests that the material conditions of oppression can vary dramatically and yet generate some uniformity in the epistemologies of subordinate groups. The significance of an Afrocentric feminist epistemology, thus, may lie in its enrichment of our understanding of how subordinate groups create knowledge that enables them to resist oppression.

Black feminism recognizes that black women's experiences differ from those of white women in general, as the former were subjected to a variety of unpleasant situations because of oppression (Norwood, 2013); this is consistent with sexism, classism, and racism. African feminism also recognizes culture and diversity that is present among African civilizations and colonies. People with different environments are socialised differently, so their challenges are different and as a result, their experiences cannot be generalised. This affirms that female academics in Africa do not face the same challenges regarding the promotion criteria as those in the western world. This is due to their differences in locations, culture, religion, class, and nationality. Therefore, with this in mind, it is important to look at the challenges or barriers encountered by women in the process of promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions from an African feminist perspective.

African feminism speaks for the experiences of women in many nations (Ahckire, 2014). It disavows the exaggerations and misrepresentations produced by global feminist researchers in the West. According to Tomlinson (2013), it is characterized by a continuing process of self-definition and redefinition. African feminists, then, provide black Africans with the chance to clarify their realities and refute the distortion made by white African feminists. African feminist philosophy empowers marginalized groups by providing a forum for them to express their issues and participate in their own development. Nkealah (2016) asserts that the goal of African feminism is to transform African women into new, liberated, successful, and independent individuals within

the various African communities. African feminism, as it relates to this subject, allows female academics a platform to discuss their experiences and offers a solution as a means of empowering them. African feminism additionally allows female academics the chance to define themselves to correct some of the inaccurate claims made about them by other academic scholars.

Addressing cultural concerns that feminists believe are relevant to the lives of African women in Africa is one of the tenets of African feminism. In order to empower women and educate them, they consider the many cultures and histories of the African people (Nkealah, 2016). African feminists want to end men's dominance. In turn, this causes the gender roles and perceptions in African countries to change (Trier-Bieniek, 2015). In the context of other oppressive systems including racism, neo-colonialism, cultural imperialism, social exclusion and exploitation, religious fanaticism, and authoritarian and corrupt systems, African feminism examines gender roles. This indicates that African feminism has a part to play in opposing, supporting, and exploiting African women.

Norwood (2013) insists that African women's experiences of slavery and colonialism have affected their behaviours in leadership roles, as well as how they deal with challenges, prejudice, and oppression. African feminism also promotes the dismantling and decommissioning of racist and sexist ideologies that devalue women. African women have a long history of resistance, both at home and abroad, despite attempts to suppress and marginalize them. "African feminism does not hold only men responsible for discriminating against women," writes Magkoka (2016), "but also recognises the presence of woman-on-woman discrimination." This is evident in the female leaders who are frequently informed that their leadership abilities are inferior to those of traditional male leaders (Howard and Newman, 2017).

African feminism is also viewed as a movement that influences societal change, particularly in terms of how women are treated (Collins, 2022). This is demonstrated by substantial changes in African women's lives over the past 20 years of knowledge production (Connell, 2014). To lessen the under-representation of women in senior positions, it is crucial to also produce knowledge about the difficulties or obstacles faced by women in the process of promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions in institutions of higher learning. African feminism is experiential, philosophical, and practical, claims Mama (2014). African feminism is a tool that can aid women in overcoming their difficulties.

African feminism in this study brought attention to the experiences and challenges faced by women (female academics) in Africa within the context of higher learning institutions. It further

examined how historical, cultural, and structural factors intersect with gender inequality. African feminism highlights the need to decolonize knowledge, challenge Western-centric perspectives, and center the experiences and knowledge of African women (Fuller, 2021).

African feminism was criticized for its definition. African feminists identify as opposed to Western feminists and are linked to imperialist past (Nkealah, 2016). Because they are focusing on the past, which is about colonized Africa, rather than the present and the future of Africa, this prevents them from having a liberated future. Maqubela (2013) argues that if Africa continues to define itself in opposition to the West, this keeps it trapped in colonialism because it has not yet attained that degree of self-definition. Maqubela (2013) adds that African feminism has been viewed to have parts that contradict one another, both in terms of its definition and how it uses the term, Africa. The use of this word prevents the advancement of an original, non-local feminist thought. African feminists are forced to concentrate on local issues at the expense of broader context and due to this viewpoint. African feminism will not be appropriate to employ in this study on the representation of female academics as a result of these criticisms.

3.2.4. Standpoint Theory

The foundation of standpoint theory is the recognition that women have a distinct viewpoint based on their experiences as women (Kowalski-Braun, 2014; Maqubela, 2017). According to this view, a person's knowledge is exclusively based on their place in society or their job. What a person knows about the world depends on how they see it and how they interact with it, in their environment (Appelrouth and Edles, 2010; Nyathi, 2019). This idea is based on the Marxist Theory, which holds that our employment affects our knowledge and behavior. While the standpoint theory does emphasize an individual's experiences inside socially formed groups, it places greater emphasis on the social orders that create such groupings. A feminist standpoint refers to a critical awareness of identification sites (such as being a woman, being poor, or being a member of a particular ethnicity), which is formed through contemplation and struggle (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006; Kowalski-Braun, 2014).

Unfortunately, the standpoint of the upper-class “white men” has permeated and dominated other world perspectives, according to Appelrouth and Edles (2010), who contend that the standpoint of men has consistently been preferred. This is because this class of people is wealthy and in charge of the world's politics, economy, and other crucial parts of governance. Yuill (2012), maintains that the Marxist ideologies that hold that people's perceptions of their lives and circumstances reflect material conditions and power relations—and that inequality therefore renders marginalized groups helpless and oppresses them—are the source of the standpoint

theory's concepts. Their need for survival, means that the oppressed groups become outsiders about the dominating groups, preventing the former's access to information about social structures or how they work (Yuill, 2012). This makes it necessary for people who are "outside" of the dominant social and political groupings to learn how to function both within and outside of the prevailing society. Yuill (2012), believes that feminists who adhere to this theory think social sciences research should be conducted from the perspective of women since they are highly equipped to comprehend specific facets of the global environment.

Due to their epistemic privilege, which allows outsiders to notice problems that the dominant group may not see or view differently, it is crucial for marginalized groups to express their ideas to help identify areas of research (Swigonski, 1994; Nyathi, 2019). As it focuses on women's agencies and provides an account of women's oppression, the Standpoint theory emphasizes research as a vehicle for social transformations and empowerment. Its focus is on making research for women a priority. It transcends beyond conventional scientific-based accounts of women's experiences and creates a fresh thesis that may be used to effect social change. The Standpoint theory is also used in this study as the lens to provide the perspective of female academics on the promotion criteria in institutions of higher learning.

Power dynamics in the creation of knowledge are aspects of standpoint theory as it investigates how gender dynamics, as well as the placed situations and experiences, affect either one sex or both. Its foundation is the idea that male expertise, interests, and experiences have been overrepresented in scientific research (Wylie, 2003; Appelrouth and Edles, 2010; McDowell and Sharp, 2016); instead of just generalizing every experience as being shared by men and women, it aims to address specific issues that are pertinent to women. It is vital, therefore, to view the promotion criteria from a women's perspective. The standpoint theory allows women a platform to discuss their struggles in order to prevent knowledge from being generalized.

The standpoint theory opposes the early feminists' portrayal of women's oppression as having a single, universal cause, rather it proposes the combination of local, social, and situational construction of knowledge (Mojab, 2015). According to Harding (2004), women should not be reduced to one homogenous group as they have different experiences rather knowledge should be based on experiences. Budgeon (2014) argues that marginalized or oppressed groups, such as women, have unique knowledge and insights into social systems and structures due to their lived experiences. Therefore, each oppressed group should be able to recognize its distinctive opportunities in order to transform an oppressive aspect of their status into a source of critical understanding about how the dominant culture thinks and is organized, according to Maqubela (2017). This simply means that the most disadvantaged groups have the responsibility of creating

their own knowledge. In relation to the under-representation of female academics, the female academics themselves should articulate their voices in terms of their experiences regarding the barriers encountered by women in the process of promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions to create insight on their situation rather than that their experiences should be generalized using knowledge generated in other society.

This theory emphasizes the differences between different cultures and experiences, in accordance with culturally diverse collectivities. In the context of the underrepresentation of female academics in senior positions, standpoint feminism highlights the importance of diversifying perspectives and challenging the dominant male-centric knowledge systems (Townsend, 2019). The situational knowledge thesis, which holds that what a person understands is determined by their position in a hierarchically structured system of power relations, is the cornerstone of the standpoint analysis. It accentuates cultural or contextual disparities. According to Wylie (2003), persons who are disadvantaged, oppressed, and marginalized are more likely to be dismissed as misinformed, unreliable, and untrained epistemic actors. This is essential to this study because it shows the urgency for the magnification of the voices of women in academia as they are typically thought to possess less power and leadership abilities than their male counterparts.

In terms of this study, the standpoint theory helps in explaining the importance of having situated knowledge that applies to a specific group of people in a specific context. From the standpoint theory's perspective, knowledge, and experiences of female academics from a Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province cannot be universalized. Instead, they argue that women possess unique knowledge and perspectives derived from their experiences of navigating gendered barriers in academia (Kowalski-Braun, 2014). Standpoint theory suggests that incorporating these perspectives and experiences is crucial for understanding and addressing the underrepresentation of women in senior positions. It highlights the importance of elevating women's voices and including their insights in decision-making processes within academic institutions. As their perceptions and experiences regarding the process of promotion might have a different experience from female academics else were in the world. Therefore, the knowledge on the under-representation of female academics has to be subjective, based on their situation. The challenges or barriers encountered by women in the process of promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions using the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province as the standpoint can highlight the specific challenges faced by female academics in that situation. Furthermore, this can also assist the researcher as a roadmap on how to provide the solutions to their challenges, which is not possible when challenges are universal.

3.2.5. Intersectionality Theory

The concept of 'intersectionality' emerged within the feminist discourse in the early 1990s and it was addressing the complexities of inequalities among various groups of people within and across different contexts (Walby, 2012). Davis (2013) explains intersectionality as a means for analyzing and interpreting the experiences encountered by women while climbing the academic ladder and the experiences of women holding high positions. Intersectionality does not deal with individuals, rather it deals with structural inequalities and operates with groups as the subject of equality. It highlights the cross-cutting nature of structures of oppression and the overlapping nature of groups (Verloo, 2013; Roland, 2017). Nyathi (2019) avers that the theory describes the multiple, multifaceted elements of inequality and power structures that produce roles of dominance and subordination in the context of race, class, gender, and sexuality, hence, oppression in society does not operate in isolation, but rather in interwoven intricate patterns.

Collins (2017) views intersectionality as a particular way of understanding social location in terms of inter-related systems of oppression, such as - race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age – which form mutually-constructing features of social organization, which in turn shape the experiences of female academics. This is supported by Bauer (2014), who posits that biological factors such as sex and genetics can contribute to health disparities. Intersectionality paints a clear image of how to detect inequities, devise remedies, and ensure that the outcomes are meaningful to specific populations. It has been employed as a theoretical framework, mostly for sex and gender studies (Bauer, 2014). Against this backdrop, this theory is most suitable to address the experiences of female academics regarding the promotion criteria in institutions of higher learning in South Africa. This theory is appropriate because of the complex intersections and interplay of several factors of oppression, among others, - racial, cultural, geographic, and gender.

Intersectionality has been widely accepted and employed by many feminist theorists in their works to explain inequality. It accounts for the many ways that women experience being a woman differently across varying cultures, and histories and across race, class, sexuality, and language (Zhang, 2013). In the intersectionality theory, African women are believed to have connection through race and gender within their societies and can identify with one another from this perspective.

The main goal of this approach is to examine the intersections between various types of disadvantages, oppression, dominance, or discrimination (Tomlinson, 2013). A woman experiences multiple forms of oppression at once, all of which contribute to her suffering. The

Intersectionality approach, according to Kerner (2017), sees gender relations as being shaped by other differentials. Thus, this theory clarifies the unique experiences of women in relation to their gender, age, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, nationality, and religion, as well as how these factors interact. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of various social identities and the unique experiences and challenges faced by women with intersecting identities. It also provides a multifaceted explanation of how structural injustice and social inequality develop (De los Reyes, 2017). The intersectionality approach aims to correct the propensity to prioritize one oppressive or dominating system above another. According to this theory's proponents, it is hard to disentangle gender from other identities and the distinctive ways they interact with one another (May, 2015). This indicates that since multiple oppressive systems can have an impact on a person at once, they should all be acknowledged. Gender matters, but not in the same way as other factors, and gender is not the sole element that counts, claims Davis (2013). Gender matters when examining the experiences of female academics, but it is irrelevant without consideration of other elements including age, nationality, and work status. It is necessary to read these forms of advantage simultaneously because they are interdependent.

The intersectionality approach, which examines difficulties through the lenses of gender, nationality, and academic status, is crucial to this study's understanding of the representation of female academics in senior positions. It is crucial to examine the underrepresentation of women in senior positions in terms of these problems because there is little research on the trends, dynamics, and procedures involved in promotion criteria to senior academic positions. The omitted kinds of academic women's oppression will be brought to light thanks to the intersectionality theory (Nichols and Stahl, 2019). These forms of oppression derive from female academics' nationality, gender, age and status as female academics. In addition, the Intersectionality approach will assist to overcome specific shortcomings on the low representation of female academics in senior positions literature by looking at different factors which disadvantage female academics. The nationality, gender, age, and status of female academics contribute to these forms of oppression. Additionally, by examining many variables that disadvantage female academics, the intersectionality method will help to address particular deficiencies on the low representation of female academics in senior positions in literature. The points are addressed by several feminist theorists by emphasizing the importance of clarifying gender-based inequality by taking into account other markers of difference and their intersections (Willie, 2003; Walby, 2012; Davis, 2013; Jayawardena, 2016). The attempt to link gender, status, race, and age will help us to understand female academics challenges and will also aid in eradicating it.

3.2.6. Feminist Theory

Feminist theory is a broad and diverse framework that seeks to understand and analyze the social, political, and economic experiences of women and other marginalized genders (Connelly, MacDonald and Parpart, 2000; Mwenzwa and Rutere, 2015). It examines how gender inequalities are shaped by intersecting factors such as race, class, sexuality, and disability. Feminist theory critically examines power dynamics, social norms, and systems of oppression to advocate for gender equality and challenge gender-based discrimination and bias (Connell, 2014). It argues that the underrepresentation of female academics in senior positions is a result of systemic sexism, discriminatory practices, gender bias, and gendered expectations within academic institutions.

Feminist theory accentuates the presence of gender bias and stereotypes that shape societal expectations and norms. In academia, women often face biases that undermine their qualifications and leadership abilities (Davis, 2015). Henningsen, Horvath and Jonas (2022) points that both male and female faculty members are more likely to rate male candidates as more competent and hireable than equally qualified female candidates. Such biases have persistently contributed to the limited representation of women in senior positions. It further highlights how traditional gender roles and the division of labour influence women's career advancement. Women often face disproportionate expectations and responsibilities related to caregiving and household duties, which in turn limit their availability for professional commitments (Toffoletti and Starr, 2016).

Feminist theory is essential for this study because it serves as a broad framework that encompasses various perspectives and approaches to gender inequality. It provides an overarching lens through which the researcher examines the under-representation of women in senior academic positions. It further highlights the power dynamics and patriarchal structures that perpetuate the marginalization of women in various spheres, including academia. Feminist theory highlights the importance of addressing power imbalances, challenging patriarchal norms, and advocating for gender equity (Curtis, 2017; Liani, Nyamongo and Tolhurst, 2020). It informed the core research by emphasizing the need for feminist analyses, insights, and solutions. It calls for structural changes, such as gender-equitable policies, inclusive hiring and promotion practices, and supportive environments that address the specific needs and experiences of women.

3.3. Summary

This chapter explores many theories that undergirded this study. The researcher integrated all these theories, to conduct a more comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the under-

representation of female academics. Combining these theories also helped the researcher to better understand the representation of female academics in senior positions at a semi-metropolitan university in Limpopo Province. These theories further allowed the researcher to explore the structural, cultural, and intersectional dynamics that contributed to the issues of gender marginalization and mainstreaming, while also considering the specific experiences and perspectives of women in different contexts. This interdisciplinary approach enabled a more holistic understanding and informed strategies to address the under-representation and promote gender equity in higher learning institutions. The methodological approaches used in this study are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

This chapter deals with the methodological processes of the research. The discussions dwell on research paradigms, followed by the nature of the study, research design, study location, population, sampling and data collection methods. In addition, measures of trustworthiness are outlined as well as ethical issues such as informed consent, confidentiality, and privacy.

4.2. RESEARCH PARADIGMS

Kuvunja (2017) notes a paradigm as a set of shared beliefs or perspectives that informs the meaning or interpretation of research data; it is researchers' conviction about the world. Chilisa and Kawulich (2012) describe a paradigm as a shared world view, reflecting a discipline's beliefs and values, and guiding how to analyse and solve problems. A paradigm has certain values that shape and direct the way researchers view the world as well as the way they perceive and conduct themselves in the world.

There are different types of paradigms - positivist, interpretive, and critical. In this study, interpretive paradigm was used as the philosophy underpinning this study.

Interpretivist research Paradigm.

Interpretive research is concerned with subjective meanings as it seeks to recognise individuals' interpretation and understanding of social phenomena (Shah, 2013; Chitsamatanga, 2014). The ontological position of the interpretivist paradigm is idealism, which denotes that there are multiple realities which differ from one individual to another. This research employed an interpretivist paradigm, which holds that people construct, interpret, and experience the world through their interactions with one another and with larger social systems (Tolley, Ulin, Mack, Succop and Robinson, 2016). Husain *et al.* (2013), therefore argue that researchers cannot distance themselves from the object being observed, the subject matter and the methods of the study. Interpretivists believe or assume that there is no objective knowledge independent of thinking and reasoning humans, instead knowledge and meaning are acts of interpretation. Interpretivist researchers aim to explore individuals' perceptions, share their meanings and develop insights about observed cases (Shah, 2013; Tolley, 2016), therefore this qualitative, explorative study was influenced by the interpretivist paradigm (Kivunja, 2017). The rationale for this choice is that this study sought to explore the causes of the under-representation of female academics in senior leadership positions in higher learning institutions and to explore these academics' experiences regarding the processes of promotions in these institutions in South Africa. The researcher has attempted to understand the experiences from the perceptions of those who had lived them and to identify strategies that can improve the promotion process, thereby empower female academics. For women empowerment to be improved, it should be done in the context of the participants' subjective and multiple perceptions. Accordingly, female academics from various faculties at a rural-based university in South Africa, were interviewed.

In this study, the interpretivist paradigm and Savage (2006)'s method of Ethnographic evidence was used to allow female academics at the University of Venda to relate their experiences, perspectives, and expertise within their own social context and viewpoint. This is because the interpretive paradigm and the focused ethnographic methodology prioritizes subjectivity and believes that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to information or procedure that would lead to intellectual advancement. Interpretive researchers do not seek answers for their investigations in a rigorous manner. Instead, they approach reality from the perspective of subjects, usually people who own the experiences and belong to a specific group or culture (Thahn and Thahn, 2015). Based on this, the researcher was able to approach a variety of female academics, from various

departments, schools and from different positions who provided useful information by telling their perspectives on under-representation of female academics.

The interpretivist research paradigm was selected for this study because it allowed the researcher to learn about the participants' socially constructed meanings directly from them. Additionally, it helped her to understand the participants' multiple realities in their natural settings. Furthermore, interpretivism enabled the researcher and participants to interact, which produced much-needed in-depth data about the under-representation of female academics in senior positions.

4.3. Nature of the study

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative research methodology. Lynch (2014), states that qualitative research seeks to both authentically reflect and make relevant the interactions, activities or processes in which people are involved and at the same time, critically, explain the commonalities of those experiences among the participants. A qualitative approach focuses on collecting knowledge about a phenomenon being investigated, thus, its appropriateness for this study because the researcher wanted to understand the world of the participants through their understanding and interpretation of their own reality. The qualitative research approach assumes that people think differently and that every single situation has equal significance in people's understanding of reality (Ormston, Spencer, Barnard and Snape, 2014). The approach makes use of highly unstructured Instruments, such as in-depth interviews, which provided the researcher with a comprehensive and denser answers to her questions about the underrepresentation of female academics in senior positions. The qualitative approach, thus, allowed/ gave room to the researcher to probe for comprehensive information from the participants allowing her to delve into the complex factors, experiences, and perceptions that contribute to the under-representation of female academics (Priede, Jokinen, Ruuskanen & Farrall, 2014).

Furthermore, a qualitative research approach was selected for this study because it is unstructured and flexible as compared to the quantitative research approach (Islam and Aldaihani, 2022). Its aim is to explore diversity in participants' views on the phenomenon being investigated, in this case is exploring the under-representations of female academics as well as to uncover unforeseen factors or perspectives rather than merely quantifying responses. The findings of qualitative research are not intended to be generalized outside of the study's specific context. Instead seeks to understand the behaviour, experiences and beliefs in that context (Eyisi, 2016).

The qualitative approach was also adopted since it could emphasize the participants' voices. As a result, the approach allowed for the inclusion of the participants' voices in the data presentation

through the use of quotations that precisely represented exactly what the participants had said. These were later analysed to derive their underlying meanings.

The qualitative approach was, however, supplemented by adding some of the elements (principles) of the feminist standpoint theory. Qualitative research approach is quiet on feminine and gender issues, therefore, to make up for this gap, the researcher will borrow some elements of the feminist standpoint theory to enrich the approach as the purpose of this study was to explore gender issues. Elements of the feminist standpoint theory, as discussed earlier in the theoretical framework were incorporated to enhance the qualitative approach as this theory gives voice to voiceless and marginalized women. Supplementing the qualitative research approach with the elements of the feminist standpoint theory was necessary because, as repeatedly emphasized, the study is on gender issues, namely, the under-representation of women in institutions of higher learning. The advocates of the feminist theories maintain that what is called scientific research or empiricism, is derived from the word “empirical”; this type of research supports the masculine perspective which promotes male interests, while it had relegated feminine and gender issues to the background (Hesse-Biber, 2014). In this study, four features of the feminist standpoint theory were used to strengthen the qualitative research approach; these features are discussed below.

4.3.1. Unequal power relations in research

Power is a creative and constitutive force that exists throughout the world in a circular way (Beasley, 2005). This relates to the relationships between the study participants and the researcher where the researcher and the researched must be placed on an equal footing by having equal positions in the production of Knowledge. The maintenance of an equal relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee is emphasized by feminist researchers in order to avoid power exploitation, so that collaboration, consent and liberty would be achievable (Marumo, 2015). Power relations in this research, therefore, supported the researcher's non-dominance over the research. A researcher should be able to maintain a balanced relationship of power with the participants, particularly if the researcher wishes to produce credible results. In this study, the avoided power relations over the participants but instead was part and parcel of their yearnings and frustrations.

4.3.2. Epistemic privilege

In epistemic privilege, the oppressed/researched are highly regarded as the ones who possess a better understanding of their situation (Maqubela, 2017). Epistemic privilege helps the researcher to understand that the researched are the subjects rather than objects of research. Hence, the research participants should be considered as possessing ‘epistemic privilege’. They are viewed and recognised as active knowledge producers. The fact that the researched are the knowers or

have “epistemic privilege” puts them in an advantaged position in terms of knowledge in any research (Maqubela, 2013). In as far as epistemic privilege is concerned, the researched are seen as possessing better knowledge of the barriers to their situation. For instance, in this study female academics possess knowledge about their experiences with academic promotions and the requirements for promotion which the researcher does not have. This demonstrates that the oppressed/researched have a deep understanding of their conditions/situation unlike those who live outside such a situation, who may find it hard to understand the intricacies of dwelling in such a situation (Hesse-Biber, 2014; Maqubela, 2013).

4.3.3. Researcher’s positionality

Galam (2015) defines “positionality” as the researcher's awareness of his or her own subjective experiences in comparison to his or her participants (Galam, 2015). The theory of feminist standpoint considers positionality as relevant because it allows the researcher to reveal his / her position or proximity to the topic and the participants. This means that a researcher should indicate if he/ she is conducting the research as an insider, outsider or whether he/ she falls in-between the two as an insider/outside; this highlights the researcher’s knowledge about his or her position in the research (Hesse-Biber, 2014; 2015). This shows that the researcher’s proximity (subjective or objective) to the research participants is critical in a research process. Maqubela (2013) acknowledges that researching from the perspective of an outsider has the advantage of the researcher being able to identify issues that have been taken-for-granted and have not been visible to the insider.

Hesse-Biber (2014) adds that it is possible that a researcher can be both an insider and outsider; in the sense that, in one social context one can be an insider while being an outsider in another. In this study, the researcher’s position is that of an outsider because of not falling under the category of those female academics who face promotional challenges at the workplace. However, I as the researcher, have had the opportunity to work closely with female academics as a student under their supervision for almost ten years. This sensitized me to the fact that female lecturers were facing difficulties in advancing to senior positions. My own experience as a doctoral student also aided me in understanding the difficulties faced by female academics. Though I had a lot of work to do for my studies, my family expected me to take care of household responsibilities while also working as a facilitator in one of the colleges. Furthermore, as a PhD student, one is assigned two to three honors students to supervise, which meant that I had to maneuver all these responsibilities.

In the mornings, I would make sure to prepare children for school before getting ready to go to the college campus, where I would try to push my own thesis on days when I did not have classes

to facilitate. By the time I got home in the evening, I would have to cook and make sure everyone is satisfied; by the time I had completed all my responsibilities it would be so late and I would be so exhausted that even if I wanted to wake up and push my work, it would be impossible, hence I had no option but to go to bed. Attending to all my responsibilities has made it extremely difficult for me to complete my studies within a specific time frame. With female academics one could see that they work hard, with lots of modules and students to teach, yet they remained in the same position, year in and year out. This aroused my curiosity to want to have a deeper understanding of the factors/ obstacles that prevent junior female lecturers from attaining senior positions, in institutions of higher learning. They work so hard and yet are the least considered when it comes to promotions. Most of them are still occupying the same position as when I first started my studies at the University. I have been working closely with female academics, so I am aware of their frustrations with promotions. The lines of the insider/outsider perspectives of doing research can become blurry, especially in my context since I am a woman who has experienced what other women are going through in their everyday lives. I have also seen how many of them are struggling to do research and write academic articles that may enable them to be promoted to senior levels in their field of work.

4.3.4. Reciprocity

The feminist standpoint theory emphasizes 'reciprocity' during interviews. This means that the researcher should reciprocate by sharing his/ her own experiences (Hesse-Biber, 2014). This is possible by making the interview conversational to enable the researcher to acquire some level of trust from the participants as this assist in soliciting comprehensive data from the participants. As a researcher, I benefited greatly from reciprocity during the interviews because she shared her challenges/difficulties with the process of being in the field and collecting data, which helped her to gain the trust of her participants. The relationship between the researcher and the participants was characterized by reflexivity. Reflexivity played a crucial role in assisting the researcher to be more open-minded and receptive towards the participant's viewpoints (Ivey, 2023). In this study reflexivity was used to avoid obvious or conscious bias on the part of the researcher, it also encouraged the researcher to be neutral in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data (Gunbayi and Sorm, 2018). Reflexivity enabled the researcher to empathetically understand the experiences of female academics regarding their under-representation in senior positions as well as enabled her to remain neutral.

After sharing the researchers own experience, the participants relaxed and they became more open during data collection because the researcher was able to build rapport with the participants by sharing her own experience before the interviews. They shared their lived experiences willingly

as they had gained trust in the researchers' information. During the interviews the researcher discovered that some of female academics were still busy with their own PhD studies, although they were at different levels.

All the above background details were necessary for structuring the qualitative approach so that the issue of women's under-representation in institutions of higher learning, which is at the heart of this study, can be adequately interrogated.

4.4. Research design

This study is exploratory in design as it sought insights on the promotion criteria in institutions of higher learning due to the under-representation of women in senior academic positions (De Vos *et al.*, 2011). A research design, according to Yin (2017), is the logical sequence that connects empirical data to a study's initial research questions and, eventually, to its findings. Durrheim (2006) explains the appropriateness of using exploratory research to investigate unknown areas of a phenomenon. An explorative research design is flexible, open, and resorts to an inductive research approach that seeks new insight. In particular, the study embarked on what is called focused ethnographic research as this method can be applicable to any discipline whenever there is a desire to explore specific cultural perspectives held by groups of people within a context-specific and problem-focused framework (Savage, 2006).

Nyathi (2019) elucidates that when a researcher investigates a new interest or when the subject is relatively new, an exploratory approach can be used. According to the literature reviewed on Africa and South Africa, there have not been extensive research on promotion criteria. Some studies focused on the experiences/ challenges of female academics in the institutions of higher learning, however, there have not been much exploration on the promotion criteria and the role it plays in under-representation of female academics in senior positions.

In this study, insight into the experiences of female academics regarding promotion criteria was explored. An exploratory design can be used when facing an issue or problem that raises questions like "what?" and "why?" (Thomas, 2011). The researcher acknowledges that there are multiple realities, therefore, in this study an exploratory research design was used providing an opportunity to listen closely to issues discussed rather than just presenting the issues from the research participants. With this exploratory study, the researcher's role was to seek an understanding of the structural arrangements and dynamics associated with the promotion processes in institutions of higher learning, particularly, of female academics about promotion criteria. It was, therefore, necessary for the researcher to allow the female academics who participated in this study to narrate their stories.

4.5. Study location

Neuman (2006) describes study location as the place or venue where the researcher conducts the study, or where the events or activities occurred; this study was conducted at the University of Venda. The University of Venda (UNIVEN) is a comprehensive institution of higher learning situated in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. It is located in Thohoyandou, a town in the Northern part of the province. Thohoyandou is the capital of the Vhembe District Municipality and serves as a major commercial and cultural center in the region (Francis, Kilonzo, and Nyamukondiwa, 2016)

The researcher did not concentrate on one faculty or institute while collecting the data instead female academics were selected from all four Faculties (Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture; Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law; Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education as well as Faculty of Health Sciences) of the University of Venda.

4.6. Study population

Babbie (2014) defines a research population as a set of elements that are the focus of a study and to which the results obtained can be generalized. De Vos *et al.*, (2011) refer to population as the whole set of objects or people the research focuses on and about which the researcher wishes to determine certain characteristics; similarly, Gerald (2014) describes the population as the group from which the data are drawn. The population for this study consists of female academics who worked at the University of Venda in South Africa, aged between 25 and 60. The study focused on female academics aged from 25-60 because people in this age range align with critical career stages for academics. It spans from early-career academics who are establishing themselves in academia to mid-career and potentially senior academics who have accumulated substantial experience and expertise. This allows for an examination of the under-representation issue across different career stages, shedding light on the specific challenges and barriers faced by women at different points in their academic careers (Eslan-Ziya and Yildirim, 2022). Those who had been chosen for this study had four years + or more working as academics and had varied career trajectories, levels of experience, and perspectives regarding the promotion criteria. The inclusion criteria for the female academics in this study were that they had to be working at the University of Venda for more than 4 years and above, age range between 25-60 years.

4.7. Sampling Procedure

Sampling is the method by which a portion of the population is selected for research (Maree, 2010). A sample includes elements of the population that are required for actual inclusion in the analysis. The process is also seen as a subset of measurements taken from a population with interest for researchers (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). The sample population in this study

consists of female academics from an institution of higher learning - University of Venda. The sample size consists of 20 female academics and to avoid information generalization, the researcher used non-probability sampling to get in-depth information (Neuman, 2011).

The researcher used both purposive and convenience techniques. According to Etikan, Musa & Alkassim (2016), purposive sampling is a method of sampling in which subjects are handpicked from an accessible population, purposefully; sampling, therefore, is done with a distinct purpose in mind. Typically, the process begins with one or more similar predefined categories that the researcher will be investigating, thus, one of the first things that the researcher is likely to do is check that the respondents do in fact meet the criteria for being in the sample (De Vos *et. al.*, 2002; Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls and Ormston, 2013). In this study purposive sampling was used because the researcher wanted to select female academics from working at the University of Venda since they were knowledgeable and able to share their experience than anyone else. A sample of convenience is a group of subjects selected because of their availability; it involves drawing samples that are both easily accessible and ready to participate in a study (Hesse-Biber, 2014). The participants were chosen based on their capacity to offer the most accurate information and their eligibility based on the inclusion criteria. The researcher used both purposeful sampling and convenience sampling, as the interviews were conducted according to the participants' availability. The inclusion and exclusion criteria for selecting the participants in this study have been provided below (see table 4.1)

Sampling cohorts	Sampling strategy	Reason for inclusion	Criteria for inclusion	Criteria for exclusion
Female academics	Purposive sampling and convenient sampling	Female academics working at the University of Venda are knowledgeable about their experiences regarding the promotion criteria	Female academics from various disciplines/ departments, different career stages, between the ages 25-60,	Non-Faculty Staff, Academics from Other Universities

4.8. Data collection technique and instrument

The research instrument refers to instruments, such as questionnaires, interviews, surveys, or observations used to collect research data (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Semi-structured/ face to face interviews were used for data collection in this study. (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout,

(2014). De Vos *et al.*, (2011) define interview as a social relationship designed to exchange information between participant and researcher. Interviews are used to gather information about people's past or present conduct or experiences (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013). Face-to-face interviewing is appropriate where in-depth meaning is important and the research is primarily focused in gaining insight and understanding. In this study, the number of participants or the point at which data collection was stopped was governed by the point of data saturation, which occurred when the researcher discovered redundancy in the offered information by the participants. I went over the transcripts after each interview to see whether the participants had come up with any new suggestions. After interviewing 20 participants, the data saturation point was reached, and the interviews were halted. Nyathi (2019) agrees that the decision to end an interview is based on its adequacy and appropriateness, as well as analytical redundancy; this means that further information / interviews will not bring any new perspectives.

Following the sampling procedures, each participant's consent was requested before the interviews could take place (see Appendix B). Using English as the common language that all the participants understood, the researcher thoroughly disclosed the study's purpose and expectations with the participants. Consent was given through verbal and written agreements, which were obtained before each interview started. The participants were under no obligation to participate in the study, and they were free to leave at any time. The participants were not given any monetary or gift compensation in exchange for their participation, which safeguarded them from pressure. The research used an interview guide created with the study's objectives in mind (see Table 1 below which shows how these objectives were met and the relevant people used to obtain information). This interview guide allowed the researcher to investigate the participants' perceptions, knowledge, and experiences and probing allowed the researchers to investigate avenues that had not been examined before (Gray, 2004; Nyathi, 2019).

Table 4.2 Data collection outline

Objective	Research question	Variables or measurement	Data sources	Data collection methods, techniques, and tools

<p>i) To explore the trends, dynamics, and processes involved in promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province</p>	<p>What are the trends, dynamics, and processes involved in promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province?</p>	<p>Age, level of education, level of employment</p>	<p>Female academics</p>	<p>Semi-structured interviews</p>
<p>ii) To probe the perceptions of women in the process of promotion and aspiration towards senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province</p>	<p>What are the perceptions of women in the process of promotion and aspiration towards senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province?</p>	<p>Gender dimensions in promotions</p>	<p>Female academics</p>	<p>Semi-structured interviews</p>
<p>iii) To identify the various challenges or barriers encountered by women in the process of promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province.</p>	<p>What are the various challenges or barriers encountered by women in the process of promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province?</p>	<p>Experiences of women on promotion criteria</p>	<p>Female academics</p>	<p>Semi-structured interviews</p>

<p>iv) To develop strategies that could be adopted for women's promotion and attainment of senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province</p>	<p>What better strategy could be adopted for women's promotion and attainment of senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province?</p>	<p>Strategies to improve under-representation of women</p>	<p>Female academics</p>	<p>Semi-structured interviews</p>
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4.8.1. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews

An in-depth interview provides researchers with access to the ideas, thoughts, and memories of people in their own words, rather than in the researcher's words. Reciprocity is one of the most important characteristics which a researcher uses to achieve the desired results (Hessen-Bibber, 2014). Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were used as the key technique for data collection to ascertain women's experiences with promotion requirements in higher education institutions. Face-to-face interviewing is appropriate where in-depth meaning is required, and the research is primarily focused on gaining insight and understanding of the experiences of the participants (Barker, 2012). A semi-structured interview is implemented through a verbal exchange between the researcher and the participants; when the researcher wants to delve deeply into a topic and thoroughly understand the answers provided (De Vos *et al.*, 2011). The researcher probed for more information whenever the responses were left hanging. This in turn allowed the participants to elaborate more on their responses. It is through such interviews/conversations that one can uncover subjugated knowledge, elicit the experiences of participants (female academics), bring them to light and subject them to systematic analysis, thus, making them visible (De Vos *et al.*, 2013).

Feminist researcher mostly favors using the interview because it makes it possible for them to collect and represent the voices and perspectives of the marginalized groups, such as women. Face-to-face interviews provide an opportunity for researchers to ask follow-up questions, probe deeper into the participant's responses, and explore complexities and nuances (Hessen-Bibber, 2014). It is such interview conversation that one can unearth subjugated knowledge and elicit women's experiences, bringing them to light and subjecting them to systematic analysis, thereby making them visible and hearable, as stated by De Vault and Gross quoted in Muleya (2017).

The interviews of this study were conducted at the female academic' workplace- University of Venda and in their offices; the familiar environment was necessary for it enabled the participants to feel comfortable during the interview. Furthermore, the participants were informed before the interview that participation in the interview was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time they wished to.

During data collection, I encountered difficulties trying to get participants, as some female academics were not interested in participating in the study. One incident involved being denied access to one of the female academics' offices, so I had to explain the study at the doorstep and ask for permission to enter her office as well as permission to interview her. Permission was denied on the basis that she was busy as shown above. She responded by saying "*I am very busy, and you cannot come into my office*". I understood that she was busy, so I asked for an appointment with her on a date that she would be available, but she made it clear that she did not want to participate in any interview. This might have also been influenced by the fear of Covid -19 as people were still hesitant to middle with others as they did not know their status regarding Covid -19. Another challenge was electricity blackouts (or load shedding) which made it impossible for the interviews to be held virtually. Some interviews had to be rescheduled. Unfortunately, some participants could not reschedule as they had other commitments. However, there were others who were very willing to participate even during load shedding and we were able to improvise with candles and torches to make sure that there was light in their offices.

4.8.2. Data Analysis

Data analysis is a method by which researchers examine and transform the collected data to discover useful information, draw conclusions and make recommendations (De Vos *et al.*, 2011). Thematic content analysis was used in six phases, through a coding process to create meaningful patterns and to establish themes. The six phases include - familiarizing with the data collected, generating initial codes, searching codes for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report (De Vos *et al.*, 2011). After the collection of the data, which was the first phase, the researcher went through the transcripts, reading them several times as a process of immersing herself in the data.

Patterns and meanings gradually emerged because of this process of in-depth reading. I had a solid perspective of the data after developing coding through reading and re-reading of the data numerous times. The next step was to organize the codes into a logical pattern that related to the research questions. I started by describing each unique theme and connecting them to one another, keeping in mind whether the themes and codes associated with them formed a compelling "story". I analyzed what each theme was about, what the important elements were,

and what the core message was when naming the themes. As a result, "a brief, snappy, and informative name for each theme" was created (Brown and Clarke 2013). These themes were then interwoven with data extracts to give a clear and appealing story to the reader.

4.9. Measures taken to ensure trustworthiness.

Trustworthiness of this analysis was ensured by adopting the qualitative requirements of trustworthiness. Analysis credibility means trust that can be put in the findings. The degree to which the study is worth noting is measured by its trustworthiness. Credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability were adhered to in order to ensure trustworthiness.

4.9.1. Credibility

Anney (2014) states that credibility, determines whether or not the findings of the research represent plausible information taken from the original data of the participants and is a correct interpretation of the original views of the participants. Lincoln and Guba (2012) posit that "credibility" relates to trust in the accuracy of the data and its interpretation. The study was designed in such a way that the results are reliable; in other words, any reader would understand and believe them. An intensive interaction with data was done in order to develop relationships between the data and the interpretations; data from recordings, Teams, and transcripts were incorporated. The researcher remained in the field until all the data was collected, therefore, long periods of time were spent engaging with and observing the answers of the participants. The researcher gained a thorough comprehension of the topic as well as specific features of the participants' attitudes. Member verification was accomplished by sharing findings with participants and allowing them to confirm their responses. This guaranteed that their views were appropriately portrayed, therefore, credibility was maintained.

4.9.2. Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of the research findings, time; participants evaluated the findings, interpretations, and recommendations to check whether they were supported by their data. This test is carried out to reveal signs of consistency and stability in the investigation process (Vosloo, 2014). In using an auditable trail to corroborate data and ensure that the findings were internally coherent, ensured that dependability was accomplished in this study; this also assured that the research findings, interpretations, and suggestions were in line with the data.

4.9.3. Conformability

Conformability refers to the study's results being reliable and could be confirmed by other investigators and that data provided by participants and its interpretations are not based on the researcher's imagination (Brink *et al.*, 2012). It also provides a means of determining whether the

researcher permitted his or her personal values to influence the collection of data. To ensure conformability the researcher adopted reflexivity, which denotes that the researcher should be empathetic and neutral at the same time. This was portrayed in the participants' voices rather than the researcher's perceptions.

Prolonged fieldwork and varied field experience ensured a long period for the participants to be observed in their natural setting. A pilot study was conducted to check whether the questions were formulated in such a way as to enable participants to answer without any difficulties. Simple, concise and well-structured interviews made it easier for the participants to understand the phenomena under review and to provide accurate information.

4.9.4. Transferability

According to Lincoln and Guba (2012), the description of data collection must be thorough enough to allow conclusions to be applied to different contexts. The description of the procedures for the study should be comprehensive enough for the interpretation to be applicable to different fields. For the study to be applicable to various circumstances, the researcher gave a thorough description of the research methodology findings and verbatim excerpts from the individual interviewees. The researcher additionally asked someone with research experience to randomly read chosen transcripts and identify main categories to ensure commonality of the analysis.

4.10. Ethical Considerations

Neuman (2011) defines “ethics” as moral procedures followed or applied in research and Pillay (2014) explains ethics as the general obligation placed upon researchers to conduct their research in a socially responsive and responsible manner. To avoid harm to the participants, integration of ethics into their research is crucial for researchers; it is their responsibility to ensure that the respondents participate in the research with full awareness of the research's purpose, risks and benefits. Ethical considerations come into play when the participants are recruited, during the interview and when the results obtained are made available. The researcher worked strictly by the University of Venda's ethical research standards and legal obligations; in addition, the researcher had to obtain certificate of ethical clearance from the University Ethics Committee. The research was also guided by the above-mentioned feminist principles which ensure a balance of power between the researcher and participants.

4.10.1. Informed consent

Babbie (2014) explains that, in relation to informed consent, research participants are made aware of the type of information that the researcher wants from them, the reason why the information is sought, the purpose for which it is intended, how they are expected to participate

in the study, as well as how participation will affect them directly or indirectly. This plays a vital role in preserving ties of cordial relationship between the researcher and the researched. For these reasons, I explained the diverse aspects of the research to the respondents before the interviews. It is the responsibility of the researcher to inform the participants that their participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw from the study at any time they wish. The participants consented to participate voluntarily and not all participants signed the consent form as others gave their agreement to participate verbally for, they did not feel comfortable with signing on the consent form as they felt that it was invading their privacy and confidentiality. While others had no problem giving their written consent.

4.10.2. Confidentiality

Monette, Sullivan and Dejong (2011), refers to confidentiality as a state of secrecy; in research the researcher is responsible for keeping secret from the public any identity information about the participants. Before the interviews, some participants were not comfortable with signing the consent form as they felt that it invaded their privacy and confidentiality; as they said - "*my information would be no longer confidential as people will know who provided the information the moment, they see my signature*". Bless *et al.*, (2006) note that confidentiality is based on the fact that participant information is particularly sensitive and that personal information should be protected and not made available to anyone, other than the researcher. Following the concerns of the participants, I did not force the participants to sign the consent forms, instead I respected their concerns and only those who were comfortable were made to sign. During the study, the researcher developed interpersonal skills, such as the ability to establish relationships, which helped both the researcher and the participants to build trust among themselves.

In this study, for safeguarding the information, I maintained confidentiality by creating a password for the file of the participants' shared information; additionally, I assured participants that the situation would remain unchanged unless they agree that the information should be shared with someone else.

4.10.3. Privacy

Privacy means keeping what is not normally intended to be observed or analyzed from the public eye (De Vos *et al.*, 2011). Every person has the right to privacy, and it is their right to decide when, where, to whom and to what extent their attitude, beliefs and conduct will be revealed. Safeguarding the privacy and identity of their respondents, as well as acting with the required sensitivity where participants' privacy is important, are essential for researchers. In this study, I avoided using participants' real names and used pseudonyms to safeguard the privacy of the respondents.

4.10.4. Avoidance of harm

Another important ethical rule for social research is that the study must not cause any harm to the participants (Hendricks, 2018). Participants can be affected in many different ways in research, whether it is physical, emotional or psychological. To avoid causing such harm, I took an ethical obligation to protect participants from any form of physical discomfort that may arise from the research project, within all possible reasonable limits (Israel, 2014). Due to the effects of Covid 19 and the lockdown restrictions, both I as the researcher and the participants had to protect each other from the pandemic. Most of the participants were not comfortable with going through face-to-face interviews, so we used semi-structured interview questionnaires, whereby I communicated with the participants by going from door-to-door to their offices seeking their consent to be interviewed. Others were contacted via email. Some participants were comfortable to answer the questionnaires on their own time while others were comfortable to be interviewed face-to-face and requested for interviews on Microsoft Teams. This was done to safeguard their physical, emotional and psychological well-being. The participants were fully informed about the potential impact of the research beforehand. On the other hand, Israel (2014) notes that a research project may even have positive effects on the participants, however, it may take many years to hear or see any such beneficial effects.

4.11. Chapter summary

This chapter looked at the qualitative research methodology that was used in the study and the approach was discussed in detail. The study employed interpretive paradigm, purposive and convenience method of sampling with the data collection technique of semi-structured interviews. While these techniques have certain inherent problems, their numerous advantages motivated the researcher to utilise them as the most appropriate data collecting techniques for the study; data analysis and ethical considerations were also covered in this chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the research findings are presented, analyzed, interpreted and discussed. The data were systematically analyzed using thematic codes to categorise the emerging themes of the study. The following research objectives guided the data presentation:

- To explore the trends, dynamics, and processes involved in promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province
- To probe the perceptions of women in the process of promotion and aspiration towards senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province
- To examine the various challenges or barriers encountered by women in the process of promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province.
- To develop strategies that could be adopted for women's promotion and attainment of senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province

5.2. Research Findings

The outcomes of the study are separated into sections based on the research objectives; the first component contains biographical information. Following this is a discussion on the processes involved in the promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions, including perceptions of women in the process of promotion. Various challenges or barriers encountered by women in the process of promotion were discussed and the last section identified strategies that could be adopted to improve women's promotion and attainment of senior academic positions in a semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province, in particular. Direct excerpts are quoted by the researcher, as they are a necessary aspect of qualitative data presentation. These excerpts provided vital perspectives regarding the promotion criteria. Two elements governed the selection of quotations - their representativeness of the theme and their originality, second, they were compelling, as they articulated participants' experiences in new and surprising ways.

5.3. Biographical information

The study consists of a sample size of 20 female academics from a semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province. The participants in this research came from different age groups, ranging from 25 -60 years, from different faculties within the University; their qualifications obtained from different institutions of higher learning also represented their level of employment. This information is indicated in their profiles presented in the table below:

Table 5.1 Profile of the participants

PSEUDONYMS	AGE	MARITAL STATUS	NO OF KIDS	SCHOOL	QUALIFICATIONS	YEAR OF EMPLOYMENT	YEAR OF PROMOTIONS	LEVEL OF EMPLOYMENT
Participant A	41	Married	2	SAS	Master's degree	2011- Junior	2016	Lecturer
Participant B	42	Married	4	SHSS	PhD degree	2010- Lecturer	2014	Senior lecturer
Participant C	59	Single	2	HSS	PhD degree	2010- Lecturer	2015	Senior lecturer
Participant D	37	Single	1	SL	Master's degree	2013- Lecturer	_____	Lecturer
Participant E	43	Single	3	SMNS	PhD degree	2009- Lecturer	_____	Lecturer
Participant F	53	Single	2	SHS	PhD degree	2013- Lecturer	2019	Senior lecturer
Participant G	58	Divorced	3	SAS	PhD degree-	2002- Lecturer	2008	Senior lecturer
Participant H	41	Married	2	SL	Master's degree	2008- Junior	2014	Lecturer
Participant I	44	Single	3	HSS	PhD degree	2015- senior lecturer	2017	Ass prof
Participant J	36	Married	2	BMA	Master's degree	2014- Lecturer	_____	Lecturer
Participant K	38	Single	1	SHSS	Master's degree	2013- Lecturer	_____	Lecturer
Participant L	28	Single	1	SMS	Honours degree	2016-Junior lecturer	_____	Junior lecturer
Participant M	43	Single	2	HSS	Master's degree	2005- Part-time	2019	Lecturer
Participant N	39	Single	2	SL	Master's degree	2013- Junior lecturer	2015	Lecturer
Participant O	37	Single	1	SMNS	Honours degree	2015- Junior lecturer	_____	Junior lecturer
Participant P	48	Married	3	NS	Master's degree	2010- Junior lecturer	2012	Lecturer
Participant Q	47	Married	3	SE	PhD degree	2009- Senior lecturer	2017	Associate Prof
Participant R	57	Widow	4	SMS	Master's degree	2011- Part-time	2016	Lecturer

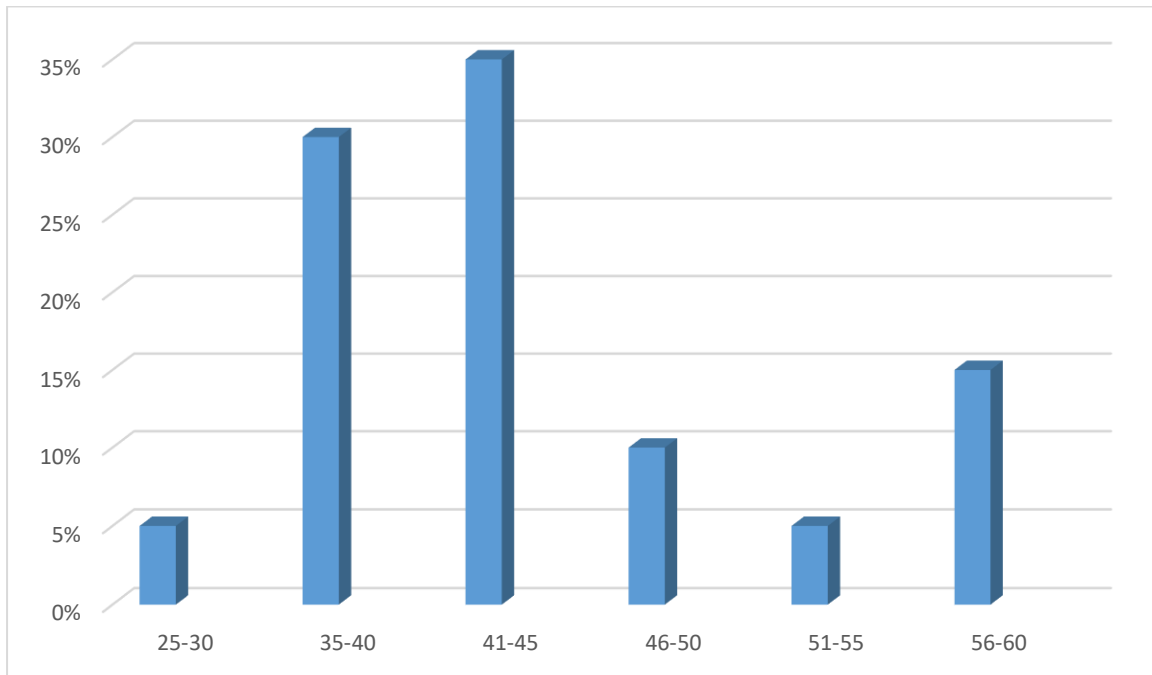
Participant T	44	Married	2	SE	Master's degree	2004-Junior lecturer	2019	Lecturer
Participant S	36	Single	2	SES	Honors degree	2016- Junior lecturer	_____	Junior lecturer

KEY- SHS- School of Health sciences SE-School of Education SL-School of Law SAS-School of Agricultural Science

SMS-School of Management Science SES-School of environmental science SHSS- School of Human and Social Science

SMNS- School of Mathematical and Natural Sciences

FIGURE 1: AGE



The Table above highlights the age range of the participants, the majority of participants ranged from 41 to 45 who constituted 35 percent of the participants, followed by those who were the ages 35-40 which covered 30 per cent. Those who were between 56-60 made up 15 percent, followed by female academics between of 46-50 years who made up 10 percent. The smallest groups were those who ranged between the ages of 25-30 and 51-55, these were the minority groups, as they were 5 percent each.

FIGURE 2: MARITAL STATUS

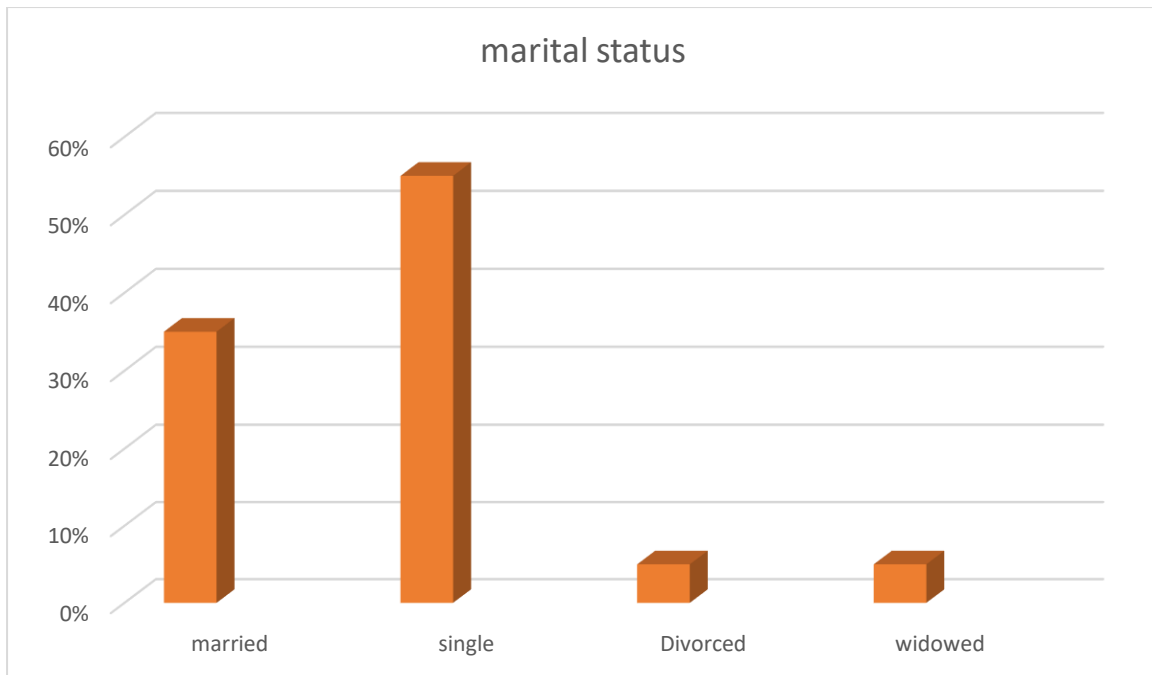


Figure 2 above indicates the marital status of the participants. Those who were married were 35%, while the majority were not married (single) at 55%. The smallest groups were those divorced and widowed at 5% each, as shown above.

FIGURE 3: Participants' level of employment

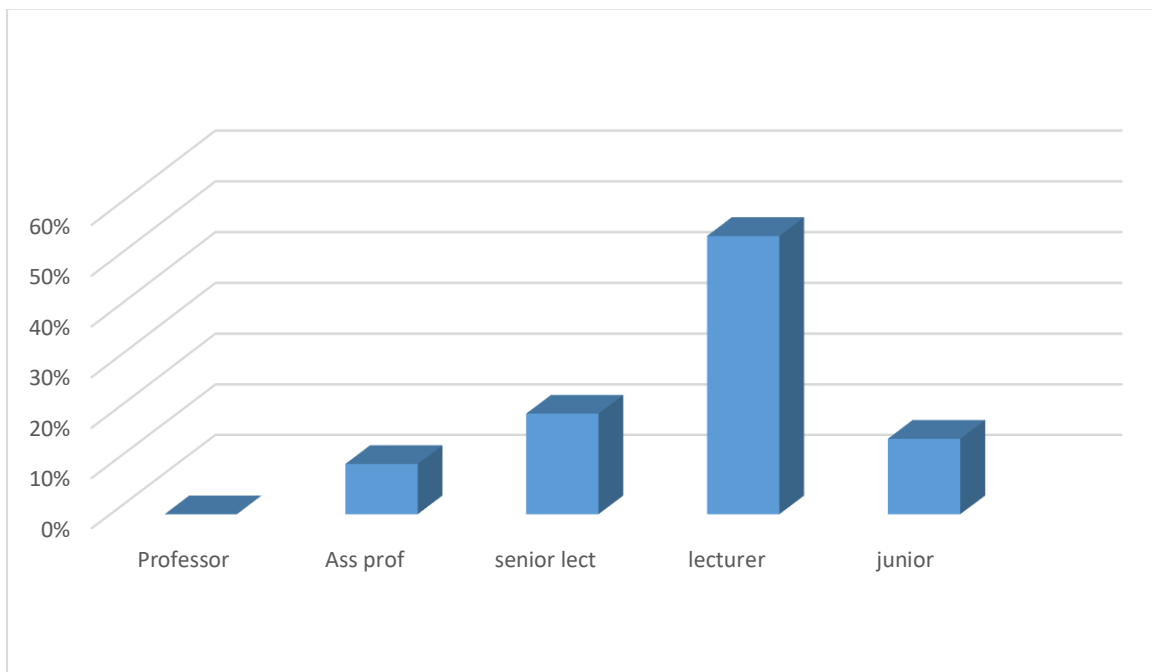


Figure 3 above represents the academic positions of the female academics participating in this study. The majority of the participants were lecturers at 55 percent, followed by the senior lecturers at 20 percent; junior lecturers who participated were 15 percent; the associate professors were 10 percent, and there were no professors in this study.

Table 5.2: Identified Themes and Subthemes

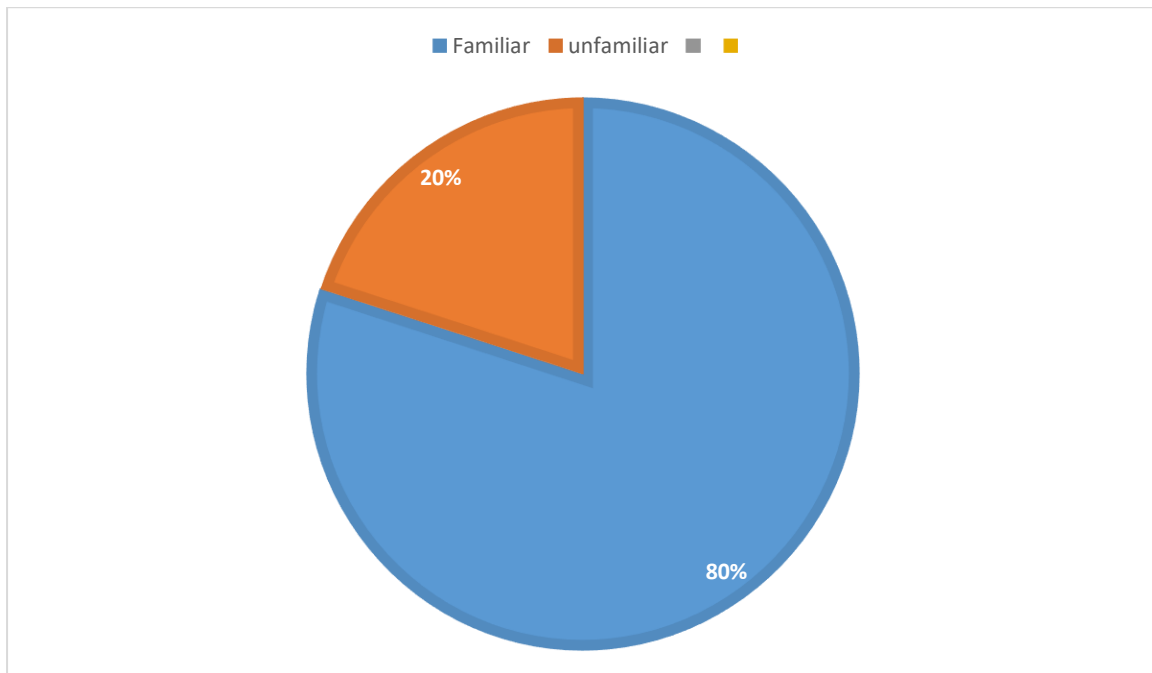
THEMES	SUBTHEMES
Academic position and promotion criteria	Knowledge regarding the promotion criteria
Gender dimensions in promotions	Promotion Guideline
Process of promotions in the institutions of higher learning	
Perceptions of women on representation	Applications for senior management positions
Challenges faced by female academics within the institutions	Publications of articles
	Teaching workload
	Time for preparations
	Supervision of students doing research
Workshop	Support from the institution
Types of training to be provided	Workshops

5.4. The processes involved in promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions.

5.4.1. Theme 1: Academic positions and promotion criteria

This section examined the promotion criteria at a Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo to determine whether they accommodate women's needs or not. My first question to the participants was whether they were familiar with the promotion criteria that was used in their Institution. The majority of the participants (80 percent) concurred that they were familiar with the promotion criteria. The results are shown on the pie chart below:

Chart 1. Knowledge regarding promotion criteria



Most of the participants responded, as indicated on the chart above, that they were familiar with the promotion criteria. However, only a few, like Participant Q, were able to clearly outline them:

Table 5.3. Outline of promotion criteria

	Junior lecturer	Lecturer	Senior lecturer	Associate professor	Professor	Senior professor
Qualification	Honours degree	Master's degree	Doctoral degree + 5years teaching experience	Doctoral degree +10 years teaching experience +10 articles	Doctoral degree+10 years teaching experience +15 articles	Doctoral degree +10 years of teaching experience+ 30 articles

Source: Policy on promotion of academic staff, 2022

“Promotion from junior lecturer to a lecturer position has its own criteria. Moving from a lecturer to a senior lecturer position requires one to have a doctoral degree. However,

moving from senior lecturer to associate professor, one should have at least 10 publications. From associate professor to full professor, one should have published 15 articles. This is according to the University where I am presently working. It may differ from one university to another. For these two promotions, leadership skills are also required together with supervision of both master's and doctoral students. Candidates for associate and professor positions also undergo interviews", (Participant Q)

Participant A echoed the same sentiment:

"A junior lecturer has to have an honor's degree, a lecturer has to have obtained a master's degree, a senior lecturer must have a PhD; as for promotion to a professor position, one has to have published many articles and must have been subjected to interviews".

Participant I added that the promotion criteria are listed as per posts:

"Yes, they list the criteria according to the description of the post. For example, a lecturer must have a master's degree, a senior lecturer must have a doctorate, and at least five articles must be published. A professor position must be applied for if one has many articles. This explains why most professors take sabbatical leave to focus on publications". (Participant I)

Some participants, like C and F commented on the promotion criteria expected from them to accelerate to senior positions without reflecting which post needed one to have published 10 articles as indicated below:

"One should have graduated 5 master's students and published more than 10 articles with colleagues within the Department, and probably some from outside the department to show that you are able to collaborate with other academics who are doing research in the same field." (Participant C)

"The number of masters and PhD students one has graduated as well as the experience one has as a lecturer, may help you to be promoted". (Participant F)

However other participants did not know the exact requirements therefore they could not clearly articulate it as shown in the quotations below:

"Proper qualifications and publications criterion for promotions. However, there is a subtle criterion which is talked about in a whisper: and that is if you are a man, you stand a better chance". (Participant E)

“The qualifications that one possesses are the criteria for promotion, having upgraded your qualification, for example from honors to master’s degree. Publications and supervision of students are also a must”. (Participant L)

Participant J not only included qualifications but also mentioned that one has to go through interviews:

“One has to get more qualifications, go through an interview, apply for promotion as well as meet performance expectations, publish and supervise students”. (Participant J)

There were participants, like M, who indicated that they were not familiar with the promotion criteria at that moment, as they were not expecting any promotions:

“Not that I can articulate as of now because I’m not at any point aspiring to be promoted, for I know that I do not have the qualifications yet for seeking promotion and I will only familiarize myself more when it’s time for me to apply (Participant M).

5.4.2. Theme 2: Gender dimensions in promotions.

This question sought to determine whether the promotion criteria in use was the same for men and women academics. The participants were asked the following question - “Are the criteria used for promotion the same for men and women? In response to this question, the majority of the participants indicated that the promotion criteria used were the same as they commented below.

“Yes, the institution uses equal/ same criteria for both men and women when it comes to promotion, such as qualifications and competency”. (Participant E)

Participant B indicated that the promotion criteria were the same for both men and women and also raised a complaint that the promotion criteria that was currently being used did not cater or consider the unique challenges faced by women which continuously strained them from meeting the promotion criteria as elaborated below :

“Yes, the promotion criteria used are the same, although there are procedures and processes that should be considered for promotions. These are not gender-sensitive in that they do not consider the unique challenges that are faced by women. The challenges faced by women have to do with child rearing, taking care of family needs and house chores”.

These sentiments were supported by Participant J:

“Criteria for promotions are the same for both men and women, yet they don’t have the same responsibilities at home. Women come to work already exhausted after making sure that their children have washed and have also eaten their breakfast before going

to school. They also clean the house and make sure that the husband has also eaten his breakfast and has his lunchbox ready for the next day”.

This view is in line with Sadiq, et al., (2019) who argued that promotional requirements were an obstacle which did not recognize women's multiple positions and did not apply to their needs. The criterion for promotion idealises the idea of competency which women lack because of other competing responsibilities. Similarly, Mansingh and Khan (2020) study revealed that women academics frequently had to split their attention and time between childbearing, childrearing, and a career.

Some participants acknowledged that the promotion criteria used were the same, however expressed their sad emotions regarding the promotion criteria as they perceived it as favoring and catering only for their male counter, this is expressed on the quotation below:

“Yes, these guys do not care about the fact that women carry most of the burden in their families. Men can come and work at night and we can't. We must look after our children when they (i.e men) are away. They find everything ready at home and can travel anywhere for leisure or for any type of work”. **(Participant C)**

Another participant shared disheartening feelings regarding the promotion criteria, revealing that she wasn't pleased by the fact that the promotion criteria used was the same for both the men and women, she felt that the promotion criteria was exploiting women this is affirmed by Sadiq et. al., (2019) who argue that as much as the system of academic promotion provided a mechanism for the achievements of academics to be recognised, it was also recognised as a mechanism that created or reflected inequalities, especially with certain groups rising to the top more readily than others.

“Yes, they are the same without consideration of gender or sex. Sometimes I feel like it is a curse to be a woman because being a woman means you will be exploited by your man and family, as well as the society you live in. It is even more disheartening that the authorities do not see anything wrong with the way the status quo in institutions of higher learning is designed. The system must be fought so that it can change”. **(Participant Q)**

More-so one of the participants viewed the promotion criteria as a policy and argued that universities remain gendered institutions and usually slow when it comes to implementing gender mainstreaming policies and due to that women remain disadvantaged as captured on the statement below:

“All I can say is that I am familiar with the details of the policy, and I know that they are the same. We are dealing with historically-disadvantaged groups so this issue of under-representation of women cannot be addressed overnight”. **(Participant M)**

However, there were other participants, like K, who did not hesitate to show their ignorance and lack of awareness when it came to the promotion criteria between males and females at the University:

“Honestly I do not know, I have never checked whether the promotion criteria differ, or if they are the same for both men and women”. (Participant K)

The above responses indicate how patriarchy has played a role in building gendered institutions which women are failing to penetrate through in order to break the glass ceiling that prevents them from attaining senior positions (Moodly & Toni, 2017). The stringiness of the promotion criteria used derailed women from accessing higher positions.

After the participants indicated the usage of a similar promotion criteria, I got curious to know the reasons why female academics were concentrated at lower positions, yet the promotion criteria were the same for both genders. The participants, therefore, were asked the following question – “If the promotion criteria used are the same, what then makes women to remain in lower positions?” The majority of participants responded revealed that the promotion criteria had lot of requirements which they were failing to meet due to constrains of their workload and felt that the promotion criteria at place was not considerate or cater for women’s need, thus leaving them unable to meet the necessary requirements for them to go to the next level. As illustrated in the quote below:

“When it comes to promotions, universities do not take women’s needs and interests into account. Women struggle to excel in an environment that does not value them. The demands are too great, the criteria for promotion are too stringent, and they fail to recognize that men and women have different needs, interests, and responsibilities. For example, men have women who cook and care for them; all they are left with is to excel at work. They do not have to balance between family needs and requirements at work”.

Participant P supported the above sentiment by saying:

“The promotion criteria are very stringent, and most female academics fail to meet the requirements as they have too much workload and lack time to study or to do fieldwork for their research projects”.

The above reflects that the promotion criteria put in place, are hardly achievable by female academics. This concurs with the point made by Sadiq *et.al*, (2019) who stated that university management boards, and officials, regulations and standards for promotion were set by men and in most cases these regulations do not reflect women's needs well. Some participants further reiterated that due to multiple tasking with workloads, women failed to have time to write and publish as shown by Participants B:

“Women juggle between too many workloads, making it difficult for them to have time to concentrate on publications. They must balance between domestic work and career demands”. (Participant B)

Other participants indicated that although the promotion criteria were the same, they were failing to climb the academic ladder to senior positions because they had many students to teach and more modules leaving them with no time for publishing articles as captured below:

“Unlike men, women are concentrated mainly in lower positions, they have too much modules and students to teach and therefore they barely have time to write articles which are a requirement for promotions”. (Participant A)

The responses above shows that the promotion criteria included having publications which was a barrier to most female academics as they barely had time for article writings. This is in line with Chitsamatanga et. al., (2019) who proposed that policies which focused primarily on research as a criterion for promotion disadvantaged women and such policies constituted barriers to their promotion.

In addition, one of the participants blamed societal stereotyping for the lack of women in senior positions, stating that stereotypical views that men are better suited for leadership positions ‘the think leader, think men attitude’ has contributed to fewer women in senior position as captured on the statement below:

“The lack of women in higher positions is due to societal stereotypes which compel women to take care of the family responsibilities as expected of them by the society. Time, opportunity, and women have other extra duties as wives to take care of the family. It’s the attitude of the society and the family, therefore the attitude of the society and the University itself affect women”. (Participant E)

However, another participant touched on the qualifications, highlighting that most female academics were still occupying low positions as they did not have the particular requirements needed for them to be promoted as indicated on the statement below:

“Yes, the promotion criteria might be the same but due to lack of required qualifications,

However, another participant mentioned something that was totally irrelevant as can be seen on the quote below:

“There are several women whose PhDs are in multi-disciplinary studies. That should be appreciated in a university which is in the process of being entrepreneurial. “We are hoping that the university will harness their talents and skills to benefit students”. (Participant F).

This section demonstrated that higher learning institutions (HEIs) were not family friendly. Mothers who work in such a system, where competence and competition are two of the key tenets, feel alienated (Chitsamatanga, 2018). Data and literature demonstrate that to be considered competent, a person must be able to achieve all requirements of the "ideal academic," including the capacity to do research, write for publications, teach, guide research students, and participate in community outreach. As a result, femininity is undesirable since it prevents women from fully immersing themselves in their profession because they have obligations outside of the workplace that conflict with their paid work. This is the reason why Intersectionality theory argued that gender was not the only factor that puts women at a disadvantage but multiple sources of oppression for women acted simultaneously to cause disadvantage in their lives (see also Collins, 2017).

5.4.2.1. Subtheme: Promotion Guideline

In this section the researcher sought to find out whether the promotion guidelines used were the same in all faculties therefore the participants were asked about the promotion guidelines that they had within their field. Majority of the participants responded that the guidelines varied depending on the school and level of employment as explained in the quotations below:

"You have to acquire relevant qualifications, for instance in my case, I have to obtain a PhD to be promoted and the PhD should be obtained in the Department that you are in, irrespective of the title of your research". (Participant P)

These sentiments are supported by Participants C and D:

"One should have graduated at least five MA students and published more than 10 articles with colleagues within the Department, and others from outside one's Department and across institutions. It's too much". (Participant C)

"In order for me to advance to the next level, I must obtain a PhD and (5) five publications first". (Participant D)

One of the participants who was still at a junior level stated that the guidelines applicable for her was to obtain a master's degree in a relevant field:

"In order for me to be promoted to a lecturer position, I have to obtain a master's degree in Biokinetics". (Participant L)

Others, however, indicated that there were no specified guidelines in their fields but instead the promotion criteria followed the University guidelines:

"This depends on the promotion one is applying for, the guidelines that are being followed are the ones specified by the University". (Participant N)

“There are no stipulated guidelines for my field except for the University’s overall policy and guidelines”. (Participant M)

Participant Q pointed out the following:

“If I want to be promoted from a lecturer to senior lecturer in my field, a doctoral degree is a requirement”.

Participant K, however, indicated that she was unaware of the guidelines within her field,

“I am not sure of the requirements for promotion in my field. But I am sure that guidelines used by the university are sufficient in this regard”.

From the responses of the participants, it shows that the promotion guideline for each faculty were the same as the promotion criteria and it only depended on the level that one was. However, some of the responses clearly shows that for some participants, there was no interest in ascending to senior positions. The reason might be the one that Mkhonto (2019) identified, that women opted to remain in lower positions rather than working towards job progression which would increase their workload and keep them away from their families.

Secondly, the researcher also sought to find out whether the participants were qualified for the promotion criteria that were in place, therefore the participants were asked the following question - “Are you able to meet those criteria?” The majority of the participants (75 percent) revealed that, currently, they were unable to meet the promotion criteria as they did not hold the necessary/ required qualifications. This is explained in the quotes below:

“I do not meet the promotion criteria as I do not yet have the necessary qualifications; I will be able to meet the criteria when I finishes my doctoral degree”. (Participant J)

“I do not have a PhD, yet which is the requirement for my promotion. But I am still working hard to finish my proposal. It is just that I am swarmed by a lot of work at home”. (Participant A)

“In order to meet the promotion criteria and be qualified as a lecturer, I have to finish my master’s degree studies first”. (Participant L)

Most participants were lecturers working on their doctoral degrees and publishing articles with the help of their peers. This point was raised by Participant D:

“I am still far from meeting the promotion criteria. But soon I will be done with my studies and I hope to publish my dissertation in the form of articles”.

Participant P had this to say:

“I cannot say I meet the promotion criteria yet as I still have to study for my doctoral degree as well as to publish articles”.

From the examinations of the above quotes, it can be noted that most of the female academics who remained in lower positions was because they did not have the necessary qualifications to meet the promotion criteria as the majority of them were still working towards obtaining their doctoral degrees. Studies have shown that women struggled to manage work and family lives. Some women are hesitant to assume higher positions, especially those that require their full-time attention, due to their strong devotion to their families. The burden of combining work and family obligations is a major reason for the shortage of women in senior leadership positions (Case and Richley, 2014; Hail et. al., 2016; Mkhonto, 2019).

The study pointed out that some of the female academics were interested in applying for managerial positions although lack of qualifications held them back which included obtaining a PhD, supervising a number of masters and PhD students and publishing a number of articles. Acknowledging that it was yet to take a long time before being promoted as supported by the quote below:

“I do not have the required qualifications to apply for managerial positions. I am still busy studying for my doctoral degree. I still have to supervise a certain number of master’s and PhD students as the main supervisor and I still must publish several articles before I qualify”. (6 or so)”, (Participant N)

The female academics also testified that due to the stringent promotion criteria and lack of institutional support when it came to issues of publication, they were struggling to grasp the knowledge and skills on how to publish. see the quotation below :

“No, I’m so far from meeting the requirements. They are so difficult and there is no support for us. It took me more than 10 years to understand the rigors of publications and I am still struggling to get my master’s degree research published.” (Participant C)

From the above extract, it can be noted that female academics faced challenges regarding publications as they lacked mentors who served as role models and inspiration. Mentorship boost an individual’s confidence and self-belief, helping them navigate challenges and setbacks. Studies indicated that many women experience a lack of pro-family public policies or support programs such as child-care in some institutions, and this tends to place pressure on women to balance their work and family obligations (Baker, 2017; Ooms, 2019). Women have limited access to established networks and collaborations, which impacts their ability to publish and disseminate their research (Thomas et. al., 2019).

However, there were few participants who indicated that they met the promotion criteria, and were only waiting to be promoted; for instance, Participant Q responded as follows:

“I was promoted from senior lecturer to Associate professor. Currently I also qualify for promotion from associate professor to a professor position because I have supervised enough students and have also published enough articles to meet the criteria”.

The analysis of the above statement uttered by participant Q indicate that some female academics despite the challenges they faced, they were able to achieve or accumulate the required qualifications for promotion. Women can climb to leadership positions, but only if they receive or have the necessary support, rather than being expected to solve their problems on their own (Meyers, 2017).

In summing up, majority of female academics lagged in senior positions because they were unable to meet the promotion criteria as most of them were still struggling with finishing their studies.

5.4.3. Theme 3: Processes of promotions in institutions of higher learning

In this subsection, the participants were asked about their promotions, as to whether they had received any form of promotion, and from which level. The majority (65 percent) of the participants responded that they have been promoted from one level to another. Most participants responded that it has been more than five years since they got promotion.

“I got promoted in 2008 from being a lecturer to senior lecturer after I graduated with my doctoral degree and from 2008 up to date, I am still a senior lecturer”. (**Participant G**)

The above statement extracted from the participant shows that many female academics becomes stagnant at the same positions for too long. According to scholars such as Hail et. al., (2016) women get stuck in one position for too long as they take much time to achieve other required qualifications. The reason for stagnancy in same position might be that women tend to prioritize family obligations over personal goals, sacrificing their skills and taking less challenging and prestigious roles to help them manage their various responsibilities (Mkhonto, 2019).

Table 5.4. Promotion Period

Name	Year of Promotion	From which level	To which level
A	2016	Junior	Lecturer
B	2014	Lecturer	Senior lecturer
C	2015	Lecturer	Senior lecturer
F	2019	Lecturer	Senior lecturer
G	2008	Lecturer	Senior lecturer
H	2014	Lab tech	Senior lab tech
I	2017	Doctor	Ass professor
M	2019	Part time	Lecturer
N	2015	Junior lecturer	Lecturer
P	2012	Junior lecturer	Lecturer
Q	2017	Senior lecturer	Ass professor
R	2016	Part-time	Lecturer
T	2019	Junior lecturer	Lecturer

The Table also reflects the slow progression of women in their careers as they remain in the same positions for long periods of time. This is supported by participant P:

“In 2012 after I finished my masters, I got promoted from being a junior lecturer to lecturer and for me to be promoted from this current position, I have to finish my doctorate program and honestly I am not sure as to when I will be able to do that; it seems impossible for me to pass that bridge”.

Participant F supported the above sentiments:

“I progressed in 2019 from lectureship to being a senior lecturer, although the progression should have occurred in 2018, was in a lecturer position since 2013”.

Participant M thought that the question about promotion was not applicable to her, as indicated in her response:

“I started as part time lecturer in 2005 and moved straight to lecturer position in 2019, therefore this question is not applicable to me”.

From the above it can be concluded that some female academics have accepted their positions as shown by participant M who stayed in the same position of being a part timer for fourteen years and never upgraded her qualifications as she got promoted to a lecturer post with the same master’s degree. According to a study by Khan and Siriwardhane (2021), some women perceive that promotion decisions are influenced by gender rather than merit, this leads to a sense of disillusionment and reduced aspirations.

A minority group revealed that since they were employed in the institution, they had never been promoted:

“I joined Univen as a lecturer in 2013 and I have never been promoted to any other positions ever since”. (Participant K).

“I have never been promoted because I started at the University as a lecturer, and I have not received any promotion yet”. (Participant D)

“I have never been promoted; I have been at Univen since 2011 as a lecturer up to date”. (Participant E)

The above statements shows that it takes plenty of years before progressing to another level for most female academics. Some had been in the same position for more than ten years since they joined university without being promoted and others for eight years; some they even get to the point of retirement still working on the same position without any progression. This aligns with Slaughter (2015) who contends that female academics face various challenges in climbing the academic ladder.

After discussing with the participants about their promotions, and the researcher perceived that most of the participants had been in the same positions for so many years, led to the following question “Do you face any challenges in meeting the promotion criteria?” Most participants responded that they did have difficulties in meeting the necessary promotion criteria to their next level, as confirmed by Participants A and L:

“The greatest challenge that I have is that of not meeting the criteria, I am swamped with too much work, making it very difficult for me to work faster towards reaching the requirements of the promotion criteria”. (Participant A)

“My challenge is that I have too much work to do as I have lot of students and modules to teach, which prevents me from finishing my master's degree, which is essential for my promotion. As long as I am unable to finish my master’s degree, it means I will remain stuck in this position of being a junior lecturer”. (Participant L)

The above statements by participant A and L shows that female academics were struggling with balancing demanding work responsibilities and accomplishing their studies which was the key for them meeting the expected promotion criteria. This created roadblocks to their self-development. This is confirmed by Chitsamatanga (2018), who stated that work-family friction, lack of time to concentrate on completing PhD studies, teaching, and heavy workloads all contributed to research becoming an obstacle to female academics and their career advancement.

On the other hand, participant O felt that her life and career path was going to be simple if she was a man as she complained that she was failing to meet the promotion criteria due to the demands of her responsibilities, yet the male counterpart had lessor burdens. According to Lawrence (2018) Female academics face certain hurdles unlike their male counterparts, based on socio-cultural and traditional ideas.

“I have a very hectic schedule, which makes me fail to work toward reaching the promotion criteria. Sometimes I wish I was born a man, in that way I would have achieved a lot on my career as the males do not have so many responsibilities when they get home. They continue with their office work (have enough time to write articles) unlike us women; when we get home, we are to take care of all the responsibilities of cooking and childcare”. (Participant, O)

Another participant mentioned that it was impossible for her to meet the promotion criteria as she struggled to balance her workload and the issue of publication, especially within her department which had few staff and plenty of work. This shows that balancing family commitments and professional aspirations can be particularly demanding and may affect the number of articles published. This is similar to the study conducted by Santos (2016) who argued that female academics were disadvantaged in terms of career advancement in universities because they were less active in article writing and publications.

“I have, first and foremost, been attempting to comprehend the world of publishing, which has taken me so long to grasp. Meeting the criteria appears to be impossible due to the amount of effort required. It's difficult for me to balance my heavy workload with research and publication. We have a small staff with heavy workloads, and it's difficult to balance work and family. My children need me, but I don't have time for them. They are essentially on their own”. (Participant C)

In addition, the above quotation, shows that the heavy workload, coupled with family responsibilities were contributing factors that stood on the way of women with regards to publishing articles. Furthermore, the strain of not having adequate mentors and networking opportunities contributed on the lack of publications by female academics. Chitsamatanga

(2014) affirm that network connections were crucial ingredients for professional career success and assessed decisions about promotions.

Participants K, M and P responded that they had challenges meeting the promotion criteria as they did not have the required Doctoral degree, however they failed to indicate what was stopping them from obtaining the required promotion criteria as captured on the quotations below:

“I have heard that for me to be promoted to a senior lecturer position I must have a PhD degree. Thus, if I don’t study, I will not be promoted”. **(Participant K)**

This sentiment is echoed by Participants M and P:

“A Senior lecturer’s position requires a PhD, and I don’t have a doctorate, so I don’t qualify for promotion and I have never applied for a promotion since the criteria is very clear in their requirements”. **(Participant M)**

“The challenge is that I am not able to meet the requirements of the promotion criteria”. **(Participant P)**

Other participants were faced with the obstacle of not having quality time to finish their studies as indicated below:

“For me the obstacle that I face is the lack of time to complete my studies, as well as lack of mentors”. **(Participant D)**

The above is supported by Mansingh and Khan (2020), who asserts that many women, in addition to their positions in universities, are also primary caregivers for their families, which makes it difficult for them to advance in academia, as the work will require more of their time and attention.

On the challenge of being promoted to associate professor, Participant I said the following:

“Perhaps the most difficult aspect for me is that I have been an Associate Professor for far too long. I believe that by now I should be a full qualified professor but there has been a moratorium on the appointment to professorial positions, hence the delay”.

This statement shows that although the participant already having all the required qualifications for the promotions, she had to wait to be promoted. Research has shown that female academics may receive less recognition and lower evaluations compared to their male counterparts, even when their qualifications and achievements are similar (Nakitende, 2019).

However, there were a few participants, like Participant F, who indicated that they had no challenges whatsoever regarding meeting the promotion criteria, as they had no intentions of achieving senior positions. Herbst (2020) argues that women have lower expectations of

success than men in many areas of achievement, which might be indicative of their tendency to underestimate themselves:

“I cannot say that I have any challenges regarding the promotion criteria as I have never tried to meet the criteria since I have different objectives unrelated to promotion and I have no interest in being promoted to senior positions”. (Participant F)

These sentiments are echoed by Participant Q who had a positive attitude towards the promotion criteria:

“So far I do not have any challenges as I am aware of the requirements for the promotion criteria for me to go to another level, therefore I have made it a point to work towards them on a daily basis, until I qualify”. (Participant Q)

After realizing that most of the women had challenges regarding meeting the promotion criteria. The participants were also asked their views/opinions regarding what they thought should be done in order for the promotion criteria to be accessible for them. Majority of the participants raised the concern that if it was possible the university should consider formulating a policy that allow women to have few modules to teach which will give them time to concentrate on writing articles. This is highlighted in the quotations below:

“Since our biggest challenge is having too much work which prevents us from acquiring necessary qualifications for the promotion, the University therefore should have a policy that allows us to have few modules and students to teach; in that way we will be able to have time to write articles and supervise more students as per the requirement of the promotion”. (Participant B)

Participant H supported the above sentiments:

“If only we can be given less workload of few classes, then I can have time to concentrate on finishing my doctorate”.

This point is similar to Chitsamatanga (2018) who posits that lack of time due to concentrating on completing PhD studies, teaching, and heavy workloads, all contribute to article writing becoming an obstacle to female academics' career advancement.

In addition, another participant indicated that in research she faced challenges relating to funds and time to conduct and be more involved in research.

“If I can get more funds to conduct my research and only if the number of modules that I teach could be reduced so that I could devote more time to my studies, I would be grateful”. (Participant D)

Some participants raised arguments and complained about the promotion criteria and its procedures, stating that it was not clear, therefore, they needed to be clarified so that everyone is aware of what was needed:

“The promotion criteria have to be clear and made known to each and every member of the University”. **(Participant K)**

“Correction of the system should be made, as its processes are not clear, and it’s so tiring to make accessible the system. People come to a point of giving up, for example the promotion criteria has to be clear and made known to each and every member of the University”. **(Participant E)**

Participant P supported the above sentiments:

“The promotion criteria should be reviewed and made more flexible; they have to be less stringent so that we are able to meet them”. **(Participant P)**

The above statements shows that the women felt that the promotion criteria were not accommodating everyone as it was not clear, therefore for their challenges to be addresses the promotion criteria has to be reviewed and cater for the women needs as well. Literature indicates that the lack of transparent and equitable promotion processes can impede women's advancement to senior positions (Bodkin and Fleming, 2021).

Other participants believed that the promotion criteria should be accommodative to the needs of women:

“These promotion criteria are male-oriented; they do not cater for female needs, therefore when they are being established, they should consider all the females’ needs, for instance, the roles and responsibilities that women have at home besides being academics”. **(Participant A)**

The above demonstrate that women still face multiple challenges regarding meeting the promotion criteria. As long as they continue having demanding work responsibilities, lacking mentors and financial support which are their roadblock to mobility, they will continue being hindered in their progress. This is in line with Mohajeri (2015) and Muleya (2017) who argued that universities were traditionally dominated by men and as a result, their traditions and standards were shaped by men's life experiences including the promotion criteria.

Another participant was of the belief that everyone should receive promotion based on merit, although she agreed that women needed to be encouraged to further their studies, especially those who did not have PhDs yet:

“I believe that people must receive this promotion based on merit, as well as sensitize women to register for PhD”. **(Participant M)**

However, one of the participants was barely relevant to the question: what they thought should be done in order for the promotion criteria to be accessible for them as indicated in their response below:

“The promotion criteria are available to every staff member of the university as they are published on the University website and circulated to everyone”. (Participant, N)

To sum up, this section covered the promotion guidelines which the participants agreed were varied, according to the schools. The researcher noted that the majority of the participants were unable to meet the promotion criteria and that most of them were yet to finish their studies. The other challenge brought forward was that some of the participants were stagnant in their positions as they have been in those positions for over 10 years. This clearly portrays that women face challenges in meeting the promotion criteria and the reason was too much workload. They suggested that the institution should have some policies which would allow women to teach less modules so that they can have more time to develop their careers, especially those who are in junior positions.

5.5. Perceptions of women in the process of promotion and aspiration towards senior academic positions.

This section gives attention to the perceptions of women towards the promotion process. It also focuses on their aspirations towards senior positions.

5.5.1. Theme 1: Perceptions of women on representation and promotion

Here the researcher looks at the perceptions of women in the process of promotion and their representation. Regarding the under-representation of women in executive management and senior positions, majority of the participants agreed that women were not adequately represented and voiced the following:

“There is still a lower percentage of women serving in strategic positions because these are reserved for their male counterparts. These positions are so demanding. It is difficult for us to be mothers, stay-at-home parents, Heads of departments, and Deans of faculties, as these positions require undivided attention. At this moment, I can understand why there is only one senior woman who occupies a higher strategic position here at the university.” (Participant E)

Participant Q supported the above sentiments by saying the following:

“Women have more responsibilities than men such as bringing up their children and taking care of their families. That is why they are behind in many aspects of life because they spend more time at home to make sure that the needs of their families are met before they can venture out in life.” (Participant Q)

The above quotations shows that women were barely represented in managerial positions as they were hindered by their work loads and seemed hesitant to complicate their lives by applying for demanding positions. This confirms a finding from a study by Ngcobo (2016) in which women tended to choose family when time constraints and job expectations became more severe.

Participant P was of the view that women were not represented in senior positions of power because they were not trusted with these positions. Many universities equated masculine traits, such as assertiveness, aggression, and task-oriented leadership skills with performance and achievement (Mayimele, Ndudzo and Ndlovu, 2020). In this regard, she said the following:

“Women are not trusted for handling complicated or demanding positions because they are deemed to be more emotional than scientific in their approach to tackling problems. If there is a man who is being interviewed for a post, he will undoubtedly be chosen as many still believe that men are born leaders and over achievers.” **(Participant, P)**

The above sentiment aligns with Akala’s (2016)’s findings that stereotyping and biases are linked to the denial by men to let women occupy positions of power. Akala (2016) further claimed that many women have internalized attitudes and (negative) role expectations regarding themselves, and these fit neatly into stereotypes. This is supported by what Participant G expressed in her statement below:

“There is only one female in the executive management position at the University of Venda who was appointed in 2021 but previously it was dominated by males”. It is exceedingly rare to see women competing for higher positions at their workplaces”. **(Participant G)**

This is similar to Krause’s (2017) findings which affirm that women continued to be under-represented in top leadership positions in institutions of higher learning, specifically at the executive levels of leadership, such as deanship and chancellor positions. The above statements are confirmed by Univen’s occupational classification by gender (2021) (attached as appendix D) which demonstrates that there was only one female at the top management level while males were the majority. At senior management level, males constituted 61 percent while the females made up 39 percent. The findings reflect that the females are not yet well represented in these categories. However, one can say there is a slight change even though it is happening at a slow pace. The change is proved by the study conducted by Muleya (2017) which showed that at management level, there was some efforts made by the university to involve women in strategic positions.

As the researcher, I further probed the participants to state their opinions as to why female academics were not adequately represented. In answering the question, participants

articulated that it was because most female academics did not have relevant qualifications for those particular positions:

“There are few women in senior positions because most of them lack the required qualifications and have a lot of responsibilities that obstruct them in meeting the promotion criteria”. **(Participant G)**

This sentiment was supported by Participant L who stated that women were being hindered\ obstructed from pursuing their careers as they had gender-based responsibilities as elaborated below:

“Women are stuck in lower positions due to the heavy work load they are bearing both at campus as well as at home (gender-based responsibilities), thus hindering them from competing equally with men”. **(Participant L)**

Participants M and L indicated that even interviewing panels were so biased and constituted of men. This is supported by the quotes below:

“Although there are few women who meet the requirements for these senior positions, interviewees would somehow find a way of marginalizing them.” **(Participant M)**

“Female leadership is being undermined and looked down upon. This is one of the reasons why female participation in senior positions is low because often when both men and women possess the same qualifications, there is a likelihood that a male interviewee will be selected.” **(Participant L)**

This is due to the stereotypical perception that women are less capable than men to handle managerial positions (Mansingh and Khan, 2020). This is confirmed by Subbaye’s (2017) statement that university boards are dominated by males. Therefore, appointments can easily be manipulated to favour them.

However, some participants had a different viewpoint, outlined lack of confidence, skills and competency as the obstacle behind lack of women in managerial positions. This is extracted from the following quotation below:

“Female academics are not in top positions because they lack the skills and confidence. “I as a woman does not have confidence the position I hold right now. I am comfortable because my position is not so demanding, and it does not require me to spend a lot of hours at work. This enables me to be with my family.” **(Participant J)**

The above is similar to Ndebele’s (2018) findings that most women were apprehensive of assuming leadership positions because of the fear that their male colleagues will not follow their instructions. Herbst (2020) adds that women had lower expectations of success than men

in many areas of responsibilities which might be indicative of their tendency to underestimate themselves.

Furthermore, participants' responses indicated that most female academics were not occupying lower positions by choice but rather circumstances surrounding them dictated this. This was disputed by participant Q who articulated the following:

“Positions such as being a dean or HOD did not rely on qualifications but on popularity as there were no interviews required for one to be nominated as a School Dean especially at this university. This requires you to have experience as an HOD and for one to be an HOD, one needs to be voted into this seat by colleagues. This depends on whether the colleagues like you or not, meaning that if the colleagues did not see leadership in you as an individual then qualifying for the position becomes impossible. However, this will soon change as the University has recently suffered setbacks by allowing staff members to vote colleagues into positions of power regardless of whether they have the expertise or not”.

(Participant Q)

The above quotation shows that it was beyond having the qualifications for women to become appointed in positions such as deans and HOD's. It is difficult for women to ascend leadership positions as people tend to perceive males as great leaders while women are seen as followers (Posholi, 2013; Mansingh and Khan, 2020). This means that due to patriarchal roots in institutions of higher learning, women still struggle to ascend these positions. This is supported by Barret (2014) who argued that patriarchy was historically and still is, at the heart of women's oppression. This sentiment on patriarchy is supported by participant R who mentioned the following:

“Patriarchy still exists in our society and is part of the culture in most institutions of higher learning. It is patriarchy which contributes to gender inequalities, as men are still labelled as leaders and women as followers”. **(Participant R)**

While participant M blamed the slow procedures for transformation in the institutions of higher learning regarding the inclusion of women as explained in detail below:

“The lack of female representation in senior positions is caused by the slow process of transformation. Although there are instruments put in place to assist in achieving gender equality within these institutions, the process and progress is very slow”.

(Participant M)

To further elicit participants' views regarding the positions that female academics were concentrated in, I asked participants to indicate the common positions that female academics occupy in institutions of higher learning and why. Most of the participants acknowledged that there were few women in Deanship and HOD positions.

“In our School / Faculty we have only one female HOD and the rest are males. This clearly shows that women are not yet equally represented in senior positions”. **(Participant I)**.

Participant L supported the above sentiment by saying:

“There are a few women who are holding strategic positions, but we believe that with time female academics will be represented in all positions as long as they are willing to acquire the necessary qualifications”. **(Participant L)**

The female academics holding positions as Professors and Associate Professors agreed that there were female professors, but they constituted a ridiculously small proportion. I asked them to give the reasons why this was the case. Participant C responded by saying:

“Women are marginalized and undermined. Most are burdened with additional responsibilities (childcare and family responsibilities). When it comes to promotions, universities do not take women’s needs and interests into account. Women struggle to excel especially in an environment that does not value them. The demands are too great, the criteria for promotion are too stringent, and these institutions fail to recognize that men and women have dissimilar needs, interests, and responsibilities. For example, men have women who cook and care for them. This gives them the chance to excel at work as they do not have to balance family needs and work”. **(Participant C)**

Participant M was of the same view as above:

“The university has very stringent criteria and it is difficult for a person to become a professor as this promotion is based on merits and the track record in publishing and supervising students. Most female academics have limited time to focus all their attention on these requirements.” **(Participant M)**

The issue of the promotion criteria being too stringent was also raised by other scholars in the literature review. Mohajeri (2016) contends that women's advancement to senior/management roles was being hampered by policies and promotion procedures which seemed not to consider women's circumstances. Participant P shared the same point of view as above:

“Women have more responsibilities. That is why they are unable to qualify as professors. Most of them come to work already exhausted after making sure that their children have washed and have also eaten their breakfast before going to school. They also clean their houses and make sure that their husbands have also eaten before they could dedicate quality time to themselves”. **(Participant P)**

Other participants brought up the fact that female academics were mostly concentrated at lower positions because some were unable to attain their doctoral qualifications due to their many responsibilities at home, as narrated below:

“Female academics are mostly concentrated at lower ranking positions because of failing to finish their doctoral studies. For instance, one can register for more than six years for a doctoral degree until they are kicked out by the system”. **(Participant T)**

Participant B seconded Participant T and mentioned the following:

“Realistically, women do not have much time to study further because of the roles they play at home, in the community, and at work. Their hands are so tight that they can't handle all the responsibilities that have been assigned to them, therefore, some opt to settle for their current positions rather than trying to pursue their studies”. **(Participant B)**

The above statements shows that women were facing the highest levels of tension between work and family since they are always required to carry out majority of family and household duties. Sadiq, et al., (2019) however, argue that the issue is promotional requirements that do not recognize women's multiple positions nor their needs.

Other participants raised the issue of not having necessary qualifications as explained by Participants O and Q below:

“Women are more concentrated in lower positions because they are underqualified. They mostly have master's degrees which qualifies them only for a lecturer's position and they feel comfortable with this as it enables them to concentrate on taking care of their families”. **(Participant O)**

“Indeed, most female academics are just lecturers because it is a lower position that requires master's degree which most of them have”. **(Participant Q)**

Participant L supported the above sentiments and mentioned that she was a junior lecturer because of her qualification:

“Currently I am working as a junior lecturer because I have an honors degree (qualification) and for one to be a junior lecturer, it requires only an honors degree which apparently all academics have”. **(Participant L)**

“I believe that female academics are occupying lower posts because they are underqualified. Of course, they will not be promoted if they don't work hard to achieve their master's or doctoral degrees.” **(Participant I)**

The above point is similar to that of Hail, Tsegai, and Dzathor (2016), who stated that the burden of combining work and family obligations is a major reason for the shortage of women in senior leadership positions. There are others, however, who maintain that there are fewer female academics in senior positions because of gender discrimination as argued by Participate H below:

“I could say that one of the reasons why women are in lower positions is because of gender discrimination which views women as less gifted than men”.

Other participants like G, argued that there are continuous delays in reviewing issues of progress of female academics:

“Yes, women might be in lower positions due to the fact that they lacked the necessary requirements to be promoted but as for the Professors’ positions, there has been a moratorium to halt promotions in this area by our institution because of lack of money. Hence the delay. And some of us have been waiting to be promoted to Professorship since 2019”.

Irrespective of all the different views that the participants were articulating, Participant R had a distinct perspective as to why female academics were still scarce at senior positions and uttered the following:

“We are getting there as women, although the process is slow since we are recovering from the old habits that always relegated women to the periphery of development. Remember that women were not allowed to attain an honours degree, let alone a master’s degree or a doctoral degree. We have indeed come a long way”. Our culture and religion did not allow this. But now it has become law that women should be empowered to develop themselves. Soon, we will also have more women professors”.

Participant M shared the same sentiments with the above:

“Senior positions require a master’s and a doctoral degree with some publications and student supervision. Women have been excluded from pursuing their studies over the past decades, so they are just trying to catch up while men have always focused on climbing the academic ladder. The gap between the two genders is just too much to be narrowed within a decade or two”.

Participant N, however, had a totally different view from the rest:

“I know that women are not well represented in this institution yet. But women in my faculty have been promoted to senior positions. They are heads of departments, and senior lecturers. Perhaps this is so because the faculty is dominated by female academic staff”.

We can therefore conclude by saying that female academics believe that women do have the capability to be appointed to senior positions if their specific needs, such as child-care and other family responsibilities can be addressed.

5. 5.2. Subtheme: Applications for senior management positions

This sub-section sought to find out whether female academics were applying for managerial positions each time there was a vacancy available. To determine this, female academics were asked the following question - "Have you ever applied for a senior management position at UNIVEN or anywhere else"? Responding to this question the majority of participants (90 percent) responded that they had never applied for such bigger posts:

"No, I have never applied for any management position, neither at Univen nor at other institutions because I do not have the necessary qualifications. Ascending the academic ladder necessitates certain qualifications in order to meet the promotion criteria. (Participant I)

Participant B supported the above sentiment by stating:

"Most women do not have the qualifications that are required for managerial positions therefore they do not bother in applying as they are well aware that they do not qualify; for instance, in my case, I only hold a PhD degree which allows me to be a senior lecturer". (Participant, B)

Although the Majority of participants agreed that they never applied for any managerial positions, there were a few (10 percent) who highlighted that they once applied for senior positions, as explained by participant Q below:

"Yes, I have once applied for a senior position at Univen, the position which I had applied for was for a Director of Research and Innovation and the outcome of the application was that I never got shortlisted for the position". (Participant Q)

This sentiment is similar to Participant R's point:

"I got promoted from part-time lecturer to lecturer in 2016 therefore when I saw an advertisement for a senior lecturer post in my Department, I applied, however, the reply I got was "awaiting response". Maybe it is because I do not have a doctorate degree which is part of the promotion criteria for senior lectureship". (Participant R).

The above shows that although the participants revealed that they had once applied, they were not applying for managerial positions. This is indicated in participant R's response who only applied for senior post in her department.

The researcher probed further the participants' thoughts regarding whether female academics apply for managerial positions, the respondents gave different views or opinions in their

answers. The majority (70 percent) elucidated that female academics did apply for senior positions and some of their views are discussed below:

“Female academics aspire to be part and parcel of the top management leadership therefore they do apply for those posts as they also want to be in managerial positions to tackle the problems associated with those positions, as well as to compete with their male counterparts”. **(Participant H)**

“Yes, women do apply for management positions, especially those who qualify, as everyone aspires to grow in their careers. They probably apply for managerial positions because this is viewed as upward mobility”. **(Participant S)**

Participant J added that women also had ambitions and worked hard to fulfil them as indicated below:

“Some female academics have got ambitions for academic growth, so they seize every opportunity and apply for managerial senior positions aiming to be in high careers for longer”.

Other participants responded with more confidence that women were applying for high positions, such as executive deans as well as DVC:

“There are women who applied for the position of executive dean and DVC research and made public presentations before they were interviewed”. **(Participant F)**

“I am very close to women in high positions, so I am adamant that women do apply for higher positions and successfully get employed on those positions”. **(Participant M)**.

Other participants insisted that they had attended interviews were even female academics where part of the people being interviewed:

“Women do apply for senior positions and in most of the interviews for managerial positions that I attended, the ratio of women to men was 1:3 meaning that they were not many but at least they are there”. **(Participant N)**

Now one can raise a question based on the quotations above - If women really do apply for those positions, why then is their visibility still low at senior positions in institutions of higher learning? For it can be assumed that when one applies for a position it means one possesses the required qualifications as per the advertisement for those posts. The study by Nakitende (2019) shows that female academics receive less recognition and lower evaluations compared to their male counterparts, even when their qualifications and achievements are similar. This is the point made by Participant K below:

“Women do apply for higher positions especially, when they qualify for that particular position, they do apply and compete with their male counterparts, although I also questions myself that if women are really applying for those positions, why then is their visibility still low in senior positions in this university?”

Participant E added that indeed women applied for managerial positions as there was also natural progression as elaborated below:

“When there is an open position, women apply because there is a natural progression, which we can also call developmental progression whereby one gets promoted after achieving the requirements and more-over women also apply for senior positions as a way of accepting a new challenge of the position”. (Participant, E)

Majority of the participants agreed that women applied for managerial positions, however, they were still invisible in those positions, causing one to query the under-representation of women. Mkhonto (2019) concluded that stereotyping is harmful for both men and women and is responsible for the establishment of the glass ceiling.

However, they were few participants who disputed the fact of women applying for senior positions and raised their concerns:

“Being a woman comes with a lot of responsibilities and being overwhelmed by responsibilities at home and at work, after work we are expected to look after our families, cooking and cleaning after them, this workload becomes so much that we become reluctant in applying for high positions being afraid of increasing our work load as we are already struggling to juggle between our work –loads”. (Participant T)

Participant L was of the same opinion with Participant T above as she mentioned the following:

“It is not like women are failing or incapable of reaching the senior positions, the only challenge is having too many obligations, not that it is impossible for them to climb the academic ladder”.

Participant C supported the above sentiments and added that women were not applying for senior posts as they had other obligations as well as not having the necessary qualifications required:

“Women tend not to apply for senior positions because they lack the qualifications required and for those that qualify, they do not apply as they have too much workload on their hands as well as lack of experience. As you know they always seek people with experience, for some posts they even say 5-7 years of experience and most of women do not have that kind of experience since they will be advancing for the first time, so it becomes difficult for one”. (Participant, C)

This is in line with Rathgeber (2013) and Mkhonto (2019) who maintain that most women were hesitant to assume higher positions, especially those that require their full-time attention, due to their strong devotion to their families. Other participants, such as D, however argued that the fact that men were not giving their full support to women, also played a role in the lack of female academics in senior positions:

“As much as women are not applying for senior positions because they lack the necessary qualifications, they also lack the support from their male counterparts and we hardly get it as women because the society is stereotyped; men are still thought to be more capable than women, owing to the male ego which leads to women being undermined”. (Participant D)

The above quotations women lacked support from both men and women. This is due to the stereotypical perception that men are better leaders than women. This aligns with Mathevula (2014) who asserts that in the South African educational system, both men and women were not ready to be under a woman with the assumption that women lose their femininity the moment they become leaders.

In summing up, the participants believe that, although female academics are not many in senior positions, they do apply for posts such as executive deans and other managerial positions in institutions of higher learning.

5.6. Obstacles encountered by women in the process of promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions.

5.6.1. Theme 1: Challenges faced by female academics within the institution.

This section sought to determine whether female academics had challenges in ascending the career ladder and to achieve this, the researcher asked the participant the following question - “Do you think women have challenges in ascending the academic ladder?” Majority of participants elucidated that most female academics experience a variety of challenges as they are marginalized, and discriminated by their male counterparts who happen to be in the academic field longer than females, as well as the academic field being difficult for females to adjust to as explained by Participant C below:

“Yes, they face difficulties; women entered such professions much later. As a result, they are marginalized, undermined, and discriminated against by men who have been there for a long time. This has a negative impact on their self-esteem and confidence; they feel worthless. Academia is a difficult place for women to work. To satisfy demands, one is expected to give up everything, including one's life, and to be promoted, one must forget that there is life outside of academia, as well as forget about

one's children and family life. You wake up at night thinking about your work responsibilities, and you get up and get to work”.

The above quote shows that when women feel undermined, they tend to lose their self-esteem. According to Webster (2020) Perceptions of self-confidence and impostor syndrome can affect women's aspirations to senior positions.

“Most of the tasks are being taken care of by women at their respective homes and as a result they lack what it takes to climb up the ladder because they are juggling between too much workload, both at work and home, therefore making it difficult for them to work towards achieving the requirements of the promotion criteria for them to be promoted. Those who have qualifications are being undermined and end up remaining in lower positions”. (Participant B).

In addition, other participants asserted that women had to juggle between their responsibilities at home and at the same time manage their academic work as illustrated by Participant T who shared her own experience:

“I can say this from my own personal experience, being a female academic you become too overwhelmed by responsibilities both at home and at work, for after work one has to look after their families, cooking and cleaning after them, believe me, after all the work one becomes so exhausted”.

“Women wear so many hats and along with being an academic they have to fulfil all the other roles such as being a wife, mother mostly and still be competent in academia like their male counterparts”. (Participant S)

These quotations indicate that due to family obligations women fail to work towards obtaining the qualifications for promotions. This aligns with the findings by Hart (2016) regarding the experience of female lecturers in universities in Nigeria which revealed that women had a challenge of fulfilling both cultural and societal roles, in addition to their role as lecturers. Most of these female lecturers were wives and mothers who must find a way to balance between their work in the academic context and family life as indicated below. This is similar to Saville (2014) who argued that the attention and time of female academics was often divided between childbearing, childrearing, and a career.

However, a few participants had mixed feelings, they agreed that female academics face challenges in balancing academic life, societal responsibilities as well as family life. Participant M had this opinion:

“I can say yes and no, I have been at UNIVEN for over 10 years and have seen women who struggle trying to juggle between academic work, family, and societal

responsibilities. So, I can say if workload at home and elsewhere can be shared between men and women we would not be having this discussion. It is easy for a male student to register and finish PhD in record time, but I have seen women who are dedicated to having a higher qualification struggle more. That said, it will definitely make it pretty much difficult for women academics to climb the ladder. They are capable but have so many glitches on the side. I also think that it is worsened by the fact that people in managerial positions do not give them the support that is needed. So, these are case to case matters, but generally support is limited even when it's available on paper/policy".

The above quote aligns with Isgro and Saville (2014) who argued that women academics who received support increased their productivity giving an example that women married to academic men were more likely to increase their productivity as they were in a supportive environment that allows academic women to advance.

Although other participants believed that the obstacles that female academics faced stemmed from their lack of the requisite qualifications to advance up the academic ladder to senior positions, as outlined below:

"The academic ladder necessitates academic qualifications; if women can obtain the necessary qualifications and publications while balancing all their responsibilities, they will be able to advance up the academic ladder to senior positions. It is just that it is not so simple, that is the reason why more female academics dominate the lower positions as they take a longer period to meet the requirements". (Participant D).

Participant I was of the same opinion:

"Ascending the academic ladder necessitates certain qualifications in order to meet the promotion criteria, which is why women face difficulties in ascending the academic ladder".

This means that as long as the requirements of promotion to senior positions is based on research production, men will continue to occupy those positions because they have time to do research, and write articles; women will, therefore, continue to be under represented and do all the teaching at junior positions (Subbaye, 2017).

Participant Q also supports the above sentiments:

"There are positions that require academic article publications, such as being a doctorate graduate, which requires at least two articles. This becomes a serious challenge when women do not have enough time to accumulate the requirements; they fail to meet the required/ specific promotion criteria needed for that particular position". (Participant, Q)

Another participant concurred with the above, that the main challenge faced by female academics was that institutions of higher learning were still patriarchal in nature with males controlling and ruling the leadership:

“One can say that the challenges that women are facing are patriarchal in nature especially, where the institution is led by males who still resist change and feel that they cannot be led or managed by women. The other contributing factor I can outline is that some women themselves lack the confidence and predict that they cannot produce the required outcomes. I think that also contribute to most women not being able to support each other”. **(Participants R)**

This confirms the findings by Davis (2015) that women continue to face discrimination in job opportunities and disparities in power, on the basis of their gender.

Another participant also agreed that women do face challenges; their absence in senior positions is a clear indication that women were struggling to penetrate high positions as revealed by Participant E:

“I think they do have challenges in reaching senior positions, if not they would be in those positions but now it’s like there is a certain stumbling block preventing them from ascending to those positions which has to be removed in order for women to have access to higher positions”.

A minority (20 percent) of the participants disputed that female academics did not have any challenges regarding climbing the academic ladder as they had the necessary qualifications as indicated by Participant N:

“Women do not have challenges as most of them have the required qualifications already. Sometimes the delay with promotions is due to the process that should be followed when one is applying for a promotion as well as the administrative part of it”.

Participant K supported the above sentiment and elaborated that people got promotion through their highest qualifications, hence, if one’s qualification meet the promotion criteria then one can be promoted

“According to my understanding you get promoted by qualification, if you have qualifications and you meet the criteria that has been stipulated, you can be promoted. I see no reason why women shouldn’t be hired because as women we are more focused, more committed, and more competent in executing any duty”. **(Participant K).**

However participant J was of the view that, there were laws put in place to support women and some incentives to help women achieve promotions, as the quotation below shows:

“There are laws and institutional culture that are put in place to support women in achieving promotions by creating more position for women, there is also more support and incentives for women to get promoted”. (Participant J)

In addition to the preceding question, the researcher sought to determine if the participants faced the same difficulties in moving up the corporate ladder. The participants' responses continue to show that women are still struggling to advance in their careers due to a lack of requisite qualifications. Majority of the participants (65 percent) claimed that they had never faced any difficulties, however, it was clear that this was because the majority of them had never sought for such positions as they lacked the necessary qualifications; this is supported by Participant E who said:

“I cannot say I have faced any challenges regarding that because I have never applied for senior positions ever since I started working in these institutions. Maybe it is because I knew that I had no qualifications equivalent to those kinds of posts. I just recently graduated with my doctorate degree, for all along I was working as a lecturer with only a master’s degree”.

A participant who was already an associate professor indicated that she did not face any challenges at all, as she had already published articles which was part of the requirements for her to be promoted to a professor’s level:

“I have already published articles so I can say I had no challenges at all, since publishing is the most challenging area for female academics, as they lack time to balance between their work- loads”. (Participant I)

Other participants stipulated that they lacked the required experience, as most of the senior posts' requirements was that one should have experience for that position and since these female academics were applying for the first time, they do not have that kind of experience.

“Most of the time when the posts are advertised, they needed experience as one of the required criteria to be considered when hiring. Some of us are still new in the field of academia, therefore it is difficult to accumulate the kind of experience required without being given the opportunity first”. (Participant P)

Participant D and M supported the above sentiments by commenting the following:

“The challenge that I have is that of not meeting the required qualifications yet, therefore I cannot apply for senior positions without the qualifications, such as experience. It means by the time I get them; it would be towards my retirement for when I check, the years of experience that are required are too much”.

“I am busy writing up my thesis and qualify for sabbatical leave, but I could not be offered the leave because another academic in my department had applied before me.

I must teach and work on my thesis as well, which is almost impossible with the type of research that I am working on. This slowed down the process of me finishing my work on time". (Participant M)

Another participant added that although she was willing to obtain a doctoral degree, her circumstance had compelled her to take a gap year in her studies:

"Although I wanted to obtain a doctoral decree my circumstances compelled me to take a gap year in order to take care of my child who was sick and the money that I wanted to use for registration, I ended up using it to take care of and to provide for my children". (Participant S)

The above statement shows that family responsibilities bind women. Family responsibilities and other responsibilities compel women to an extent of putting their studies on hold. According to Bhopal (2020) women and men have different experiences with higher education, and that social relations within educational institutions reflect power differences, on access, jobs, decision-making bodies, healthcare, and capacity to access research and professional opportunities.

Participant G highlighted a different challenge altogether regarding the slow process of lifting the moratorium which delayed the promotion process as explained below:

"The challenge that I have is that of the promotion guidelines which have a moratorium, and they tend to block women from climbing the academic ladder as the process is slow and disheartening to us as women." (Participant, G)

To sum up women faced variety of challenges regarding attaining higher positions as the majority had to combine their careers with family responsibilities. Their challenges seemed to be fueled by the stringent promotion criteria.

5.6.2. Subtheme: Publication of articles

In this subsection, the findings of the study focus on the challenges which female academics confront in writing articles; the section will also discuss the number of publications that each participant has within their discipline. Firstly, the researcher asked the participants whether they had published any articles; majority of the participants (70 percent) responded that they have published articles within their discipline, whereas 30 percent admitted that they had challenges with publishing as they lacked mentors to guide them on how to write articles especially those who were beginning their academic careers. Participant J highlighted the following:

"The challenges that we are facing are those of lack of mentorship especially for some of us since we are still amateurs in the field of article writing and publications, therefore,

we need guidelines as on how to write the articles; also, time is limited on my side as I have a lot of work to do". (Participant J)

"It is difficult for one to be successful in publishing without right networks and proper mentoring, I am often not confident in how to write publishable articles, as I am still struggling with the whole process of writing therefore I need support on how to start and see a publication through, that is why it is important to have mentors who will guide us through the process". (Participant S)

"As young researchers, we need mentorship as we are still new in the publication industry. We need guidance and support in writing successful articles, however there is a challenge regarding the lack of mentorship in our institution, especially mentors for women". (Participant D)

The above quotations show lack of role models and mentors to introduce female academics into the publishing world. According to Dopwell (2019) the absence of female role models and mentors in senior positions exacerbate the lack of representation for women. This is in line with Kubuabola et.al, (2016) who acknowledged that women had the capacity of becoming great leaders if they could get proper mentorship, sponsorship, and networking opportunities that their male counterparts had.

Participant C elaborated that publishing was too demanding mentally especially considering that one has to be proficient in academic writing as well as gathering knowledge as to how the journals work as quoted below.

"Publishing articles is too mentally demanding; there is a lot to know about journals and when you can publish. To be introduced to publishing a research, one must have the right networks and mentoring. It is difficult to make that breakthrough on your own as a women, but it is simple for men. Male academics are automatically mentored in this manner, whereas female academics must practically beg to be mentored".

This shows that some female academics who wanted to improve their research output continue to be disadvantaged by workload systems. According to the literature, most female academics regard research publication as an obstacle to their career advancement and a mysterious process simply because they have not been exposed to a research culture, as a condition of employment until recently (Chitsamatanga and Rembe, 2019). Thomas, Thomas and Smith (2019) argues that women have limited access to established networks and collaborations, which impact their ability to publish and disseminate their research.

Secondly, the participants identified the heavy work load which consumed their time and barely gave them enough time for article writing as expressed by participant P and F below.

“When one has to write articles, a lot of time is actually needed to write an article and what challenges me the most is that my workload here at work doesn’t allow me, as I have lot of modules to teach and a large number of students which leaves me barely any time to concentrate on writing articles”. (Participant, P)

“Multiple work-related demands made on me make it difficult to focus on publishing as it leaves me with no time to think of writing articles. If it was possible, they could reduce the work load that way, I can have time to indulge in writings”. (Participant F)

The above statements shows that women face highest level of tension between family and work which disables them from concentrating on publishing. Sadiq, et al., (2019) blames the issue of promotional requirements that tended not to recognize women's multiple positions nor their needs.

Participant N was in agreement with the above point, emphasizing that the biggest stumbling block was the issue of time and added that for herself, she feared rejection from the publishers as indicated below.

“I usually do not give myself time to write articles when I think of the feedback that I will receive from the reviewers and the rejection of my articles. I think I just have to adapt to the world of publication”.

Participant C acquiesced that submissions and approval of journals were not simple processes:

“I've just submitted three articles for publication, but men already dominate and serve as gatekeepers there. If you're a woman and you don't know any of them, you're out. One must network, but even networks are dominated by men”. (Participant C).

The participants who acknowledged that they did not have any unusual challenges when publishing, accepted the common challenges that everyone went through within the process of publishing:

“There are common challenges from publishing and it is a normal part of the processes so I can say I do not have special challenges”. (Participant E).

One participant pointed out that in her institution (Univen) there were training opportunities for all academics so that they learn how to develop and write articles as reported by Participant Q below:

“University of Venda provides training opportunities for academics to learn how to develop academic articles. As a result, I have taken that opportunity for my benefit as an academic”. (Participant Q).

Only a few participant admitted that they had no challenges with publishing as they had already had published articles as indicated below.

“I have already published articles so I can say I have no challenges at all regarding publications”. (Participant I).

Thirdly, in this section, the researcher also wanted to know the number of female academics who had published as well as the number of articles they were able to publish per annum. Majority (65 percent) agreed that they had already published in accredited journals, they indicated that it was not that simple for one to publish many articles per annum. A few stated that they were able to publish a single journal per annum, although some were unable to publish yearly, due to their hectic schedules as was reported by participant M:

“I publish biannually, annually is not possible for me as I am the chairperson of my professional body and do a lot of work for them which also benefit the University. A good journal is my preference. If I take articles to the prey journals, then I can publish annually”. (Participant M)

The Table below illustrates the number of publications that the participants had published; it shows that participants Q, G, E, and A, have a significant number of articles. From this Table, one may conclude that the few females who had already published a large number of articles faced other obstacles that prevented them from advancing in their careers. And those having fewer articles prevented them to accelerate to higher positions as they were a total number of articles required for each senior level position.

Table 5.5: Number of published articles

Name	A	B	C	E	G	H	I	J	K	N	P	Q	R	T
NO	8	3	1	9	15	1	6	2	2	4	2	17	2	1

5.6.3. Subtheme: Teaching workload

In this question, the researcher sought to find out the workload of female lecturers, therefore, the researcher asked them about the number of modules they teach as well as the number of students they had. The researcher also inquired about the amount of time they devoted to class preparation. Based on the number of modules and students, majority of the participants indicated that they had an excessive teaching load. The teaching load appears to be based on employment levels as well. Those employed at the lecturer level appeared to be teaching a huge number of students; majority of the participants indicated that they teach between two to eleven modules as shown in the table below.

Table 5:6. Number of modules and students

PARTICIPANT	NO OF MODULES	TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS
A- lecturer	3	297
B-senior lecturer	2	160
C-senior lecturer	2	20
D- lecturer	6	280
E-lecturer	1	100
F-senior lecturer	3	297
G-senior lecturer	2	50
H-lecturer	4	570
I-ass prof	2	140
J-lecturer	2	560
K-lecturer	2	15
L-junior lecturer	11	200
M-lecturer	4	120
N-lecturer	2	41
O-junior lecturer	2	300
P-lecturer	4	760
Q-ass prof	4	60

R-lecturer	2	100
T-lecturer	2	300
S-junior lecturer	2	300

The Table above displays the number of modules as well as the number of students being taught. Lecturers seemed to have a lot of modules to teach as well as a large number of students as indicated by the responses below:

"I teach 4 modules with a lot of student, who in total are 760". (Participant P).

"For me, I teach 350 students (1st level) both semester; 215 students (3rd level) first semester and 05 students (honors) 2nd semester; in all they are 570". And because it's a large number I use a microphone in class so that I can be audible enough to all students (Participant H).

"I have so many modules that I teach; 7 modules with a total number of 560 students". (Participant J)

These statistics are similar to Mangolothi (2019)'s findings which confirm that most African academic women, who are junior lecturers were often given more classes to teach which contributed to their poor research output, compared to men who have fewer classes, hence, have ample time to conduct research. This is also supported by Participant L:

"I am a junior lecturer and I have a lot of modules to teach; in total they are 11 modules, however, I do not have too much students as they are only two hundred in total although the modules consume a lot of time due to the preparation". (Participant L).

Participants who were associate professors and senior lecturers had more than one module to teach, however, they had less student as indicated in Table 3 above.

Participant Q indicated:

"I teach 4 modules and have 40 undergraduate and 20 honors, the total number of all the students is sixty; for the Honors students I also supervise them in research".

"I have only 2 modules to teach with about 160 students". (Participant B)

This section demonstrates how the majority of participants have a heavy teaching load that forces them to put in a lot of time getting ready for sessions. This hampers their capacity to conduct research and publications for career advancement. The findings for this study only identified the implications of the heavy teaching load on the research and publications. However another study by, Toffoletti and Starr (2016) mentioned that a heavy teaching load

consumed a considerable amount of time and energy, leaving less room for other responsibilities, such as research, networking, and personal life. This imbalance disproportionately affected female academics who often faced additional family and caregiving responsibilities. Furthermore the heavy work load also affected the mental and physical health of female academics.

5.6.4. Subtheme: Time for preparations

In this subsection, the participants were questioned about the amount of time they took in preparation for their classes. Majority of participants mentioned that since they had lot of modules they needed plenty of time to prepare for their classes depending on their time tables:

“It depends on the things I would be teaching, but sometimes it takes 2 to 3 hours to prepare per module”. **(Participant B)**

“I preparer 2 hours per module, so if on that particular day I have to teach 3 modules, it means I will use 6 hours to prepare beforehand”. **(Participant G)**

Participant L answered that she uses three to more hours on average to prepare for her classes.

“Three to four hours per day on average, but this varies depending on the module being facilitated”. **(Participant L)**

Participant T responded that she uses 3 hours in a day but the preparation took two days, so the total hours was 6 hours of preparations.

Some participants spent a total of 6 hours per week on the preparations for classes. On the issue of supervision, participants indicated that it depended on the nature of the study; if it was a good proposal they would take less hours (8 hours) but some studies can take up to 24 hours a as elaborated below:

“For one day I spend roughly 2 to 3 hours, so it’s 6 hours per week and for marking it depends on how good the proposal is, if it’s good, I can spend 8 hours and if not that good I can spend up to 16-24 hours on that proposal”. **(Participant E)**

“I use 6 hours for each group/module, meaning that if it’s preparation for 2 modules then I take 12 hours to prepare for them”. **(Participant Q)**

“The time that I use surpasses six hours per week on the preparations for the modules”. **(Participant I)**

Participant H indicated that in a week she spends 8 hours in preparation for her classes, however, during exams she spends a lot of time in marking the transcripts of students. There were participants who maintained that they used more than 10 hours on preparations. This is supported by Participant M:

“Our modules are clinically-based so each module has on site clinical training, therefore, it’s difficult for me to allocate the hours of preparation as they are divided into theory and practice. 40 hours will be enough for preparation, excluding teaching and tasks given to students”. **(Participant M)**

“For me to conduct classes well, I have to be prepared, so for myself, I spend 15 hours per week”. **(Participant D)**

Participant A did not mention the hours she uses to prepare but instead indicated the following:

“I use two days a week. It actually varies depending on the work because sometimes I am compelled to prepare every day”. **(Participant A)**

To sum up, majority of the participants teach two modules, however, it did not mean they had less work to do as most of them had a large number of students to prepare for; others had to use over 10 hours on the preparations. Some participants reported that they also had students doing research to supervise, and this impacted negatively on their ability to be involved in publications.

5.6.5. Subtheme: Supervision of students doing research

In addition to their teaching load, some participants also had the responsibility of supervising research students which increased their workload as outlined by Participant F below:

“I supervise a total of 17 students; 10 are Honors students, 4 Masters and 3 PhD students”.

“I have a group of 15 students who are doing Honors degree to supervise”.
(Participant E).

“I teach 4th year level (140), then the second group is supervision of ten (10) students”.
(Participant G)

Other participants, such as K indicated that they had students who they were supervising but they failed to state the number of students they had:

“I normally have 2 modules per semester plus supervision of final year students”.
(Participant K)

The presentation above displays the massive and continuous workload of supervision of postgraduate students on top of the teaching workload of the participants. According to (Mkhonto, 2019), this may leave less time and energy for female academics to pursue leadership opportunities within the institutions of higher learning.

5.7. Strategies to be adopted for women's promotion and attainment of senior academic positions.

5.7.1. Theme 2: Workshops

In this subsection, the researcher sought to learn more about the University's support for academic staff members in terms of career development programmes and whether they add value to their development. For this, the researcher asked the participants the following question - 'Have you attended any article publication workshops?' Majority (85 percent) of the participants pointed out that they had attended several workshops.

"I have attended several workshops. In our School every year they organize article writing workshops, for us to attend and I always make sure that I do not miss out especially, when I have time to attend". (**Participant N**)

One of the participants outlined some of the workshops that the University was offering to academics:

"I have attended several workshops provided within this University; these are: Assessor and moderator training, post graduate supervision, promotion workshops, women and leadership workshops, teaching and learning workshops as well as proposal writing workshops". (Participant B)

Figure 4. Number of participants who had attended workshops

Figure 4 below shows that the majority of participant (85 percent) have attended workshops for publication while just a few had never attended any.

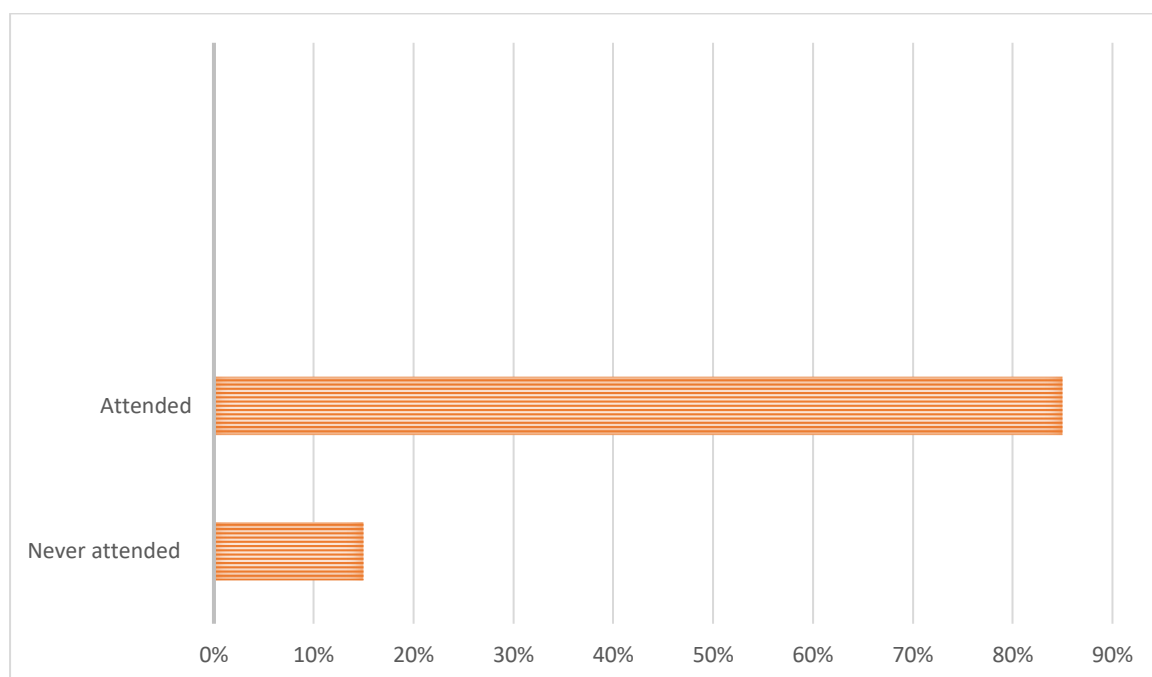
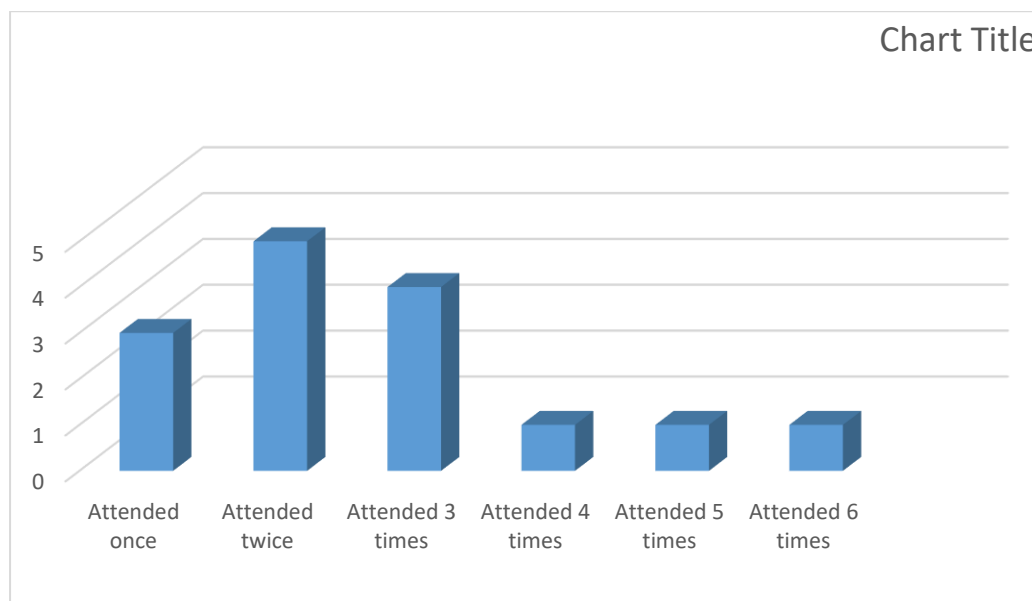


Figure 5. Number of workshops attended



The participants who had attended several publication workshops were very few; the participant who attended many workshops was a senior lecturer. This might be because senior lecturers have less classes; this is supported by Participant G:

“I have attended several workshops which have helped them a lot in building confidence regarding publishing and through the workshops I was provided with a mentor to guide me in writing articles”.

There were a few participants (10 percent) who had attended the workshops but forgotten the number of the workshops that they had attended:

“I can’t remember them all but what I am sure of is that I have attended several of them, for every time the Institution organizes workshops we are encouraged to attend; it’s a pity that I was not counting them”. (Participant E).

Having determined that most of the participants had attended workshops, the researcher was eager to know from those who had attended developmental workshops whether they had benefited from those workshops, therefore, the researcher posed a question on whether the workshops had helped or assisted them in anyway. The following responses were extracted from the participants:

“The workshops were very informative on how to write different types of articles (research papers, reviewed articles, etc.). The organizers encouraged every attendee to upload at least one article before the end of the workshop and keep a trace of the

manuscript uploaded. That helped me a lot for I can now review articles and write research articles without any challenge”. (Participant N)

“Yes the workshops were very fruitful and beneficiary to me as they provided one with an opportunity to learn about academic writings which enabled me to write articles as we were encouraged to publish them in relevant journals”. (Participant Q)

The above quotations show that academic writing workshops offer valuable opportunities for skill development, networking, and personal growth. They empower participants to become more confident and proficient academic writers, which can have a positive impact on their academic and professional careers (Knipfer, Shaughnessy, Hentschel and Schmid, 2017).

This is supported by the participants who acknowledged the transformation that took place in their academic life after attending the workshops as elaborated below

“The workshops has played a vital role, especially since we do not have mentors to guide us; in attending the workshops we gained how to align manuscripts with the requirements of journals and that had been a serious challenge for me”. (Participant, F)

“I can now write an article without the assistance of a third party and have it published in an accredited journal. It was difficult for me in the past. But I saw the light after attending more workshops on writing and supervising”. (Participant B)

“The workshops helped me to carefully choose journals that were publishing in my field and to isolate predatory journals”. (Participant P)

In addition, other participants mentioned that these workshops helped them to gain skills in doing fieldwork for the collection of data and the final write-up of their research projects:

“The workshops did not only assist me regarding publication but made it easier for me to attain my master's degree although I was involved in distance learning. The workshops also made me improve my writing skills and on soliciting funds for projects and writing for publication”. (Participant L)

While others indicated that they did not only benefit in terms of how to write and publish articles. They also benefited on their personal development, as well as obtaining certificates as elaborated by Participant J below:

“it's beneficiary because at the end we get certificates as well as learn how to write and publish. For instance, I attended an assessor course which helped me to assess students”. (Participant J)

Participant O suggested that these workshops should also include mentorship lessons so that they can be able to mentor students:

“Some of the workshops we are offered could be more beneficial if we were given practical skills on how to fund raise or solicit money for our projects. (Participant O)

However, there were those who were not convinced or unsure that workshops benefited them or not as indicated on the expression below.

“I think they helped me in a way”. (Participant E)

5.7.2. Subtheme: Support from the institution

This section sought to find out whether there was any internal support given to assist academics in their career development, hence the following question was asked to the participants - “What support does the University have in assisting academics (you) in career advancement?” The majority (70 percent) of the participants responded in the following manner:

“What I know is that the Institution has funds for conducting research and that of writing articles, although the procedure to get the money is difficult as the requirement to get the money is very strict, so if they could release the funds without any complications since they are tiresome”. (Participant A)

“It has incentives but unfortunately the system of the University is not fair because they say they can give you money, but I tell you when you claim the money and receive support needed the university seems to be only interested in numbers. There are experts that they invite at times, but they are not cream of the source”. (Participant E)

The above statements show that although there are financial support funds, it was not easy or simple to access it as the procedures used were very restricted and frustrating. Hence other participants argued that it was the same as not getting any support since the incentives put in place were very difficult to access. This is supported by the statement below.

“There is no kind of support that I can say I am receiving because the incentives that they say are available for article publication and for conferences, however, for one to be able to get it is not easy as the procedures put in place to claim for the money are very difficult and discouraging for one to go through”. (Participant C)

In addition, participant T claimed that even the staff fund provided for research was inaccessible as elaborated on the quotation below:

“The Institution provides some workshops for publications, and they also cover the expenses of articles when one gets to submit, but as for the staff funding, for one to access it is very difficult. I am currently doing my PhD and in the stage of collecting data, I received

a staff fund for research (R100 000) but until now I have failed to access it as the procedure of it is so tiring and confusing. Every time I submit the claim forms they are rejected and asked to fill them in again and this is so time-consuming". (Participant T).

"The institution offers study leave and remission of fees to academics as a way of encouraging them to further their studies".

The above quotation shows that the monetary incentives that were put in place to motivate women to further their studies, were actually demotivating them as its claiming procedure was complicated.

Other participants indicated that they receive support as the University organized workshops for publications:

"There are many training workshops that are offered by the University and are offered in accordance with the needs of the academic staff members". (Participant N)

"The University of Venda provides research and teaching and learning-related trainings that make it possible to teach students and publish articles". (Participant Q)

Furthermore, other participants highlighted that although the institution had gender-equity policy, women were still under-represented, showing that there was lack of enthusiasm on the implementation of the policy:

"They have gender equity, but they are still behind in terms of gender issues, which means they do not believe in implementing gender equity. This is proven by the continuation of the under-representation of women, and this is further illustration of lack of desire for implementation of the policy". (Participant B)

I further probed the answers, and asked the participants to clarify even further with this question: "Is there any such support directed at women?" Majority of the participants (70 percent) agreed that there was no support that was directed at women academics as the support which was available was the same for both genders:

"There is no particular support that is meant or directed at women since whatever is there is for both males and females but those who are benefiting the most are males". (Participant T)

"Not that I knows of because we receive the same as the men; sometime males seem to have a much better opportunity for support than us women". (Participant A)

Participant D added the following:

"There is no direct support that I know of which is directed to women as I have never heard of one; in fact, the support that is there currently, is for both men and women".

There were a few participants who responded that women received enough support, although in their argument they contradicted themselves. As they failed to differentiate whether the support was directed at women or to both men and women as they acknowledged indirectly that the support was for both academics. These points were mentioned by Participant N who said:

“Women are academics like men, they receive support trainings such as teaching and learning, curriculum development, moderation, assessment and problem-based learning methodology”. **(Participant, N)**

“The support is not particularly for women but is for young academic staff which is a collaboration between various universities and Department of Education”. **(Participant T)**

5.8. Theme: Types of training to be provided

Firstly, in this sub section, I wanted to gather the views and suggestions from the participants on what they thought could be done to improve representation of women in senior leadership positions. The following question, hence, was asked - *“What kind of training programmes should be put in place to promote women to senior leadership positions in institutions of higher education?”* Responding to this question, the majority of participants suggested that there should be leadership training programs available for female academics so that they can be able to gain the required skills:

“In institutions of higher learning, training in management and leadership skills should be made available for women so that they can empower themselves”. **(Participant H).**

Participants G and M supported the above by saying the following:

“Workshops, particularly designed to coach and mentor women on leadership should be provided. They will help to build self-esteem and boost confidence in women especially those who aspire to be promoted to senior positions”. **(Participant G)**

“Women leadership workshops should be established so that those who are interested can attend and get the kind of coaching they need, and if also possible, the promotion criteria should be reviewed.” **(Participant M)**

The above statements shows that women value the support programs to boost their leadership skills. Herbst (2020) argued that women have lower expectations of success than men. Therefore, these workshops will undoubtedly serve as a motivating factor for them.

Participant E instead of talking about provision of support programmes, suggested the following:

“It depends on the needs as each and every position has its own requirements. Women should respond and be adaptive to change, basically, changes should be there and the University must be receptive”.

Participant A suggested that there should be a re-look at the gender policies in order to level the field regarding equitable hiring of men and women lecturers as well as senior managers:

“I think what the institutions should do, is to loosen their stringent policies so that the promotion criteria can be flexible for female academics”. **(Participant A)**

Participant J, however, argued that the policies and workshops that were available were adequate and suggested that the only transformation that was needed was changing the attitudes of men regarding the leadership of women in institutions of higher learning.

“The policies that were put in place are fair enough. But we have not seen drastic measures that aimed at the creation of gender parity”. **(Participant J)**

I further sought the views of the participants regarding the strategies they thought could be used to address the under-representation of women in institutions of higher learning. Most of the participants agreed that there should be a way forward to uplift female academics into senior positions, as mentioned by Participant D:

“There should be some recognition of the capability and capacity of women first before we can even consider them worthy to lead institutions and companies as well as organizations”. **(Participant D)**

These recommendations were supported by the following quotations.

“Leadership development programs specifically tailored for women academics should be provided, focusing on skills such as negotiation, networking, and self-advocacy, which are vital for career advancement”. **(Participant, M)**

“Also, the institution should develop a strategy to recognize and celebrate the achievements of women who have attained senior academic positions. This can serve as inspiration for other women academics and contribute to a positive and empowering culture”. **(Participant, N)**

“Strategies such as appointing more women into senior positions, as well as providing programmes that will empower them will surely motivate them”. **(Participant R)**

Another participant, however, disputed the suggestions, maintaining that it was not a matter of appointing more women into senior positions but instead women had to have the necessary qualifications:

“it’s not a matter of appointing more women into senior positions but instead those who meet the requirements for promotion should be promoted regardless of their gender”. **(Participant F)**

Participant Q argued that there should be a way of motivating women to work towards occupying higher positions:

“Women must be encouraged to see value in leadership so that they can work towards occupying higher positions. This can be achievable through women empowerment workshops and seminars on leadership and management”. **(Participant Q)**

Participant E argued that whatever the strategies can be brought forward, they have to involve men as they are the decision-makers. The strategy, therefore, must be one that brings both men and women to work together without any challenges:

“We have lot of policies regarding promotions, maybe we should teach men so that they can understand to work with women. Men should be involved at every level as they are presently holding the yardstick to determine who should be promoted”. **(Participant E).**

5.9. Conclusion

This chapter has presented themes that emerged from the interviews with 20 female academics at a Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province. The findings show that women continue to confront a variety of hurdles in the workplace. Some of these hurdles are due to factors conflict between work and home duties, a lack of role models and mentors, and a lack of confidence in women themselves due to gender stereotypes that are skewed towards men. Women are also underrepresented due to lack of institutional support, especially regarding the promotion criteria. The findings demonstrated that promotions glorified the issue of competence, which many women lacked. Institutional support was also found to be lacking. These external influences have a substantial impact on women's progress in academia. The findings also showed that universities do provide training workshops and seminars for both male and female academics. However, there is little special support for female academics who need encouragement and some recognition for the work that they are already engaged in.

Feminist theory and the Intersectionality approach were used to interrogate and explain the phenomenon under the study. The Intersectionality theory provided a comprehensive explanation on the various challenges or barriers encountered by women in the process of promotion. Both the feminist theory and Intersectionality theory guided the researcher in explaining all the objectives. Based on the premise that women’s issues to be addressed, there is a need to look at the multiple sources of the oppression, the feminist and Intersectionality approach assisted in looking at the various issues that point at the under-

representation of female academics in senior positions. The Intersectionality highlighted the unique challenges faced by women with multiple marginalized identities and called for tailored solutions that address their specific needs. Through Intersectionality theory the study provided a more comprehensive understanding of the multiple layers of marginalization and its impact on representation in senior positions. Feminist theory provided an overarching lens through which the researcher examined the under-representation of women in senior academic positions. It also looked at the strategies to be used such as gender-equitable policies, inclusive hiring and promotion practices, and supportive environments that address the specific needs and experiences of women.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter has focused on the presentation, analysis, and discussion of the collected data. In this chapter the focus will be on how the findings have answered the research objectives, limitations encountered and ideas for future research. This will be followed by the implications of the findings, recommendation, and conclusions.

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

- What are the trends, dynamics, and processes involved in promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province?
- What are the perceptions of women in the process of promotion and aspiration towards senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province?
- What are the various challenges or barriers encountered by women in the process of promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province?
- What better strategy could be adopted for women's promotion and attainment of senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province?

6.2. What are the trends, dynamics, and processes involved in promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province?

This question sought to address the processes involved in promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions. The findings from the study show that the promotion criteria in place were the same for both men and women. This means that the criteria do not consider the daunting work load that women already have in juggling their family chores and academic workload. They are still expected to publish articles and to promote their post graduate students while making sure that their household needs are met. This, in most instances, contributes to their failure in achieving the requirements for their promotions as highlighted in Moodly and Toni (2017) and Sadiq *et al.*, (2019). The analysis reveals that most female academics were stagnant as they fail to adhere to the stringent promotion criteria put in place by their institutions.

It was also brought to light that the promotion criteria were designed by males. That is why they (men) put rules and regulations and policies that suited them than everyone irrespective

of their gender (see also Subbaye, 2017; Sadiq *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, the findings from the study shows that women were interested in applying for senior managerial positions, but lack of sufficient qualifications held them back.

6.3. What are the perceptions of women in the process of promotion and aspiration towards senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province?

This question sought to address the perceptions of women in the process of promotion and aspiration towards senior positions. The findings of the study show that there was only one female occupying a senior position at the University of Venda while the rest were males (close to eighty three percent). In senior management, males make up 61 percent, while the females are 39 percent. These figures clearly reveal that women were under-represented in senior positions since most of them were still failing to meet the set promotion criteria. The findings of the study also show that the promotion criteria were established by men, thus explaining why it was possible for most of men to be in high positions while women are stagnant. In lower positions.

Since most institutions were still patriarchal oriented and with stereotypical beliefs that men were better leaders, women were not entrusted with managing senior positions by both men and women themselves. This shows that female leadership is undermined and looked down upon, hence, one of the reasons for low female participation in senior positions. This has led women to have low self-esteem and to lack confidence in their leadership skills and capabilities.

6.4. What are the various challenges or barriers encountered by women in the process of promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province?

This question aimed to elucidate the challenges that women confront as they work their way up the academic ladder. Due to many impediments, women are under-represented in management and higher academic levels of employment, according to the findings. Women's career advancement and progress continue to be beset with difficulties that do not appear to be abating.

To begin with, the study's findings demonstrated that women struggle to balance work and family obligations. Participants reported that the basis of their problems is the persistence of a strong patriarchal cultural foundation in society, which means that child care and family concerns are still mostly their responsibilities. The patriarchal stereotyping of women means that they are not trusted for handling complicated or demanding positions because they are deemed to be more emotional than scientific in their approach, therefore even though a

particular women might qualify for a post, if there were males on that interview the panel, they would tend to choose the men as they feel that he will do a better job than the woman. The lack of a family-friendly atmosphere, rather a masculine-oriented one, exacerbates the challenge of achieving a work-family balance. This is demonstrated by the lack of institutional support for working mothers, since the institution only provided monetary assistance as well as workshops for both men and women (as seen in chapter five). HEIs appear to have embraced the bare minimum in terms of work-family balance to accommodate working women, even though an academic job is quite demanding. From the findings, it is evident that an academic must teach, supervise research students, travel to conferences and work-related seminars, conduct research, participate in community outreach, and publish; women rarely receive institutional support, making it difficult for them to balance these responsibilities and family life.

Secondly, the study's findings underlined the difficulty in doing research and publishing articles, which is a part of the promotion criterion and a hallmark of true academics, but which female academics still find difficult to participate as men have long dominated this sector; women must adhere to the rules set out by men who are fully aware of the game's rules. This is supported by Chitsamatanga's (2018) study, which found that men conduct more research than women. The statistics revealed that the majority of participants had published and were familiar with both accredited and non-accredited journal standards. Some participants expressed concern about the lack of mentorship, hence, they were unsupported to write acceptable articles, which resulted in them receiving too many rejections when they submitted the articles. Another concern raised in relation to article writing was a lack of time to concentrate on writing, since the process needed a significant amount of time, which most women did not have due to their already enormous workloads. Academics are expected to produce a particular number of articles per annum, hence, although some have already published continue to remain in low positions as they have not published the required number of articles.

Participants' responses indicated that the lecturers at lower positions had heavy teaching loads. It seemed women were assigned a heavy teaching load and had many research students to supervise each year, whereas males have less classes, therefore, they could devote more time to research and publication. The participants mentioned that teaching preparations took a long time and left them with no time for research, publication, family, or furthering their education.

The promotion criteria employed were shown to be quite strict, and that women faced numerous problems in meeting them. In general, most women are extremely far in terms of achieving the promotion criteria, as majority of them are still working on their PhDs; their

studies are usually delayed as they face obstacles such as, excessive workload, which prevents them from concentrating on their research. Too much workload and responsibilities are among the problems that keep women back, according to the literature reviewed for this study.

Thirdly, the findings of the study show that women in higher education institutions lacked mentorship and female role models. Mentorship has been found to be the most effective way to solve the problem of gender underrepresentation by several experts in the literature (see Yousaf, 2018; Dopwell, 2019; Davis, 2015). Mentorship is one of the essential tools for equipping women with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in academia. Women suffer from low self-esteem sometimes from a lack of mentorship, thus having female role models will assist them in acquiring the promotion criteria quickly. Mentorship also helps women stay informed about what is going on in their own institution as well as in other institutions, through conferences and workshops. The absence of female mentors may cause aspiring female academics to feel isolated and frustrated. The findings revealed that while mentoring programs were not available in the institution, the University, however, did offer training programs such as workshops, which the participants believed were insufficient and could not be compared to mentorship. There is a need, hence, for a mentorship program to be established, in which academics could be mentored internally, or in other institutions.

6.5. What better strategy could be adopted for women's promotion and attainment of senior academic positions at the Semi-Metropolitan University of Limpopo Province?

This question sought to probe the strategies that could be used to reduce and improve the under-representation of women in institutions of higher learning, specifically at the University of Venda. The findings revealed that training, such as in management and leadership skills should be made available within the institution to help in equipping women for leadership positions. Concerns about workshops not particularly designed to coach and mentor women on leadership were raised. Participants suggested that workshops should be made available especially for those women who are interested in leadership positions (see also, Ndebele, 2018; and Herbst, 2020).

Incentives such as women's awards could be introduced to motivate as well as encourage more women into pursuing leadership positions. This would help in recognizing the capability and capacity of women's skills in leadership and will further boost or encourage women from lower positions to work towards being promoted to higher positions. Participants revealed that this can be achieved through women empowerment workshops and seminars especially on leadership and management roles.

The other strategy raised in the findings was that of assisting or teaching men to work together with women to create synergy and to pass on the skills that they have to their colleagues.

There are many policies that have been formulated in this regard, but these are not implemented. Otherwise, we would not have under-representation of women in their institutions. Mainstreaming gender in these institutions was also viewed as being essential especially on the development of women.

6.6. Conceptual model

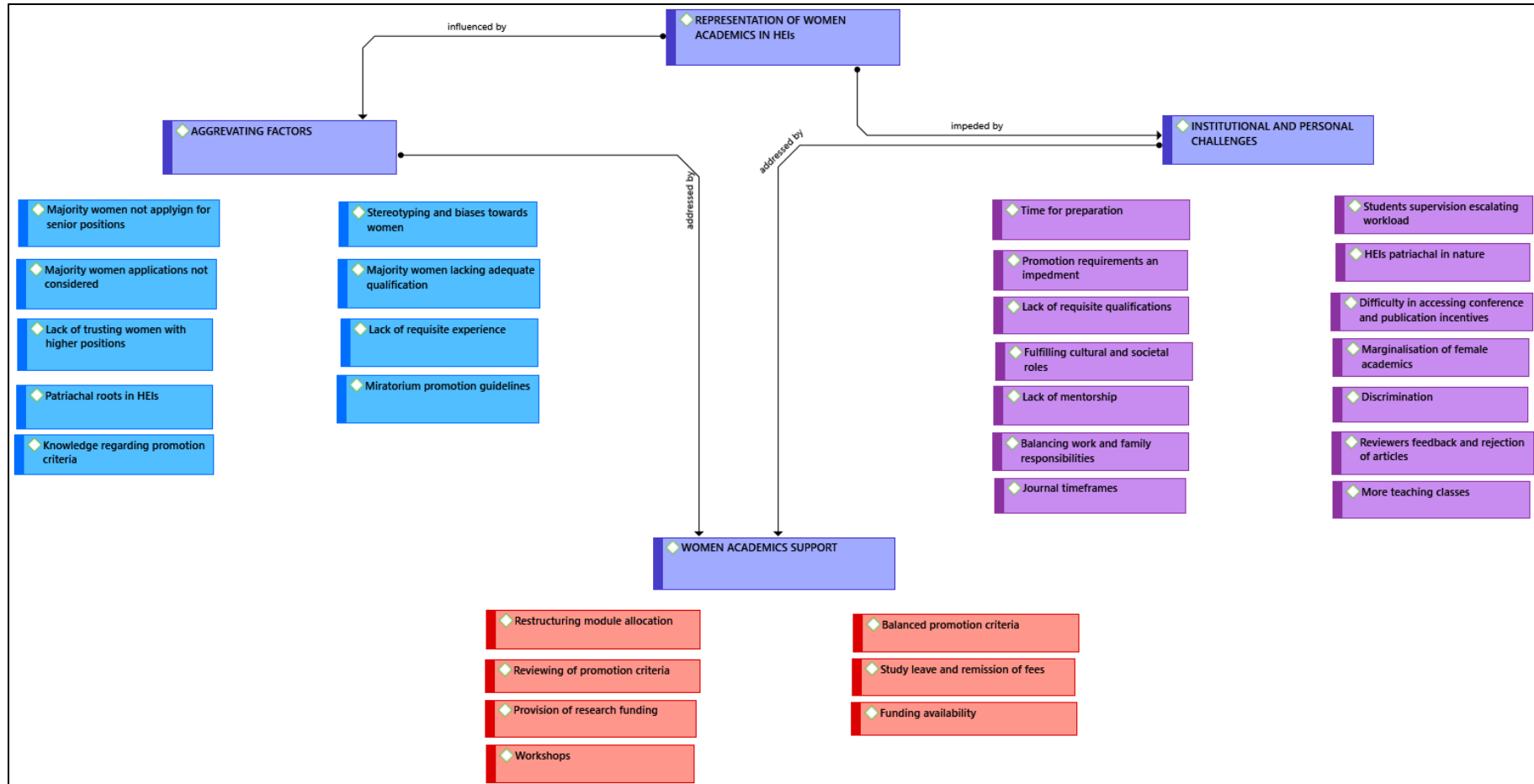


Figure 6.1: HEIs women academics representation in senior positions

Source: Researcher's own construct using ATLAS.

6.6.1 SUMMARY OF THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The under-representation of women in academia arises because of the persistent patriarchal relations in institutions of higher learning. Stereotypic attitudes towards women still run deep in our societies. Lack of trust in women leadership is still rife. The conceptual model also explains that most women remain under-represented as they lack adequate qualifications for the management positions as well as the required qualifications. Therefore, they did not attempt to apply for those senior positions. For those who have the right qualifications and the courage to apply, they, however, become demotivated as their applications are mostly ignored. Some do not receive any feedback from their applications. What also contributed to lack of female academics / the under-representation of women in senior positions were the challenges that they were facing, such as failing to balance work and family responsibilities. The promotion criteria required publications and most female academics do not have these as they are still busy either with their proposals or research. Participants also made a plea for mentors to guide them. The inability to attend conferences to present their articles was also highlighted as a major challenge.

Lastly, strategies and support devices to assist female academics to rise above their predicaments needs cooperation of all stakeholders promoting the representation of women in senior positions to work together in reviewing the promotion criteria and putting the needs of women into consideration as well as restructuring module allocations to female lecturers.

6.7. Recommendations

In acknowledging the findings presented in Chapter Five of this study, recommendations are given to the following stake holders:

6.7.1. Recommendations for the Institution

The University's system must embrace democratic concepts and principles and should enforce a friendly environment that is sensitive to women's concerns, rather than the one that hinders women's personal, intellectual, and professional development. Due to a lack of policies that embrace or cover women's specific needs, the institution must develop a gender-equality policy in which it must make a commitment, in consultation with the gender mainstreaming bodies as well as female academics, to ensure that the institution understands clearly what their needs are. There is also a need to arrange a gender-sensitization program for a sex-role socialization campaign to enlighten men who are still entrapped in patriarchal relations.

Mentoring and training should be integral to an institutional strategy to mainstream gender at the University. The most prominent and presumably effective technique for addressing many of women's concerns of under-representation, specifically within the academic fraternity, is a

well-developed mentoring program (see also Kubuabola *et.al*, 2016; Smith *et.al*, 2018). The institution, hence, should implement mentoring programs and procedures to help female academics who have challenges.

Mentorship should also form part of the overall strategy to empower women at work and to help them to engage in round breaking research that will ultimately benefit the entire society. Furthermore, the institution should explore differing promotion standards for men and women to deliberately empower those women who have the talent but lack time to embark on graduate studies.

The institution should also consider implementing policies that promote work-life balance, providing support for childcare and family responsibilities, evaluating faculty based on a range of contributions (not just teaching), and fostering a gender-inclusive and equitable environment that recognizes and rewards all forms of academic labor. Additionally, individual faculty members and colleagues can advocate for supportive policies and practices and engage in mentoring and networking activities to support the career advancement of female academics.

6.7.2. Suggestions for female academics

Rather than being co-opted into the prevailing power structures, women in leadership must be seen to be encouraging a culture of inclusion and togetherness in fighting for their rights especially in institutions of higher learning. Those who have advanced in their careers should also represent the needs of other women. Women in academia should band together and assist one another. Instead of portraying the “pull-her-down syndrome” which seems to be the order of the day in these institutions. Women in positions of leadership must confront patriarchal and hierarchical leadership styles to reframe power relations rather than to be co-opted by the same status quo that marginalizes them.

6.7.3 Suggestion on the Community level

Women in academia can advance in their jobs in a supportive environment that enables them to balance their personal and professional obligations. Therefore, the community as a whole should engage in discussions about gender equality which will help breaking down the societal obligations or barriers that prevent women from achieving senior positions and foster a more supportive environment for female academics. Encouraging work-life balance efforts and family-friendly policies both at work and at home. Furthermore, men should be urged to actively support gender equality and combat negative views. Men being included as allies in the movement for women's emancipation can result in more significant and long-lasting change. There is need for community leaders and policymakers to work together in advocating for gender-inclusive policies and legislation that promote equal opportunities for women in all

spheres of life. Addressing societal norms and stereotypes about women's roles and capabilities is crucial in promoting gender equality in institutions of higher learning.

6.7.4. Suggestions for family members

Family members within a household should challenge traditional gender norms and roles by encouraging a fair distribution of responsibilities within the family, including household chores, childcare, and caregiving. When family members share the burden, it allows women academics to focus more on their careers without feeling overwhelmed. Family members can support the academic by accommodating her work schedule and helping with tasks during busy periods as balancing multi-responsibilities can be stressful for women pursuing senior positions. Therefore, offering emotional support, understanding, and encouragement during challenging times can make a significant difference.

6.7.5. Suggestions for policy makers

Policymakers should create and enforce policies that explicitly address gender imbalances in academia. This may include setting targets for female representation at different academic levels, encouraging gender-neutral recruitment processes, and promoting work-life balance to support women's career. There is a need to include all genders in the process of the formulation of laws and policies intended for promotions and the recognition of talents in institutions of higher learning. Equal opportunity and special treatment for women due to their caregiving roles should be incorporated into policy formulations to create an equitable environment that does not appear to favor one gender at the expense of another. Government and regulatory bodies should play a crucial role in promoting gender equity in academia by implementing policies that support women's representation in senior positions. This could include quotas, affirmative action measures, and monitoring mechanisms to track progress. Furthermore, the policy makers should enhance family-friendly policies, such as parental leave, flexible working hours, and on-campus childcare facilities. These measures can help alleviate the burden of balancing work and family responsibilities, making it easier for women academics to pursue successful careers.

6.7.6. Suggestions for future research

A comprehensive strategy to address the persistent problem of female underrepresentation in higher education should be constantly researched until there is an equitable approach to promotional criteria in institutions of higher learning. This research focused on female academics from a single semi- Metropolitan University in Limpopo. Hearing men's perspectives on the subject would be beneficial. This study further suggests that there be a study on the criteria used by universities to appoint Vice Chancellors and Principals as there is not enough research that was embarked upon in this regard. Also, future researchers should consider using mixed multi- methods to devise accurate solutions. Future research should continue exploring these perceptions and their implications for the advancement of women in

senior academic positions. Furthermore, future researchers should consider conducting a review or document analysis and also quantitatively understanding the dynamics of academics at the Metropolitan University in Limpopo and relationships between different aspects such as academic background, qualifications, experience, gender, family set up, and promotions.

6.8. Contributions of the study to the existing literature

Existing research has revealed gender disparities when applying promotion criteria between men and women especially at the chosen Metropolitan University in Limpopo. This localized approach provides insights into the unique challenges and dynamics that women face in this setting, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of gender disparities and barriers in academia within South Africa. Several studies as alluded to earlier concluded that women are underrepresented in managerial and academic positions (Barret, 2014; Krause's, 2017; Subbaye, 2017). Some authors have investigated and brought to light the challenges that women experience as they progress through their careers especially in institutions of higher learning. This study adds to the body of knowledge by revealing the basis of the problem that has kept female academics in lower positions despite the same promotion criteria being applied. More so it also contributes to the literature on intersectionality by examining how gender intersects with other social identities, such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, in shaping the experiences of female academics (Connell, 2014; Kerner, 2017). By considering the intersectional dimensions of gender discrimination, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding of the multiple layers of marginalization and its impact on representation in senior positions. Further-more the study contributes to the literature by identifying specific barriers and challenges faced by women in attaining senior positions within the chosen university in Limpopo Province. And by delving into the experiences of female academics and the processes involved in promotion and aspiration toward senior academic positions the research shed light on the systemic, cultural, and individual factors that hinder gender equity. In addition, this study has revealed the lack of institutional support for women who are grappling with family problems that pose a challenge to their academic growth. The study also identified the kind of training that women needed, as well as the most effective techniques to be implemented to ascertain their empowerment. The study builds on existing gender-equality debates, focusing on identifying and recommending appropriate policies that are geared towards gender parity and equity in the South African institutions of higher learning. In addition, while the study focuses on a semi-metropolitan university in Limpopo Province, the findings and insights can have broader implications beyond the specific context. The study's methodology, conceptual framework, and key findings may be relevant to other institutions in South Africa and similar higher education settings globally, enhancing the generalizability and replicability of the study.

6.9. Delimitation of the study

Various limitations were encountered whilst carrying out this study. It was very challenging to convince participants to partake in the interviews as most of them were working from home due to Covid-19. They were not comfortable having anyone in their offices as by that time the Covid-19 was still spreading and they would not want to risk their lives, hence the idea of using virtual meetings was brought forward. Furthermore, others were reluctant to open especially on their biographical information and signing the consent forms as they thought their identity would be easily compromised. Therefore, I clarified that the study was academic and would benefit those women who felt marginalized pertaining to promotions. There were also times where appointments would be cancelled due to some circumstances beyond their control. As a researcher, I was patient and accommodated these challenges.

This research is a follow up to my earlier research for my master's project which only focused on the experiences of female academics in institutions of higher learning and the promotion criteria used by the University of Venda emerged as one of the stumbling blocks that female academics were facing. The limitation of my master's study was that it only focused/ concentrated on their experiences rather than on the promotion criteria. This study fills in the gap that was apparent in that study.

6.10. Summary

This chapter provides the summary of the study in relation to aims and objectives achieved, delimitations of the study, and recommendations for further research.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Guide

SCHEDULED INTERVIEWS

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION/ DATA

Instruction: please choose the appropriate answer by putting a tick in the provided space.

1. Age range

25-30	
30-35	
35-40	
40-45	
45-50	
50-55	
55-60	

2. Gender

Female	
Male	
LGBT	

3. Marital Status

Single	
Married	

Widowed	
Divorced	

4. Racial Group

African	
Indian	
White	
Coloured	
Other	

5. Level of Employment

Professor	
Associate professor	
Senior lecturer	
Lecturer	
Junior lecturer	

SECTION B: QUALITATIVE DATA

Tick the answer which is applicable

Gendered nature of the institutions of higher learning in terms of academic positions and promotion criteria

1. Do you think women are adequately represented in the following employment levels?

Tick under Yes/No in the table below

Representation in employment	Yes	No	In your opinion what could be the reasons for your response
Executive/Senior Management			
Middle Management			
Deans			
HODs			
Professor			
Associate professor			
Senior Lecturer			
Lecturer			
Junior Lecturer			
Part-Time Lecturer			

1. Where do you think women are concentrated in Academic positions? Choose one or more below:

Academic positions	Yes	No

Professor		
Associate professor		
Senior Lecturer		
Lecturer		
Junior Lecturer		
Assistance Lecturer		
Part-Time Lecturer		

In your opinion why are women concentrated in the position you have indicated?

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. Have you ever applied for a senior management position at UNIVEN or anywhere else?

Yes	
No	

4. Which position did you apply for?

.....

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.....

.....

5. What was the outcome of that application?

Accepted	
Rejected	
Other	

Elaborate

.....

.....

.....

.....

6. Do you think women do apply for managerial positions?

Yes	
No	

Please elaborate your answer.

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.....

7. Do you think women have challenges in ascending the academic ladder (in getting promotion)?

Yes	
No	

Briefly expand on your chosen answer.

.....

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.....

.....

8. Have you had the challenges yourself?

Yes	
No	

If yes, please explain these challenges

.....

.....

.....

.....

9. Have you published before?

Yes	
No	

If not, why

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.....

.....

10. If yes, how many articles do you publish per annum?

11. Do you have any challenges regarding publishing? Yes.....No.....

Please support your answer to question 11.

.....

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.....

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12. How many published articles do you have in your discipline of study? If any, please outline them.

.....

.....

.....

.....

13. Have you attended any article publication workshops?

Yes	
No	

If yes, state how many

14. How have they helped you?

.....

15. What support does the University give academics (you) in career advancement?

.....

16. Is there any such support directed at women?

Yes	
No	

If yes, name them.

.....

17. How many modules do you teach?.....

18. How many students do you teach for each module, (estimate)?

.....
.....
.....
.....

19. How much time do you spend for preparation each week?

.....
.....
.....

Promotion criteria

20. Are you familiar with the criteria for promotion used at Univen? Yes\No

Please outline them

.....
.....
.....
.....

21. Are the criteria used for promotion the same for men and women?

.....
.....
.....

22. If the promotion criteria is the same what then makes women remain in low positions?

.....
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.....
.....

23. What are the promotion criteria in your field?

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.....

24. Are you able to meet that criteria?

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25. If not, how far are you from meeting your criteria?

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.....

26. When last were you promoted at Univen?

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.....
.....

From level to level

27. Do you have challenges in meeting the promotion criteria?

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.....
.....

28. What challenges do you face in meeting the promotion criteria?

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.....

29. What do you think should be done in order for the promotion criteria to be achievable by you?

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.....

30. What kind of training programmes should be put in place to promote women to senior leadership positions in HEIs?

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.....

31. Which strategies do you think can be used to address the under-representation of women in institutions of higher learning?

.....
.....
.....
.....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

Appendix B: Univen Consent form

Institute for Gender and Youth Studies



University of Venda

Informed consent for participation in an academic research study entitled:

**Title of the research: Under-representation of female academics in an institution of
higher learning in South Africa: the case of a rural-based university**

Research conducted by: **Abgirl Muleya**

Contact details: cell: +27712296007 email: abiemleya@yahoo.com

Dear Respondent

- You are invited to participate in an academic research study to be conducted by Abgirl Muleya, a PhD student from the Institute for Gender and Youth Studies at University of Venda (UNIVEN). This study has received approval from the School of Human Social Sciences as well as Institute for Gender and Youth Studies at Univen. The purpose of the study is to explore women's experiences regarding the processes of promotions in institutions of higher learning in South Africa.

Please note the following:

- This study involves interview with female academics at the University of Venda. Names will not appear in the findings and the answers given will be treated as strictly confidential. You cannot be identified in person based on the answers you give.
- Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.

- Please answer the questions as honestly as possible. The interview and questionnaire should not take more than 30 minutes to an hour of your time.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.
- Please contact my supervisor, **Prof Thobejane** (Daniel.thobejane@univen.ac.za) if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

Please sign the form to indicate that:

- You have read and understand the information provided above.
- You give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

Respondent's signature

Date

Appendix C: Ethical Clearance

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

NAME OF RESEARCHER/INVESTIGATOR:

Ms A Muleya

STUDENT NO:

11606288

PROJECT TITLE: Representation of female academics in senior positions in the institutions of higher learning in South Africa: The case of a rurally based university.

ETHICAL CLEARANCE NO: SHSS/20/GYS/07/0207

SUPERVISORS/ CO-RESEARCHERS/ CO-INVESTIGATORS

NAME	INSTITUTION & DEPARTMENT	ROLE
Prof TD Thobejane	University of Venda	Supervisor
Dr NR Raselekoane	University of Venda	Co - Supervisor
Dr TJ Mudau	University of Venda	Co - Supervisor
Ms A Muleya	University of Venda	Investigator - Student

Type: **Doctoral Research**

Risk: **Minimal risk to humans, animals or environment (Category 2)**

Approval Period: **July 2021 – July 2024**

The Research Ethics Social Sciences Committee (RESSC) hereby approves your project as indicated above.

General Conditions

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following.

- * The project leader (principal investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the REC:
 - Annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project
 - Within 48hrs in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
 - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- * The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the REC. Would there be deviated from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- * The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date; a new application must be made to the REC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- * In the interest of ethical responsibility, the REC retains the right to:
 - Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project,
 - To ask further questions; Seek additional information; Require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
 - withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - Any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected.
 - It becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the REC or that information has been false or misrepresented.
 - The required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,
 - New institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary

ISSUED BY:

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA, RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Date Considered: May 2021

Name of the RESSC Chairperson of the Committee: Prof Takalani Mashau

Signature:

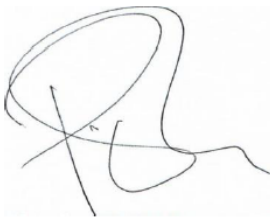



Appendix D: Editor's letter

PROOF OF EDITING

24 September, 2022

This is to certify that I, Dr P Kaburise, have proofread the thesis titled - **UNDER-REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE ACADEMICS IN SENIOR POSITIONS IN AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER LEARNING IN SOUTH AFRICA: THE CASE OF A RURAL-BASED UNIVERSITY** - by Abgirl Muleya (student number: 11606288). I have indicated some amendments which the student has undertaken to effect before the final thesis is submitted.



Dr P Kaburise (0794927451/ 0637348805; email: phyllis.kaburise@gmail.com)

Dr P Kaburise: BA (Hons) University of Ghana (Legon, Ghana); MEd University of East Anglia (Cambridge/East Anglia, United Kingdom); Cert. Teaching English as a Foreign Language (Cambridge University, United Kingdom); Cert. English Second Language Teaching, (Wellington, New Zealand); PhD University of Pretoria (South Africa)

Appendix E: Occupational positions at Univen

OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION BY GENDER (As at 31 August 2021) (EE)

Table 2: Occupational Classification by Gender

Occupational Level incorrect figures	Male	% Male	Female	% Female	Total
Top Management	5	83%	1	17%	6
Senior Management	11	61%	7	39%	18
Professionally Qualified	67	72%	26	28%	93
Skilled	329	57%	249	43%	578
Semi-skilled	48	44%	60	56%	108
Unskilled	45	43%	60	57%	105
Total	878	4	5	21	908

Table 1: Snapshot of workforce profile for all employees, including people with disabilities as at 31 August 2021.

Occupational Levels	Male				Female				Foreign Nationals		Total
	A	C	I	W	A	C	I	W	Male	Female	
Top management	3	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	6
Senior management	9	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	2	0	18
Professionally qualified and experienced specialists and mid-management	32	1	2	3	23	0	0	1	29	2	93
Skilled technical and academically qualified workers, junior management, supervisors, foremen, and superintendents	263	1	0	8	225	1	3	8	57	12	578

Semi-skilled and discretionary decision making	48	0	0	0	60	0	0	0	0	0	108
Unskilled and defined decision making	42	0	0	0	55	0	0	0	0	0	97
TOTAL PERMANENT	397	3	2	12	371	1	3	9	88	14	900
Temporary employees	3	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	8
GRAND TOTAL	400	3	2	13	375	1	3	9	88	14	908

Appendix E: Promotion criteria for academics at the University of Venda

	Junior lecturer	Lecturer	Senior lecturer	Associate professor	Professor	Senior professor
Qualification	Honours degree	Master's degree	Doctoral degree or in exceptional cases. A master's degree in the relevant degree plus 10 years of teaching experiences	Doctoral degree	Doctoral degree	Doctoral degree
Teaching experience	Evidence of participation in teaching or tutorial sessions at undergraduate level	At least three years of teaching at a tertiary institution	At least five years of teaching at tertiary institution or seven years professional experience in the relevant field	At least 10 years teaching experience in tertiary institution or 7 years professional experience in the relevant field.	At least 10 years teaching experience in tertiary institution or 7 years professional experience in the relevant field	At least 10 years teaching experience in tertiary institution University or 7 years professional experience in the relevant field

<p>Scholarship/ Research and Creative Work</p>	<p>Evidence of registration for a Master's degree or engagement in research such as Honours mini dissertation</p>	<p>Publications in peer reviewed and or non-peer reviewed journals will be a strong recommendation on</p>	<p>At least 5 publications in accredited, peer reviewed journals Chapters in a book and book publication Evidence of supervision of 5 postgraduate students at Honours level Evidence of supervision of Master or Doctoral students</p>	<p>At least 10 articles published in accredited journals. Chapters in a book and book publication Ability to attract funding/grants Evidence of supervision of 4 Masters/ Doctoral students</p>	<p>At least 15 articles published in accredited journals, Chapters in a book and book publication. Evidence of supervision of Master or Doctoral students at least four.</p>	<p>At least 30 articles published in accredited journals Chapters in a book and book. Ability to attract funding/grants Evidence of supervision of Master or Doctoral students at least 8 Scholarly achievement in terms of national and international recognition in the discipline e.g. participation in professional</p>
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						bodies, editorial bodies of journals
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Annexure F: Turnitin report

