Thesis

An examination of factors affecting career advancement of women into senior positions in selected parastatals in Lesotho

Motheba Rosemary Posholi

P.O. Box 2633, Maseru 102, Lesotho 0113, Cape Town.

Presently, in Lesotho women form a larger percentage of the workforce as compared to the previous years. Even though, there seems to be several factors, which affect their progress up the corporate ladder. The purpose of this research was to examine factors that affect career advancement of women; to determine the cause of under-representation of women in top management positions and their reluctance to advance their careers; to identify whether selected biographical characteristics such as age, mentorship and marital status play a role in career advancement; to propose a career advancement strategy; and to determine the challenges that are faced by women in senior positions.

To accomplish this aim, the two approaches of descriptive research, the secondary and historical approaches, were adopted. In addition, the questionnaires were distributed to women in senior positions at selected parastatals in Lesotho. Moreover, a method to conduct the research was carefully and logically planned and then implemented. Once the questionnaires were collected and the data analysed, conclusions were drawn and a range of recommendations were proposed based on the findings.

The findings revealed that women continue to face significant obstacles to career advancement in their organisations.

Key words: Advancement, Coaching, C.O.S.C. (Matric), Constrain, Data, Double-bind theory, Glass ceiling, Lobola, Locus Standi Injudicio, Mentoring, Phenomenon, Sample, SPSS, Stereotype, Theory.

INTRODUCTION

The Kingdom of Lesotho is a traditional society, which is ruled over by a king and chiefs. It has always, since its origin, been controlled by males, since men were expected to protect the country and their families. Historically, during the nineteenth century, in Lesotho, a married woman was considered the property of her husband or a precious object of exchange and control as stated by Guy (1990). A man will justify this action by saying that he has paid 'a bride price', known as 'lobola'. Even the Roman Dutch Law that functioned at the time supported the above practice, since it provided that:

(a) The husband is the head of the family and possesses the decisive voice in all matters affecting the common life of the spouse;
(b) Women cannot enter into a contract or take up gainful employment without their husbands' prior authorisation; and
*(c) A woman does not possess **locus standi injudicio** to participate in legal proceedings unassisted by her husband, whether as a plaintiff or defendant.*

A research by Meyerson (2001) revealed that in the past,

E-mail: mrposholi@gmail.com; Tel: 0783090481

men were regarded as financial providers, while women were viewed as home keepers and care-takers. A few (or no) women were allowed in the business industry, let alone to hold managerial positions. This is the reason why the business world is dominated and operated by men as the idea of giving women an equal chance is still in its infancy.

Based on the history of Lesotho, the majority of people still hold the traditional view that a woman is supposed to be a house-keeper; perform all family responsibilities and wait for a man to bring money to the family (Molebatsi, 2006).

Conversely, when the Missionaries arrived in Lesotho, they paved a way for women to live a rather self-reliant life. They offered women western style ideas such as individualism, personal autonomy, opportunities for leadership, education, self-expression, and so on (Guy, 1990). It was after these changes that women were gradually employed in lower positions, and then later with the realisation that women were better educated than men, they were recognised through certain policies and were given some more responsible positions in the civil service. At a later stage the government implemented laws to promote equality and prohibit gender discrimination; The Local Government Ministry of 1994 began to initiate the decentralization process in Lesotho; The Local Government Act No. 6 of 1997 and The Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act No. 9 of 2006 removed the minority status of married women. Today, there are strong and confident women in Lesotho who work hard towards promotion of women's rights, and thus paving a way and making a difference for the next generation of women.

Even though more women are entering the business world, once again, a problem arises where few of them are represented in top management positions, while those who are fortunate to hold senior positions find it difficult to advance their careers.

The study aimed to examine factors, which prevent women who hold senior positions at selected parastatals in Lesotho from advancing their careers, and then propose strategies, which encourage giving women opportunities to further their careers in workplaces as a means to promote equity and eliminate unfair discrimination in order to ensure progressive organisations. Given the above background, statement of the research problem is as follows:

Under-representation of women in top management positions in most organisations in Lesotho, and their reluctance to advance their careers once they make it to the top, is a major concern.

Previous research

It is largely known that previously women formed part of the disadvantaged groups. Women were not allowed in the work field or to hold managerial positions. This is mainly because, the management was considered a masculine activity, and therefore, only suitable for men. Men were considered more natural leaders than women, hence best suited for authority. Schreiber (1998) mentioned that career development programmes were implemented only for men, a male-dominated environment required women to imitate male traits in order to develop their careers. In recent years, women are entering the world of work in larger numbers but there seems to be a problem, which holds them back from advancing their careers.

There are several theories which relate to why women have been held from advancing their careers in workplaces. For instance, a 'double-bind theory' states that some business leaders claim that women are too sensitive and not strong enough to handle clients and problems, yet these women are also typecasted as "bitches" if they become strong and aggressive (Carroll, 1989). The trait theory of leadership states that women lack particular masculine personality traits that would allow them to be effective managers. The majority of women still hold the above conspiracies, which, in turn, makes it pointless for them to see the necessity of pursuing their careers. Studies by Burton (1991) and Bierema and Opengart (2002) revealed that problems that surround women's career development lie in the history, social attitudes and direct experience of work.

Potential constraints to women's career advancement

Below are some of the potential factors which affect women's career advancement as highlighted by different authors:

Gender discrimination

Studies by Burton (1991) and Catalyst (2003) revealed that women have a desire and ability to reach the top of their careers, but gender discrimination remains a major deterrent. In an article by Senthebane (2009), it was reported that one of the reasons for the slow advancement of women in decision-making positions is inadequate recognition of the many potential women role models that already exist in Southern Africa. Moreover, in the study of Catalyst (2003), it was indicated that female respondents reported that they did not feel that they were listened to, and that when they spoke in meetings their comments and suggestions were ignored or belittled, but the same or similar comments and suggestions from men, made an impact. Catalyst's (2003) study revealed that quite a large number of women from the survey pointed out that they had to employ a number of strategies in order to get ahead of their careers, which included:
- Exceeding performance expectations;

- Successfully managing others;
- Developing a style which male managers are comfortable with;
- Having recognised expertise in a specific content area; and
- Taking on difficult or highly visible assignments.

Gender role

Holland (1997) and Bierema and Opengart (2002) have a similar or same belief that one of the factors, which affect women's career advancement is gender role. To sustain this point, Molebatsi (2006) reported that in Lesotho, girls receive more education than boys, but still they often fall into gender-specific roles of wife and mother once they complete school. As a result of this setback, their chances at higher education and/or advancing their careers are stifled. This is because of an expectation for females to bear children and be responsible for household labour, which contributes to their families not being willing to invest in girls' education and women's careers (Hartmann et al., 2006). Hakim (1997) mentioned that in some countries, women's labour force participation is seen to conflict with the traditional roles of women as carers, and regardless of their level of education, women may have to prioritise their family responsibilities over employment and/or career choices.

Glass ceiling

According to Bierema and Opengart (2002) glass ceiling remains a major problem, which hampers women from pursuing their careers. Leonie (1992) is of the opinion that surprisingly enough, in spite of the myriad of established government policies and programmes all over the world to ensure that women's talents and skills are recognised, indeed their progress up the corporate ladder and opportunities to advance are limited by the glass ceiling phenomenon. This is because, according to Wirth (2001), both visible and invisible rules have been constructed around the "male" norm, which women sometimes find difficult to accommodate. In most cases, male and female colleagues and customers do not automatically see women as equal to men, since women tend to work much harder than men to prove themselves, while sometimes having to adapt to male working styles and attitudes more than necessary.

Lack of mentoring

Cullen and Luna (1993) and Nies and Wolverton (2000) agree that lack of mentoring is a barrier to women's career advancement. Even the study that was conducted on career advancement for women in higher education by

Maack and Passet (1994) also revealed that those women in higher education who have been mentored have shown to attain higher levels of career advancement than women who have not been mentored. Brown (2005) supports this assertion by indicating that in a study of 91 female college presidents, the majority who were 'presidents' had primary mentors and were also mentors to others.

Male-dominated professions

Bierema and Opengart (2002) affirmed that some professions in organisations are male-dominated. Ridgeway (2006) explained that this is because of the stereotypes based on so-called essential traits of women and men, in the essence that they are best suited for some tasks rather than others. Theko (2006) indicated that men in Lesotho dominate senior positions, not only in government structures and ministries, but also in non-governmental organisations in comparison to women.

Organisational structure and culture

Meyerson (2001) and Bierema and Opengart (2002) mentioned that when it comes to the structure and culture of the organisation, organisations are often not structured to accommodate women's values. This is primarily because they entered organisations relatively late. According to Linehan and Scullion (2005), women are typically placed in non-strategic sectors rather than in professional and management jobs, which leads to slow career progression.

Personal factors

Meyerson's (2001) journal stated that women managers are more at risk to role stress due to multiple role demands, which are inherent when running a career, while also running a home. The success of these women is often at substantial cost to their personal lives. Women are torn between work and family demands, since they do not want to be housewives, but at the same time they are challenged to be super women. They wish for but fear opportunities and challenges which the external world offers.

Bierema and Opengart (2002) indicated that work-family conflict is one of the major constraints to women's career advancement. Rapidly growing industries require working long hours, which means loss of quality time with families. Women try to balance success and struggle with work and family conflict, which leads to difficulties in career progression. A study which was conducted by Liu and Wilson (2001) disclosed that work-family conflicts are experienced when pressures from work and family roles

are mutually incompatible since participation in one role makes it difficult to participate in another, and this makes it difficult for female senior managers to advance their careers.

In addition, Bierema and Opengart (2002) and Super (2007) are in support of the principle that women often find it difficult to balance their work and family commitments. In most cases, women are expected to solely take responsibility to raise the children while less parental care is expected from men (Polly, 1988). Polly, (1988) observed the reality that, if women do not care enough for their children, they know that their children risk neglect. Conversely, if men do not care enough, they know their wives will. This makes it hard for women to focus on advancing their careers or opting for managerial positions.

Stereotypes of women as managers

Bierema and Opengart (2002) are of the same opinion with Burton (1991) that some of the factors, which contribute to the slower career progress of women and fewer opportunities are because of stereotypes against women as managers. The study that was conducted by Crystal and Todor (1993) highlighted the following stereotypes concerning women:
- Women tend to place family demands above work consideration and hence lose time for, and interest in their jobs;
- Women work for supplemental income and hence lack the necessary drive to succeed in business;
- Women are unsuitable for top management positions because they are too emotional and lack aggressiveness;
- Women are not as committed as men to their careers (Korn and Ferry, 1992); and
- Women lack quantitative skills (Korn and Ferry, 1992).

Negative stereotypes concerning women as managers show that there is no confidence in women holding senior management positions. This, subsequently, lessens the confidence in them to pursue their careers, which makes them loath to face challenges and problems associated with being stereotyped.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study made use of descriptive research. An in-depth and detailed description of what was being observed concerning the relationship between and among variables was provided. The two approaches of descriptive research that were adopted include the secondary and historical approaches. The purpose of the secondary approach was mainly to get an idea of what other researchers did and found regarding this or a similar topic and was also used to examine the literature. The historical studies approach provided a rational explanation of the reasons why women in different parts of the world, including Lesotho, were not allowed in

the world of work or to hold managerial positions in the past, as well as how that affected female workers at the time. It also presented a logical interpretation of how those factors contributed towards shaping society as we know it today.

Sampling technique

Strydom and Venter (2002) explained that it is difficult for the researcher to involve the entire population in the study. It is in this regard that a sample was drawn from the population. The decision to use non-purposive sampling, also known as probability sampling, was based on the fact that this type of sampling gives individuals in the population an equal possibility of being included in a sample.

Even though there are various approaches or techniques that are used in probability sampling, the stratified random sampling was chosen as it was somewhat easy to use for this particular research. In this approach, the researcher stratifies the entire population according to certain specified criteria or variables, and then draws the sample from each of the stratum (Adèr et al., 2008). When choosing the sample, certain parastatals where respondents could be found as clusters were identified. This was done with confidence that it would guarantee absolute representativeness of all strata within the population. Some of the challenges faced in using a stratified random sampling were that it required more administrative effort, and it was difficult to identify appropriate strata.

Participants

The sample size was obtained based on randomness, but gender was taken into account, since the research focused only on females. A sample size comprised a total of 100 women in senior positions at selected parastatals in Lesotho.

Instruments employed

One measurement instrument (a questionnaire) was used for data collection, which consisted of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. A questionnaire made use of a few open-ended and mostly closed-ended questions. Questionnaires were distributed among participants at selected parastatals. The dependent variable comprised those factors which were identified by participants as constraints to women's career advancement, while gender served as an independent variable.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections: section A examined biographical information of participants; section B surveyed their educational qualifications; while section C examined factors affecting career advancement of women into senior positions. In addition, the questionnaire made use of nominal and interval scales, because these scales would provide adequate response variances and would make it easier for participants to complete the survey.

Reliability and validity of the instruments

Validity, according to Neuman (1997), is when the instrument actually measures what it claims to measure. A revised instrument was submitted to the statistician in order to establish content and face validity. For content validity, the statistician identified problems and provided suggestions to ensure that the instrument indeed measured what it claimed to be measuring. To establish face validity, the statistician helped to improve the physical appearance of the questionnaire, while attention was given to grammatical errors, alignments, quality of paper used and so on.

Neuman (1997) defined reliability as the fact that an instrument is

able to return the same or similar result when used repeatedly on different occasions, even after or between certain periods of interval. A split-half reliability approach was used to determine reliability of an instrument. The first half of the questionnaire was distributed to selected participants at selected parastatals. After a certain period of time the second half was also distributed to the same participants at those parastatals. It was then decided that the instrument was indeed reliable as the results that were obtained correlated.

Data analysis procedures

In analysing data, the software SPSS version 18 was used for variable and data coding. On the software are among others descriptive statistics, which included frequency distribution that was used for formatting, cleaning and presenting data. The chi-square test was used to determine the degree of freedom. The p-value answered the research questions and determined the level of significance. For graphical presentation, both the SPSS and Excel were employed. Thereafter, in the form of a narrative description the results obtained were interpreted and explained once the data was analysed, before making concluding remarks.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Biographical information

Current positions

The majority of women from the survey hold positions in Training, Audit, Human Resources, Sales and Marketing, Administration and Logistics, whereas they are less represented in Operations, Finance, Customs, Client services, Public Relations, General management and Labour relations. The reason for this discrepancy is that there are some positions in organisations, which are still believed to be only suitable for men, as women are said to lack particular masculine personality traits that would allow them to be effective managers. This outcome is supported by Haynes and Hollman (2004) who noted that in numerous parts of the world Accountancy is a male-dominated profession in the workplace. In addition, Theko (2006) found out that men in Lesotho dominate senior positions, not only in government structures and ministries, but also in non-governmental organisations in comparison to women. Judging from these results, it is clear that when it comes to specific positions or professions in workplaces, organisational cultural preferences are more restraining for women than men, which makes it unworthy for women to see the necessity of pursuing their careers.

Marital status

Survey results revealed that the majority of respondents are married, while a few are single, divorced or widowed. All these women in their different marital groups stated that even though they feel that it is important to advance

their careers and are keen to pursue their careers, they often have difficulties when trying to balance their careers with family and work commitments. As a result of this drawback, their chances of making progress in higher education and/or careers are stifled. The finding seems to be somehow in contradiction with Super (2007) who indicated that women are not concerned with meeting work demands or focusing on advancing their careers. Whereas truth of the matter is that, women have a desire and are able to reach the top of their careers, as mentioned by Burton (1991) and Catalyst's (2003) study. In fact what really holds them back is that they are torn between careers, work and family, conversely, they do not want to be housewives, but at the same time they are challenged to be super women (Catalyst, 2003).

Age

The research results disclosed that the majority of women are between the ages of 41 and 45, and 31 and 35, followed by those who are between the ages of 36 and 40. There are few women who are between the ages of 26 and 30, 46 and 50, and 51 and 55. It was noted from the findings that the younger women whose ages range from 26 to 40, are more keen to study further, but those that are between the ages of 41 and above, are less keen to study further or do not have any intentions to study at all. The Cognitive philosophy states that younger brains are more prone to learn because the mind is most ready to absorb information, but as people grow older, they experience psychological changes. It takes longer for them to learn and recall information. Therefore, age plays an important role in career advancement.

Mentorship programmes

A substantial number of respondents stated that their organisations do not offer any mentorship programmes while quite a few mentioned that their organisations offer mentorship programmes. In addition, the survey results revealed that a large number of women whose organisations do not offer mentorship programmes experienced challenges such as lack of equity in pay or in training, in comparison to those whose organisations offer mentorship programmes. It is clear that, women who have not been mentored face more challenges as compared to those who have been mentored.

Furthermore, Cullen and Luna (1993) and Nies and Wolverton (2000), mentioned that lack of mentoring is a major barrier to women's career advancement. This is mainly because mentoring is a cost-effective form of staff development, and provides an individual with an avenue to move across a wide range of areas and levels to share knowledge and experience (Moses, 1998). Moses (1998) added that anyone who has been mentored knows the great benefits that they have received, while anyone who

could have but not mentored does not. It is apparent that organisations which do not offer coaching and mentorship programmes are more unlikely to succeed in a competitive environment, as the findings clearly stipulate that mentorship plays an important role in career advancement.

Educational qualifications

Highest educational qualification

The findings from the study demonstrated that the majority of women in selected parastatals in Lesotho are educationally qualified. Their highest qualifications range from Doctoral degree, Masters degree, First degree, Btech/Honours degree, Diploma, while a few of them hold College certificates and COSC (Matric). These results indicate that in comparison to ancient times when women were not allowed to embark on any form of education, today they are making substantial progress in pursuing their careers. In support is Guy (1990) who pointed out that a factor which is likely to have contributed to this success is that missionaries paved a way for women to live a rather self-reliant life, and offered women western style ideas such as individualism, personal autonomy, opportunities for leadership, education, self-expression and so on. It is quite interesting to learn that regardless of how tough it was for women in the past or perhaps still is, they are dedicated and committed to improving their educational qualifications. It is also remarkable to see such positive progress, which happened in such a short period of time considering that it is not too long ago when women were disadvantaged.

Intentions to study further

The responses from the study indicated that the majority of women are enthusiastic to study further while a few are not. This implies that regardless of the invisible and artificial barriers that prevent women from reaching their full potential, as stated by Knutson and Schmidgall (1999) many women have intentions and are devoted to advance their careers. Alepin (2009) points out that "it is harder for women to advance as every woman has to prove herself more than a man does."

Factors affecting career advancement of women into senior positions

Constraints

A large number of women from the survey indicated that conflict with family responsibilities is a barrier to their career advancement. Even the study that was conducted by Hakim (1997) revealed that women's labour force participation is perceived to conflict with the traditional roles of women as carers, and that they may have to prioritise their family responsibilities over employment and/or careers. Furthermore, the majority of respondents mentioned that, in addition, job characteristics and lack of support systems at work are some of the barriers to their career advancement Figure 1. In support, Wirth (2001) expressed that in the United Kingdom, female lawyers find it difficult to progress in their careers because of inflexibility of the profession's working conditions. For this reason they leave at a crucial point in their careers, which results in the profession being dominated by men.

Moreover, lack of equity in pay and training are highlighted, among others, by most women as constraints to their career advancement. It is clear that in some organisations women continue to experience inequity in pay and training, which contributes to their lack of motivation to advance their careers. This result is in line with the finding by Molebatsi (2006) who noted when conducting a research at the Queen Elizabeth II Government Hospital in Maseru that female managers earned far less than their male peers earned.

Clearly, this problem is not confined to Lesotho, as Wirth (2001) also stated that in 2001 it was reported that in Italy, senior women managers and middle managers were paid, respectively, 7.7% and 5.2% less than men, while in the United States of America women earned, on average, 76% of men's pay. Burton (1991) stated that established socio-cultural attitudes, gender inequality in training, recruitment and so on cause vertical and horizontal occupational segregation. This is the principal reason for persistent gaps between men and women's earnings, which, consequently, prevents women from advancing their careers.

Apart from these, the majority of women highlighted sexual harassment as another constraint to their career advancement. This finding is supported by Reed (2001) who explained that one of the reasons for women's lack of enthusiasm to enter into traditionally male-dominated occupations, and their reluctance to pursue their careers, is because of sexual harassment, which includes sexist remarks that lessen a person's work efforts or competence.

In addition to the above factors, a significant percentage of respondents pointed out that lack of mentoring and coaching in their organisations are barriers to their career development. This is because anyone who has been mentored knows the great benefits they have received, while anyone who could have, but not mentored, does not', (Moses, 1998).

Moreover, more than 60% of respondents agreed that glass ceiling is indeed a barrier to women's career advancement. Leonie (1992) stated that, surprisingly, in spite of the myriad of the government policies and programmes all over the world to ensure that women's talents and skills are recognised, their progress up the
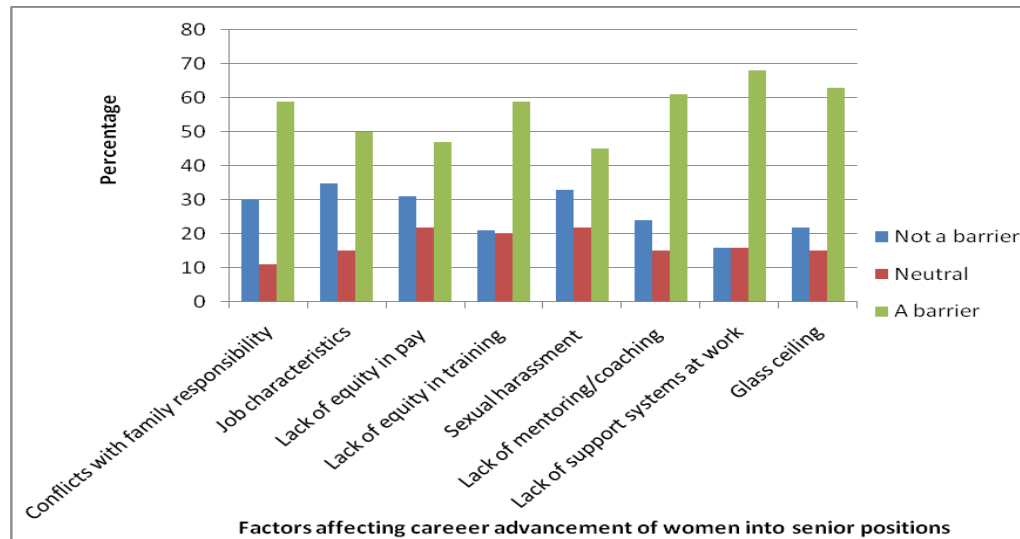
Figure 1. Factors affecting career advancement of women into senior positions
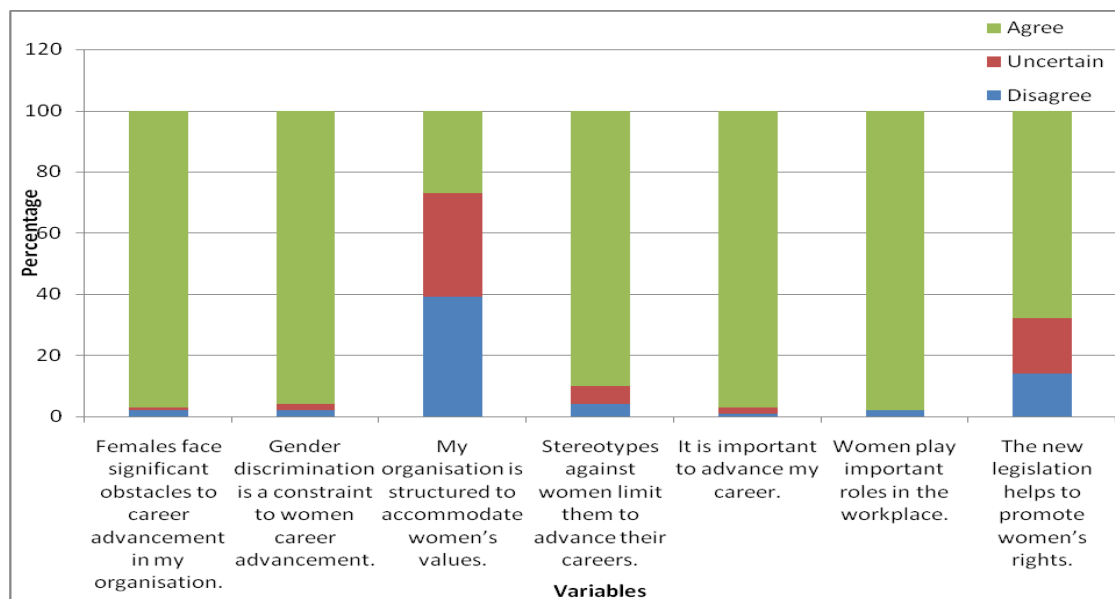

Figure 2. Views of women on constraints to career advancement

corporate ladder, as well as opportunities to advance are still limited by the existing glass ceiling phenomenon. Therefore, evidently the above factors play a role as constraints to women's career advancement.

Views of women on constraints to career advancement

Figure 2 shows that compared to the respondents who are uncertain or disagree, more women agree on the following factors, that: females face significant obstacles to career advancement in their organisations; gender

discrimination is a constraint to women career advance-ment; stereotypes against women limit them to advance their careers; it is important to advance their careers; women play an important role in the workplaces; and that the new legislation such as the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act No. 9 of 2006 helps to promote women's rights. Conversely, on the category of organisational structure, there are more who disagree that their organi-sations are structured to accommodate women's values than those who agree and those who are uncertain.

These findings are supported by Burton (1991) and Catalyst's (2003) study, where it was noted that when it comes to a set of job performance expectations, women,
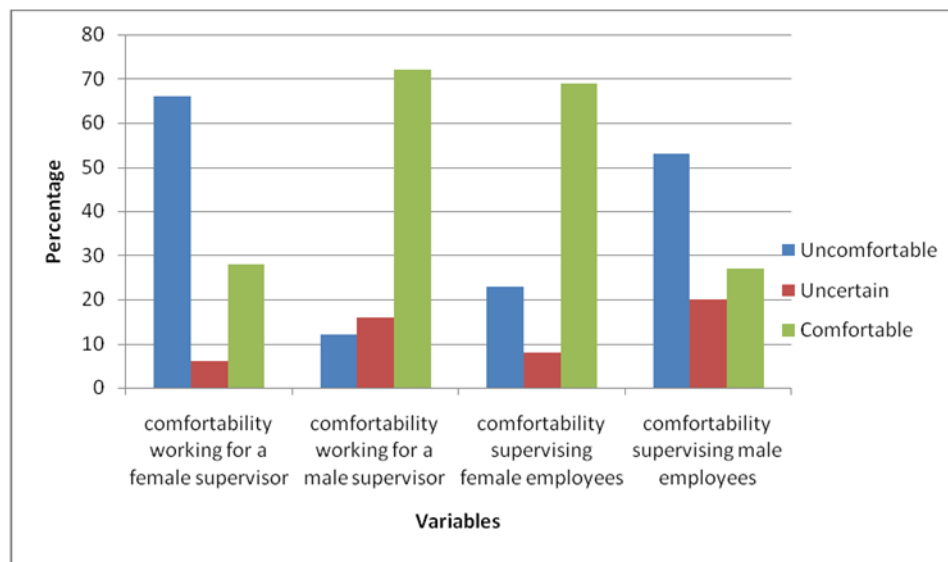
Figure 3. Comfortability of women when working for supervisors or supervising

in most cases, tread a narrow path since for them there is no room for mistakes, compared to their male colleagues. Most of the time, women are relentlessly held to a lower standard than their male counterparts. In addition, Meyerson (2001) and Bierema and Opengart (2002) pointed out that even though many women feel that it is important to advance their careers, the structure and culture of the organisations are often not structured to accommodate women's values, primarily because they entered organisations relatively late. Furthermore, Moutlana (2001) indicated that women play an important role in organisations even though staying at the top for women is not necessarily always filled with joy.

Apart from these, the newly establishment laws and legislation in Lesotho have contributed massively towards promotion of women's rights. As a result, today there are strong and confident women in Lesotho who work hard towards the promotion of women's rights, which makes it possible to advance in various ways.

Comfortability of women when working under supervisors or supervising

Figure 3 shows the survey results revealed that the majority of women feel or would feel more comfortable working for a male supervisor compared to a female supervisor. This outcome is supported by Burton (1991) and Catalyst (2003) who indicated that people respond differently to female managers, compared to male managers; they favour male over female managers. This is mainly because, according to Catalyst's (2003) study, when it comes to management or leadership, surrounding social structure invalidates and undercuts women's attempts to be effective, influential and powerful. It is

clear that even today, a number of women still feel intimidated by men and lack confidence in themselves and their fellow female supervisors, as they nevertheless hold the traditional belief that, female managers are less competent than male managers.

Furthermore, more women stated that they feel or would feel comfortable when supervising female employees compared to male employees. This could be because when supervising female employees, women often face less opposition in comparison to when supervising male employees. Tripp (2001) added that even for Grace Onyango (the first female elected member of Parliament in Kenya), ascending to the leadership position was not easy, as she often faced opposition from people (particularly males) who argued that those positions were only suitable for men. These findings show that most women feel threatened by men because often males do not regard women as equal to men.

According to Krannich's (1989) study, most of the time, women claimed that they did not feel listened to and that when they spoke in meetings, their comments and suggestions were usually ignored or belittled, while the same or similar comments and suggestions if they were made by men would have an impact. Additionally, Krannich's (1989) study revealed that factors such as a lack of women acceptance by male supervisors, colleagues or employees lessen their confidence to manage male employees or to compete with their male counterparts.

Length of service in the organisation

Results presented as shown in Figure 4, indicates that the majority of women have been working for their organisations for at least more than five years. Nowadays
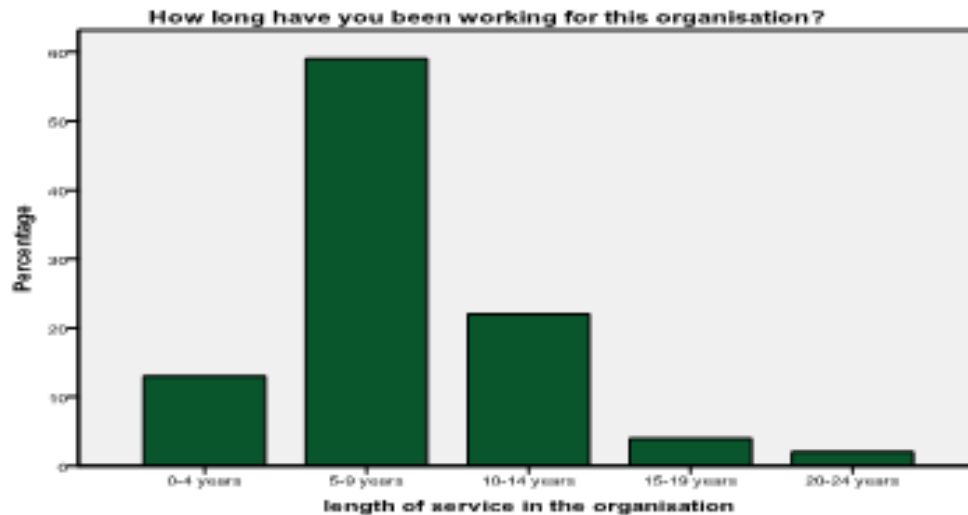
Figure 4. Length of service in the organisation

it is rare to find people who have been with their organisations for that long, but this finding proves reliability of these women towards their organisations. In order to ensure that employees are motivated, committed and reliable to the organisation, it is vital to take their needs into account such as the need to advance a career, which, in turn, would benefit both the individual and the organisation.

Length of work in the same position, number of times promoted and type of training received

The findings from the study revealed that respondents have been working in the same positions for a long time. In a large number of organisations unfairness exists when it comes to promotion of women as they are still not believed to be best suited for certain professions in comparison to men (Figure 5). For instance, some women have been in the same position for nearly 17 years, but only a few or none of them have been promoted to new positions. 67% of women from the survey stated that they have not been promoted to a new position; 27% have been promoted one time; while only 6% has been promoted twice. Conversely, majority of these women stated that they have been trained formally and informally. It is advisable for organisations to take into account an individual's good performance, and for promotion to be granted fairly, in order to avoid losing some of the organisation's best employees.

Goals for the next three years

The majority of respondents from the study plan to be Running their own businesses in the next three years,

while a few will study further, get more challenging jobs, retire, stay in the same positions and some hope to become Managing Directors in the same organisations. This outcome shows that unlike in the past, today in Lesotho there are ambitious, confident and independent women who aim to work hard to stand up for themselves and hence pave the way for the next generation of women.

The best way to advance a career

A large number of women from the survey feel that by going on a challenging assignment and by undergoing a specific course or training, are the best ways to advance their careers. This finding is similar to the results from Montross's (2001) study, whereby 80 percent of the respondents, of which at least 30 percent were successful executives, felt that it was a combination of challenging assignments over the course of their careers that contributed close to 50 percent of what they felt had aided towards their own development. In accord with the survey results, Montross (2001) explained that, by placing oneself in a tough, challenging and stretchy assignment, real learning takes place.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There has been quite a steady progression of women entering the business world, yet they remain under-represented in top management positions. The historical background of women as home keepers and care takers has contributed enormously towards an existing under-representation of women in top management positions. This is mainly because, as mentioned previously, in the
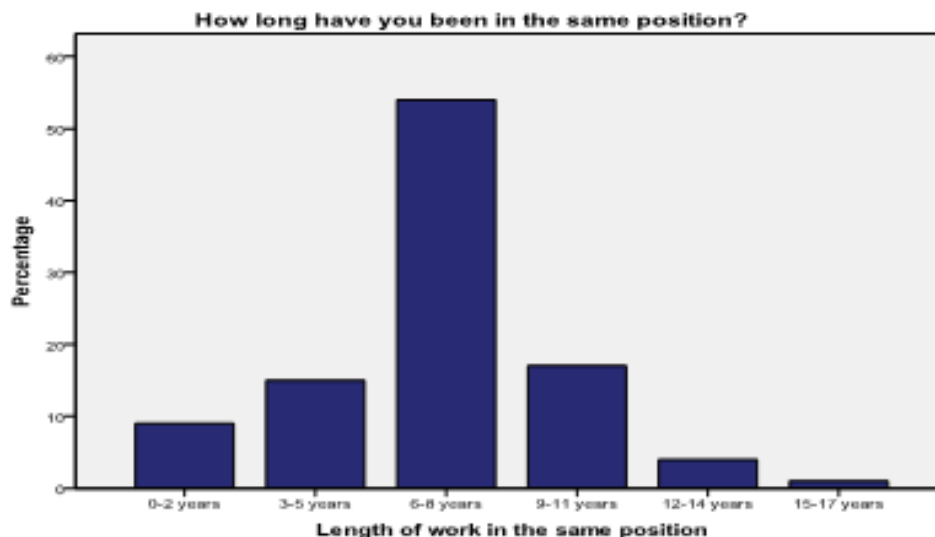
Figure 5. Length of work in the same position

past management was considered as a masculine activity, and therefore, only suitable for men. Men were considered as more natural leaders than women, hence best suited for authority. The majority of people, including some women themselves, still hold the belief that women cannot function effectively as managers. As a result, this lessens their confidence to opt for top management positions.

The findings from the survey revealed that for women who are fortunate enough to hold senior management positions, their road to success is never an easy one. It is always filled with fear of being rejected or facing criticisms from their male counterparts. In addition, the research disclosed that in some organisations unequal balance in power and opportunities persists. In most cases men are given better chances of advancing their careers and being promoted to senior management positions in comparison to women.

It is essential for organisations to understand the impor-tance of granting equal opportunities to all individuals regardless of gender, including chances for career advancement. Career advancement does not only benefit an employee, but also an organisation in a variety of ways. Acquiring new skills and knowledge helps to improve an individual's work performance, which, in turn, increases organisational profitability. Women also play a vital role in the effectiveness of the organisation; they deserve to be given equal opportunities. The study revealed that female managers are as hard working as male managers. Some of the best traits noted in women include: fairness, hardworking, ability to motivate others, determination, calmness, assertiveness, competitiveness, enthusiasm, deliberateness and detail-oriented, which all contribute to the success of the organisation (Brownell, 1994).

Apart from these, the research highlighted that in

Lesotho the Government has made several changes and improvements to promote equality. Presently, women are free to fight for and promote their rights. This positive change was brought about after establishment of the Local Government Ministry in 1994, which began to initiate the decentralization process in Lesotho; the establishment of The Local Government Act No. 6 of 1997; and the passing of The Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act No. 9 of 2006, which removed the minority status of married women.

In general, this research covered an examination of factors affecting career advancement of women into senior positions at selected parastatals in Lesotho. The factors were comprehensively discussed. The back-ground to the research problem was provided in order to find a rational explanation for what happened in the past, and how it affected society today. Thereafter, the problem statement was clearly stated. In addition, a random selection of one hundred participants was achieved.

The significance of this study was to examine factors, which prevent women in senior management positions in selected parastatals in Lesotho from advancing their careers. To answer the research topic, data was collected, analysed and literature was surveyed and Key findings of the study are summarised below:

Key findings

1). Women in Lesotho are under-represented in top management positions because of fear that they are not confident enough to act as managers. The reason is because society generally perceives that women do not and cannot function effectively as managers. It is belie-ved that management is best suited to men; therefore, women cannot handle authority as competently as men

do. In addition, it was found that some organisations are not gender neutral. In most cases, requirements for one to enter senior management exclude female representation at that level. In summary, factors that deter women from entering senior management positions are:
- Lack of confidence;
- Society criticisms;
- Fear of disapproval; and
- Having to prove their competence.

2). Women who are mentored seldom face the same challenges as those who are not mentored. Most of the time women who are not mentored are exposed to personal or environmental challenges, compared to those who have been mentored. The study revealed that women who are not mentored tend to face obstacles such as a lack of equity in pay or training in their organisations, unlike those who have been mentored.

3). Some challenges faced by women who want to assume senior positions include: disapproval and intimidation by male colleagues; not being listened to; and not being given equal access to opportunities, such as opportunities to carry out special assignments or opportunities for career advancement.

4). The study revealed that women have a desire to advance their careers, but are limited by the following key factors:
- Gender role;
- Work-family commitments;
- Personal factors;
- Work and family conflict;
- Stereotype of women as managers;
- Male-dominated environment;
- Organisational structure and culture;
- Glass ceiling;
- Gender discrimination;
- Job characteristics and lack of support systems at work;
- Sexual harassment; and
- Lack of mentoring and coaching.

5). The research discovered that certain biographical characteristics such as age and marital status play a role in career advancement. It was found that the younger people are, the more keen they are to advance their careers, but the older they become, the less eager they become to advance their careers. In addition, it was noted that women in different marital groups (single, married, divorced or widowed) have a desire and willingness to advance their careers, but are deterred by particular marital concerns and/or commitments.

6). Today women in Lesotho are making substantial progress in pursuing their careers. The study revealed that the majority of women in Lesotho are educationally qualified. Their highest qualifications range from Doctoral degree, Masters degree, First degree, Btech/Honours degree, Diploma and a few of them hold College certificate and COSC (Matric).

7). It was discovered that women's perceptions of men working with them or under them is that men often find it difficult to work with or be managed by women.

8). The study disclosed that the majority of women have been working for their organisations for relatively a long time, but a few or none of them have been promoted to new positions once or twice while some have never been promoted at all. From one study, a woman declared that, "there is nothing as frustrating as working so hard expecting to be promoted, yet it takes a long time to be promoted".

9). It is believed that the best ways to advance careers are by going on a challenging assignment and/or undergoing a specific course or training.

Recommendations

There are various things that can be done to ensure continued and effective functioning of an organisation. Firstly, it is vital to understand that human capital forms the most important part of every organisation. Organisations cannot function without its staff. It is encouraged for organisations to ensure that the following are taken into account:

1). Develop recruitment and selection processes that encompass women for home-based and international assignments. Organisations should go beyond masculine stereotypes when attracting individuals for certain positions. In addition, recruitment processes should be evaluated to identify possible constraints to women's career advancement;

2). Women themselves should create a culture, which will change the entrenched traditions, which dictate that women should or should not do or be;

3). Organisations should develop mechanisms to address gender imbalances and promote fair discrimination and equality at all times in terms of hiring, training, pay, promotion and so on. Some of the best strategies to achieve these are through Affirmative Action, the quota system, which enables allocating a certain number of positions to women, ensuring equal representation of women in management and leadership positions, and developing policies which guarantee equal treatment for both women and men;

4). Eliminate penalties for marriage and motherhood, and adopt work, life and family-friendly policies. These should include flexible hours, job sharing, telecommunicating, day-care programs, and so on. Family-friendly policies would encourage men and women to share domestic and child-care responsibilities more equitably, and improve organisations' productivity, since workers can focus on their jobs without stressing about non-job related matters;

5). Ensure equivalent opportunities for all. This should include opportunities for career advancement, joining professional associations, networking or going on special assignments. As mentioned, Affirmative Action is the best tool to achieve this;

6). Human resource policies should cover and guarantee elimination of any form of stereotypes and sexual harassment. Such policies should be discussed with employees on a regular basis;

7). Establish support mechanisms or structures that are clear and helpful to all employees such as coaching, mentorship programmes and counselling to assist employees who experience difficulties in dealing with work and family pressures, financial matters, personal issues, and so on;

8). Abolish the traditional view that there are 'male and female professions'. It is advisable to recruit and place suitably qualified individuals (in spite of gender) in those professions that were traditionally viewed as 'male and female professions';

9). The Human Resources department should take proactive action to break the glass ceiling phenomenon. This can be done by, re-examining organisational culture; re-evaluating workplace policies and practices; establishing and leading change management programmes; ensuring regular staff development; guaranteeing support for women in career development; and assigning mentors for staff; and

10). Implement career advancement programmes or strategies such as providing training that is related to one's profession. Organisations should emphasise the link between employee development and advancement programmes.

REFERENCES

Adèr HJ, Mellenbergh GJ, Hand DJ (2008). Advising on research methods: A consultant's companion. Huizen: Johannes van Kessel Publishing.

Alepin L (2009). Midwifing a Quantum Leap in Women's Leadership. http://www.ila-net.org/Members/MemberSpotlight/Spotlights/2010/SpotlightGWLN.pdf [23 March 2010].

Bierema LL, Opengart G (2002). Emotions in Women's Career Development: A merging of literatures. Cambridge, MA: Honolulu.

Brown TM (2005). Mentorship and the female college president. Sex Roles, 52(9):659-666.

Brownell J (1994). Women in hospitality management: General managers' perceptions of factors related to career development. Int. J. Hosp. Manage. 13(2):101-117.

Burton C (1991). The promise and the price: The struggle for equal opportunity in women's employment. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

Carroll A (1989). Business and Society: Ethics and Stakeholder Management. Cincinnati: South-Western Publishing.

Catalyst I (2003). Women in U.S Corporate Leadership. New York: Ashgate Publishing limited.

Crystal LO, Todor WD (1993). Attitudes toward women as managers: still the same-few women hold executive positions. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1038/is_n2_v36/ai_13815059/[12 March 2010].

Cullen DL, Luna G (1993). Women mentoring in academe: Addressing the gender gap in higher education. Gender Educ. 5(2):125-137.

Government of Lesotho (2003). The Gender and Development policy. Maseru: Ministry of gender and youth, sports and recreation.

Guy J (1990). Gender Oppression in Southern Africa's Pre-Capitalist Societies, In: Walker C (ed.) Women and Gender in Southern Africa. London: James Currey and Cape Town: David Philip.

Hakim C (1997). Key issues in women's work: female diversity and the polarisation of women's employment. New York: Routledge Publishing.

Hartmann H, Stephen JR, Lovell V (2006). How Much Progress is Closing The Long-term Earning Gap? New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Haynes G, Hollman R (2004). Career Development. Thousands Oaks CA: Sage.

Holland JL (1997). Making vocational choices: A theory of vocational personalities and work environments (3rd Ed.). Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.

Knutson BJ, Schmidgall RS (1999). Dimensions of the glass ceiling in the hospitality industry. The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly 40(6):64-75.

Korn and Ferry (1992). Women in senior management positions. Los Angeles Times: 3, March 17.

Krannich RL (1989). Careering and Re-careering. Manassas, VA: Impact Publications.

Leonie V (1992). Women in Management Review. Bradford: MCB UP.

Lesotho government (1994). The Local Government Act No. 35 of 1994. Maseru: Government Printers.

Lesotho government (1997). The Local Government Act No. 6 of 1997. Maseru: Government Printers.

Lesotho government (2006). Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act No. 9 of 2006. Maseru: Government Printers.

Linehan J, Scullion MN (2005). Mentoring as a HRD initiative in Higher Education. New York: Macmillan.

Liu J, Wilson D (2001). The unchanging perception of women as managers. Women Manage. Rev. 16 (4):163-173.

Maack MN, Passet J (1994). Aspirations and mentoring in academic environment. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Meyerson D (2001). Tempered Radicals: How People Use Difference to Inspire Change at Work. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Molebatsi H (2006). Glass Ceiling: Reaching Full Potential. Moeletsi Oa Basotho: 5 June 03.

Montross D (2001. The best ways to develop your career: And what you should avoid at all costs. Springfield Illinois: Thomas publisher.

Moses B (1998). Career Planning Mirrors Social Change. http://www.bbmcareerdev.com/booksarticles_articles_detail.php?article=35[23 March 2010].

Moutlana I (2001). "Surviving the boardroom dance in institutions: the land of steady habits." Paper presented at the Forum for African Women Educationalists South Africa (FAWESA) International Conference. [11 March 2010].

Neuman WI (1997). Social research methods qualitative and quantitative approaches. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Nies C, Wolverton M (2000). Mentoring Deans. New Orleans: LA.

Polly T (1988). Is Margaret Thatcher a woman? No woman is if she has to make it in a man's world. http://www.theglobalist.com/StoryId.aspx+6981[12 March 2010].

Reed A (2001). Whatever you call it, it's still discrimination and it affects women's wages. http://research.stlouisfed.org/publications/regional/01/04/GenderWageGap.[20 March 2010].

Ridgeway C (2006). Gender as an Organising Force in Social Relations: Implications for the Future of Inequality. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Roman-Dutch Law.

Schreiber PJ (1998). Women's career development patterns. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Senthebane T (2009). Male-ruled Lesotho hosts many women role models. Maseru: Lesotho Government Printers.

Strydom H, Venter K (2002). Sampling and sampling methods. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Super G (2007). A Study of Gender Differences. Cincinnati: South-western Press

Theko JBM (2006). The Effects of Work and Gender on Health Conditions of the Basotho. Unpublished undergraduate dissertation, National University of Lesotho.

Tripp AM (2001). Women and democracy: the new political activism in Africa. J. Democracy 12:141-155.

Wirth L 2001. Breaking through the glass ceiling: Women in Management. Geneva: International Labour Office (ILO).

Questionnaire

A. Biographical Information

1.   What is your current Position?_____

2.   Marital status:

Please use ticks (√)	
1	Married
2	Single
3	Divorced
4	Widowed
5	Other (please specify)

3.   Age:

Please use ticks (√)	
1	21-25 years
2	26-30 years
3	31-35 years
4	36-40 years
5	41-45 years
6	46-50 years
7	51-55 years
8	56< years

4.   Does your organisation offer any mentorship programmes?

Please use ticks (√)	
1	YES
2	NO

B.   Educational   Qualifications

5.   What is your highest level of educational qualification?

(Please use ticks √)	
1	Doctoral degree
2	Master's degree
3	First Degree
4	Btech/Honours degree
5	Diploma
6	College certificate
7	COSC (Metric)
8	Other (specify)

6. Do you intend to study further?

Please use ticks (√)	
1	YES
2	NO

C. FACTORS AFFECTING CAREER ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN INTO SENIOR POSITIONS

NB: For this section you will be required to use *ticks (√)*

Please indicate your opinion regarding each of the following variables that may be barriers to the career advancement of women into senior positions in organisations.

Variables/Factors	Not a Barrier	Minor Barrier	Neutral	A Barrier	A major Barrier
7. Conflict with family responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5
8. Job characteristics, e.g., irregular work hours	1	2	3	4	5
9. Lack of equity in pay	1	2	3	4	5
10. Lack of equity in training	1	2	3	4	5
11. Sexual harassment	1	2	3	4	5
12. Lack of mentoring/coaching	1	2	3	4	5
13.Lack of support systems at work	1	2	3	4	5
14. Glass Ceiling	1	2	3	4	5

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

Variables/Factors	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
15. Females face significant obstacles to career advancement in my organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Gender discrimination is a constraint to women career advancement.	1	2	3	4	5
17. My organisation is structured to accommodate women's values.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Stereotypes against women limit them to advance their careers.	1	2	3	4	5
19. It is important to advance my career.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Women play important roles in the workplace.	1	2	3	4	5
21. The new legislation such as Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act No. 9 of 2006 helps to promote women's rights.	1	2	3	4	5

How comfortable would you feel about working for a:

	Very uncomfortable	Uncomfortable	Uncertain	Comfortable	Very comfortable
22. Female supervisor?	1	2	3	4	5
23. Male supervisor?	1	2	3	4	5

How comfortable do/would you feel about supervising:

	Very uncomfortable	Uncomfortable	Uncertain	Comfortable	Very comfortable
24. Female employees?	1	2	3	4	5
25. Male employees?	1	2	3	4	5

26.   How long have you been working for this organisation?

(Please use ticks √)	
1	0-4 years
2	5-9 years
3	10-14 years
4	15-19 years
5	20-24 years
6	25< years

27.   How long have you been in the same position?

(Please use ticks √)	
1	0-2 years
2	3-5 years
3	6-8 years
4	9-11 years
5	12-14 years
6	15-17 years
7	18< years

28.   How many times have you been promoted to a new position?

(Please use ticks √)	Number of times
1	0
2	1
3	2
4	3
5	4
6	5
7	6<

29.   What type of training have you received so far?

(Please use ticks √)	
1	Informal
2	Formal
3	None
4	Other (*please specify*)

30.   Where do you see yourself in 3 years time?

(Please use ticks √)	
1	Study further
2	Running own business
3	Get a more challenging job
4	As the Managing Director in the same organisation
5	Retired
6	Other (*please specify*)

31.   What do you think is the BEST way to advance a career?

(Please use ticks √)	
1	Through self-assessment or self-reflection
2	Reading
3	Going on challenging assignments
4	Networking
5	Undergoing a specific course or training
6	Other (*please specify*)

Thank you for dedicating your time in completing this questionnaire.