FACTORS AFFECTING THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT POSITIONS IN THE PETROLEUM SECTOR IN GABON

by

Georgie Antonia Awakossa Pounah

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Supervisor: Dr Liiza Gie

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DECLARATION

I, Georgie Antonia Awakossa Pounah, declare that the contents of this dissertation/thesis represent my own unaided work, and that the dissertation/thesis has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

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ABSTRACT

Gender inequality in the workplace occurs worldwide, but more so in developing countries where women have been marginalised. In a society where gender roles are culturally constructed, this inequality extends into the workplace, affecting job opportunities, specifically those involving women's career advancement. Complicating the situation are male-dominated industries that further limit women's career progression and firmly keep the glass ceiling intact. It is against this background that this research study aimed to investigate factors affecting the representation of women employees in the Gabonese petroleum sector, particularly in management positions.

Triangulation involved adopting a mixed methods approach, with quantitative and qualitative information collected from employees in Gabonese petroleum companies. Purposive sampling involved selecting a target sample of women to complete the questionnaires in lower, middle and top level management; and snowball sampling was then used to identify top managers, both male and female, for the interviews. The Statistical Package for Social Software (SPSS 23) was employed to scrutinize the quantitative data, with content analysis of qualitative data.

Outcomes of this research study converged on three factors, namely: women's constraints in the workplace; men versus women in the workplace; and government and organisations' level of commitment towards women. The main findings were, firstly, that few training and mentoring opportunities for women exists in the petroleum companies in Gabon; secondly, that perceptions of women are based on beliefs and preferences influenced by culture and tradition; thirdly, that hegemonic gender roles contribute to perpetuate barriers (such as gender stereotype, male dominance and family conflict), keeping women at the same level in management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector; and, lastly, for women to progress in their careers, they need to be supported by Gabonese government policies and organisational commitment.

Following on these findings, the researcher proposes a framework to address the three identified factors that restrain females from advancing in their careers and increasing their representation in management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon. Those factors are detailed towards four themes characterised by different key elements influencing the situation of women in industry, either positively or negatively. Finally, the study concludes with recommendations, aligned to the researcher's objectives and the findings, to improve the conditions and environment offered to women working in the petroleum sector in Gabon and Africa.

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I wish to thank:

DEDICATION

In the memory of my beloved daddy, Awakossa Georges Jean-Claude (1962 - 2017), whom I shall always love;

and

To the people I love the most, families Koudouh, Mbourounot, Mandi Bakouyanga, Tapoyo Yvendarere, Maitre Erangah, Pounah and Awakossa.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BEAC	Bank of Central African States
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CEMAC	Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
GAD	Gender and Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IFP	French Petroleum Institute
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IPG	Gabonese Petroleum Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UPEGA	Union Pétrolière Gabonaise

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Gender equality entails equipping all workers, both males and females, with equal access to resources so that they have the freedom to choose opportunities that best suit and improve their lives (United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, 2010). Dawar and Singh (2016: 65) note that discriminatory treatment faced by women in top level positions is very common barrier. In many companies, men are generally given preference over women in matters of leadership, power, facilities and promotions. There is still a long process in current business environments to improve women representation on boards. As females in many companies have been facing barriers in the form of discrimination, unwelcoming corporate culture and male stereotyping (Dawar & Singh, 2016: 68). Additionally, Lansky (2000) focuses on the issue of gender and development, and reports that women have reduced importance in this regard, and are isolated from development and economic growth globally. Women inhabit a corporate world that is very male dominated (Lansky, 2000). This is particularly true in the petroleum sector, where 72% of professionals are male (Ideas Lab, 2014).

Globally, it appears that extractive industries or companies that have more than 10% female employment are extremely rare, while those that have less than 5%, are so much more common (Global Rights Alert, 2013: 8). McKee (2014: 167) confirms that, customarily, job tasks in energy industries such as coal or uranium mining, refineries, and oil and gas drilling sites have not been esteemed to be "women's work", as a small number of women have been involved in the planning, building or operations of such energy industry systems. Besides, since male-dominated industries are particularly gender-biased, it is tougher for females to access these industries than to effect changes to their biased norms. Most oil companies are in the private sector and operate internationally. Thus, in spite of being technically qualified, women experience difficulties when they join energy companies across the globe (McKee, 2014). However, in the public sector, Arriola and Johnson (2014) debate that women in African countries have occupied a considerable number of political leadership positions during the past 30 years. Recently elected African women presidents such as Joyce Banda of Malawi, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, and Catherine Samba-Panza of Central African Republic are testimony to this assertion.

Gabon, located on the west coast of Africa, is a member of the French Franc Zone (African Financial Community, CFA), the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) and the Bank of Central African States (BEAC). The National language is French and this country's independence from France occurred on 17 August 1960. Ranked as a Middle-Income Country (MIC) by the World Bank in 2017, Gabon's per capita income is approximately USD 7 370, which is four times greater than most Sub-Saharan African nations. Most of Gabon's population is found in its political capital, Libreville, its economic capital, Port-Gentil, and the urban area that surrounds Franceville, which are hence where the major conglomerations are housed (World Bank, 2017; BBC News, 2018). There are huge income disparities that exist amongst the population, with most being poor. Before oil was discovered offshore in the early 1970s, Gabon was largely dependent on its timber and manganese industries. In 2017 the total Gabonese labour force of the entire population of over 1 640 286 was estimated at 557 800 (Theodora, 2018). According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2010), the Gabonese Constitution regards men and women to be equal legally. However, the status of women remains restrained in respect of discriminatory legal provisions within both the civil and penal codes, especially regarding matrimonial and family relations. Furthermore, the advancement of Gabonese women is held back by obstacles such as social attitudes and cultural practices (OECD, 2010: 222).

1.2 Background of the research study

Women in the working environment encounter inequality at many rankings. Many instances of inequality relate to human resource activities such as recruitment and selection, promotions, career advancements and skills development. Weiss (2008) reports that recruiting and retaining female employees in specific departments such as information technology, science, engineering in oil, and gas businesses, pose an issue. Furthermore, evidence from Statistics Canada indicated that women make up only 20% of employees in the petroleum sector, compared to approximately 38% of Canada's other sectors (Van De Wynckele, 2017). Being the second lowest proportion of women employed sector after construction, 17% occupying of the most senior positions in the petroleum sector are limited to communication, administration, human resources functions and only 1% of Chief Executive Office functions. Women are often the most economically threatened social group in the oil sector. The low participation of women results from entrenched views on women's place in society. Females' position in society in relation to that of men has generated the responsiveness of scholars, activists, feminists and development workers who are concerned about their subordination, oppression and marginalisation (Makama, 2013: 116).

According to Global Rights Alert (2013: 8-9), women in Uganda, particularly in Hoima and Buliisa, admitted that oil companies require work tasks that demand the kind of dynamic that mainly men can offer in respect of physical strength. This view is male biased and eliminates women from consideration for jobs. The African Development Bank Group (2011: 2) in Gabon stipulates that most of the country's economy depends on oil, wood and manganese. Moreover, competent labour is deficient in expanding sectors (African Development Bank Group, 2011: 7). Currently, the fifth biggest petroleum producer in Sub-Saharan Africa, foreign petroleum companies dominate Gabon's oil sector. There are about 30 producing oil fields in the region, making Gabon an oil producer for more than 50 years in Africa. However, production is declining. Total Gabon is a French global company, based in Port-Gentil in Gabon. It is engaged in the exploration and extraction of hydrocarbons. It has 300 employees. Its range of products includes natural gas and crude oil (*Financial Times*, 2018). Moreover, Royal Dutch Shell has also flexed its operational muscle in Gabon for the last 50 years. The company has around 500 employees working for it, as well as a range of contractors and suppliers that can hire up to 2000 people in total (Business Excellence, 2010). Finally, according to Ide-Jetro (n.d.), Perenco started in 1992, operating two seaward platforms, and based in Port-Gentil in the south of Gabon. Working with 100 employees, most of its crude oil production (with a storage of 90,000 barrels per day) is sent to the Fernan Vaz and Banio Floating Storage and Offloading (FSO) units.

According to Venables (2018), Gabon is ranked fifth amongst oil producers in Sub-Saharan Africa. The country's oil production was 370 000 barrels per day twelve years ago and its current level is 200 000 barrels per day. Gabon exports most of its oil to countries like Japan, France, the United States, Australia, India and Spain. Despite the level of economic activities in the oil sector, women participation in this industry is under represented. Gabon's unemployment remains high at 16%, affecting mainly women and youth. Moreover, female unemployment was recently rated at 27% in Gabon (Tognini, 2018).

1.3 Explanation and statement of the research problem

The perception of "women's work" (McKee, 2014: 167) has limited their progression in their career at the workplace. Lo (2013) explains that, traditionally, the petroleum industry is perceived to be harsh and male-dominated, with little or no career consideration or guidance for women to join its workforce. Furthermore, career progression in the workplace is one of the main problems that women all over the world face and battle against, particularly in the engineering, scientific and

technical sectors, including the petroleum industry. It is on this premise that the research problem was formulated as follows:

> Women employees in the Gabonese petroleum sector are marginalised in terms of their career progression, which results in their underrepresentation in management positions.

1.4 Research questions

In relation to the research problem, two main research questions were investigated in this study:

1. Why are women employees in the Gabonese petroleum sector not being groomed for management positions?
2. To what extent are women employees in the Gabonese petroleum sector recognised as management candidates?

To elucidate these two questions, four sub-questions were formulated:

1.1 To what extent are women employees provided with training opportunities to groom them for management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector?

1.2 In the Gabonese petroleum sector, what is the employees' and employers' perception regarding women employees in management positions?

2.1 Do gender roles influence the recognition of women employees applying for management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector?

2.2 What catalyst could transform women employees' career progression within the petroleum sector in Gabon?

1.5 Research objectives

The aim of this research study was to identify various factors affecting women's representation in management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon. Moreover, it was proposed that the findings of the study could be utilised to assist Gabonese petroleum companies to encourage women's career progression in management positions.

The following research objectives were formulated in line with the research sub-questions:

1.1 To ascertain if training opportunities exist for women employees to groom them for management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector.

1.2 To understand the employees' and employers' perception in the Gabonese petroleum sector regarding women in management positions.

2.1 To determine if gender roles influence the recognition of women employees applying for management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector.

2.2 To propose a strategy for transformation of women's career progression to management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon.

1.6 Research design and methodology

Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006) state that research usually arises from some need, meaning that there is a particular purpose to fulfil. This study was designed by the epistemological paradigm through interpretivist philosophy. What career progression means to women working in the Gabonese petroleum sector is critically important to understand if one hopes to create and explore opportunities to meet changing organisational and individual needs (Willis, 2007; Du Plooy, 2011).

For this study, a mixed method approach was considered appropriate. Collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative information involved a combination of techniques which ensured data triangulation in this research (Creswell, 2003: 18-19; De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2013: 434). Quantitative and qualitative information were gathered via questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. Then, this information gathered were analysed via Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 23) and content analysis, interpreted and articulated as research findings (De Vos *et al.,* 2013: 440).

1.6.1 Study population

This study's population includes three selected Gabonese petroleum companies obtained from Union Pétrolière Gabonaise (UPEGA), a trade union working with 20 000 employees of several petroleum companies, such as Reyes Gabon, Total Gabon and Petro Gabon, participants in this research study. InfosPlus Gabon (2010) shared that the Gabonese Petroleum Union (Union Pétrolière Gabonaise, UPEGA) was created on 27 March 1984 with the goal of defending their members' interests and ensuring representation concerning their activities with the public

authorities and institutions of the Gabonese Republic. Almost 20 000 employees of petroleum companies like Total Gabon, Shell Gabon, Perenco and Addax are members of UPEGA, which is located in Port-Gentil, the economic capital of Gabon (InfosPlus Gabon, 2010).

1.6.2 Sampling

A non-probability sampling method, specifically purposive sampling, was applied. A specific, predefined female group working in the petroleum sector in Gabon was the selected target research sample for this research study (Trochim, 2006; Alvi, 2016: 33). The sample size for the distribution of the questionnaire was 71, comprising female employees who accepted to participate by answering correctly to all questions. In addition, 15 participants, including females and males, were selected for the interview via the snowballing technique allowing the researcher to identify a participant matching the criteria of this study then who refer the researcher to another participant with the same criteria (Trochim, 2006; Alvi, 2016: 33).

1.6.3 Data collection procedure

Primary data was obtained from the questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. Closed-ended questions were used in the questionnaire, while the interview guide included open-ended questions. The open-ended questions allowed further elaboration of respondents' expressions. Secondary data was gathered for the literature review via published information from researchers and authors reported in textbooks, research articles in journals and the Internet (Cant, 2005: 50; Galvan, 2013).

1.6.4 Data analysis

The Statistical Product for Service Solution (SPSS 23) software was utilised for analysing quantitative data collected from the questionnaires distributed to selected petroleum companies. Data was described and summarised using descriptive statistics, tables, bar charts and other graphic representation. Content analysis, focused on categories and themes, was used for the qualitative data gathered from the face-to-face interviews conducted at selected petroleum companies. An amalgamation of quantitative and qualitative data was analysed to articulate the findings.

1.7 Delineation of the research study

This research study focused on women in management positions, including lower, middle and top level management, such as supervisors, regional managers, general managers, boards of

directors and chief executives in the three selected petroleum companies in Gabon. The research was conducted in Gabon as the petroleum sector is the engine of the national economy and accounts for the following: about 35% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP); for 50% of government revenue; and for 80% of goods exported in 2014 with a deficit of 7% of GDP in 2015 (African Development Bank Group, 2011; Schaffnit-Chatterjee, 2016).

1.8 Significance of the research study

The significance of this research lies in its under covering of factors that limit women's career progression to top management in the Gabonese petroleum sector. The findings are intended to contribute to solutions for effectively managing women's underrepresentation in top management positions in emerging countries within the petroleum sector. Considering that Gabon is a developing country, the outcome could be applied to others emerging countries in the petroleum sector.

1.9 Clarification of key terms

Terms relating to women and obstacles to their career progression are defined here:

Table 1.1: Definition of key terms

Terms	Definition
Gender	"The socially determined ideas and practices of what it is to be female or male" (Reeves & Baden, 2000: 2).
Gender inequality	"Unequal access by women relative to men to material resources, status, power and privileges which allow for statistical comparison over time and space" (Lemel & Noll, 2002).
Gender equality	"Women having the same opportunities in life as men, for instance, equality of access to education and employment, which does not necessarily lead to equality of outcomes" (Grown, Gupta & Khan, 2003: 3).
Gender and Development (GAD)	"Approach focuses on the socially constructed basis of differences between men and women and emphasises the need to challenge existing gender roles and relations" (Reeves & Baden, 2000: 3).
Women's empowerment	"A 'bottom-up' process of transforming gender power relations, through individuals or groups developing awareness of women's subordination and building their capacity to challenge it" (Reeves & Baden, 2000: 3).

Women's human rights	"The recognition that women's rights are human rights and that women experience injustices solely because of their gender" (Reeves & Baden, 2000: 3).
Senior position	It is "a title given in a large company with a perceived need for additional levels in its management structure. In a hierarchy, senior manager falls between manager and general manager" (Reh, 2018).
Leadership	It is "a process by which a person influences other to accomplish an objective and directs the organisation in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent" (Sharma & Jain, 2013: 310).
Petroleum industry/sector	"Petroleum or crude oil is any naturally occurring flammable mixture of hydrocarbons found in geologic formations, such as rock strata. The petroleum industry/sector includes the global processes of exploration, extraction, refining, transporting often by oil tankers and pipelines, and marketing petroleum products. The largest volume products of the industry are fuel oil and gasoline or petrol" (Helmenstine, 2018).
Gender discrimination	"The systematic, unfavourable treatment of individuals on the basis of their gender, which denies them rights, opportunities or resources" (Reeves & Baden, 2000: 3).
Gender stereotypes	"Stereotypes of femininity and masculinity function in the social life consist of patterns, ideal images about what women and men are and should be, as orders of the assigned behaviours, and finally, as beliefs about their social roles and mutual relations" (Mandal, 2012: 8).
Glass ceiling/wall	"The failure of women gaining entrance into the workforce and their failure to attain the highest management positions" (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2010: 466).
Career advancement/ progression	"Means improved job quality and therefore increased benefits of working for an individual, which in turn will increase their retention at an organisation" (Louie, 2014).
Marginalisation	"Defined as a form of acute and persistent disadvantage rooted in underlying social inequalities" [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 2009: 1].

1.10 Chapters outline

This research study consists of five chapters, structured as follows:

Chapter one: Introduction and background to the research study

This chapter provides a background to the study to underpin the research problem which, in turn, is addressed via research questions and research objectives for achieving better understanding and results. It briefly expresses the methodology applied and discusses the delineation of the

study, as well as its significance. Furthermore, it clarifies key terms necessary for better understanding of the research topic.

Chapter two: Women's career progression in the 21st century

This chapter addresses different terms and their importance in relation to the research questions. A literature review elucidates women's representation in the modern-day workplace, gender roles in the workplace, mechanisms for the advancement of women in the workplace, and, lastly, perceptions of women in top management.

Chapter three: Research design and methodology

In this chapter, the researcher describes in detail the methodology utilised to collect and analyse information obtained from participants in this study. The study population, sampling method, data collection and analysis are explained. The choice of data triangulation in this research is detailed and justified, including how data collection was conducted and the gathered data analysed.

Chapter four: Presentation and discussion of research results

This chapter expounds on the findings of the study, commencing with a presentation of charts to illustrate the results from questionnaires and interviews.

The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS 23) was applied to questionnaire responses and content analysis of interview responses occurred. Thereafter, the findings articulated from the results are discussed and related to a conceptual framework obtained.

Chapter five: Conclusions and recommendations

The fifth and last chapter summarises the main findings and draws conclusions. A set of recommendations is offered, along with a reiteration of the significance of this study and suggestions for further research.

1.11 Summary

This research study's significance lies in its examination of the factors that limit women's career progression to top management levels in the petroleum sector in Gabon. This study focuses on women in management positions at all levels of petroleum companies in Gabon. This chapter firstly examined the background to the research problem, explaining that, due to deep-rooted, traditional views of females' place in society, inequality in the working environment is experienced

by women throughout the world. This issue is clearly noticeable in the petroleum sector as it appears to affect women's career progression. Secondly, the research problem was detailed, with its focus on women's marginalisation and slow career progression, with their very low representation in management positions, in the petroleum section in Gabon. Furthermore, the research questions were elaborated upon and sub-questions outlined to provide a focus on the different aspects that require investigation if potential responses to the questions in this research are to be found. The intention of the study was to draw conclusions and make recommendations to assist petroleum companies in Gabon to support women's career progression to management positions.

Since the emphasis falls on what the world means to Gabonese women in the petroleum sector, the design and methodology of this research study were suitable within epistemological paradigm via interpretivism (Willis, 2007: 6). Data triangulation was ensured through collecting information by using mixed methods of data collection (questionnaires and face-to-face interviews), combining quantitative and qualitative techniques.

Finally, the key terms linking women and the obstacles to their career progression were described, followed by an outline of chapters structuring this research study.

The following chapter presents a review of literature exploring previous research studies, providing both global and local perspectives on the main barriers affecting women in their career progression in the petroleum sector.

CHAPTER TWO
WOMEN'S CAREER PROGRESSION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the importance of this study, as expressed in the problem statement, research questions and objectives. The researcher stated the significance and contribution of this study in relation to improving women employees' career progression to management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector. This chapter explores literature related to women's career progression.

Globally, research has shown that females are underrepresented in top management positions in organisational hierarchies. Such findings have stimulated wide interest in this research area (Lehto, 2008; Hoobler, Lemmon & Wayne, 2011). Interestingly, Lehto (2008) points out that research evidence has indicated that males and females acquire the same set of skills and abilities and can attain the same educational level. However, in spite of improved increases in the number of female middle management positions, top management positions are still occupied by men globally (Schwanke, 2013: 15).

This research attempts to provide an overview of the marginalisation of women in terms of their career progression to management positions, within the specific context of the Gabonese petroleum sector. The review of literature in this chapter commence with an outline of women's representation in the modern day workplace in the petroleum sector and their position in the African working environment. Typical workplace gender roles highlighting gender stereotype, gender discrimination and male dominance in the Gabonese context is addressed. Moreover, it focuses on mechanisms for the advancement of women in the workplace through training and development opportunities; the importance of women in organisational development; and ways of creating a supporting organisational culture. This chapter concludes with an overview of employees' and employers' perceptions concerning women in top management positions and their representation in the management hierarchy in relation to needed managerial characteristics.

2.2 Women's representation in the modern day workplace

Since the 21st century women have continued to enter working environments in increasing numbers in all emerged and emerging countries (Barreto, Ryan & Schmitt, 2009; Burke 2009). Nevertheless, the flow of advancement for women's careers and occupations is both slow and imbalanced in diverse nations, and across different cultures. Research on women's representation in the workplace, internationally in emerged countries and locally in Africa, will be discussed.

2.2.1 Women's representation in the working environment in developed countries

Internationally, women remain in very low echelons of power in the energy industry. Only 5% of executive board members and 14% of senior management are women in the top 200 power and utility companies (Catalyst, 2016). However, considering that half of the United States workforce comprises of women, Shriver and the Centre for American Progress (2009) use the expression "female nation", which calls attention to the fact that women employees should change perceptions in this regard, and the future of society, in general. Supporting Shriver and the Centre for American Progress (2009), Makama (2013: 116) observes that recognition of females in the corporate world and their representation in top management positions is growing in all developed and developing countries.

Despite progress, women still face many obstacles to full participation in the growth of economies worldwide. Their position in society in relation to that of men remains inferior. For a long time women's' subservience, unfair treatment and marginalisation across their respective roles have captured the interests of scholars, activists, feminists and development workers in their quest for an improved, equitable society. Issues in the labour market around 'gender inequality' have gained increasing momentum and criticism, particularly in the past two decades (Bertrand, Goldin & Katz, 2010; Makama, 2013; Kleven & Landais, 2017). For instance, Chen (2014) notes that, on average, the composition of company boards in the United States is nearly 90% men, with just 10.7% being women. Well-known companies such as Discovery Communications and Chesapeake Energy, with approximately 7000 employees, have no women employed on their representative boards. Likewise, in April 2013, women accounted for only 16.6% of the 27 European Union Member States' directors at large publicly listed companies. The percentage of female executive officers increased in 12 months by 2.3%, and by almost 5% since October 2010. Of the three biggest United States stock benchmarks, only one company, the cosmetic giant, Avon Products, comprises more than 50% of women in their decision-making positions. Globally,

at least one in four large, listed companies still operate without any women executives who serve on board level, whilst the level of amelioration, which is required to obtain a 40% target of each gender by 2020, remains under-par (European Union, 2013: 3). The failure of females to attain the highest management ranks in the world is mainly because of what is referred to as a "glass ceiling" or "glass wall" (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2010: 466). Despite some progress, the European Commission revealed in 2010 that it planned to appoint more women to managerial board positions (Van der Gaag, 2014).

Turning to Africa, a study by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2015) reported that the proportion of women working in top management positions in Africa remains low, and requires major redress. Gender balance is considered to be beneficial for business, as the increasing number of women who contribute to the labour market is a main catalyst for growth and competitiveness across the globe (ILO, 2015).

2.2.2 Women's representation in the African working environment

A dominant factor in Ghana's society, as in many other African countries, is the necessity for gender balance and equity in all social and economic activities (Gyan, 2013: 94). In Ghana, women face various challenges such as the glass ceiling, gender stereotypes, getting maternity leave and family conflicts stemming from the duality of women's' functions as both mothers and workers. A majority of women cannot work for long hours or work extra time, which hinders their chances of occupying leadership and other significant positions (Gyan, 2013: 97). Broadly speaking, Nigerian, as well as Gabonese societies and their workplaces, are still gender-biased and male-dominated (Mordi, Simpson, Singh & Okafor, 2010).

A global trend is that contemporary workplace policies seem to favour men and, consequently, women who are appointed to traditionally male-dominated positions face serious challenges when it comes to balancing work and family duties (Mordi, Adedoyin & Ajonbadi, 2011: 14). According to the Annual Women in Leadership Census, South African women comprised 3.6% of CEO positions in 2012, which is similar to that of 2009, while it was 4.4% in 2011 (ILO, 2015). Research was conducted amongst 93,969 enterprises in Cameroon, which revealed that they only have 27% female employees, while no more than 10% of these enterprises had a woman manager. It is unusual for large companies to have female CEOs, especially in the petroleum industry (ILO, 2015).

The international petroleum industry has experienced several changes recently owing to

increasing environmental concerns, as well as rising crude oil and natural gas markets globally. Crude oil and natural gasses prices are high, while petroleum industry stocks have also increased. Currently, there is a lack of qualified workers in the industry to fulfil new technology tasks because of gender preferences and a lack of training (ILO, 2012).

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2012) insists that there are talented workers that the petroleum industry can access from various labour supply groups, including women. The petroleum industry has failed to appoint qualified women. Most women workers experience difficulties in advancing their careers and some have to cope with male colleagues who treat them unfairly in the workplace. Standard features in the human resources field presently exist, which include mandatory sexual harassment workshops, policies and grievance procedures. There is also strong scholarly literature linking harassment with gender inequality (Martin, 2003), and other types of discrimination in workplaces (Lopez, Hodson & Roscigno, 2009). To develop a climate of diversity within the workplace, there is a need to promote and implement family-friendly policies, as well as non-discriminatory practices for women and men, and these include equal remuneration for same job positions and equal promotion opportunities. Also, there is a continual need to boost women representation in managerial positions, specifically in respect of top management (ILO, 2012).

Against this backdrop, this research aims to identify different factors contributing to the marginalisation of women and hindering their career progression and representation in managerial positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon.

2.3 Gender roles in the workplace

'Gender' refers to roles that society and cultural norms have placed on males and females (Reeves & Baden, 2000: 2). Gender is defined as a key element that identifies a person's preferences, abilities, skills and behaviours attributed to his/her job's position (Akpinar-Sposito, 2013). Stereotypically, it is presumed that men are relatively more competent than women, so they are the most often considered for top level positions (Mordi *et al.,* 2011: 13). According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (2008: 23), gender analysis includes various approaches and practices that are used to identify the attributes of men and women in terms of their roles, personalities, opportunities and constraints. This analysis observed that there is a difference between men and women's knowledge, behaviour, preferences and access to resources. Gender analysis thus examines distinctions between men and women's situations for

a purpose to discovering and understanding these differences. It also assists researchers and policy-makers to demonstrate these differences among the gendered roles and challenge them.

Mishra (2017) argues that scholars have investigated gender in relation to the organisation to which the individual belongs, with a focus on his/her commitment, satisfaction levels, and performance. Gender difference in a business is one of the elements most investigated for relational demography, but it has focused mainly on work groups and targeted persons, and not merely on management.

Eagly and Sczesny (2009: 645) describe gender roles as being mutual opinions that society holds of individuals based on their socially identified sex, which hence borders on associations with gender stereotypes (explained later). On the same point, Murnen and Don (2012: 128) illustrate the notion of gender roles by noting that femininity is a gender role that is attributed to females, which generally includes traits and behaviours relating to female expressiveness and communication. Masculinity is a gender role that is attributed to males, which generally comprises traits and behaviours related to industriousness and assertiveness. Male gender roles (including that of property owner, decision maker and household head) are more culturally, socially and historically constituted and institutionalised rather than based on biological differences. Gender roles vary, depending on place and period (Makama, 2013: 118).

Weyer (2007) opines that, according to the Social Role Theory, males and females' different societal roles stem from their gender. For example, traditionally, women stayed at home while men left to work and earn a wage. Hence, these historically-attributed social roles, based solely on gender, continue to exist presently. The Social Role Theory argues that these traditional social roles influence men and women's leadership roles in terms of what is expected of them owing to their respective genders. Hence, gender roles are stereotypical, irrespective whether they occur naturally, or they are created (Weyer, 2007). According to Ibarra, Ely & Kolb (2013: 5), in spite of them working hard across the globe to be recognised for their skills and talents, biased organisational policies and practices reduce their chances to determine their own success.

Fallon (2018) observes that there have been no improvements to uplift women's status in resource industries, and the issue against gender disparity is not eased. International oil companies (IOCs) employee 26% women, while national oil companies employee 13%, and oilfield services and equipment companies employ 16%. The reason is that the companies' approach towards women is not concentrated enough on significant quantitative targets, or the

methods that they use for activity programs are failing to attain gender balance. As a challenge to succeed, Canada's Petroleum Human Resources Council reports that the oil and gas industry will hire between 125 000 and 150 000 candidates in 2022, and will focus on hiring women (Fattori, 2014).

Fattori (2014) adds that women may join the oil and gas sector during early years of their careers, but it becomes increasingly difficult to retain these women when they reach the 30 to 34 age group. Women leave the sector around this period, as they start to take care of their families by raising children and managing conjugal responsibilities, which may not always allow them to accede to job travels or company relocation requests. Women require more adaptable work schedules, as well as infrastructure such as recreation centres, medical facilities and on-site day-care services, which will support their family life too. However, companies look for linear progression and, as things stand now, a woman's career path is suspended when she takes time off to have a child.

Regarding the situation of women in Gabon, the Oxford Business Group (2011: 26) reports that boosting the contribution of females in Gabon's economy is a crucial component of the government's strategy to increase development and poverty alleviation as well as reduce gender inequality. By and large, the country's legal framework is already well-adapted to provide increased economic empowerment to women, and the law currently allows single women's rights to the same access to education, investment, land business, hiring, financing and salaries. Indeed, there are a number of women who work at all levels of both the private and the public sector, from ministers and chief executives to shop-floor employees. However, this phenomenon is largely concentrated in urban areas while women continue to be marginalised in rural areas where employment and income opportunities are already scarce (Oxford Business Group, 2011: 26). Makama (2013: 115) assesses the Nigerian society to be patriarchal in nature, which is a stark characteristic of a traditional society. In Gabonese socialisation, male domination is a principal element affecting the relationship between a man and a woman.

This research study aims to identify and highlight the constraints affecting women's career progression in management positions by exploring these aspects: firstly, the effects of gender stereotype and discrimination on women career's progression; and, secondly, the influence of male dominance on women's career progression which are interrelated.

2.3.1 Gender stereotype and discrimination

Gender stereotypes define a fixed idea(s) that the difference between males and females is not necessarily true in reality, but stereotypical beliefs affect perceptions of male and female managers (Klaile, 2013: 25). Accordingly, Mandal (2012: 8) denounces femininity and masculinity stereotypes, as these are associated with functions in social life, with defined patterns (social roles) for men and women, along with idealised images of female and male personalities (i.e. assigned behaviours), and their mutual relations. As explained previously in section 2.3 by Eagly and Sczesny (2009), therefore, the concepts of gender role and gender stereotype tend to be related.

Brannon (2004: 160) discusses four different aspects of gender stereotypes: physical characteristics; traits; behaviours; and occupations. These aspects may vary and be independent; however, they become an interdependent network of associations because of peoples' judgments of each aspect, which relates to information about each (Brannon, 2004: 184). Further, through stereotyping, assumed common characteristics such as gender, age, race, ethnicity, language, and religion categorise people (Hussain, Naz, Khan, Daraz & Khan, 2015: 1). Also, Rhode and Kellerman (2007) reveal that females are more restricted than males in the working environment owing to gender stereotypes.

Gender discrimination is described as a belief that one gender is superior to the other particularly that men are superior to women, resulting in unfair treatment towards women. This discrimination denies women rights, opportunities or resources (Reeves & Baden, 2000: 3). Furthermore, Catalyst (2018a) refers to sex or gender discrimination occurring when a person or group of people is treated unfairly based solely on their gender. Gender discrimination, which is illegal, culminates in unfair treatments linked to employment, job tasks, salaries, training, benefits, promotions, and dismissals. However, even though they experience gender discrimination frequently, women still deny it.

For instance, in spite of improved salaries, there is a persistent gender gap between men and women's salaries across all job positions and sectors (McKee, 2014: 170; International Labour Organization, 2017: 8). According to a study by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC, 2013b), unlikely discrimination sometimes takes place, causing men to hold senior executive leadership positions more so than women. PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC, 2013b) considered that when there is a selection on prospective successors at the most senior levels, gender plays a role in performance evaluations. In companies' senior male executives commonly associate male behaviours with

strong leadership. Even though she may be competent at her job, a woman's gender can be perceived to interfere with her ability to work with her male counterparts.

Challenges persist around hiring more women workers in the petroleum sector. The reality is that qualified candidates for jobs on offer are limited by the fact that recruitment is centered on male stereotypes, according to the job's criteria (McKee, 2014: 168).

Numerous women are confronted with different work-related challenges from their male counterparts in spite of their contributions to the petroleum sector's enhancements. This is because the industry's organisations are dominated by male sub-cultural practices such as their beliefs and values, whilst they are also demographically predominant. These factors contribute to women being discriminated against in the workplace more so than men. Gender differences generate an organisational culture that is unfavourable, or at least resistant, to women (ILO, 2012: 16). Women are not easily promoted to top management positions unless there is already a female presence in those positions (McKee, 2014: 168).

According to McGregor (2015: 124), sexual harassment is another obstacle that prevents women from being promoted. Harassment is a form of unfair discrimination, which basically entails treating someone in a manner that constitutes a violation of that person's dignity or situates them in a degrading environment. Similarly, sexual harassment amounts to unfair discrimination as it establishes arbitrary barriers for women, violates their dignity and includes sexist actions. Sexual harassment, of course, also takes place against men, but women are mostly on the receiving end (McGregor, 2015: 124).

Uneven sex ratios, organisational norms and opportunities are also pinpointed as elements that cause sexual harassment. Women in leadership positions, such as women supervisors, are potential targets for such harassment (McLaughlin, Uggen & Blackstone, 2012: 627). In depth, McGregor (2015: 124) explains that sexual harassment comprises a comprehensive of conduct which can be split into three broad categories: firstly, physical conduct, such as touching, and assault-like pinching or winking in the presence of the opposite sex; secondly, verbal conduct, comprising comments with sexual overtones, whistling of a sexual nature, suggestions, hints and sex-related jokes about the body of a woman in her presence; and, thirdly, non-verbal conduct, including indecent exposure, unwelcome gestures and displaying or sending e-mails with sexually explicit pictures or objects.

The Code of Good Practice (McGregor, 2015: 125) prescribes that employers should establish policies against sexual harassment, which should stipulate, *inter alia*, that (i) sexual harassment is a form of unfair discrimination; (ii) sexual harassment is not allowed or tolerated in the workplace; (iii) plaintiffs should follow formal or informal procedures to address a complaint; (iv) to persecute or avenge an employee who submits a complaint of sexual harassment is a disciplinary offence; (v) appropriate action must be taken by employers when procedures are instituted; and (vi) examples of sanctions for perpetrators. The most vulnerable victims of sexual harassment in a working environment are women. Despite attempts to minimise its prevalence, sexual harassment remains to be one of the most frequent types of mistreatments in the workplace. Around one half of employed females in the United States are confronted with sexual harassment before they retire; for example, 65% to 79% of females who work in male-dominated environments such as the petroleum sector and the U.S. Armed Forces, have experienced it (Department of Defence Inspector General, 2005; Buchanan, Settles, Hall & O'Connor, 2014: 688). According to Stange, Oyster and Sloan (2011: 594), in Gabon, violence against women is a major problem; moreover, sexual harassment is widespread but, unfortunately, no official action has been taken to deal with it. In other words, there is no law against sexual harassment and domestic violence in Gabon. Sexual harassment is inappropriate, harmful behaviour towards women, who often become depressed, suffer of post-traumatic stress disorder, engage in absenteeism, are less efficient, and want to resign as a result (Buchanan *et al.,* 2014: 688).

Additionally, Anyanwu and Augustine (2014) state that attaining gender parity in employment is a difficult fete, which many countries across the world are dealing with, including African countries. In 2011 male employment-to-population was 72.7% worldwide, contrasted with female employment-to-population, which amounted to 47.9%. For Africa, overall, the male employment-to-population percentage was 69.2% contrasted with the female employment-to-population percentage of 39.2% (Anyanwu & Augustine, 2014). Globally, women have tolerated gender-based discrimination in the working environment around (Cunningham-Parmeter, 2015: 10). This discrimination also surfaces in cases of recruitment and promotion when women reveal that they are pregnant; or there are cultural expectations about motherhood and domestic activities based on responsibilities and childcare obligations. Additionally, women are not prepared for top management positions as a result of presumptions about their incompetence, workplace commitment, and leadership skills when compared to childless workers (Cunningham-Parmeter, 2015: 11).

Hajarelfatihi (2011) supports this argument by saying that traditionally males are the breadwinners and dominate the family and home environment, while females are mere obedient caregivers. Hajarelfatihi (2011) mentions that gender roles are losing significance in developed countries. Nevertheless, in developing countries it is harder to eradicate traditional gender roles because of the prevalence of the status quo, and less access to education. This perpetuates a perception that the restraint of women is worthy. Thus, when women discard their expected gender roles, they challenge the power of the male role. Folkman and Zenger (2012) note that amongst mainstream companies' CEOs, 64% are men; and it appears that the higher up organisational hierarchies one goes, the more one finds that men occupy these positions. Amongst boards of directors, 78% are men; while amongst senior executives who report directly to directors, 67% are men; and at managerial level below that, 60% are also men.

United Nations Economic and Social Council (2010) states in the Annual Ministerial Review fifty-fourth session that Mrs Ami Diallo (Representative of Mali) reported on her country's strategy to obtain gender parity and women's emancipation. She quoted legal texts from Mali's Constitution (Articles 1 & 2, 1992) that guarantee women's rights and, which show the authorities' determination to protect and promote women. Besides, she restated the November 2009 Labour Code, specifically Articles L.178 to L.188, which guarantee women the right to be hired, and mentored.

In Nigeria women's self-progression has been hampered by exceptionally high levels of birth rates, coupled with social roles that accompany women's' roles of child bearing, child raising and homemaking. Nigerian women, similar to other women across the globe, deal with discrimination that limits their chances to develop their maximum capacity based on fairness and equity. Women are a long way from benefitting from the same rights as men do in the labour market owing mostly to their domestic duties, educational achievements, low self-esteem, destitution, discrimination against them in respect of recruitment for certain jobs, and unfair remuneration practices (Makama, 2013: 122).

In the Gabonese context the Government Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 2005) reported on discrimination against females that, being more conscious of their function and place in society; most Gabonese women have been more productive in the country's economic growth. Nevertheless, they have still continued their childcare and family duties. The National Day of Gabonese Women was launched by the President on 17 April 1998, and is held each year. However, there are still not nearly enough females in specific managerial

positions (CEDAW, 2005). For instance, merely 5 out of 39 (12.8%) government cabinet members are women. Several awareness campaigns and information seminars on gender have encouraged people to promote women's rights; after all, without them sustainable growth will not be achieved. However, the report noted that women continue to endure discrimination in numerous areas, while additional attempts have been made to sensitize people to the contributions of women to leadership, and to address negative stereotypes (CEDAW, 2005).

Gabon approved the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (African Development Bank Group, 2011: 8). It was also adopted in 1995 by the Beijing Platform for Action just as the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa then in 2003 by the Conference of African Union Heads of State in Maputo. In 2010 the National Gender Equality and Equity Policy was adopted in Gabon. Yet, even if women are not exposed to discrimination, they are disadvantaged by inequalities that exist. Commonly, women are marginalised and more subjected to unemployment than men. Though their representation is higher than other nations in the sub-region, women are represented in the National Assembly by a minority of 16.1% (African Development Bank Group, 2011: 8).

According to CEDAW (2015), committee experts have hailed Gabon for encouraging and providing opportunities for women to enhance their education levels. In terms of persistent discrimination in Gabonese law though, the experts emphasize the necessity for a legal framework that will defend women and eradicate discrimination. Experts are concerned about increasing violence against women in Gabon (including sexual violence). They have lobbied for changes to the Criminal Code, and for a more comprehensive law that deals sufficiently with domestic violence against women. The committee has further questioned how traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, premature matrimonies and polygamy were dealt with, and what punitive measures were established for crimes against women, in particular. A large number of women live in polygamy and have husbands who are considerably older than them, which immediately places the woman in an unfair disadvantage. The delegation noted that no action had been taken to deal with polygamy in Gabonese law, but measures were established to teach young ladies about problems that such associations presented. According to the 2012 report, 82% of widowed women were in traditional matrimonies; and 50% were involved in polygamous relationships, endorsed by their relatives (CEDAW, 2015). The persistence of gendered views of leadership has influenced the representation of women in managerial positions and has participated to gender stereotyping at the workplace (Akpinar-Sposito, 2013). The

research problem and research questions stated in this thesis indicate that an important goal of this study is to find an efficient solution to address this situation.

2.3.2 Male dominance

A lack of career guidance since secondary school and companies' limited awareness of alternative gender roles, and workers' perceptions of the oil and gas industry being harsh, isolated and male-dominated, have contributed to this industry failing to attract women to its workforce (Marcellin, 2013). Even though the last few years have seen an increase in the number of women who have joined the petroleum sector, they are still paid lower than their male colleagues, and are less inclined to attain top management positions in these companies (McKee, 2014). Male domination at both social and organisational level prevents women from accessing positions of power (Watkins & Smith, 2014: 208). Generally, women in the Netherlands receive less profits for their human capital than men, with unequal occupation levels or wages, leaving women in jobs that underestimate their potential (Fransen, Plantenga & Vlasblom, 2010: 5). In fact, the female employment rate in Southern Asia is the lowest in the world with the female workforce's lowest rate at 28.5%, which is marginally ahead of the second lowest rate in sub-Saharan Africa (International Labour Organization, 2017: 8).

Christ (2013) outlines that male dominance is a method of patriarchy, entrenched in war, which authorizes violence. It is purified by religious representations, where men overwhelm women because of the hegemony of female sexuality, and while property is usually inherited by men. Christ (2013) explains that patriarchy started as a measure of control, which was imposed through violence and the risk of violence. Powerful men created and managed this system, which control women, youngsters, other men and nature itself. From the same point of view, Phoenix (2012) observes that a powerful male is commonly acknowledged as a man who manipulates his physical or mental capacity to manage others. More often these men dominate women; however, they take it a few steps further by attempting to control everybody and everything in their respective environments. Nature has given men a physical favourable position over women and some men utilise this advantage to compel women to do what they want. This behaviour gives them security and a feeling of intensity. Phoenix (2012) restates that a patriarchal society is a system, which men regulate to support and suit themselves. Men are in charge in the home, in business, in government, in games – and, in fact, wherever they find themselves. Thus, male dominance is an essential part of the world's structure.

Watkins and Smith (2014: 208) show that influential positions in society, and also in organisations, have a tendency to be controlled by men. Further, Ibarra et *al.*, (2013: 7) refer to numerous studies that have shown that women with technical and engineering skills who excel in traditionally male domains such as the petroleum sector are considered to be competent; however, they appear to be less pleasant than their male colleagues. Men would often be described as self-confident or assertive, while the same conduct by women would be perceived as them being arrogant or abrasive. Meanwhile, women in influential positions who lead by using a conventionally feminine style may be liked on the one hand, but, conversely, they may not be respected as a result.

Laplonge (2016: 802) contends that numerous women in Australia do not join companies in male-dominated industries because of preferences and cultures within those organisations. Masculine culture is widespread, and dominates such industries with inappropriate conduct such as sexual harassment, intimidation and discrimination. To the extent that one group dominates organisational positions of power, the empowered group will keep up hegemonic power over esteemed assets and authority, while the other dominated group's assets and attributes will be diminished (Watkins & Smith, 2014: 209). This leads to insight that employment at these organisations will be a struggle at every stage of a woman's career, and not only at senior management level.

The appeal for more women to join male-dominated industries is a political issue. Julie Collins (Laplonge, 2016: 803), Federal Australian Minister for the Status of Women, claims that it is essential to afford women opportunities to work in male-dominated industries as means to enhance their financial status. There is no valid reason to exclude women from such career advancement opportunities so that they may also benefit from the professional opportunities and economic rewards that are associated with these industries. This remains a deeply-rooted problem in gender discrimination in an affluent country like Australia, and in many other nations too (Laplonge, 2016: 806).

Martin and Barnard (2013: 3) argue that the inability to recruit more women to male-dominated industries such as oil, mining and construction, in spite of their qualifications and skills, could be because of an unwillingness to accommodate them in specific occupations within these industries. These specific occupations are top management positions highly filled up with men and that is obviously considered as an evidence of sex discrimination within these industries.

Ibarra *et al.,* (2013: 8) argue that rather than conducting themselves according to gender stereotypes (whether they use masculine methods, which would make them feel unauthentic, or feminine ones, which would make them seem inept), female leaders should be themselves by using their own standards, morals and values to reach top management levels and be successful leaders. Catalyst (2018b) relates that in United States, Canada and Europe, the male-dominated industries like oil, gas and mining contains 25% or fewer women in their total employment. In the United States no more than 6.6% of women held full-time jobs in male-dominated industries in 2017. Females here are mainly found doing secretarial, service, and health-related jobs, while males generally engage in expert, operator, and labourer jobs. In addition, one of the traditionally male-dominated areas, which lags behind in respect of creating a gender-balanced workforce is the oil and gas sector; while 72% of oil and gas specialists want oil and gas to remain a male-dominated industry (Ideas Lab, 2014).

Bolton (2015) states that management is a career discipline, which attracts women, and, which in turn benefits the business. Females are perceived to be good at building and maintaining relations with both employees and clients. Bolton (2015) emphasises that the ILO states that jobs such as human resource management, public relations, personal selling, advertising and customer relations are female-driven. However, areas such as finance, research, operations, mechanics, electronics and general management, female supervisors are less likely. This is especially significant, considering that females maintain that they are rejected for top management positions because of a lack of relevant experience. For instance, the American Petroleum Institute (2015: 11) asserts that 63% of females have worked in, or sought to work in retail and sales, while merely 4% have worked in or sought employment in the energy industry, and 3% in oil and natural gas, particularly (see Figure 2.1).
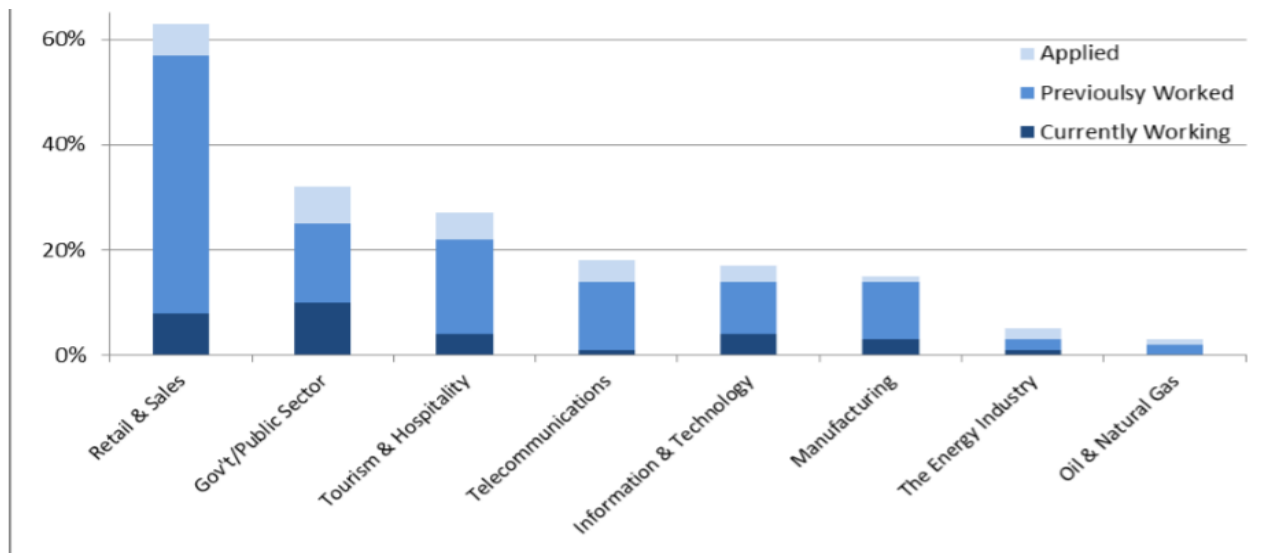
Figure 2.1: Women's employment history by industry (American Petroleum Industry (API), 2015: 10)

From birth, girls and boys are treated differently. Socialisation is the means by which norms are shared and these define what is appropriated and desirable for each sex, including which interest centres or professions are suitable for men and women (Mayila, 2012: 119). However, Mayila (2012: 130) also notes that, over time, with French colonisation and culture, Gabonese women's status and role, originally procreation and housekeeping, changed. Gabonese women entered the labour market and are now active participants in economic development. Despite this fact, socialisation still requires them to fulfil their duties as wives and housekeepers. Like in Nigeria, in Gabon patriarchy is based on culture and traditions, which prescribe hierarchical relations between men and women, favouring men, thus allowing them to control women. Patriarchy's material base is male hegemony over females, and generally present in the workplace too. This hegemony is upheld by the exclusion of females from economically productive resources, and by limiting their sexuality (Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, 2010: 32; Makama, 2013: 118).

Kokemuller (2014) cautions that notwithstanding the fact that the number of females in the work environment has increased during the late 20th and early 21st centuries, certain professional careers remain male-dominated. In addition, the researcher surmises that male-dominated industries and professions exist for a number of reasons, including cultural backgrounds, beliefs and norms, job obligations, stereotypes, and interest from potential employees.

2.4 Women's advancement in the workplace

Jan Combopiano, Chief Knowledge Officer at Catalyst, said, "Women are a powerful force in the economy, but yet they are not well represented on company boards" (Chen, 2014). This section will discuss women's training and development, career advancement, their importance in organisational development, and the amount of organisational culture support experienced, so as to distinguish the important role those factors can have on women's career progression. Furthermore, training opportunities existing for women employees to groom them for management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector will be considered.

Antoniu (2010: 13-14) explains that the career planning process involves responsibility on the part of both the organisation and the individual. The purpose of career planning is to identify individual necessities, ambitions and opportunities for their careers, as well as human resource programmes that reinforce development of those careers. Without the participation of an organisation finding, sustaining and reinforcing its workers' careers, the expected outcomes at either organisational or individual level cannot be attained. Career planning is understood to be an extremely precise and all-inclusive process, which aims to advance one's career by using opportunities, self-appraisal and assessing related outcomes (see Figure 2.2). In addition, career advancement or progression occurs when work quality improvements allow for an employee to improve their probability to remain at and support the organisation's business (Foster & Purvis, 2011: 5). Louie (2013) argues that an organisation has different facets within its environment that management can address to enhance advancement opportunities, commitment and dedication for their workers. To support this statement, Louie (2013) deduces that the fundamentals of an effective career advancement plan are the following: firstly, increasing workers' competencies; secondly, assigning them supplementary duties in addition to their functions; thirdly, acknowledging their input by providing monetary and promotion concessions; and, finally, tendering a personalised career advancement plan for every worker that aligns with his or her professional objectives (Louie, 2013).

PAST
Experience
Abilities
Knowledge
Acquired
Competencies

PRESENT
Current priorities
about career

FUTURE
Career and life
goals

Individual's perspective on career

PAST
Combination of
abilities,
knowledge and
skills of human
resources in
organisation

PRESENT
Current objectives
of developing
human resources
within the
organisation

FUTURE
Skills needed to
ensure future
viability and
competitive
advantage

Organisation's perspective on career

Figure 2.2: Career planning process (Antoniu, 2010: 17)

Research studies continue to point out that skilled females who work in lower level jobs do not receive developmental opportunities in contrast to males in the same position (Powell, 2010). Several studies have identified structural and cultural barriers (such as gender preferences, gender discrimination, and gender roles) that are at work within organisations, which prevent women from attaining top management positions. Moreover, there are other elements at play within organisations that are of an anti-female nature and, which institutionalise discrimination against women. Such elements include restricting women's admission into networking circles, coaching programmes, and training and development opportunities, limiting their career advancement prospects (Kirai & Elegwa, 2012).

In Kenya few organisations support women by allowing them access to all organisational information and available training and career development programmes (Kirai & Elegwa, 2012). When women operate within male dominated hierarchies it decreases their chances of fair promotions and development, as male managerial hierarchies are more likely to promote men to managerial positions, since they prefer to work with men rather than with women (Kirai & Elegwa, 2012).

Coaching and networking connections are also useful for women's advancements within organisations, as these give them emotional support and confidence, as well as career

satisfaction. However, women who work in male dominated organisations frequently experience limited or no networking and mentoring opportunities (Kirai & Elegwa, 2012). Furthermore, Fagan, González and Gómez (2012: 5) refer to the 'glass ceiling', which is a shared metaphor that captures obstacles that women face in their quest to apply for or be promoted to top management. Additionally, even when they eventually break this glass ceiling, they have to contend with the 'glass cliff' (refers by Murrell, 2018, as negative circumstances like crisis, conflict or failure in an organisation that women face when they ascend to the highest structural levels), which further prevents them from accessing even higher positions. Male-dominated organisational environments increasingly subject women to career advancement failure. Women's advancement in the workplace is better developed through training and development opportunities, career advancement, by advocating the importance of women in organisational development, and then creating a supportive organisational culture.

2.4.1 Training and development opportunities

To increase the number of women in managerial positions, it is important to provide training and development access to them that will enable them to assume such positions. Training and development play a significant role in an organisation's effectiveness, and contributes to employees' work experiences. The main aim of training and development for women is for them to acquire and develop necessary skills, which organisations require as means to accomplish their objectives, whilst building a competitive advantage by increasing their employees' value and quality of work life (Nikandrou *et al.*, 2009: 255; Kulkarni, 2013: 2).

Similarly, Edralin (2004: 2) defines training as planned actions that are meant to simplify learning knowledge, attitudes and skills for employees in an organisation as means to develop their existing job performances so that they may achieve the organisation's objectives. Furthermore, Edralin (2004: 3) notes that the importance of training and development is determined by the following elements: the increasing of organisational commitment; the improvement of employees' cognitive, physical and spiritual dimensions; job performance development; flexibility towards internal and external factors, which change; interpersonal skills improvement; increased information about, and consciousness of the workplace; helping to attain organisational goals; retaining a competent workforce; development of originality and problem solving skills; and, finally, improving and acquiring technical skills. Thus, training and support should not be seen as one-off events by organisations, instead as an ongoing two-way process of mutual learning and personal development (Involve, 2012: 6).

Switzer, Nagy and Mullins (2005), in accordance with Burke and Hutchins (2007: 265-266), note that apprentice characteristics include factors such as identity, learning abilities, learning objectives, occupation and career value, commitment to work, and willingness to learn and share knowledge at work, and influence an apprentice's will to succeed once trained. According to Nikandrou *et al.*, (2009: 258), trainees are influenced by several elements during the learning phase, for example, the training content, mentor, other learners, teaching techniques and the programme's planning and design.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2012: 6) stipulates that consistent human resources development regulations should be improved to guarantee sustainable development, considering the skills sets that both men and women require. Mentoring should align with labour market requests, whilst it should be continuous, and equip employees with innovative skills. Mordi *et al.*, (2011: 13) state that certain factors prevent women from accessing top management positions within organisations. Women are not given conventional mentoring opportunities that industry development schemes offer and fund. A major reason for this limited access in training and development is that employers do not intend to incur increase cost.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2012: 6) emphasises that the skills shortage is a global problem and is a challenge in the petroleum sector remained as a male-dominated field. A main reason for skills deficiency appears to be demographic, as a number of knowledgeable, male employees are nearing retirement, while less young, skilled employees are entering the petroleum sector. The ILO stresses that unless the petroleum sector addresses these difficulties urgently, it may face a skills shortage crisis during the next ten years. It should instead be proactive by adapting to labour market transitions in order to help with future workforce requests (ILO, 2012: 6). Based on data from an oil and gas HR benchmark survey, which Schlumberger Business Consulting conducted in 2011, a total of 37 global exploration and production (E&P) enterprises dealt with almost 40% of the world's oil and gas production, and estimated that there could be a worldwide decrease of more than 3,200 petrochemical experts and oil engineers (PTPs) in the exploration and production (E&P) industry in 2015 (see Figure 2.3). This has been a significant problem for International Oil Companies (IOCs) performing in Gabon, as they find it difficult to recruit qualified, local workers. Numerous Gabonese workers do not have the required technical skills or training for jobs on production rigs in exploration (Oxford Business Group, 2012: 44).

Bar chart with y-axis from 130 000 to 155 000.

- 2011: 137 800
- 2015 Required: 153 000 — "Required number of PTPs to cover demand, at equal PTP intensity to production"
- 2015 Projections*: 149 800 — "Based on recruitment, attrition and retirement forecasts"

−3 200 — Projections vs requirements

*2010 workforce projected to 2015 based on: 1.4% attrition; company recruitment targets; retirement rate at 20% for 55–59 age group 90% for 60–64 age group, and 100% for +65 years. Number of PTPs exclude China and oilfield service companies.

Figure 2.3: Estimate of the potential talent gap of petrochemical professionals and petroleum engineers (PTPs) in the exploration and production sector in 2015 (ILO, 2012: 6)

Figures 2.3(a)-(c) show female engineers' employment growth levels within independent oil enterprises, National Oil Companies (NOCs) and International Oil Companies (IOCs) for 2006, 2010 and 2011 in the exploration and production (E&P) area. Generally, the number of female employees within these industries has not grown in the last six years. High-development organisations operate with more females in their technical talent pool, while in geosciences, women occupy 27% of PTPs in high-development organisations compared to 18% in lower-development organisations. Amongst petroleum engineers, the number of women employees in high-development organisations was 19% compared to 11% in lower-development organisations (ILO, 2012: 14).
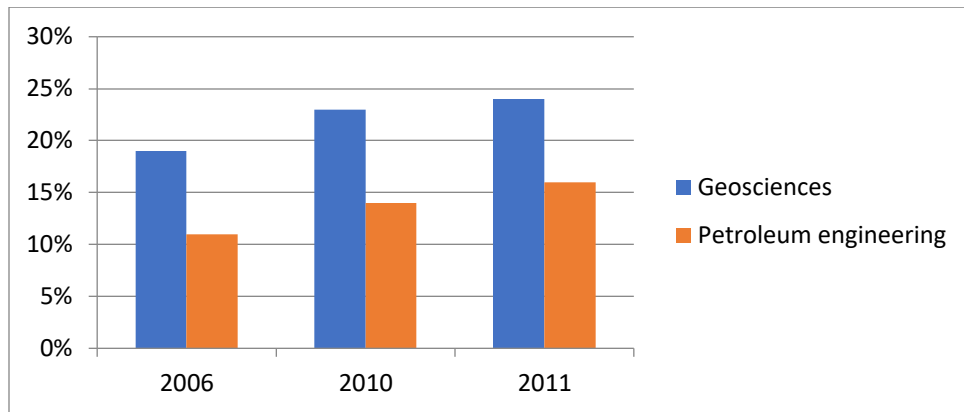
Figure 2.3(a): Percentage of female workers in independent oil companies (including contractors) for 2006, 2010 and 2011 (ILO, 2012: 6)
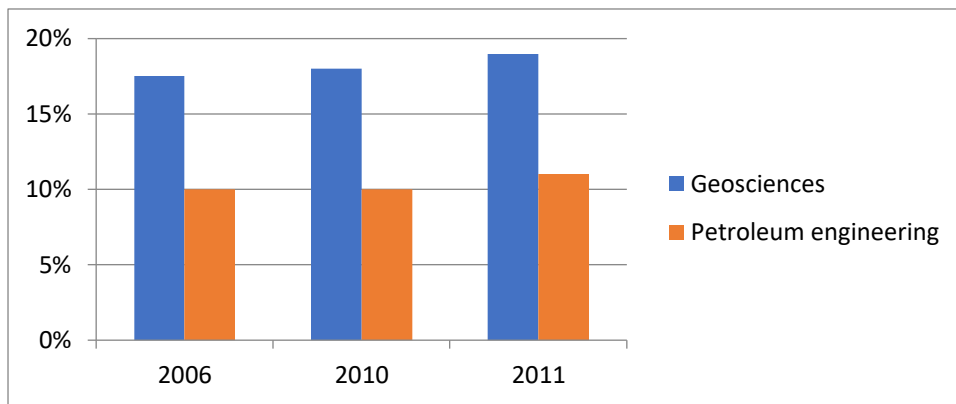
Figure 2.3(b): Percentage of female workers in International Oil Companies (IOCs) for 2006, 2010 and 2011 (ILO, 2012: 6)
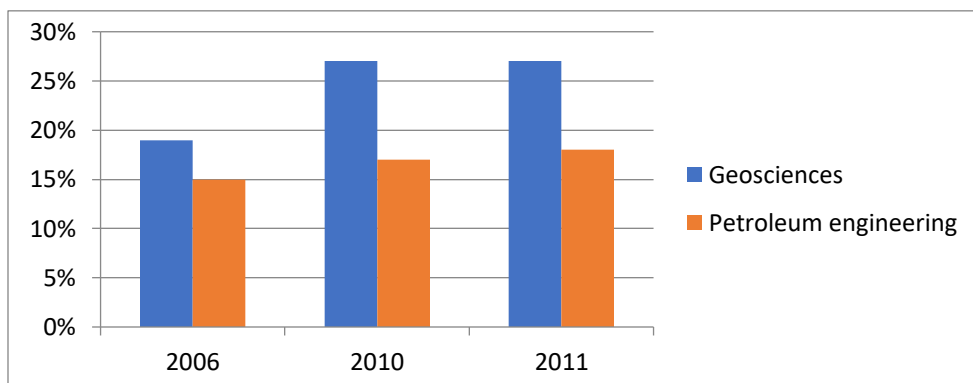
Figure 2.3(c): Percentage of female workers in National Oil Companies (NOCs) for 2006, 2010 and 2011 (ILO, 2012: 6)

In summary, Figure 2.3 illustrates the global skills shortage, which presented a serious challenge to more than 3,200 petrochemical professionals and petroleum engineers (PTPs) in the exploration and production (E&P) industries in 2015. Likewise, Figures 2.3(a)-(c) show that the

recruitment of female engineers in independent, national and international petroleum organisations has remained the same over a period of six years. However, the figures stipulate that women engineers are more involved in geosciences companies than petroleum companies. Therefore, the petroleum industry throughout the world has been unsuccessful in employing more skilled female employees in spite of their skills shortage (ILO, 2012: 14).

Nowadays, training is not only used to develop employees' skills, but also to develop teams within workplaces. The opportunity of working in a group allows both men and women to increase their confidence and respect levels, and indirectly learn to be responsible and reliable through training. This may also contribute to enhance work performance (Nikandrou *et al.,* 2009: 259). According to Costen and Salazar (2011: 275), acquiring new skills also allows employees to evaluate the organisation's training programme. Training includes supplying workers with essential knowledge and skills that they need to fulfill their responsibilities to attain the organisation's benchmarks. For example, Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger and Smith-Jentsch (2012: 74) report that American companies spend billions on training every year. These training and development initiatives allow companies to comply with new business and technological requirements, compete with others, excel, innovate, produce, maintain safety standards in the company, improve their services, and achieve the organisation's objectives. Another benefit of training is that staff acquires supplementary skills, as they obtain new and more authoritative responsibilities, objectives and interests. In addition, organisations are turning to training and mentoring programmes to develop employees' talent through learning activities inside or outside the company (Kulkarni, 2013: 4).

Technology has been integrated into practically all aspects of life; hence training is required (Salas *et al.*, 2012: 87). Patel (2010) explains that organisations are increasingly applying technology-based training instead of traditional forms of training. Organisations should plan technology-based training carefully by selecting appropriate media and instruction methods to render the training effective and efficient (Salas *et al.*, 2012: 87). The Mobil Technical School in Nigeria offers effective company-supported training to Nigerians. Likewise, Shell Nigeria provides effective training. Additionally, companies in Nigeria also offer training that develops competencies for jobs that do not require technology. Another illustration is the Saudi Aramco Professional on boarding Programme (POP), which provides speedy training for new graduates and their integration into the workforce. The programme provides young, female engineers with both technical and untechnical skills, giving them comprehensive insight into the Saudi Aramco business (ILO, 2012: 9).

Costen and Salazar (2011: 274) comment that another opportunity is that human resources training and development programmes impact both male and female employees' skills, competencies, and outputs. This could affect employee job satisfaction. Costen and Salazar (2011: 274) state that human resources is an important function that assists employees with various organisational processes and experiences, and affect the organisation's culture through creating policies and procedures. Nevertheless, Borzaga and Tortia (2006) point out that employees' loyalty is one of the keys signs when they have job satisfaction in the organisation. Loyalty is evident when employees demonstrate respect towards the organisation, and protect it against criticism. Loyalty also reduces turnover and employees do not complain about the organisation (Costen & Salazar, 2011: 274).

Nikandrou *et al.,* (2009: 259) explain that the trainee, who can be a woman or a man, comes in the workplace after being trained and can impact the organisation directly and indirectly by his or her acquired knowledge and skills. Employee training can affect job and organisational interests, as it requires more independence, task diversity and job involvement. Additionally, the latter can include quality management and learning in the working environment. Conversely, Nikandrou *et al.*, (2009: 259) argue that work and people-related factors like motivation, job involvement, better performance and career path will influence trainees' perceptions of learning in the workplace by informing them of the training's worth, and its benefits for both the learner and the organisation.

Through training and development, the Gabonese government has implemented programmes that deal with structural imbalances in the Gabonese labour market. Hence, the government wants to create partnerships with the petroleum sector to enable access to such training. The Institute of Oil and Gas was founded in March 2010 by the Gabonese government, the French Petroleum Institute, and other stakeholders within the Gabonese oil and gas industry (Oxford Business Group, 2012: 44).

The Oxford Business Group (2012: 44) states that the new French Petroleum Institute (IFP) buildings at Port-Gentil in Gabon were open after more than three years of work. President Ali Bongo Ondimba was in the economic capital on 18 January 2013 to open the new Institute. Today, male and female students with a master's degree can look forward to improved work conditions. Also, the Gabonese Petroleum Institute (IPG) has set itself some new targets by improving the master's training, specialising in oil engineering. They have signed new partnerships, in addition to signing with the IFP Training and the school Polytechnique in Franceville, and introduced new training for professional divers with the support of the French Institute for Professional Diving

(INPP). Additionally, the Chinese petroleum company, Addax Petroleum, launched a training centre in Port-Gentil (Gabon's economic capital) for young Gabonese people, including females who seek employment at an oil organisation. The centre, with a capacity of 50 students, will train the first group of students for two to three months (Xinhua, 2014). Furthermore, the Gabonese Petroleum Institute (IPG) and French Petroleum Institute (IFP) training offer a master's programme to a student group of 15 people, all of Gabonese citizenship, included women. Thus, the Gabonese Petroleum Institute (IPG) and French Petroleum Institute (IFP) have provided a solution to the need for skilled labour by offering both males and females trained employees, while also increasing employment of Gabonese in petroleum companies operating in the national territory (Oxford Business Group, 2012: 44). In addition to training, career advancement for women will be developed through other research studies.

2.4.2 Career advancement

Women have generally advanced at low-level management positions, but are still under-represented in top management positions. Despite performing competently in similar job positions, females still earn a lot less than their male counterparts globally, including in the petroleum sector (Davidson & Burke, 2011: 7). Researchers previously defined career advancement as an important element for employee satisfaction and retention at an organisation. The purpose is to improve job quality, which in turn increased benefits of working for an individual (Louie, 2014). However, researchers have illustrated that career advancement can pose challenges, like elimination of gender discrimination and inequity at the workplace. A significant aspect of career advancement is for both parties, employee and organisation, to assume responsibility for its process. Employees should be responsible for their career development during different phases of their lives in respect of planning and working towards achieving their goals, while organisations should establish training and development programmes to enable this, and create environments that are both satisfying and safe for employees (Antoniu, 2010: 16). Even though females' progression in the workplace has improved in the past 50 years, females are still marginalised compared to males for the same job positions. They also face greater barriers such as gender discrimination, family responsibilities, and compete with male dominance in respect of promotions to higher managerial positions.

A number of countries have empowered women by advancing them in their respective careers. For instance, the percentage of females who attend medicine schools has increased progressively in several nations, including Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, thereby equalling the number of males that are admitted (Chamie, 2014). According to

the U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics, females comprised approximately one-third of employment in the upstream petroleum and natural gas sector during the first quarter of 2013 (The Oil and Gas Year, 2014: 9). Likewise, IHS Global predicts that the petroleum industry may add 185,000 females to its organisations by 2030 (Ideas Lab, 2014).

The PwC (2013a: 8) cites a lack of female representation at all levels within the petroleum industry as a major reason for the absence of female executive board members. Presently, females constitute a small number of the world's petroleum workforce, while in the Middle East and in South America they account for between 3.1% and 10.3%, respectively. The American Petroleum Institute (API) (2015: 2) states that the primary barrier to female recruitment in the petroleum sector is because they are unaware of job opportunities and career development within the sector. Furthermore, Thomson (2014: 13) states that women consider career advancement as their weakest area. Thomson explains that 83% of women have clearly-defined career goals, and are enthusiastic about their respective jobs, while 77% find it difficult to adapt to the business structure, engage effectively with leadership, and strike a balance between their work and personal/family lives. Fattori (2014) notes that women's challenges identified as obstacles to career advancement are especially in technical positions, skilled trades and senior leadership roles.

However, Buse, Bilimoria and Perelli (2013: 147) deduce that female engineers who maintain their careers have been able to marry their professional and personal lives, without distinguishing between the two, as they perceive their career success to be personal success. In contrast, those who left the profession were not able to do so, as they had different work-related and individual objectives, and perceived the two to be different and separate.

Women who deal with unfair treatment in the workplace, especially concerning their expectations around promotions and development, are aware of the challenges and inequalities that they face (Schwanke, 2013: 16). According to the World Economic Forum (2016: 4), women's lack of confidence and limited aspirations are seen as another barrier. The clear majority of women, 90%, leave quietly when there is dissatisfaction. Moreover, Fattori (2014) explains that females are not encouraged to engage in organisational systems administration and team-building opportunities, particularly in a male-dominated environment. While this may not be intentional at times, it can make women feel rejected, which may impact their working culture by minimizing their involvement in the organisation.

According to Hoobler *et al.*, (2011: 156), female employees cite family-work conflict more so than males, while executive management perceive that women frequently require time off from work to deal with family obligations. Hence, this family-work conflict prejudice seems to influence executive management's decisions in respect of females' career advancement (Hoobler *et al.*, 2011: 156). The ILO (2012: 17) reports that family obligations are perceived to be a huge challenge for females' careers in the petroleum sector even though it is a factor that also affects working males. A number of employees in the petroleum industry are concerned that their family and personal responsibilities may hamper their careers (ILO, 2012: 17). According to Rowe and Guerrero (2011: 382), culturally and traditionally, it is expected that family responsibilities such as caring for children and aging parents are more the responsibility of females rather than males. Females also appear to prefer to work in environments that do not offer or require development opportunities, and/or promotions to executive positions. Organisations should be flexible by allowing employees, both males and females, to engage in training and development activities that will equip them with skills that are not necessarily attached to their careers, or for career advancement (ILO, 2012: 17).

Indeed, Davidson and Burke (2011: 4) conclude that stereotypes and gender biases remain the main barrier to women's advancement, particularly in succession planning processes. Family structures such as marriage and having children affect career progression, though these affect women more negatively (Scholarios & Taylor, 2011: 1298). It becomes difficult for employees to manage both family expectations and responsibilities and professional duties when the two interfere with each other (Dartey-Baah, 2015: 292). However, being married and/or having children do not necessarily impact male employees' career progression in the same way that they do females, and may in fact often be beneficial for them (Landau & Arthur, 1992; Kirchmeyer, 2006; Scholarios & Taylor, 2011: 1298).

Schwanke (2013: 17) reports that women face societal issues, which limit their career progression, including expectations of women within service industries such as education, health, and in male dominated environments (Eagly & Sczesny, 2009: 34; Schwanke, 2013: 17). Another study demonstrates that the unfair career progression of females is continuously owed to the frames of mind of the more senior male partners in organisations who regularly settle on choices regarding issues such as selection, employment, strategic planning and promotion results. Such decisions are made on the basis of previous decisions instead of considering the differences between, and/or characteristics of male and female competencies in this respect (Jogulu & Wood, 2011). To illustrate, when considering the differences between male and female employee career

progressions, there appears to be a distinct pattern. Figure 2.4 shows that women occupy significantly less positions between middle-manager level and executive management level in almost all sectors. Contrarily, men seem to accelerate to the latter level more frequently and at a faster pace than women. For example, in financial services industry in the United States women represent 54% of funds, trust and other financial vehicles; however, this includes 42% professional, technical, and sales staff, and 44% middle-level managers. At senior to the middle-manager level, the number of females decreases, as only 26% occupy executive or top level positions, while males hold 74% of those positions. Other financial services sectors are worse off in this regard. The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission noted in 2011 that women employees were outnumbered by far by male employees in private industries (PwC, 2013b: 7). The securities sector does not only face the challenge of developing and promoting women, but also struggle to attract them to employment to begin with, as they comprise 40% of this sector's workforce currently, while males represent 60% (PwC, 2013b: 7).

Securities, Commodity Contracts, and Other Financial Investments and Related Activities

— Women   — Men

81.7%

66.3%   64.7%

59.9%

40.1%

33.7%   35.3%

18.3%

| Total Employment | Professional, Technical and Sales Workers | First/Mid Level Officials & Managers | Executive/Senior Level Officials & Managers |

Credit Intermediation and Related Activities

— Women   — Men

69.3%

59.2%

54.3%

50.5%

49.5%

45.7%

40.8%

30.7%

| Total Employment | Professional, Technical and Sales Workers | First/Mid Level Officials & Managers | Executive/Senior Level Officials & Managers |

Insurance Carriers and Related Activities

— Women   — Men

68.5%

64.1%

57.0%

49.3%
50.7%

43.0%

35.9%

31.5%

| Total Employment | Professional, Technical and Sales Workers | First/Mid Level Officials & Managers | Executive/Senior Level Officials & Managers |

Funds, Trusts, and Other Financial Vehicles

— Women   — Men

74.2%

57.6%

55.6%

53.7%

46.3%

42.4%   44.4%

25.8%

| Total Employment | Professional, Technical and Sales Workers | First/Mid Level Officials & Managers | Executive/Senior Level Officials & Managers |

Figure 2.4: Career progression in financial services sector in the United States (PwC, 2013b: 7)

Ballout (2008) states that career success is a familiar concept, which is perceived to be difficult to understand. Career success may either be objective or subjective (Nabi, 2001 & 2003). Firstly, objective career success is characterised by vertical progression in the organisation through ascending the corporate pyramid. It focuses on organisational achievements, objective characteristics of success, and society's monetary expectations of success (Powell & Mainiero, 1992; Nabi, 2001). It is perceived that objective career success is measured by an employee's remuneration status and the number of promotions that he/she receives. Hence, this type of

career success is calculated, and achieved by extrinsic or objective elements such as position or occupation status, frequency of promotion and career ascension, and financial rewards such as remuneration or income increases (Baruch, 2006; Ballout, 2008). Subjective career success concerns employees' individual characteristics, which may not be limited to the organisational context. Compared to objective career success, subjective career success is intrinsic by nature, and measures success in terms of that, which the employee values. These may include personal satisfaction, independence, life balance, accommodation of work, family issues and freedom (Clark, 2000; Arthur, Khapova & Wilderom, 2005: 179; Baruch, 2006; Chudzikowski, 2012; Vincent-Höper, Muser & Janneck, 2012). Considering that subjective career success is unique to the person concerned, and may hence be different for different people in terms of their emotions, family life, and personal satisfaction (including their understanding of career success), subjective career success is commonly perceived to be more appropriate to describe females' personal experiences of career success as opposed to males (Vincent-Höper *et al.*, 2012).

Thomson's (2014: 14) study reveals that most women who work in male-dominated organisations recognize the difficulties that they face, and at times struggle to exercise their own style of leadership and management. Several women cite the way in which men engage in business principles as their biggest obstacle to their career advancement. Another barrier for women's career advancement is other women: women are supposed to assist and promote one another in the working environment, while men supposedly compete with one another for positions (Mavin, 2008: S77). Ellemers, Van Den Heuvel, De Gilder, Maass & Bonvini (2004: 325) propose that females who become successful in male-dominated settings may act negatively towards promoting female subordinates. Even though, the term "Queen Bee Syndrome" was made to describe the phenomenon toward women who reach positions in top management in organisations dominated by men and do not support other women to improve their position (Derks, Ellemers, Van Laar & De Groot, 2011: 520; Sobczak, 2018: 54).

Considering competition with their male counterparts, another career development barrier affecting women is the lack of 360-degree performance appraisal, a tool used to assess performance and potential employees at middle and top levels with the goal of enabling the latter to map their career path based on the feedback (Davidson & Burke, 2011).

Al-Manasra (2013: 41) notes that after reviewing studies it is evident that aspects of the glass ceiling phenomenon is culture and country-specific. For instance, Storvik and Schone's (2008) report indicates that Norway's state government does not prevent females from attaining top management positions, while women in these positions are able to strike a balance between their

professional and personal lives. The report attributes the slow movement of females into upper management positions to their anticipation of discrimination, instead of an absence of ambition or self-confidence. A study about the comparative under-representation of females in managerial positions in the United Kingdom's travel and tourism industry shows that the majority of respondents cited the following as key reasons: they stop working once they have a child; they struggle to find babysitters; and they have difficulty balancing their professional and personal/family lives (Al-Manasra, 2013: 41). Conversely, a Malaysian study shows that females in middle management positions defy glass ceilings in their workplace. This constrains their chances of promotion; is a hindrance to their career development opportunities; and do not receive and support from within the organisation such as mentoring and coaching to assist with their challenges (Man, Dimovski & Skerlavaj, 2009). In Singapore studies of glass ceiling barriers, from the perspectives of organisation culture, organisation climate and practices, reveal that these exist (Dimovski, Skerlavaj & Man, 2010). In summary, Al-Manasra (2013: 42) concludes that women's career progression is affected by glass ceiling barriers, namely organisational practices, the existence of a dominant male culture, and family and social duties (see Figure 2.5).
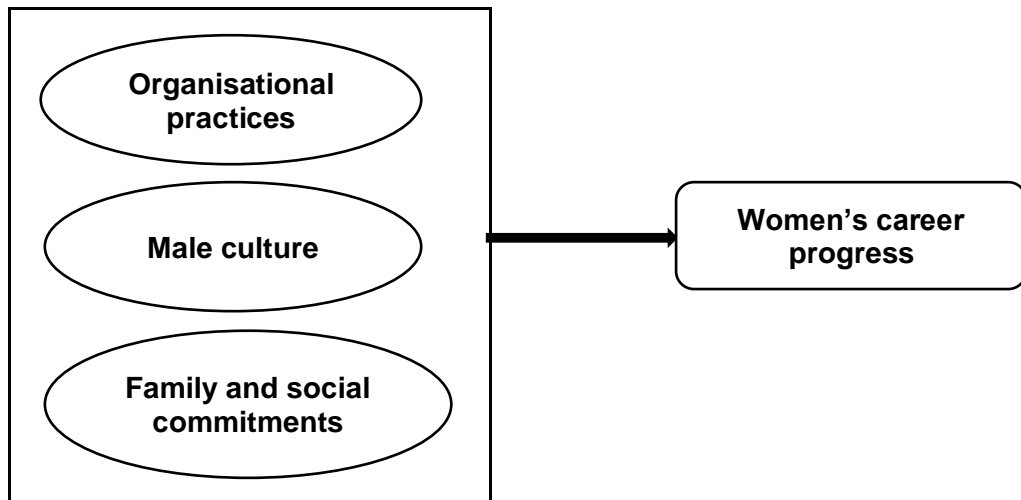
Figure 2.5: Glass ceiling study model (Al-Manasra, 2013: 42)

Despite challenges in their workplaces, women have progressed since the days of them being perceived to only occupy traditional roles such as housewives and mothers. Presently, an ever-increasing number of women are educated, employed, and ascend within their chosen careers. In addition, women participate in economic, political, sport, and social arenas on an equal footing to men (Chamie, 2014). Thomson (2014: 9-10), however, notes that females may occasionally perceive that their leadership skills are compromised in a predominantly male environment such as the petroleum sector. Ordinarily, males and females tend to approach problems differently. For

example, females are more inclined to discuss the issue at hand before making an informed decision and/or in this regard, while males tend to detach themselves from the problem by acting in isolation without consulting anyone. They believe that this allows them to consider the matter objectively, and to find an efficient solution to the problem.

According to Derks *et al.*, (2011: 521), workplace gender discrimination may also impact women's' perceptions of their own social identity outside of the organisation. However, the risk of this happening may decrease when women collectively conduct themselves in a manner that eradicates any negative stereotypes, which are associated with them. They may also do so by dissociating themselves from those who perpetuate these psychologically negative effects on their identity, and to rather engage with those who value and respect them. There are also women who choose instead to serve their own individual interests by taking care of their career interests even if it means disregarding and/or discrediting another woman, referred to as individual mobility, as opposed to collective mobility, which refers to women supporting each other within organisations as a measure to stave off and challenge gender discrimination. Irrespective whether women advance themselves and their careers individually or collectively, it would seem though that they perceive themselves in respect of the extent, if any, to which they are discriminated against in organisations (Derks *et al.*, 2011: 522).

Mensi-Klarbach (2014: 539) illustrates women's growth in the workplace by claiming that Norway was the first state in Europe to apply an obligatory quota of 40% females per company board as a prerequisite for organisations to be enrolled on the country's stock exchange in 2008. Many women are ambitious and committed to self-empowerment in organisations. An increasing number of females have become financially savvy as a result of having a professional and/or skill career. According to Lahti (2013: 22), the number of women in top management positions in China and Russia changed considerably between 2012 and 2013. For instance, in 2012 25% of senior managers in China were female, and in 2013 females comprised 51% of senior managers. In 2012 Russia reached its highest number of female chief executives, but this decreased from 46% to 31% in 2013. Furthermore, Lahti (2013: 23) reports that, globally, the number of organisations that have a female Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has increased (see Figure 2.6). In 2012 the international average number of businesses that had a female CEO was 9%, and this increased to 14% in 2013. There has never been a significant number of female CEOs internationally in the past (Lathi, 2013: 9). In 2012, Australia had the biggest number of female CEOs, totalling 46% of the country's businesses. Thailand followed in this respect with 29%, Italy 24%, the United Arab Emirates 5%, and Botswana, Brazil and Japan 3% (Lahti, 2013: 8).
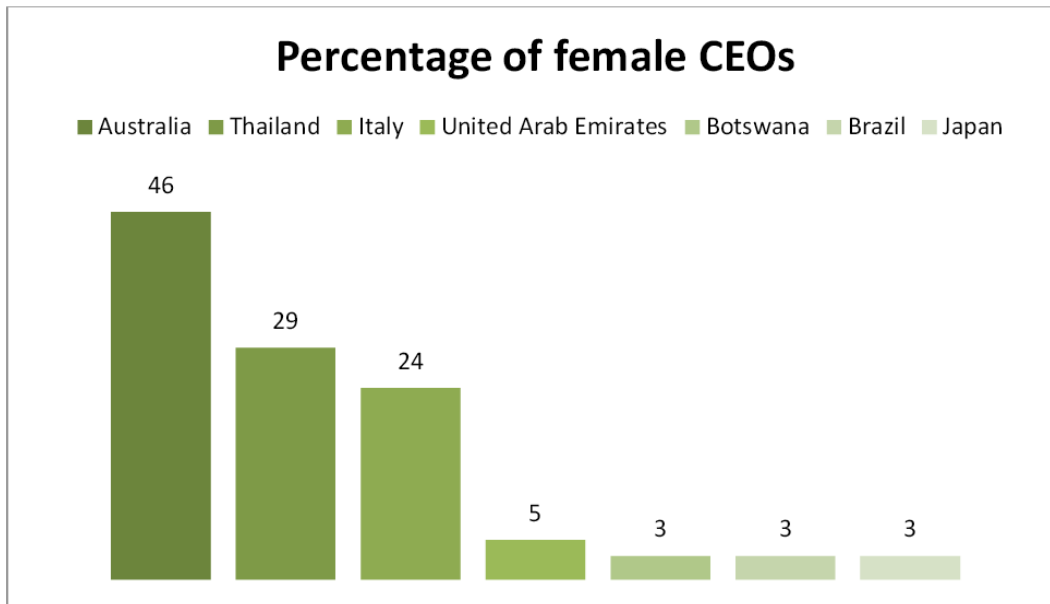
Figure 2.6: Percentage of female CEOs globally in 2012 (Lahti, 2013: 23)

Figure 2.6 illustrates, globally, women's representation in top management positions in Europe, Asia and America. It is clear that, in Africa and some other countries like Brazil and Japan, the number of females in top management positions was low.

In Africa, the representation of women in top management could be increased like other continents with women's education and skill development. McKinsey (2016: 9) states that at the chief executive officer level in Africa, women hold 5% of positions and at the board level 14% of seats. In South Africa 20% of businesses' board positions are occupied by women, while 47.6% are actively engaged in the country's workforce, hence, women add value to organisations. To attract and retain the talents and skills that women employees proffer, organisations should offer packages that comprise a market-related salary, career advancement opportunities and access to these, and employer-driven initiatives to strike a better balance between employees' personal and professional lives. Female employees are deemed to be more progressive, productive and faithful than males (Heathfield, 2018). Hence, Buse *et al.*, (2013: 150) point out that knowledge and skills are necessary for women's effective performance; and appraisal of their capabilities will influence their motivation and behaviour. For instance, Shell uses its Women's Career Development Programme to encourage its female employees to advance their careers, and to keep them motivated (Lo, 2013).

Fattori (2014) discusses mentoring programmes and workshops, conducted by the Canadian Centre for Women in Science, Engineering Trades and Technology (WinSETT Centre), which assists females to deal with related difficulties and to further their careers. The Status of Women Canada established a project in February 2013 to improve the participation and progression of women in Alberta's petroleum sector. WinSETT obtained $248,400 for a three-year project to improve working conditions in Canada for women. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2012: 16) stresses that fair and balanced gender representation in organisations is a significant factor that influences women's career development. According to the ILO (2012: 16), when females are treated fairly in an organisation, they will be content and enthusiastic towards the organisation. Hence, more women would strive to work towards occupying top organisational positions. Seeing other women progressing in their careers will encourage and motivate women to seek and attain the same. For instance, McKee (2014: 169) states that Schlumberger, one of the world's largest oil field service organisations operating in Gabon recently announced that it has the most representative male-to-female gender ratio in the petroleum sector, and that it has a total of 100 dedicated female technical personnel who occupy different organisational roles, including areas within research and instrument installation. Then, women's importance in organisational development should be evaluated.

2.4.3 Importance of women in organisational development

Women are seriously under-represented at organisational board level. Despite the petroleum industry being progressive in a number of other areas, it has failed to seriously address this problem; and in spite of the fact that governments and a number of companies have complied by improving their gender diversity (PwC, 2013a: 3). Researchers have shown that there are many definitions of organisational development that all point in one direction and emphasise a shared context. From Bradford and Burke (2005: 12) point of view, organisational development is a process that is entrenched in key human values, the science of human behaviour and open system theories. The process enhances an organisational vision, mission and goals through leadership and strategic planning especially in the dissemination of information and the establishment of organisational policies. Furthermore, Cummings and Worley (2009: 1-2) mention that organisational development is "*a system-wide application and transfer of behavioural science knowledge to the planned development, improvement and reinforcement of strategies, structures and processes that lead to organisational effectiveness*". In summary, organisational development is the process of organisational change and effectiveness through the implementation of social and behavioural sciences knowledge.

According to Melero (2011: 386), male and female leaders have different styles, which can range from either being dictatorial by not allowing employees to participate in decision-making, or inclusive by motivating subordinates to contribute to decision-making. Participative or democratic leaders encourage and allow CEOs and their subordinates to engage in discussions before they reach agreement in respect of decisions (Bell & Mjoli, 2014: 451). Melero (2011: 387) indicates that female managers have a preference in a more participative method to make decisions. Additionally, as regards work environment level decision-making women bolster more democratic practices. Melero (2011: 387) and Bosch (2011: 35), as well as Xiaoxian (2008: 25) point out that women have different needs, which comprise strategic gender needs on the one hand, and practical, real-life gender needs in the other. Strategic gender needs refer to analysing females' comparatively subordinate status to males. Meeting those needs includes getting rid of gender-based labour; ceasing to perceive that women are solely responsible for housework and raising children; removing institutionalised gender biases regarding land and property ownership, and the right to take out loans; realising political equality; battling male oppression and dominance; and so forth. Hence, it is important for organisations to be able to distinguish between these types of gender needs. It is also important to be able to change women's' real-life gender needs into strategic gender needs (Xiaoxian, 2008: 25).

Moreover, Durbin (2006: 131) mentions that household responsibilities disrupt a woman's ability to engage in top management positions within organisations, or to be developed within organisations by attending external development courses and working long hours. Indeed, concerning gender in top management positions, Mensi-Klarbach (2014: 545) contends that whether and how females and males in top management positions participate in the organisation's performance hinges not just on the influence at the macro-level (society) and meso-level (organisation), but also depends on the organisation's executive board members. The role of organisations and society should not be neglected when there is a lack of gender diversity in top management levels. Several studies (see Figure 2.7) contend that female add optimism, positivity, and self-confidence to top management positions. However, individual organisations do not necessarily motivate and allow employees to articulate their gender uniqueness in the working environment (Mensi-Klarbach, 2014: 545).
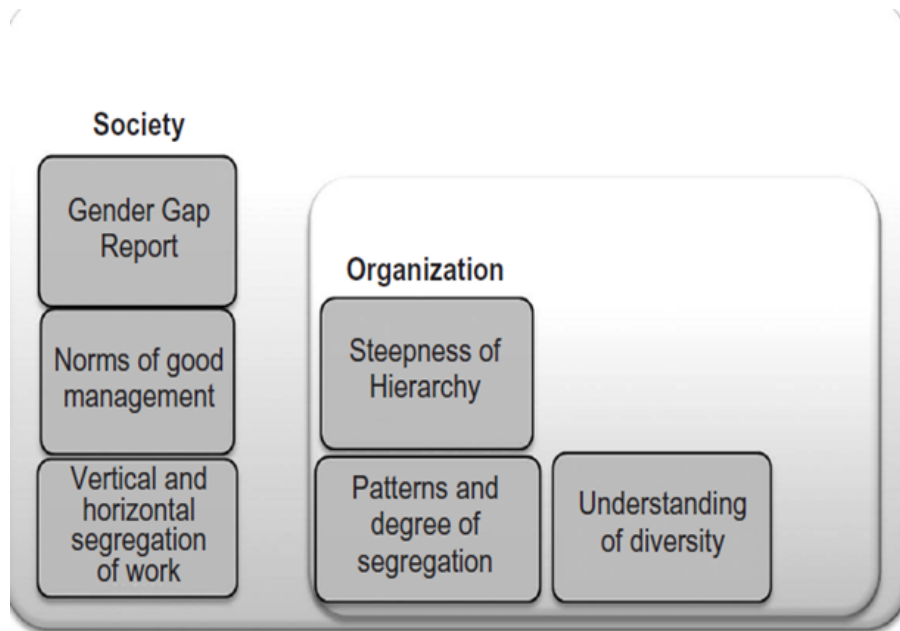
Figure 2.7: Society and organisation: variables influencing the potential link between gender in top positions and organisational profit (Mensi-Klarbach, 2014: 545)

Li Kusterer, Lindholm and Montgomery (2013: 562) argue that female managers are evaluated more rigorously than males in the same positions owing to the perception that these positions are more suited to males. This is simply because of the assumption that women are not suited to management positions, and hence cannot be successful in them, as they are deemed to not possess the construed leadership abilities that men do. Furthermore, Jonkeid and Mango (2008: 9-10) indicate that workplace stereotyping continues to mar women: management does not pay much attention to them; they are not rewarded in the same way as men are for the same work; and they have to increasingly prove themselves capable of doing the work. Jonkeid and Mango (2008: 10) also note that there are few women who occupy top management positions within organisations in South Africa, in general. Women managers have additional responsibilities attached to their roles as mother and family/household carer. However, most gender stereotypes promote the notion that women leaders exceed expectations by maintaining their competencies such as improving others and building connections, whilst showing integrity and engaging in self-improvement too (Folkman & Zenger, 2012). According to Folkman and Zenger (2012) and Bosch (2011: 20), certain attributes are associated with female leaders, which include: being optimistic and sympathetic; being supportive and honest; belief in the power of groups and collectives; and having the capacity to remain in power.

In Australia, women are not interested in, or do not remain long in resource industries such as mining, oil and gas mainly because of the long working hours, the organisational culture, family obligations, and the organisation's reputation. Hence, organisations should devise means to attract more females and ensure that they remain with the organisation (Laplonge, 2016: 806). Nigeria is a patriarchal country, based on fundamental societal traditions, much like other central African countries such as Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon and Congo. A patriarchal society is one in which a society's set relations are structured in a way that allows males to control females. Females are hence discriminated against and, in most cases, prevented from procuring formal education. They are regularly abused and oppressed, whilst being confined to housekeeping roles. Patriarchal culture remains a powerful determinant of male dominance over females; males continue their family heritage when they wed, as females assume their husband's surname when they marry. Males are raised to be leaders in their homes, and females for household activities. These roles are ascribed to women by cultural traditions, and cause them to lose confidence in their abilities outside of the home, and in themselves, affecting their careers too (Makama, 2013: 115-116). In the case of villages in Gabon, male duties include clearing land, building and maintaining homes, and hunting; female duties include planting, tending and transporting crops, food preparation, cleaning and raising children. However, in urban areas, women increasingly serve as the head of the household and take sole care of their children. Women often do very well in the urban wage economy and often become economically independent (Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, 2010: 31).

Internationally, owing to the competitive nature of business environments, top management teams (TMTs) require a variety of skills and competencies to both adjust to organisational conditions and change, and to be successful (Palmer, Varner & Iris, 2007). Krishnan and Park (2005) state that those organisations whose TMTs have a large representation of women show that this has a positive effect on the organisation's performance levels, hence women should be retained. Likewise, Xiaoxian (2008: 19) claims that companies will not achieve their objectives, or progress without female involvement. For this reason, organisations across the globe began to engage in developing women since the 1980s. Women are under-used resources, as they are capable of fulfilling certain skills shortages. The increasing number of working women ensures that companies are able to meet their objectives whilst being competitive (Eggleton, 2011). For instance, The New Republic Staff (2014) states that across the world, organisations that have females on their respective Board of Directors had a higher return on equity (ROE) and cost to charge value than those that did not. From January 2005 to December 2013 the ROE of organisations that had a minimum of one female board member was 14.1% compared to the

11.2% of organisations that did not have any females on their boards. Internationally, the number of organisations that had a minimum of one female on their board had increased to 12.7% from 9.6% in 2010; however, sector and regional differences should be noted. For instance, globally, the energy sector has the smallest number of women on their boards, as females occupy a mere 9.4% of top management positions, while the consumer products sector boasts the largest number at 16.3%. There are noteworthy contrasts in this regard in terms of country and region, and not merely amongst different sectors. For example, 39.7% of directorates in Norway comprise women, 13.7% in the United States, and merely 1.6% in Japan (The New Republic Staff, 2014).

Ramadani, Hisrich and Gërguri-Rashiti (2015: 393) states that the number of women involved in business is increasing as much as their roles within society, in general, and in the economy. Firstly, female entrepreneurs create employment opportunities, and secondly, establishing companies add to their experience, skills and training, which decreases gender discrimination and bias against them on a professional basis. For example, the U.S. Department of State reports that a total of 29 business women from 26 African countries arrived in the United States in July 2014 to investigate options to extend their companies as means to wealth creation in their respective societies in Africa. Moreover, Ramadani *et al.*, (2015: 394) indicate that the women in the African Women's Entrepreneurship Programme (AWEP) joined a system that produced jobs and associated businesses in both Africa and the United States. Numerous members in AWEP are enabling women and supporting their entrepreneurial ventures as means to promote financial development globally. They represent 26 countries in different regions across Africa. Thirdly, Ramadani *et al.*, (2015: 394) point out that by working and not being unemployed, women will be able to balance their family and job/career responsibilities without compromising the family unit. Fourthly, as small business owners, women establish their independence by actively engaging in the country's economic growth and political landscape. Fifthly, as business women they can become actively involved in campaigning against human trafficking, which is a serious threat to many women in a number of countries. Sixthly, women entrepreneurs can inspire younger generations to follow suite. Lastly, the growth of women entrepreneurs could result in improved innovative capacities and private sector development (Ramadani *et al.*, 2015: 394). For example, in 2011 women comprised 44.7% of Macedonia's workforce (State Statistical Office of Republic of Macedonia, 2012), followed a total of 38% in Albania, and about 30% in Kosovo (i.e., in countries located in South-Eastern Europe). In respect of the number of working women in the same region, similar statistics were revealed: women comprised of its workforce 41% in Montenegro; 45% in Croatia; 46% in Slovenia; 47% in Bulgaria; and 46% in Romania (Hontz & Rotanu, 2010).

Additionally, Bosch (2011; 35) observes that women are beneficial for organisations because of their skills and abilities. Females readily comply with regulations, add value to organisational visions, and change difficult situations into manageable ones within the business world. The Oil and Gas Year (2014: 9) illustrated this when noting that the President of the Gabon Oil Union, Jacqueline Bignoumba, occupied an important position when she became the representative for the domestic oil and gas industry, making her the liaison between management and industry. The Gabon Oil Union established the hydrocarbon programme in September 2014. The programme facilitates cooperation between the government and the oil and gas industry in respect of improvements, taking into account the nation's global obligations towards other sectors such as banking guidelines and environmental protection. Jacqueline Bignoumba also sought to establish a similar working programme between the state and the energy industry.

Keane and Wilson (2013) point out that to identify potential hydrocarbon deposits, oil and gas organisations use geoscientists to analyse geographical developments, and to extract core samples from relevant sites. Presently, female geoscientists comprise 40% of graduates who have a Master's degree, and who are accredited geologists. Confirming this statistic, Dupre (2013) argues that around 40% of the oil and gas sector's new recruits are females. Furthermore, Erin Leonty, a Western Canada executive at Catalyst, encourages women to develop their careers, and to apply for top management positions within companies, but points out that Canada is behind other countries in terms of gender equity at executive level (Stephenson & Herald, 2017). Leonty says that there are a number of benefits for organisations that have women who serve on their directorates. For her, it is important to promote inclusive workplaces for women in order to boost innovation, productivity and drive future economic growth in Canada. Companies really need to leverage the talent of both men and women. In fact, Leonty states Norway, for example, introduced mandatory quotas in 2008 requiring companies to have women take up 40% of board seats. Companies that fall below the 40% threshold face harsh penalties and can even be forcibly dissolved (Stephenson & Herald, 2017). However, in spite of those encouraging evolutions, the perception is that women do not develop their careers, and often resign from organisations after a while (Muller, Dunning-Lozano & Williams, 2009: 17). Al-Manasra (2013: 45) reports that women perceive organisational internal cultures to work against them in areas of promotion, selection and mentoring. Besides, researchers consistently demonstrate that societies perceive that favourable leadership traits are those which closely resemble traits usually attributed to men (Stelter, 2002: 90; Eagly & Sczesny, 2009: 25). Figure 2.8 below displays the difference between staff level and gender in the financial services sector, which may be indicative of other

sectors too. It shows that the number of women at higher staff levels decreases compared to other levels, which should not be the case, as it appears that women comprise 25% of middle management, but only 19% at senior levels (PwC, 2013b: 6).
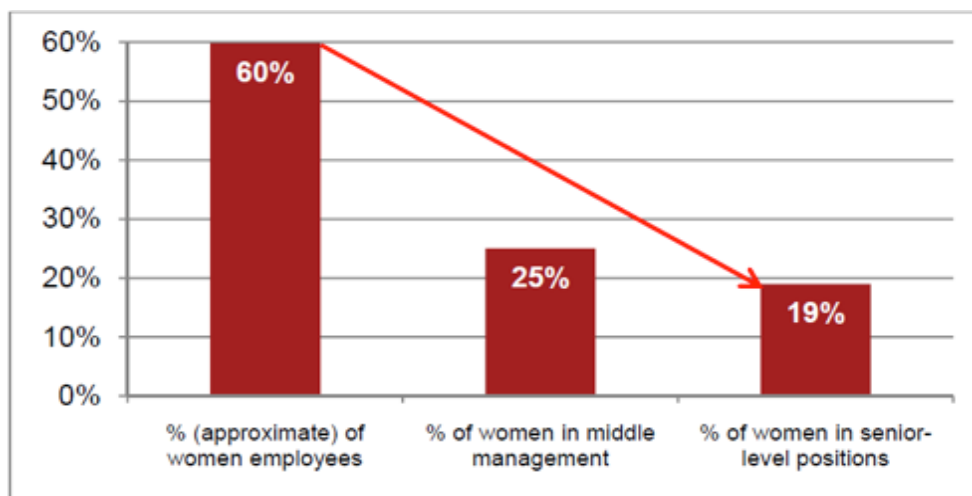
Figure 2.8: Average representation of women in financial services in 20 global markets (PwC, 2013b: 6)

Figure 2.8 demonstrates that, even in the finance sector, women are generally well represented at 60%, but clearly under-represented at top management level.

Communal and agentic traits are generally used to distinguish females from males, respectively, in terms of their expected behaviours. Communal attributes are regularly ascribed to females, and these include being affectionate, useful and gentle, while agentic attributes are associated with males, and include being assertive and in control. Such generalised perceptions add to cultural and gender stereotyping in the workplace (Eagly & Sczesny, 2009: 24). Societal norms expect that women should show off a warm personality in the workplace rather than be a competent employee, as the two cannot exist simultaneously (Cikara & Fiske, 2009: 79-80). However, Melero (2011: 387) responds to Eagly and Sczesny (2009) and Cikara and Fiske (2009) by stating that female managers tend to be more considerate towards workers. Organisations that have a high number of female managers engage more readily with coaching and mentoring programmes and practices, and encourage feedback from workers. Researchers asked the question: "What do women bring to the table?" Tarr-Whelan (2009) in Davidson and Burke (2011: 3), identified five benefits realised from organisations having more women in senior jobs positions:

- Firstly, organisations use teamwork and participative decision making, which reflect 21st century best practices;
- Secondly, organisations become more profitable as a result of being more aware of risks, are less competitive, and less inclined to suffer financial catastrophes;
- Thirdly, they have constituted policies that protect and promote employees' health and well-being;
- Fourthly, there is an increased emphasis on creating and sustaining a balance between one's personal and professional lives; and
- Finally, this balance creates increased productivity in the workplace, and a more qualitative lifestyle.

The Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (2015) reports that the Gabonese Government is aware of the significant role that women play in the country's economic growth, hence its attempt to establish a public policy that focuses empowering women in respect of well-being, training and accessing their rights. In addition, Gabon's First Lady, Sylvia Bongo Ondimba, launched the "Sylvia Bongo Ondimba Foundation for the Family" to improve the plight of vulnerable and disadvantaged people around the world, focusing on three priority areas: education of youth; rights and empowerment of women; and inclusion of vulnerable people. Moreover, since 2014, Sylvia Bongo Ondimba has also initiated a programme entitled "Gabonese women and Leadership" which is committed to supporting the emancipation of females in Gabon. Through the implementation of mentoring relations, it allows generations to share experiences and foster positive synergies (Ondimba, 2015).

Yin (2014) states that the Gabonese Women's Development Platform, a newly established women's federation in Gabon, is aimed at helping Gabonese women to establish grassroots women's organisations, applying for financial assistance from the Government and improving women's lives. The members of the federation come from the Gabonese government, Congress and all walks of life. Yin (2014) adds that the chairperson of the development platform, Denise Mekamne, delivered a speech on 21 August in which she called on Gabonese women to unite in strength and take part in economic development so as to reduce poverty and build a new Gabon.

Because the goal sought in this research is to provide a strategy for transformation to guide women's career progression to management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon, it is also important to consider how an organisation's culture through their commitment could affect women's advancement in the petroleum sector.

2.4.4 Creating a supportive organisational culture

Organisational or workplace culture is described as a series of beliefs, attitudes, practices, norms and customs, and the ways of behaving that characterise employees and workplaces (Arnold, 2005: 625; Belias & Koustelios, 2014: 132). Sun (2008) notes that organisational culture refers to the way in which they do things; how they operate; and what makes sense to them. It is defined as the organisation's values and beliefs, which all staff have to accept as norm. Sun (2008) also says that organisational culture involves employees sharing common values, beliefs and understanding of how things work within the workplace. A shared organisational culture allows leaders better perspectives, perceptions and reactions that help them to make decisions and to organize company activities. A successful company would have an organisational culture that interests, retains and compensates employees for their performing tasks competently, and for accomplishing objectives. This type of organisational culture is usually characterised by employees' commitment to the organisation and its objectives, and owing to collaboration amongst all who work there.

Organisations are constantly seeking ways to encourage their employees to perform beyond that, which is required of them. But these same organisations do not realise that for employees to do more than what is expected of them, means that they must be treated fairly and justly. In other words, understanding an organisation's culture can help one predict the level of employees' job satisfaction (Belias, Koustelios, Vairaktarakis & Sdrolias, 2015: 321). The reasons that influence how much an employee gets involved to deliver their best performance for an organisation should be recognised clearly (Sun, 2008). Male dominated management organisational teams appear to inculcate working environments that are more suited to males. In these environments' masculine-type attributes tend to be goal-orientated, shrewd, competitive and aggressive, while the male managers operate hierarchically. Conversely, organisational work environments that have dominant female managements are mostly characterised by decentralised organisational operations, and display leadership styles that encourage relation building and staff development and growth, whilst using a nurturing approach (Watkins & Smith, 2014: 210). Kolade and Kehinde (2013) outline that women tend to be averse to construction and petroleum organisations owing to the industry's reputation for long working hours on offshore rigs, working in extreme weather conditions, and employees using unsavory language and engaging in unsolicited sexual advances. Owing to these features, many people believe that the petroleum sector involves trades only suitable for men, such as being an engineer, technician, plumber, electronics expert, and so on.

There is a global shortage of women in organisational leadership positions. In addition to the gender challenges that they face in workplaces and in accessing positions, women also have to contend with the increasing number of young graduates who are entering the labour market. Research studies, as well as the media are constantly advocating for more female leadership amongst organisational management. To realise this, and to sustain the change, organisations must establish coaching and mentoring programmes that will prepare their female staff for more senior management positions. However, to manage this, companies should first understand what is required to attract, develop and retain young, talented females (PwC, 2014: 3). Ibarra *et al.,* (2013: 6) state that several embedded organisational structures and work operations and practices were intended to accommodate males rather than females, as the latter comprised a small percentage of the workforce then. For instance, certain organisational areas such as sales and operations were usually regarded as stepping stones for senior leadership positions, hence it was expected that males rather than females worked in these areas.

Bosch (2011: 34) indicates that the 'glass ceiling', which is a concept that prevents women and minority groups from progressing in organisations and in society, in general, is prevalent in South Africa, Gabon, Nigeria and in several other African countries. Limited support structures and networking opportunities are available to assist females with their career progression. Lower wage averages, organisational culture and structures prevent women from career development, as well as outdated organisational policies, which subscribe part-time and flexi-time, work-sharing and working from home options. A decentralised organisation, characterised by a culture that supports female leadership positions will assist to break the glass ceiling concept, in addition to women's efforts to develop and enable themselves by enhancing their educational and professional qualifications (Bosch, 2011: 35).

According to Kirai and Elegwa (2012: 205), employers perceive that females are less dedicated to work, and less ready to assume a full-time career than males because of their biological constitution rather than because of their competencies and skills. Employers would readily promote males as opposed to females albeit that they have the same or similar qualifications owing to the perception that the latter is less able, and more of a liability to the organisation, given their traditional gender roles.

Formal lines of power are used to maximise productivity and to facilitate effective organisational operations; however, gender discrimination still surfaces (Roscigno, 2011). When females hold

senior, authoritative positions in organisations, colleagues, customers and other managers who are sexist will resort to sexual harassment as a means to undermine female managers. This finding concurs with the notion that sexual harassment in workplaces is primarily about control and domination over women rather than sexual desire (Berdahl, 2007a & 2007b).

Buchanan *et al.*, (2014: 689) deduce that managers should eliminate sexual harassment in organisations. Their efforts to do so will assist potential victims, and will also advantage and protect the organisation against sexual harassment. the act impacts organisations negatively, resulting in poor work performance and decreased organisational commitment, as well as increased staff withdrawal, staff turnover and team conflict.

Karimi and Kadir (2012: 209) argue that managements should know their organisational culture to assist them to understand if and how each aspect of it will impact the organisation and its employees. However, the above authors claim that, contrary to quality management practices making a difference, the existing culture of the organisation determines how quality is interpreted and enacted.

According to Williams, Kilanski and Muller (2014), organisational policies that discriminate against employees on the basis of gender and race are contrary to most organisations' culture of fairness, which seeks to promote an equitable and inclusive diverse working environment. In order for organisations to be relevant and competitive, they must employ qualified, skilled and experienced workers for their respective positions. The competencies and abilities of recruits may differ depending on the industry's requirements in terms of both technology and soft skills. Particularities of organisations affect the structure of jobs, as well as the type of recruits for the various jobs, and the required tasks of each job. Companies offer various promotion opportunities for certain positions, particularly for those that require exceptional skills; but these provide limited opportunities for others (Antoniu, 2010: 17).

Thomson (2014: 21) states that organisations' value statements may include gender equality on paper, but in reality, favour a more patriarchal approach by discriminating against females in favour of promoting males to leadership positions. Thomson argues that male leaders should engage in cross-gender coaching with females at low, middle and top management levels as means to develop potential female employees, and thereby retain them.

Costen and Salazar (2011: 275) assert that an organisation is responsible for a worker's holistic experience of the organisation. Organisational commitment is significant for organisations, as it is perceived to be an element that creates a connection between workers and the organisation, and influences whether or not workers remain with the organisation, and for how long. Such commitment influences how workers conduct themselves in the workplace, their wellbeing, and the organisation's effectiveness (Bell & Mjoli, 2012: 453).

Women's career progression needs to be transformed and gender stereotypes reduced so that they may be recognised in management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon. To achieve this, McKinsey and Company (2013: 15-16) propose that, to influence organisational culture and change mind-sets, awareness workshops and training should occur. These would focus on the idea that females, like males, are a heterogeneous group, Diversity, particularly in respect of gender equality, can be enhanced by making it more resourceful and progressive (ILO, 2015: 29). Male employees should also be made aware of the challenges that their female colleagues face when trying to attain management positions. Organisations should offer equal opportunities to both males and females, and should perceive them in the same light by recognising that achieving an ideal work performance model, for both men and women, means sacrifices in one's personal life. Through this awareness being created, beliefs and behaviours can change, whilst eliminating prejudices. Male employers may become more inclined to recruit and promote females too instead of males only, and females can become more actively involved in the organisation (McKinsey & company, 2013: 15-16; ILO, 2015: 29). Changing men's and organisations' perceptions could be useful for transforming women's career progression and attaining their recognition in management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon.

2.5 Perception of women in top management positions

A majority of working females have become discouraged from aiming to reach top management positions because of myths. These myths represent a particular school of thought that relates to historical beliefs, culture, and humanity's place in nature and the universe; and these generally accepted beliefs suggest that females are unsuitable for top management, though they are unsubstantiated by fact (Agatucci, 2010). Most people continue to believe that males are more appropriate for top management (Mordi *et a*l., 2010: 9). These perceptions are gradually being addressed (Feminist Majority Foundation, 2014). Jonkheid and Mango (2008) explain that past gender inequalities have led to these being addressed and corrected, which has proven significant for gender equity. Equity in the workplace has been especially achieved by the increasing number

of female appointments in lower and middle management positions. There is greater fairness in obligations, empowerment, rights and opportunities in the workplace. Women communicate differently to men, and have more discerning points of view than men. A study by Waller and Lublin (2015), which was published in the *Wall Street Journal,* states that there are more men than women in corporate America's board rooms, because women have restraints like needing to spend more time caring for their family that affect their career plans. Moreover, they are inherently less ambitious and less confident about leading than men.

However, concerning perceptions towards women in top management, this literature review should consider women's representation in management hierarchy, and compare men and women's managerial characteristics.

2.5.1 Women's representation in the management hierarchy

Simmering (2014) lists three typical management's levels in organisations: top level, middle level and first level, also known as lower level. These three types of managers form part of an organisational hierarchy or chain of command, where managers are positioned one above another, according to their standing within the organisation. Thus, in many organisations their hierarchical system looks like a pyramid, which includes a number of lower-level managers, less middle managers, and even less top-level managers. Quain (2018) indicates that first level managers are those who are positioned at the base of the organisation's chain of command. They interact with ordinary workers, and often supervise them, while they also engage in the organisation's daily tasks, which include planning, budgets, human resources management, and disciplinary hearings. Middle managers serve above them, and act as mediators between them and top management. Middle-tier managers are usually general managers, but may also serve as regional managers. Finally, top-tier managers are ranked highest in this regard, and liaise with middle management when making decisions that affect the organisation's strategic operations. Top management comprises chief executive officers, chief financial officers, the chairperson, president, vice-president and other strategic stakeholders.

Mahmood and Basharat (2012: 514) describe management as being distributed in three levels. In business organisations, top level management is generally called 'administration' and includes a board of executives, general managers and a president; in universities, top management includes rectors, vice-chancellors and deans. They are the organisation's strategists, working towards reaching their goals, whilst ensuring their respective roles (Stoner, Freeman & Daniel, 2003; Akrani, 2011). Middle level managers often act as the organisation's intermediaries. Their tasks include organising management activities, and establishing policies and plans, as outlined

by top management's strategic plans. In the education sector middle management comprises deans, deputy deans, heads of divisions, deputy and assistant examination controllers, deputy registrars, district education officers, assistant education officers, and head instructors. And in business organisations these comprise managers (production managers, office managers, finance managers, and so on), as well as deputy and assistant directors (Stoner, Freeman, & Daniel, 2003; Akrani, 2011). Lastly, first or lower level management comprises supervisors (hence 'supervisory management'), and they ensure that the organisation's plans and policies are implemented. In education this tier comprises teachers, and in a business organisation it includes foremen, supervisors, and shift controllers (Stoner, Freeman, & Daniel, 2003; Akrani, 2011).

The reasons for women's underrepresentation in top management positions has been explored by several researchers and continues to be investigated (Dezsö & Ross, 2012: 8; Mordi *et al.,* 2010; Ibarra *et al.,* 2013: 6). According to Fagan *et al.* (2012: 2-3) argue that in terms of individual level clarifications, even if females have the required skills for top management positions, they are still under-represented in the industry because they lack qualifications and experience. Another reason for their under-representation is owing to their unassertive manner, or because they themselves need authority. Moreover, organisational-level clarifications attract awareness about male-dominated working environment structures and cultures that females have to contend with when they seek promotion to top management positions. Thus, societal-level clarifications locate employees and companies inside the more extensive conditions of social, political and financial structures that influence individuals and organisational behaviours, which are reformed or reproduced by this societal activity. Dezsö and Ross (2012: 10-11) point out that females in organisational top management structures may be noticed by others in lower management as a feminine management style. Dezsö and Ross (2012: 10-11) describe a feminine management style as 'women in sex-integrated organisations. Such an organisation is likely to recruit employees on the basis of their capabilities in response to the job's requirements rather than on the basis of their gender. The organisation would therefore show that it values and legitimises gender equity to further enhance its objectives and performance levels. Dezsö and Ross (2012: 11) consequently deduce that women in top management will, firstly, improve board members' performances; secondly, they will inspire women at lower management and, finally, introduce and inculcate management and leadership styles that align with a fundamental feminine approach. This should, in turn, improve both individual and group performances across the organisation.

Supporting Dezsö and Ross's (2012: 11) statement, McKinsey and company's (2013: 7) point out that organisations that have female managers, albeit a few, perform better than those

organisations that do not have any women in their management structures. This claim neutralises the perception that female organisational leaders are less competent than male leaders. However, McKinsey and company (2013: 8) report that not only is there a lack of women representation at top management level, but also at all organisational levels, as women are limited and/or prevented from progressing through the organisation's ranks. Moreover, McKinsey and company (2013: 8) illustrate that in Europe females who occupy top management positions are rarely promoted to Chief Executive Officer (CEO) positions. The same statistic is true of the United States (Figure 2.9). In Asia there is a critical scarcity of women at middle and top management levels, especially because organisations there do not support their female employees' family responsibilities.

Figure 2.9: Women are still underrepresented at the top of corporations in 2013 (McKinsey et al., 2013: 8)

In 2009, of the 8 076 200 women employed in the Canadian labour force, only 26 000 held top management positions, representing 0.32% of all women employed. By contrast, of 8 772 700 men employed in the Canadian labour force, 56 200 were working in top management positions. This represented 0.64% of all men employed. A comparative study of the proportion of working males and females who reached the top management ranks showed that males were twice as likely as women to be senior managers in Canada in 2009 (Wolhbold & Chenier, 2011: 3-4).

The ILO (2015: 20) mentions that it is important for organisations to appoint females to top management positions so that they are positioned to apply for, and assume CEO and board positions. The ILO (2014) further shared the number of females in top management positions in 49 countries, and this is shown in Figure 2.10 below. Still, Allen (2015) stating in *The Guardian Journal* that the Catalyst group reports in their statistics in Fortune 500 that a mere 14.6% of

women occupied CEO positions in 2013, and board seats held by women in 2013 represented 16.9%. Table 2.1 below shows that in three countries, namely Finland, Sweden, Norway, and in the United Kingdom, female representation at board level exceeds 20%; it ranges between 10% - 20% in 13 countries; between 5% - 10% in 14 countries; and less than 5% in 13 countries.

Country	Percentage
Dominican Republic	55.8
Panama	48.7
Latvia	44.6
Ecuador	42.8
Philippines	41.0
Slovenia	40.3
Ukraine	39.9
France	39.3
Iceland	38.2
Hungary	35.7
Guatemala	35.6
Bulgaria	35.5
Lithuania	35.5
Argentina	35.1
Poland	35.0
Sweden	34.4
Estonia	32.4
Mexico	32.2
United Kingdom	32.2
Belgium	31.7
Israel	31.6
Switzerland	31.4
Norway	31.2
Romania	31.1
Australia	30.8
Slovakia	30.4
Ireland	29.8
Finland	29.7
Costa Rica	29.2
Denmark	28.8
Netherlands	28.4
Spain	28.4
Croatia	28.1
Germany	28.0
Malta	27.8
Portugal	27.6
Austria	27.0
Thailand	25.6
Macedonia FYR	23.3
Mauritius	23.2
Czech Republic	23.1
Italy	22.0
Greece	21.7
Ethiopia	20.9
Malaysia	20.7
Luxembourg	17.0
Cyprus	16.4
Palestine	15.4
Turkey	14.3

2012

Source: ILO statistical database, from female share of employment in senior and middle management, June 2014

Figure 2.10: Percentage of senior and middle-level managers who are women in 2012 (ILO, 2014: 20)

Table 2.1: Percentage of board seats held by women, latest year (Allen, 2015)

>20%	10-20%	5-10%	<5%
Finland	Australia	Belgium	Bahrain
Norway	Austria	Brazil	Chile
Sweden	Canada	China	India
United Kingdom	Denmark	Greece	Japan
	France	HK China	Kuwait
	Germany	Indonesia	Oman
	Israel	Ireland	Portugal
	Netherlands	Italy	Qatar
	Poland	Malaysia	Rep. of Korea
	South Africa	Mexico	Russia
	Turkey	New Zealand	Saudi Arabia
	Switzerland	Singapore	Taiwan
	USA	Spain	UAE
		Thailand	

Source: Catalyst Inc. Knowledge Center, "Quick Take: Women on Boards", 3 March 2014

Figure 2.10 and Table 2.1 illustrate that the ratio of men who reached the upper management ranks in the private and public sectors combined is double that of women. Women remain underrepresented in top management throughout the world.

Lynn J. Good was the first female Chief Executive Officer of Duke Energy Corporation, one of America's largest energy companies who was appointed in 2013; BP, Shell and Exxon also have women in top management in Alaska. To concur with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the World Bank, The World Bank (2014) states that women's involvement at all organisational levels is vital in order to achieve gender equity, promotion and freedom. In Sub-Saharan Africa for example, the World Bank (2014) reports that the percentage of female participation in business ownership represents 35.4% when the percentage of females as top manager in firms represented 15.4%. Likewise, In South Africa, women make up 45% of entry level professionals against 53% in the United States. However, some 43% of women in South Africa hold middle management roles compared to 37% of their United States peers. In South Africa and the United States, representation is the same at 27% for senior management level and 18% for executive level. In other words, South Africa has reached gender parity with the United States. In 2011, in

Central African Republic, the percentage of female participation in ownership represented 53.3%, with 12.2% of females as top managers in firms. In Cameroon in 2009, the percentage of female participation in ownership represented 15.7%, with 10% of females as top managers in firms; while in Gabon in the same year, female participation in ownership was 33.1%, including 11.5% of females as top manager (World Bank, 2014). Studies were made towards masculinity against femininity; the effects of those managerial characteristics on women's career advancement will be noticed.

2.5.2 Managerial characteristics: masculinity vs. femininity

When a particular profession is dominated by males, there is generally more stereotypical masculine characteristics attributed to the profession, which reinforces gender discrimination within certain occupations (Cejka & Eagly, 1999). This also reduces opportunities for females to be employed at top management level, as the domain is male-dominated in the Americas and Europe. Moreover, working environments in Africa have constantly privileged the appointment of males over females across cultures (Reskin & Bielby, 2005; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Hind, 2015). Male characteristics or tendencies to be assertive, competitive and tough are perceived to be important for occupations that are male-dominated, while female characteristics such as being nurturing, collaborative, warm and helpful are perceived to be important for occupations that are dominated by females (Cejka & Eagly, 1999).

Allen (2015) notes that while women may be promoted to top management positions, they tend to be specific managerial positions that are deemed to suit them. For example, females frequently occupy managerial positions such as human resources, public relations and communications, finance and administration. According to The Feminist Majority Foundation (2014), several myths are responsible for this position, including people's thinking and assumptions about what is 'normal' for humankind. This type of thinking restricts women to certain management positions only, and may explain the few women who are promoted to top management. Moreover, such myths blame women for their slow progress in the workplace rather than gender discrimination. Myths illustrate some people's perception regarding women as leaders or in top management. In the quoted paragraphs that follow (Feminist Majority Foundation, 2014), the authors cite several myths regarding the unsuitability of women for top management positions, then go on to address each myth by providing a factual rebuttal:

> For instance, a myth says, "Conflicts with family and home responsibilities keep executive women from getting to the top". Apparently, the fact to this myth is "Many women executives believe their jobs have strengthened their family lives. Or women executives who do have families, only a tiny

minority, 3%, feel that family responsibilities have hindered their careers" (Feminist Majority Foundation, 2014).

Another myth says, "Women executives cost the corporation more because they must divide their attention between career and family." However, the fact mentioned is "The proportion of top management that is male, the likelihood is that male-linked habits like alcoholism will cost companies a great deal more than pregnancy ever could" (Feminist Majority Foundation, 2014).

An additional myth declares, "Women are not suited for top management because they are not aggressive enough and lack the self-confidence required for the top jobs". Wisely, the fact is "Sexual stereotypes like these persist because the best defence by executive men trying to protect their privileged status is an offense that keeps women in their place" (Feminist Majority Foundation, 2014).

Similar myth states, "Women are not as serious about their careers and often drop out to start their own business to better accommodate their family responsibilities. Consequently, companies must spend considerable amounts on executive development." But the fact is "Women in executive positions have traditionally exhibited lower turnover rates than men since their chances of finding another high-level post are limited" (Feminist Majority Foundation, 2014).

The Feminist Majority Foundation's (2014) study about these different myths addresses people's ideas and assumptions about women in top management positions and confirms that perceptions can reduce women's chances of progressing in their professional careers and reaching top management positions, as in the Gabonese petroleum sector.

In Africa today, the proportion of women who are active and employed is estimated at 43% (Mayila, 2012: 24). In Gabon the number of females who work in the private and public sector remains inferior to men and their remuneration is also low. Some jobs, such as chief executive office, general manager, technician manager and others, are reserved for men, while women work in areas such as secretarial, human resources, public relations and sales promotions. Consequently, Gabonese women are limited in their career progression (Mayila, 2012: 24). Figure 2.11 below demonstrates that a higher percentage of organisations contribute to gender diversity in the workplace in the International Labour Organisation survey of 2013 tend to have more women in managerial positions, for example, human resources, public relations, communications management, finance and administration (ILO, 2015: 14). Fewer organisations have women concentrated in managerial positions in disciplines such as research and product development; operations and sales; and general management. Most of those managerial functions are occupied by men. Furthermore, most organisations employ more than 50% of female managers in the former three disciplines compared to the latter, which are dominated by male employees.
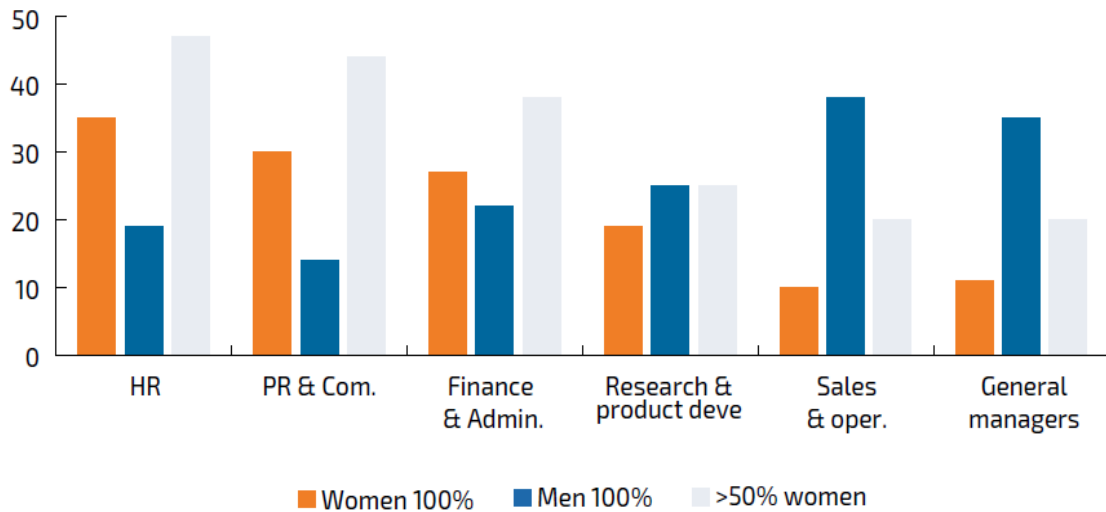
Figure 2.11: Percentage of companies with women and men in different types of management
(ILO, 2013: 14)

Similarly, in hospitals the lowly ranked profession, nursing, is vastly occupied by women, while men typically occupy higher status roles such as that of doctor (Watkins & Smith, 2014: 209). Ondimba (2015) reports that, as the first lady of Gabon, she declared that "Empowerment of women in Africa is critical and this problem is not new. Currently, across the African continent, women hold but a little over 20% of all parliamentary seats. It is my distinct opinion that this is not sufficient political visibility or representation". Ondimba (2015) contends that, in Gabon, Madeleine Berre, President of the Senate, became the country's first female president following the death of President Omar Bongo in 2009. Also, it was a woman who was elected Mayor of the capital city, Libreville. Moreover, in Morocco, one of the five biggest industrial, commercial and financial groups' chief executive of office is a woman, Miriem Bensalah-Chaqroun. In Namibia a substantial number of women serve in the country's parliament. Also, ministers of Foreign Affairs, Finance, the Interior and Labour, are females. Ondimba (2015) concludes that African women are certainly proving their worth to obtain top management positions. Women's role in the economic and public life of our nations, boosts financial development, good governance across both the local and the international scale of decision-making. However, paradoxically, most key opinion and perception leaders largely ignore the voices of Africa's women, who are then prevented from claiming that to which they are entitled. African women should be recognised and lauded for their respective leadership roles (Ondimba, 2015). The urgency of this mission continues today.

2.6 Summary

This chapter focused on certain perspectives relating to issues participating to the underrepresentation of women in management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon. The literature review was based, firstly, on women's representation in the modern day world of business and industry, internationally and locally; secondly, gender roles in the workplace were discussed in relation to gender stereotypes, discrimination and male dominance; thirdly, the emphasis was on women's advancement in the workplace through training and development opportunities, career advancement; and the importance of women in organisational development was considered, along with creating a supportive organisational culture; finally, common perceptions of women in top management positions were discussed, including how these affect women's representation in management hierarchies, with reference to managerial characteristics comparing masculinity and femininity.

Through the literature review, it was revealed that women representation in the 21_{st} century in top management positions in the petroleum sector, internationally as locally, remains low. Women still face many obstacles to full participation in the growth of economies worldwide and remain marginalised in society, despite the recognition of women in the corporate world (Bertrand *et al.,* 2010; Makama, 2013; Kleven & Landais, 2017: 21). Gender roles were denounced as being responsible for slowing women's progress or keeping women from reaching top management positions; and several issues, such as gender stereotypes, discrimination, family commitment and male dominance, were considered. Up to today, women across the world have attempted to remove gender discrimination from working conditions, and be acknowledged purely for their skills and talents. But gender discrimination entrenched in organisational policies and practices creates more constraints for women than for their male colleagues in the workplace (Ibarra *et al.,* 2013: 5). Gender discrimination remains a barrier for women; and sexual harassment too often confronts women in the workplace. Inequalities of rights in the labour market continue, with discrimination limiting women's opportunities to build their maximum capacity to be on par with men (Makama, 2013: 122). Concerning family commitment, organisations should help men and women equally through working towards flexibility towards family responsibilities such as caring for children and accessing maternity leave (Piterman, 2008: 27).

Another barrier that impacts womens' careers, and/or promotions in the workplace, is male dominance related to tradition and culture. The patriarchal system has an important impact on

women's empowerment, with women often the most economically threatened social group in the petroleum sector in Gabon (Makama, 2013: 115).

Researchers have shown that women advance in their career with training and development opportunities by acquiring specific skills and allowing organisations to achieve their goals (Kulkarni, 2013: 2; Nikandrou *et al.,* 2009: 255). Furthermore, women's abilities and performance in organisations have proven their importance in a company's economic growth. The increasing number of females in the working environment has allowed organisations to achieve their organisational objectives, whilst remaining competitive (Eggleton, 2011). To advance women's careers, a supportive organisational culture, which is strongly aware of women's perceptions of how they are treated, needs to be developed. Organisations, therefore, need to build gender balance, and treat both men and women equally; and recognise that the performance model that is relevant for both involves sacrifices in one's personal life (McKinsey & company, 2013: 15-16; ILO, 2015: 29).

Finally, negative perceptions regarding women in top management positions were estimated to reduce women's chances to achieve successfully. Women should be considered as having the same value and potential as men in the organisational hierarchy; and managerial characteristics should value what both masculinity femininity bring to the organisation. Women representation in top management remains low in organisations. To change Gabonese society's perceptions regarding women's leadership, women's associations such as African Women's Entrepreneurship Programme (AWEP), African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) and Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) need to continue their pioneering efforts to promote women in Africa and value their skills and performance.

The following chapter focuses on the research methodology applied in this study.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The foregoing chapter was a structured review of the literature, based on the research questions and sub-questions, as outlined in Chapter One. This chapter details the research study's design and methodology. It commences with a re-statement of the research objectives, followed by a description of the design and methodology employed to achieve those objectives, including sampling techniques, data collection methods, instruments and procedure, data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research objectives

The purpose of this research was to reveal various factors affecting women's representation in management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon, and to assist the latter companies to encourage women's career progression in management positions. In keeping with this purpose, the following research objectives were formulated:

- To ascertain if training opportunities exist for women employees in order to groom them for management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector.
- To understand the perception of the Gabonese petroleum sector regarding women in management positions.
- To determine if gender roles influence the recognition of women employees applying for management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector.
- To propose a strategy for transformation of women's career progression to management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon.

3.3 Research design

A research design is defined as "a structured plan and strategy of investigation used to obtain answers to the research questions" (Cooper & Schindler, 2011: 147). In this section, discussion focuses on the research paradigm, research philosophy, research approach and research design of this research study.

Bless *et al.*, (2006: 35) observe that research usually arises from some need, meaning that there is a particular purpose to be fulfilled. In this instance, the goal is to assist in solving a problem facing a particular community, namely women employees in the Gabonese petroleum sector. The project can therefore be described as applied research (Bless *et al.,* 2006: 44). Other salient characteristics of this study are the following:

- Non-experimental research: this study did not involve experimental research as no outcomes were tested (Creswell, 2009);
- Quantitative: this study made use of numerical data collected via questionnaires that produced statistics, numbers and figures (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009); and
- Qualitative: this study involved face-to-face interviews where words, which assisted the participants who sought clarity and understanding of any part of the process (Yilmaz, 2013: 313).

3.3.1 Research paradigm

A research paradigm refers to a general worldview in term of which the researcher approaches an investigation. The researcher in this study supports gender equity and thus was guided by the philosophy that women should not be marginalised in trying to progress in their careers (Creswell, 2009).

Epistemology is concerned with how reality can come to be known (Willis, 2007: 10; McQueen & McQueen, 2010: 151). According to Thomas (2009: 75), the concept, interpretivism, advocates agrees that the world is altering in permanence, while meanings are modifying and disputed. The purpose of this investigation was to understand the underrepresentation of women in management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector by identifying the factors that hinder women's career progression, from the point of view of the latest. Since the emphasis falls on what the world means to Gabonese women in the petroleum sector, interpretivism appeared to be the appropriate epistemological paradigm for this study (Willis, 2007: 6).

3.3.2 Descriptive research design and associated methodology

In descriptive research, there is an existing body of knowledge about which it is possible to produce additional knowledge of a higher level of importance. Issues pertaining to women's low representation in top management positions in the workplace worldwide have been investigated and continue to be investigated. The researcher in this study identified a problem, specifically that

woman employees in the Gabonese petroleum sector are marginalised in terms of their career progression, which results in their underrepresentation in management positions (Strydom, 2013: 154). To describe the phenomenon accurately and work towards the finding possible solutions to the problem of women's career progression in the Gabonese petroleum sector, a descriptive research design was used.

To generate findings for this research design, the researcher had to consider what methods would meaningfully address the research objective and questions, as well as issues of data triangulation. As the research design for this study was descriptive and interpretive, it was appropriate to use mixed methods (both quantitative and qualitative methods) to gather data. The goal of using such mixed methods (via questionnaires as a quantitative technique and face-to-face interviews as a qualitative technique) was two-fold: firstly, the approach increases the chances of generating a more complete and detailed understanding of the research problem and increase the reliability of the obtained results (Maree, 2010; De Vos *et al.,* 2013: 434); secondly, multiple methods of data collection address the need for triangulation of findings. Quantitative and qualitative research and triangulation of methods will now be discussed.

A mixed methods approach is appropriate to capture the best of both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative research is an approach that deductively discloses occurrences as numerical information which, in turn, are examined by means of mathematically-based techniques in the form of statistical procedures (Yilmaz, 2013: 311; Creswell, 2014: 5). Yilmaz (2013: 313) notes that an advantage of this technique is that the researcher can measure information such as participants' responses to the questions, which eases comparison, and statistical collection of the information.

Yilmaz (2013: 313) reports that, unlike quantitative studies which are concerned with mathematical-based methods through deductive reasoning, qualitative studies focus on emerging data typically collected in the participants' setting and inductively built through a process, within a context, using interpretation or understanding of meaning, such as during face-to-face interviews. Using a qualitative method is therefore useful in that the researcher can describe and understand a phenomenon (here, the marginalisation of Gabonese women in terms of their career progression, which results in their underrepresentation in management positions) by capturing and communicating research participants' experiences and views in their own words (Yilmaz, 2013: 313; Creswell, 2014: 5). During face-to-face interviews using open-ended questions (allowing a participant to give a free-form answer, Farrell & Coburn, 2016) research participants

express how they perceive the world, and share their experiences. Qualitative findings are those that can be changed compared to quantitative ones, which cannot (Venkatesh, Brown & Bala, 2013: 39; Yilmaz, 2013: 313).

Triangulation of data within one's study helps to ensure that, as far as possible, information from a variety of sources reveals to the researcher a more accurate understanding of what the participants believe and think (Saunders *et al.,* 2009). Data triangulation is useful in facilitating interpretive validity, as researchers can check the extent to which quantitative data obtained is supported by the perspectives gleaned from qualitative data. In this study, data triangulation was achieved through a mixed methods approach, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative techniques.

3.4 Population and sampling techniques

A study population is described as the people, or full set of cases, that are the subject of an investigation (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). A sample is a fraction or subdivision of the bigger population and, which is used to assume information about the broader population (Saunders *et al*., 2009). Union Pétrolière Gabonaise (UPEGA), a trade union working with 20 000 employees of several petroleum companies, allowed the selection of three companies which participated in this research study. From those three selected petroleum companies, the participants were targeted as sample for this study.

Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique was used for this research study. The personal judgment of the researcher was that women were the best target sample for obtaining information, even though the number of women working at the three selected petroleum companies was unknown before the survey. The researcher contacted research participants through some members of the three selected petroleum companies' management team (Teddlie & Yu, 2007: 80; Saunders *et al.,* 2012). Of over 400 employees working at the selected petroleum companies, approximately 95 women are employed in lower, middle and top management positions. Only 73 women volunteered to complete the questionnaire. Consequently, the sample consisted of 73 female employees. Only 71 fully completed questionnaires were returned. Thus, the questionnaire response rate was about 97% of the whole female employee population.

The snowball sampling technique (occurs when each located subject suggests other subjects for data collection, Babbie, 2016: 197) for the face-to-face interviews seemed the most appropriate in this context when members of the target population were difficult to locate. The interview

participants in this study were selected according to their managerial level (Elder, 2009: 8; Babbie, 2016: 197). Since men occupy most top management positions in petroleum companies in Gabon, it is perhaps no surprise that the interview participants consisted of 12 men and only 3 women, the latter being the human resources managers at the three selected petroleum companies. Including samples of both women and men employees was useful, as the researcher was able to compare the females' questionnaire responses with the males' interview responses, and thus to analyse their perceptions regarding the factors influencing women's career progression.

3.5 Data collection methods

As explained, data collection for the current research involved mixed methods: both numeric and textual information was gathered so that the final data represented quantitative and qualitative perspectives.

Firstly, quantitative data was gathered using a questionnaire given to 71 female participants; and, secondly, qualitative data was gathered via face-to-face interview with 3 female managers and 12 male managers. The qualitative method was used for exploratory purposes so that the researcher could possibly generalise results to a population (Creswell, 2003: 16; Venkatesh *et al.,* 2013: 37).

The questionnaires were used to collect participants' opinions regarding different issues affecting women's career progression; and the interviews were used to supplement the results obtained from the questionnaires to provide a more complete understanding of the career challenges faced by women. Combining those two methods ensures improved instrumentation by supporting or completing each other for all information aggregation approaches, and to improve the researcher's understanding of the outcomes (Venkatesh *et al*., 2013: 23). Using a mixed methods approach (quantitative sources supported by a qualitative perspective) ensured triangulation of data to facilitate the achievement of interpretive validity (Maree, 2010). Details of these data collection instruments will now be described.

3.6 Data collection instruments

Good research studies benefit from having multiple sources of evidence that might include interviews, audio-visual materials and documents, depending on what is available and relevant to the study investigated (Yin, 2012: 10). From three selected petroleum companies, the researcher

intended to gain in-depth knowledge and understanding in order to provide an explanation and find possible solutions to the problem exposed (Simons, 2009: 19-21). To study women's career progression, their marginalisation and underrepresentation in management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon, the researcher used questionnaires and face-to-face interviews as instruments to assemble both, quantitative and qualitative information to answer the research questions.

3.6.1 Questionnaire construction

A closed-ended questionnaire, defined as a limited set of possible answers offered to participants when open-ended questions allow participants to give a free-form answer to express their opinions (Farrell, 2016), were both used by the researcher in the questionnaire to obtain the maximum of information to answer to the research problem of this study.

Completion instructions were provided at the beginning of the questionnaire (Appendix D), including the attached participants' informed consent form (Appendix A) used to inform respondents of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses to the questionnaire and encourage their participation.

To provide adequate response variance and to make it easier for participants to complete the survey, the questionnaire was divided into three sections, as explained here:

- Section A: Biographical information

This first section, from Questions 1 to 5, consisted of close-ended questions with check boxes. These questions allowed the respondent the opportunity to give basic details concerning their biographical information: marital status, occupation, duration of work experience, current position and age.

- Section B: Career information

This second section included Questions 6 and 7, closed-ended questions designed to get information regarding the respondents' education, including their level of qualification and study plans.

- Section C: Factors affecting women's career progression into management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector

This third and last section, from Question 8 to 15, involved statements, which engaged participants' understanding of factors that could affect their career progression. The eight statements used a four-point Likert scale with response options for each question as follows:

1. Strongly disagree or Not a barrier;
2. Disagree or A minor barrier;
3. Agree or A barrier;
4. Strongly agree or A major barrier.

One open-ended question concluded the questionnaire to obtain information regarding the respondent's career plan. The questionnaire therefore consisted of 15 closed-ended questions and 1 open-ended question.

The participants completed the questionnaire after reading and signing the informed consent form which explained the purpose of this research and the importance of their participation. In addition, at the beginning of the questionnaire, the participants were encouraged to answer correctly by instructions and assured about the privacy of their answers. Thereafter, some participants returned their completed questionnaire to the three selected petroleum companies' management by email, or delivered it to a management office.

3.6.2 The interview design

Qualitative research facilitates the gaining of in-depth insight into the opinions of research participants. In the case of this study, the views of women and men holding top management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector were of interest to better understand why women are not being groomed for management positions and to what extent women employees in this sector are recognised as management candidates. Responses to open-ended questions by Gabonese women and men working in the petroleum sector would help the researcher understand and present these participants' views and experiences of their world.

The interview guide for this research study was semi-structured with four open-ended questions (Appendix F). The first question "What do you think your organisation could do to better prepare women for leadership positions in the company?" focused on the effect of their organisation's participation or involvement on women's leadership; the second question "Do you think there is a difference between male and female supervising employees in the organisation?" was about the respondents' perception of female and male supervisors; the third question "Do you think that management positions in petroleum organisation should be considered according to the

qualifications and competence than the gender?" referred to their perception of the influence of gender and qualification on the attainment of management positions; and the last question focused on the respondent's perception about career advancement.

Interviews were conducted with managers after the questionnaires had been completed with the aim of obtaining in-depth understanding of participants' questionnaire responses and a better explanation and interpretation of data.

3.7 Data collection procedure

A month before going to Gabon to interview participants working in the top management positions of the three selected petroleum companies, the researcher emailed the questionnaire and interview guide to the three selected petroleum companies' HR departments in an effort to reach most women employees as participants. Sending both the questionnaires and interview guides in advance to the Gabonese petroleum companies allowed the research participants to have enough time to complete the questionnaires and to be prepared for the interviews. This ensured that the researcher did not receive unusable questionnaires and face-to-face interviews.

To ensure confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation, respondents were issued an informed consent form that they completed before participating in the study. To facilitate easily access, the questionnaire for all women employees at the three selected petroleum companies was an Internet-mediated questionnaire that was administered electronically, using the Internet as communication tool (Saunders *et al.,* 2009). However, participants had to print out the questionnaire and consent form, or open it via Microsoft Word, complete it, then return it to their HR department.

3.8 Data analysis

Data analysis is designated as the process to organise, summarise and interpret information collected in order to answer the investigative research problem which, for this study, is women are marginalised in terms of their career progression ensuing their underrepresentation in management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector (Saunders *et al.,* 2012). The goal of data analysis was to explain the nature of the elements found, as well as the relationship between them, in information gathered by the researcher via mixed methods: (1) responses to questionnaires (as a quantitative data collection method) were analysed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 23); and (2) responses to face-to-face interviews (as a

qualitative data collection method) were analysed via content analysis (Yin, 2003: 109-138; Saunders *et al.,* 2009).

3.8.1 Descriptive statistics

For this research study, the researcher used descriptive statistics for the interpretation of quantitative data to make it more understandable. Descriptive statistics consists of methods for organising and summarising data. Usually, this requires calculating numerical insights from the gathered data and representing these in various ways, such as graphs, charts and tables, using various descriptive measures such as means, standard deviations, sums and percentages (Kerns, 2018: 37).

The questionnaire data obtained were summarised and interpreted through statistical analysis (SPSS 23) with the assistance of a statistician at Cape Peninsula University of Technology. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 23) software was utilised for analysing quantitative data collected from the selected petroleum companies. This software allowed to summarise data gathered through descriptive statistics then described through graphic representations by the researcher. Furthermore, it was important to use the statistical significance level (p-value<0.01 or p-value<0.05) to determine whether the test results are significant or not (Greenland, Senn, Rothman, Carlin, Poole, Goodman & Altman, 2016: 339).

3.8.2 Thematic and content analysis

Thematic analysis is mainly recommended to consider both manifest (developing categories) and latent content (developing themes) in data analysis, according to Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas (2013: 401); while in content analysis the researcher may choose either manifest (developing categories) or latent content (developing themes) before continuing to the next stage of data analysis. For this study, content analysis was suitable to examine and interpret responses to the four open-ended questions used in the face-to-face interview, as the researcher intended trying to explain qualitative data in depth. The respondents' answer consistency was an important focus. Content analysis is described as a research method that examines the content of a body of material, including verbal or visual data, in order to record and identify the relative incidence of patterns, themes or biases (Welman & Kruger, 2000: 201; Bengtsson, 2016: 9). Conducting a qualitative study offers the researcher an inductive process for analysing raw data: the researcher can search for similarities and differences in the data to confirm or discard earlier impressions. Relevant categories of possible interest might include, for example, women in training, women in management, gender stereotypes and career progression for women (Maree, 2010).

Data derived from the face-to-face interviews was summarised and interpreted through content analysis: a systematic process of coding information, then examining and further interpreting information in participants' descriptions of social reality, was facilitated through the creation of categories or themes. Some explanation of these terms is helpful here: a code is a word or sentence extracted from the data analysed that points towards a single idea; a category is a word or sentence that the researcher imposes on a group of codes to describe them as a collective; and a theme is a word or a sentence, a higher level of categorisation, to describe a concept (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen & Snelgrove, 2016: 101-102). The purpose of the face-to-face interviews was to provide a meaningful summary and reconstruction of the collected data for interpretation (Schoenbach, 2014: 454; Vaismoradi *et al.,* 2016: 101). For in-depth understanding, respondents' opinions were displayed in text boxes to organise and more clearly present the qualitative data gathered (Baaij, 2014: 525).

3.8.3 Reliability and validity

Using a quantitative questionnaire for data gathering offered greater reliability and validity than qualitative interviews. The reliability of the questionnaire was based on test-retest reliability, which is the extent to which the data collection technique is repeatable and consistent with similar observations done by other researchers for the same purpose (Saunders *et al.,* 2009; Maree, 2010). Additionally, the validity of the women employees' questionnaire was tested by employing exploratory factor analysis, a method that is commonly used to decrease a big number of variables. It also establishes fundamental dimensions among measured variables and latent constructs, permitting the theory's formation and refinement. The use of self-reporting scales ensure that the evidence is valid (Williams, Brown & Onsman, 2010: 2). Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was applied to assess the reliability of the questionnaire and to provide consistent results. The resulting Cronbach's Alpha coefficient ranges from zero to one. Firstly, there is high reliability when values are equal to, or more than, 0,8; secondly, values between 0.65 and 0,8 are considered to be satisfactory; and finally, values that are below 0.5 are generally considered to be unsatisfactory (Goforth, 2015). This study considered value from 0.65 as Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to evaluate the reliability of the results from the questionnaire.

In light of the data triangulation through a mixed methods approach applied in this research study, the quantitative statistics were combined with the qualitative themes to interpret the research results and articulate the research findings.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Scott (2013: 86) clarifies that ethical considerations are vital when researchers undertake studies investigating people's feelings and views. Those considerations are the value and respect of the contributions made by participants that researchers must fulfil through findings reported truthfully and accurately.

Permission was obtained from the three selected petroleum companies to implement, firstly, the questionnaires; and, thereafter, hold the face-to-face interviews. To ensure that the research study fulfilled all the ethical requirements, any individual who participated in this research was required to read and sign a participant informed consent letter and form (Appendix A and B). The participant informed consent form stated that their participation was voluntary, would remain anonymous and all information divulged was strictly confidential. The questionnaire was constructed with open-ended and closed-ended questions compiled to help the researcher identify a general pattern of Gabonese women employees' reactions to their male colleagues' treatment of them and towards women's career progression. The Human Resources departments of the three selected petroleum companies received an email from the researcher with the questionnaire and participant informed consent form attached and these departments were requested to send these documents to their women employees.

By signing the informed consent form, the participants agreed to the study's terms, and to participating in it. Furthermore, for the face-to-face interview, the participants were informed at the beginning of the interview that the interview would be recorded for later written transcription by the researcher. All interviews were subsequently transcribed using and saved on the researcher's laptop; and access to this information was secured with a password.

3.10 Summary

The main focus of this chapter was to present and justify the research design and methodology used to conduct the study, the purpose of which was to investigate how and why women are marginalised in terms of their career progression and so underrepresented in management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon. The target population for this study was limited to women and men working in three selected petroleum companies obtained by a petroleum trade union called Union Pétrolière Gabonaise (UPEGA). Purposive sampling produced 71 women participants who received the questionnaire, while snowball sampling produced another 15 participants, consisting of 3 women and 12 men, for the face-to-face interviews. The questionnaire

was implemented to gather data from women regarding their marginalisation in terms of their career progression in the Gabonese petroleum sector; the face-to-face interviews generated data, from both women and men, to provide the researcher with an in-depth understanding of why women have limited access to a senior level of management in their professional career, and how men perceive women in management positions. This research study used a mixed method approach and triangulation of data was assured through the use of quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and interpretation of that data.

Chapter Four, presents and discusses in detail the research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter described the study's research design and research methodology, including approaches, data collection and data analysis. In this chapter, the results obtained from the data gathered is interpreted, analysed through descriptive statistics (SPSS 23) and content analysis, then discussed. For ease of interpretation, the results are visually represented in the form of bar charts, pie charts, frequency tables, chi-square test tables and coding techniques. These results, obtained from the questionnaires and interviews, are elucidated in this chapter on the basis of four categories that correlate with the research questions and literature review, namely: women in training; women in management; gender roles; and career progression for women.

In order to posit the research results expounded in this chapter, the research problem of this investigation, as formulated in Chapter One in Section 1.3, is extracted as follows:

> ***Women employees in the Gabonese petroleum sector are marginalised in terms of their career progression, which results in their underrepresentation in management positions.***

Triangulation of data, useful through mixed methods that are accurate in facilitating interpretive validity through quantitative sources supported by a qualitative perspective, was applied when interpreting the data collected.

4.2 Alignment of research data

It is important to align the questionnaire and interview instruments that will allow the filtering of statements and answers to fit into the frequencies, charts, themes and categories. Table 4.1 elucidates how the questionnaire and interview questions relate to the research questions, with the goal of providing answers to the latter. Furthermore, Table 4.2 explains in detail the process of analysis followed to better interpret and discuss the information collected, for both quantitative and qualitative data.

Table 4.1: Structure of questionnaire and interview in relation to research questions

Research questions	Questionnaire statements	Interview statements
To what extent are women employees provided with training opportunities to groom them for management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector?	8. Does your organisation offer you training/mentorship programmes? 9. How many times in a year does the company offer you training/mentorship programmes? 10. Support and guidance from a mentor is very important. 11. The fact that a mentor is a male or female can influence women employees during training/mentorship programmes.	**Question 1:** "What do you think your organisation could do to better prepare women for leadership positions in the company?"
What is the employees' perception in the Gabonese petroleum sector regarding women employees in management positions?	14.1 Lack of mentoring/coaching may be a barrier to the career progression of women into management positions in the organisation. 14.5 Job characteristics, e.g., irregular hours, may be a barrier for women's career progression. 14.6 Sexual harassment at work may be a barrier for women's career progression. 14.7 Preferences towards gender and cultures/traditions. 15.4 Women play important roles in the workplace. 16. How many times have you been promoted to a new position in the organisation?	**Question 2:** "Do you think that there is a difference between male and female supervising employees in the organisation?"
Do gender roles influence the recognition of women employees applying for management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector?	12. Male colleagues are more advantaged than women regarding training/mentorship programmes. 13. Male colleagues are more advantaged than women regarding promotion offers in the organisation. 14.8 Family responsibilities may be a barrier to the career progression of women into management positions in the organisation. 15.1 Gender discrimination is a constraint to women's career advancement. 15.2 Stereotypes against women limit them from advancing in their careers.	**Question 3:** "Do you think that management positions (C.E.O., General Manager, Regional Manager, H.R Manager, Supervisors) in petroleum organisations should be considered according to the qualifications and competence rather than the gender?"
What can be the catalyst for the transformation of women employees' career progression within	14.2 Lack of equality in training may be a barrier to the career progression of women into management positions in the organisation.	**Question 4:** "What do you think is the best way to advance a career?"

	14.3 Lack of equality in remuneration may be a barrier to the career progression of women into management positions in the organisation.	
the petroleum sector in Gabon?	14.4 Lack of support systems at work may be a barrier to the career progression of women into management positions in the organisation.	
	15.3 Females face significant obstacles to career advancement compared to males in my organisation.	
	15.5 My organisation is committed to Government legislation (Gabonese Labour Code Act 2000) to promote women's empowerment.	
	15.6 Government legislation such as Gabonese Labour Code Act No.12 of 2000 helps to promote women's rights.	

Quantitative data was subjected to the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 23), software popularly used within both academic and business circles, to obtain many different types of analyses, data transformation and forms of output to understand social and health science research about a phenomenon (Arkkelin, 2014: 2). Content analysis was employed to scrutinise qualitative information to identify the manifest and latent content of all the interviews by categorising and evaluating its key symbols and themes as means to uncover its meaning and possible effects (Krippendorff, 2013: 1). Table 4.2 reveals in detail the procedure of analysis used for quantitative and qualitative data:

Table 4.2: Processes of analysis

Quantitative data analysis	**Qualitative data analysis**
Step 1: Information gathered from questionnaire was filtered: • All questionnaires were translated into English and evaluated by the researcher to check for valid ones (fully completely). • Each response of each participant was reported on an Excel data sheet.	**Step 1:** Translation and transcription of the interviews: • The audio recordings of interviews with the 15 respondents were listened to several times for accurate translation and transcription. • The researcher organised the data from the recordings by typing out each response to each question from the 15 interviewees, first into Word then onto an Excel data sheet.
Step 2: SPSS software was used to translate the gathered data from the questionnaires into	**Step 2:** Development of themes and codes:

descriptive statistics, then frequencies, including Chi-Square tests and Cronbach alpha.	• Once written, responses were read numerous times to identify and highlight repeated words and relevant sentences. • Words and sentences were grouped.
Step 3: The frequency tables were copied and pasted into Excel to be converted in charts and graphs, then finally interpreted.	**Step 3:** Themes and code capture: • After regrouping and identifying all the words, the researcher grouped them in categories according to the themes identified in the literature review (women in training, women in management, gender stereotypes and career progression for women), and also identified any new themes emerging from the data gathered.

4.3 Quantitative results

Quantitative data was obtained through a questionnaire divided into three sections: biographical information, educational information and factors affecting women's career progression (see details of Sections A to C in Appendix D). This allowed the researcher to group information from a great number of participants regarding different aspects of the phenomenon under investigation (Venkatesh *et al.,* 2013: 25). The first and second sections focus on the participants' information and the study results are in the third section.

➢ **Section A: Biographical information**

The first section of the questionnaire requested participants to complete biographical information which, in turn, offered the researcher personal information concerning the targeted research sample. Of the 73 participating female employees over 95 females working in the three selected petroleum companies, 71 questionnaires were returned, which resulted in a 97% response rate. The goal of the biographical section was to identify who the female employees in the Gabonese petroleum sector are. This information provided details on various aspects: marital status, occupation, duration of experience, current position and age, as represented in Figure 4.1.
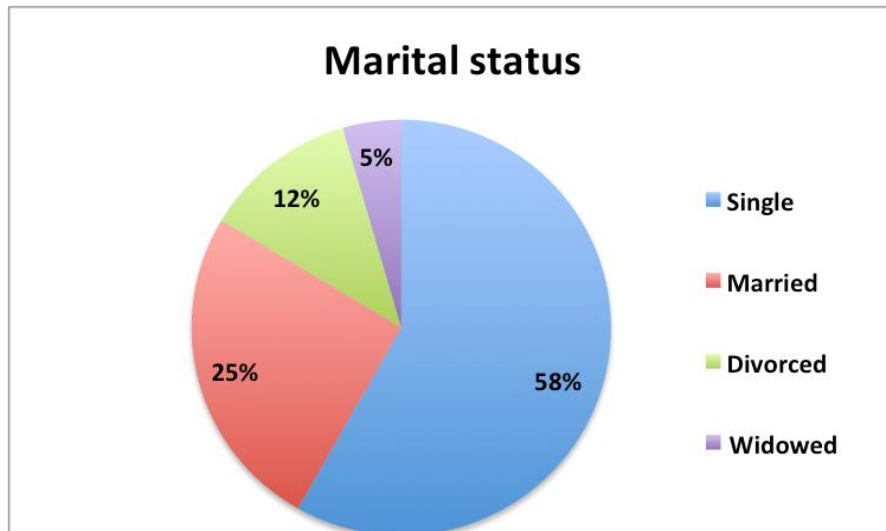
Marital status

Figure 4.1: Marital status of women employees in the selected petroleum companies

As shown in Figure 4.1, the respondents were divided into four groups by marital status. The results indicate that 58% of the 71 respondents were single, 25% married, 12% divorced and 5% widowed. From the results, it is evident that the single group represented by 58% of women working in the three selected petroleum companies, compared to the three other groups, is the major one. Therefore, the majority of women employed in the three selected Gabonese petroleum companies were single.

Q2: What is your current position in the organisation?

POSITION HELD IN THE ORGANISATION
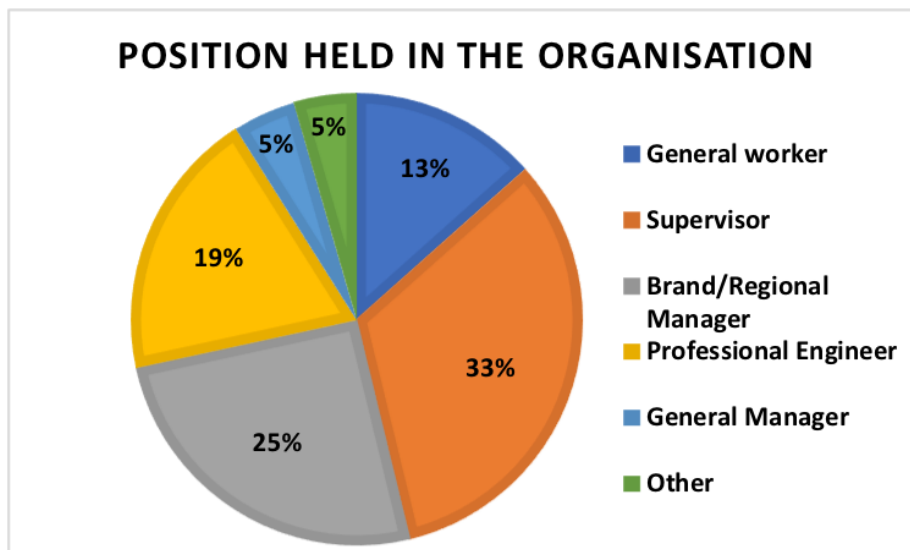
Figure 4.2: Position in the organisation

In Figure 4.2, it can be seen that, for 71 respondents, these categories of position are represented: 13% are general workers; 33% are supervisors; 25% are brand or regional managers; 19% are professional engineers; and only 5% are general managers, with another 5% occupying other senior positions. According to the results, the position most frequently occupied by women in the three selected petroleum companies in Gabon is supervisor, applicable to 33% of the respondents.

Q3: For how long have you worked for the organisation?
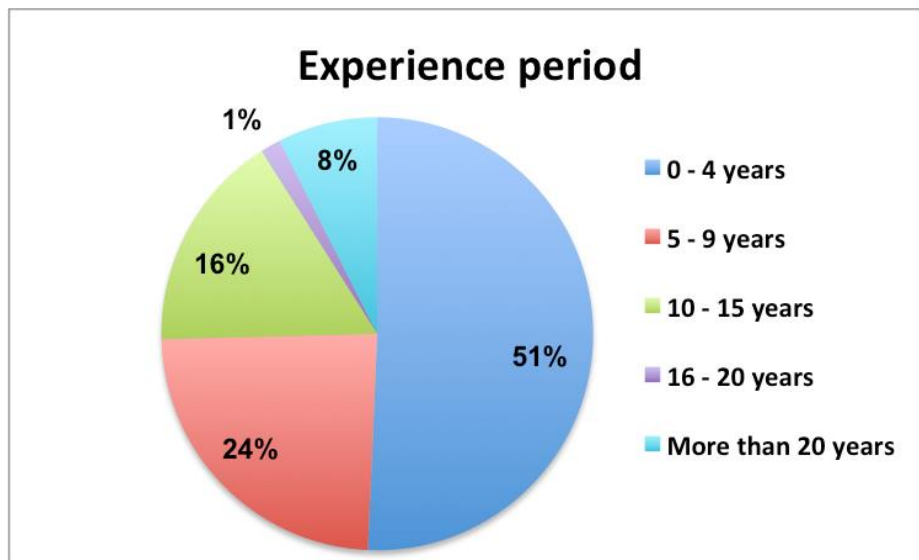
Figure 4.3: Experience period in the organisation

Figure 4.3 shows the duration of women's employment in the three selected petroleum companies: 51% of women had been working between zero and four years; 24% of women had worked for five to nine years; 16% of women had worked between 10 and 15 years; 1% of women had been working between 16 to 20 years; and, finally, 8% of women had worked there for more than 20 years. Thus, the majority of women had worked for one of the three selected Gabonese petroleum companies for less than four years, while a considerable number of women had worked less than nine years.

EXPERIENCE IN SAME POSITION
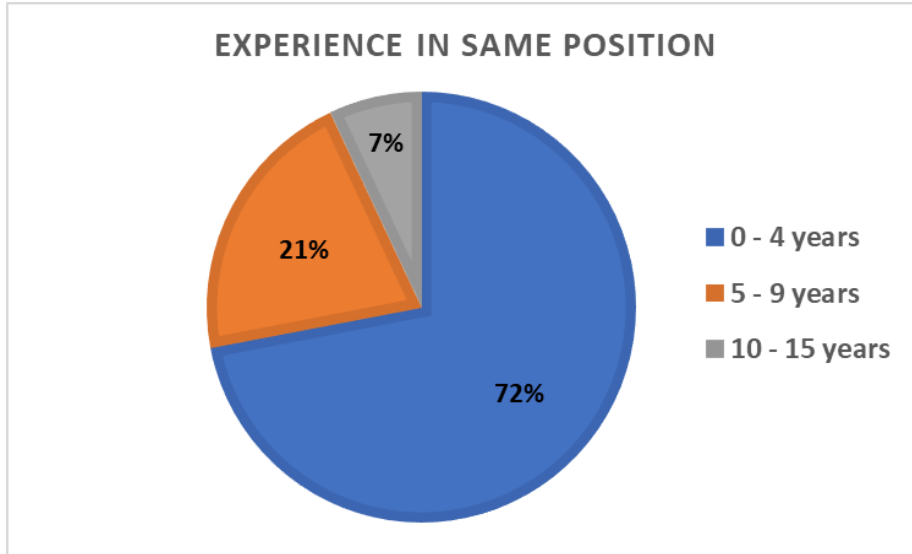
Figure 4.4: Period in the same position

Figure 4.4 shows that 72% of women had kept the same job position for zero to four years in the three selected petroleum companies, while 21% had held the same position for five to nine years; and, finally, only 7% had occupied the same job position for 10 to 15 years. Therefore, about three-quarters of the women (72%) working in the three selected petroleum companies in Gabon had stayed in the same position for between one and four years.

Q5: How old are you?
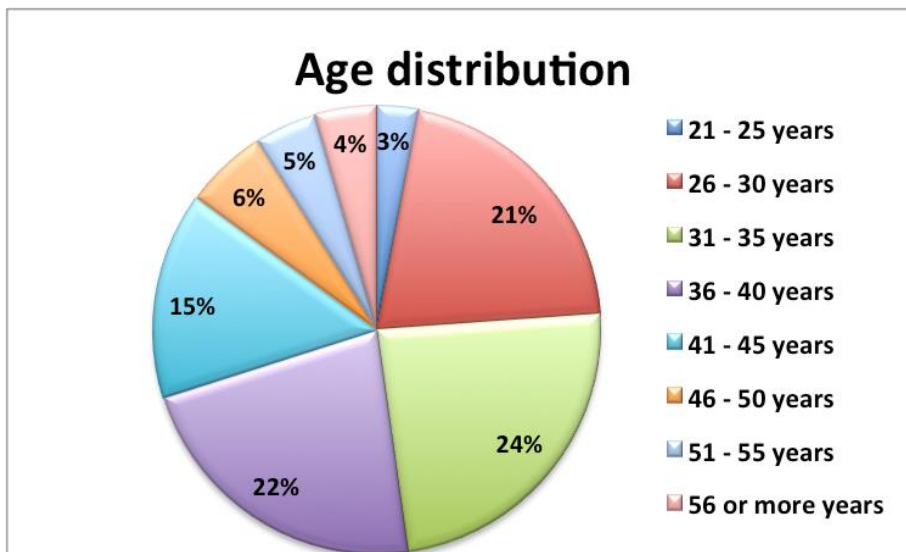
Figure 4.5: Age profile

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In Figure 4.5, the age of participants in this study is illustrated. The sample included the following: 3% of respondents aged 25 years and younger; 21% between the ages of 26 and 30 years; 24% between the ages of 31 and 35 years; 22% between 36 and 40 years; 15% between 41 and 45 years; 6% between 46 and 50 years; 5% between 51 and 55; and, finally, 4% were 56 and older. At the time of the study, the workforce in the three selected petroleum companies in Gabon was dominated by prime working aged women between 26 years and 45 years old.

➢ **Section B: Educational information**

The second section of the questionnaire requested the targeted research sample of participants to provide educational information which gave the researcher valuable personal information about them. The goal of the educational section was to determine the knowledge and skills level of the 71 women employees in the three selected Gabonese petroleum companies. The educational information providing details on, respectively, highest educational qualification level and study plans, is represented in Figure 4.6.

Q6: What is your highest educational qualification's level?
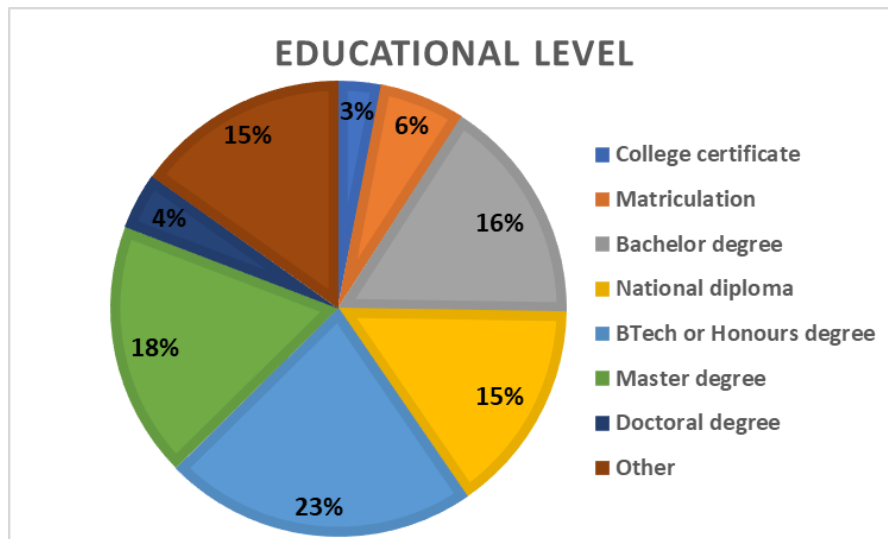
Figure 4.6: Highest qualification's level

Figure 4.6 indicates that 3% of respondents had obtained a college certificate and 6% had obtained a matriculation. A total of 16% of respondents had a bachelor's degree, 15% a national diploma, and 23% a Bachelor of Technology or honours degree. A master's degree was obtained by 18% of respondents; only 4% had graduated with a doctoral degree. Finally, 15% of respondents had obtained other certificates or degrees. Thus, the majority of women in the three selected Gabonese petroleum companies had a Bachelor of Technology or honours degree or a

master's degree at the time of this study.

Q7: Do you anticipate continuing your studies?
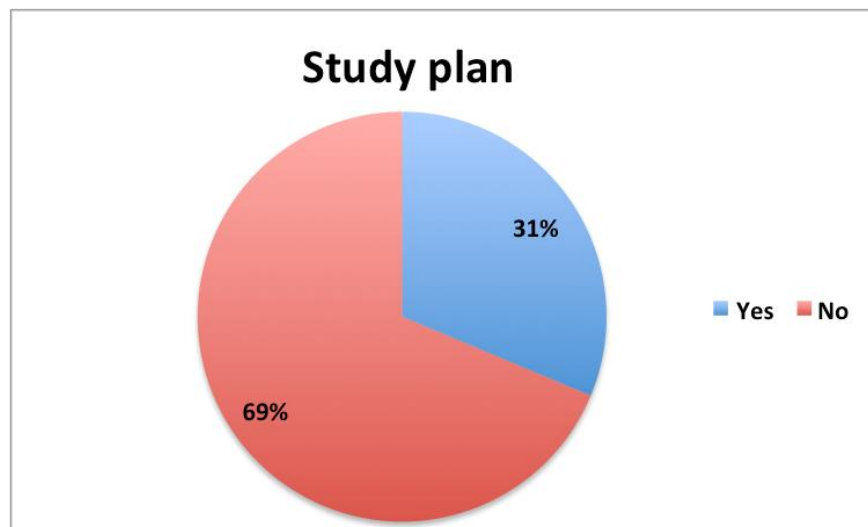
Figure 4.7: Study career plans

Figure 4.7 reveals that most women in the three selected petroleum companies in Gabon (69%) did not want to continue their studies with the goal of increasing their knowledge and chances of promotion; only 31% of them were planning to pursue further studies. Considering the qualification levels illustrated in Figure 4.6, most respondents were already qualified and did not wish to continue studying. It is deduced that the majority of women in the three selected petroleum companies in Gabon are qualified, while others have plans for studying further which will improve their professional career progression.

➢ **Section C: Factors affecting women's career progression into management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector**

This section of the questionnaire elaborates upon particular questions and statements obtained from the literature reviewed for this study. The researcher utilised the Likert rating scale method. Participants chose their answers along a scale of ratings from 1 to 4, with these meanings: 1 represented "Strongly disagree" or "Not a barrier"; 2 represented "Disagree" or "A minor barrier"; 3 represented "Agree" or "A barrier"; and, finally, 4 represented "Strongly agree" or "A major barrier". For the descriptive statistics used in this study, the T-Test method was used for statements 11 to 14. The purpose was to see whether there was (or was not) significance in the results, when p-value<0.05, between categories and factors obtained from the questionnaires linked to the research questions. The information gathered from participants are detailed here:

4.3.1 Women in training and mentorship

The first category, namely women in training and mentorship, reflected one of the four research sub-questions of this study. It concerned all the information collected from participants regarding the training programmes offered by the three selected petroleum companies in Gabon and the importance of mentorship.

Q8: Does your organisation offer you training/mentorship programmes?
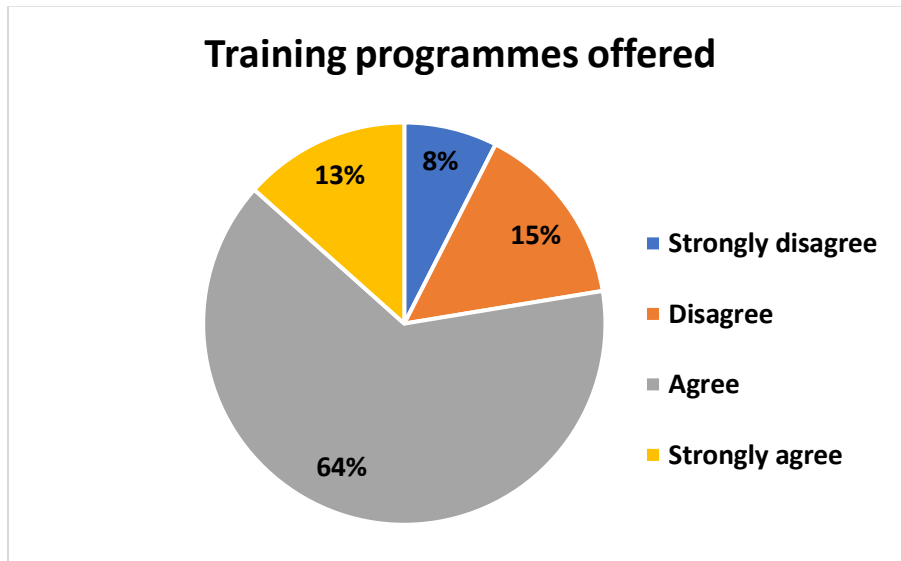
Figure 4.8: Training and/or mentorship programmes

Illustrating training and/or mentorship programmes offered, Figure 4.8 demonstrates that most of the respondents representing 8% strongly disagree that the selected petroleum companies provide them with training and/or mentorship programmes; 15% disagree; 64% agree; and only 13% strongly agree that training and/or mentorship programs are offered. This shows that the majority of women employed in the selected Gabonese petroleum companies had been offered training and/or mentorship programmes.

Q9: How many times in a year has the company offered you training/mentorship programmes?
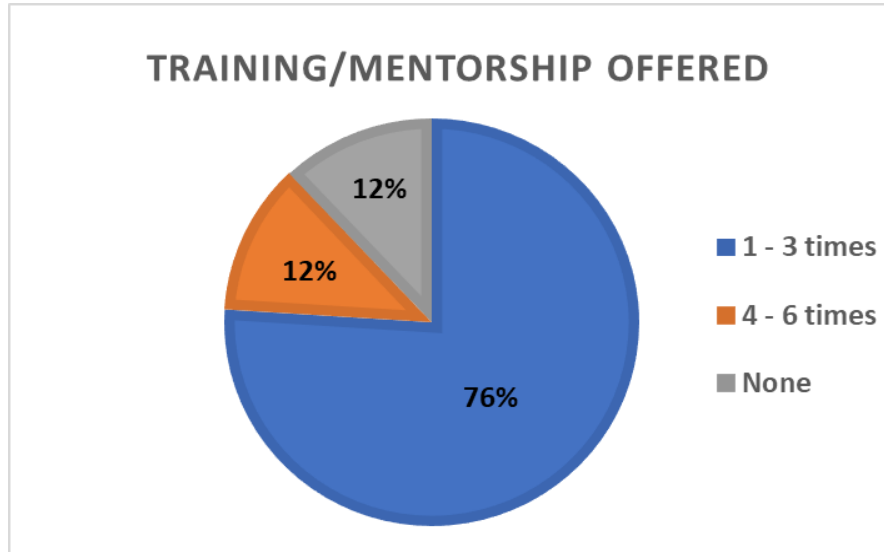
Figure 4.9: Frequency of offering of training/mentorship programmes

The results from Figure 4.9 show that 12% of respondents indicated that they were not offered training programmes; however, the majority of women (76%) have been trained and/or mentored at least one to three times per year. Finally, a few women (12%) reported receiving training/mentoring programmes four to six times per year. Hence, most of women in the three selected petroleum companies in Gabon were offered training/mentoring programmes one to three times per year.

Statement 10: Support and guidance from a mentor is very important
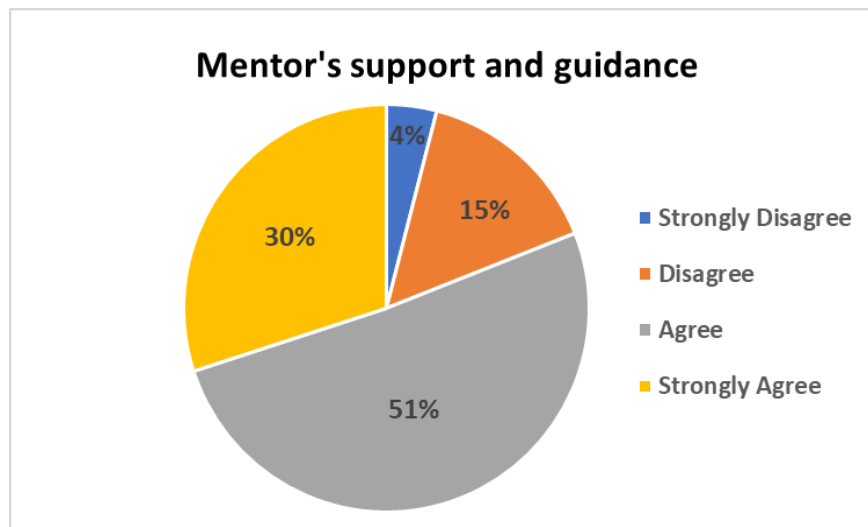
Figure 4.10: Importance of mentor's support and guidance

In Figure 4.10, the results show that only 4% of the respondents strongly disagree that support and guidance from a mentor is very important while 15% of them disagree with this same statement. However, 51% of the respondents agree that support and guidance from a mentor is very important; and 30% strongly agree this same statement. Three-quarters of women in the three selected petroleum companies in Gabon confirmed that support and guidance from a mentor is very important.

Statement 11: The fact that a mentor is a male or female can influence women during training/mentorship programmes
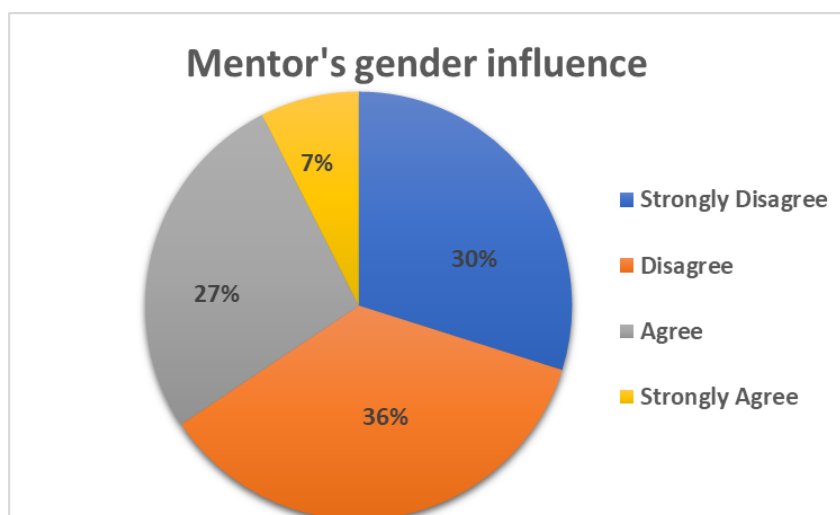
Figure 4.11: Mentor's gender influence during training

Figure 4.11 illustrates that 30% of women strongly disagree that a mentor's gender can influence them during training programmes, while 36% disagree with this statement. However, some women agree and strongly agree to this statement (respectively 27% and 7%). Consequently, an overwhelming percentage of respondents were of the view that a mentor's gender does not influence training programmes in the three selected petroleum companies in Gabon.

4.3.2 Perception towards women in top management

The second category, perceptions towards women in top management, was replicates one of the four research sub-questions of this research study. This part presents all information grouped from respondents regarding the different obstacles confronting women in management due to employees' perception about women reaching top management positions in the three selected petroleum companies in Gabon.

Statement 14.1: Lack of mentoring/coaching may be a barrier to the career progression of women into management positions in the organisation
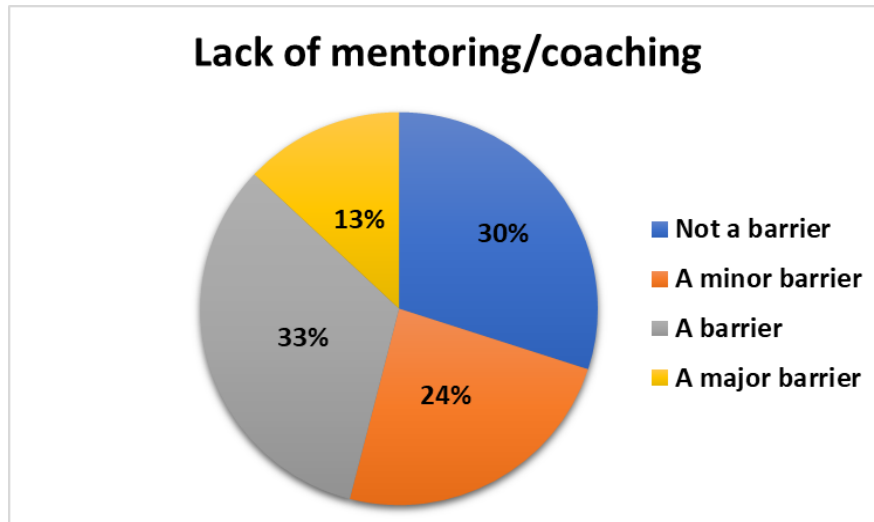
Figure 4.12: Lack of mentoring/coaching may be a barrier

Figure 4.12 shows that 30% of women working in the three selected petroleum companies in Gabon do not consider a lack of mentoring/coaching affecting their career progression into management positions, while 24% of them considered this a minor barrier. However, 33% of women regarded a lack of mentoring/coaching as a barrier to their career progression into management positions; and 13% considered this lack as a major barrier. Most respondents confirmed that a lack of mentoring/coaching was not a barrier to their career progression into management positions.

Statement 14.5: Job characteristics may be a barrier to the career progression of women into management positions in the organisation
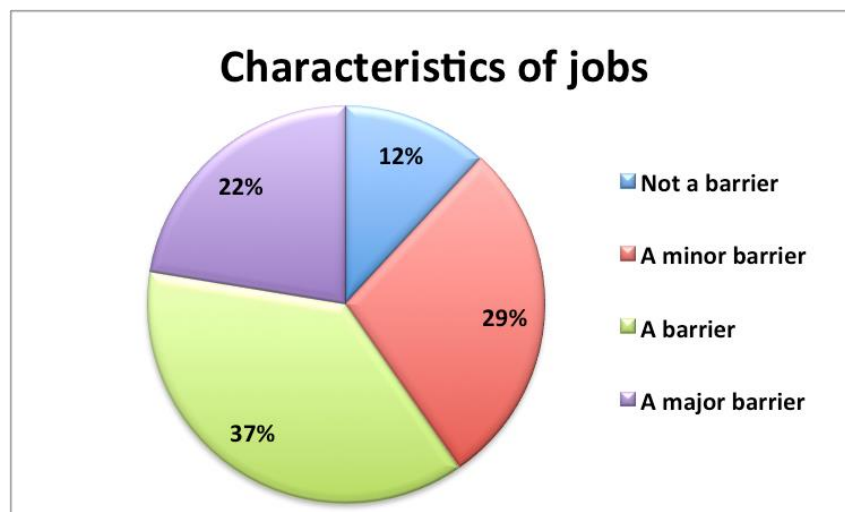
Figure 4.13: Job characteristics may be a barrier

Jobs duties and responsibilities, but also other characteristics of the workplace, like irregular hours or travel, were not always regarded as beneficial for the employee. Figure 4.13 shows that 29% of respondents believed that characteristics of jobs were a minor barrier, while 12% did not consider these as a barrier at all. Conversely, 37% of women agreed that job characteristics were a barrier preventing them from reaching top positions in management; and 22% of women regarded job features are a major barrier to their career progression. Therefore, most women employees in the three selected petroleum companies in Gabon considered certain job characteristics as a barrier affecting their progress to attain top management positions.

Statement 14.6: Sexual harassment may be a barrier to the career progression of women into management positions in the organisation
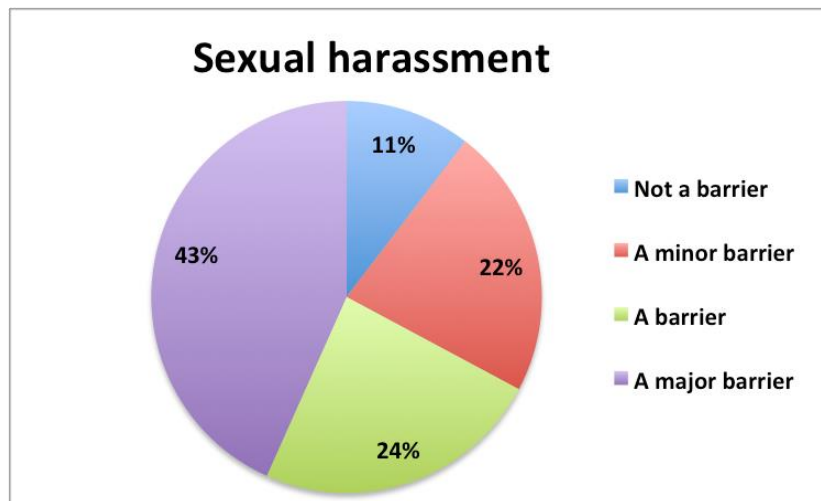
Figure 4.14: Sexual harassment may be a barrier

Figure 4.14 illustrates that, of 71 respondents (with 4 respondents missing this question), 22% of participants believed that sexual harassment was a minor barrier affecting their advancement at work, while 11% did not regard this as a barrier at all. Nevertheless, 24% of participants judged that sexual harassment at work was a barrier affecting their advancement into management; and 43% of participants considered that sexual harassment was a major barrier for them. Hence, almost half of women reported that sexual harassment was a major barrier to their progression in the three selected petroleum companies in Gabon.

Statement 14.7: Preferences toward gender, cultures and traditions may be a barrier to women's career progression
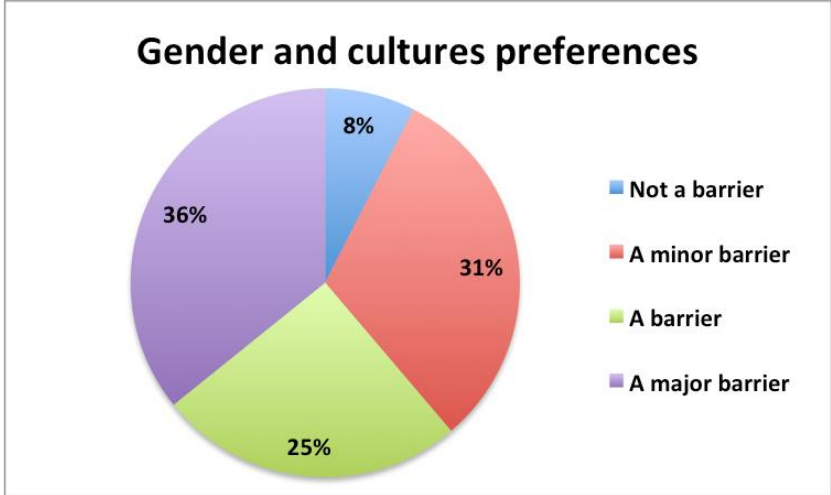
Figure 4.15: Influence of gender, cultures and traditions may be a barrier

Figure 4.15 shows that many participants (31%) believed that gender, cultures and traditions were a minor barrier affecting their chances of attaining management positions, while 8% did not regard those as barriers at all. However, 25% agreed that preferences of gender, culture and tradition constituted a barrier for women in their advancement to management in the petroleum sector; and 36% of the respondents regarded those preferences as a major barrier for them. Clearly, more women considered these influences (gender, cultures and traditions) as significant barriers to their reaching top management positions in the Gabonese petroleum companies.

Statement 15.4: Women play an important role in the workplace
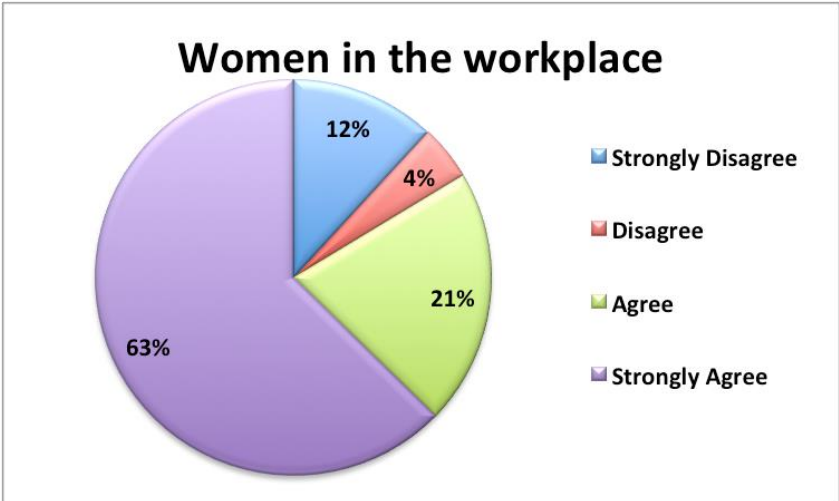
Figure 4.16: Importance of women's role in the workplace

Figure 4.16 shows that 12% of participants strongly disagree that women play an important role like their participation in the workplace; and 4% of participants disagree with this statement. By contrast, 63% strongly agree that women's involvement in the workplace in the Gabonese petroleum companies is important; and 21% agree with this statement. Consequently, women are regarded as significant owing to their roles in the workplace in the three selected Gabonese petroleum companies.

Q16: How many times have you been promoted to a new position in the organisation?
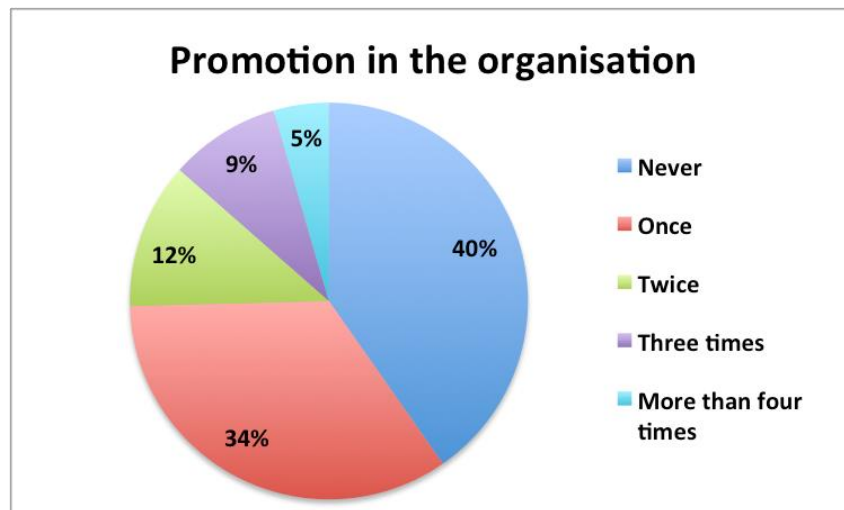
Figure 4.17: Promotion in the petroleum organisation

In Figure 4.17, it is clear that the majority of women (40%) in the selected petroleum companies were never promoted to a new position in their workplace; and 34% were promoted only once to a higher position. Furthermore, 12% were promoted twice to a new position; 9% were promoted three times; and only 5% were promoted more than four times. So, most of the women respondents had received a promotion in the three selected Gabonese petroleum companies.

4.3.3 Gender roles impacting on women

The category entitled 'gender roles impacting on women, reflecting one of the four research sub-questions, was all information gathered from participants regarding the advantages of males compared to women in their efforts to reach top management positions in the three selected petroleum companies in Gabon.

Statement 12: Male colleagues are more advantaged than women regarding training/mentorship programmes
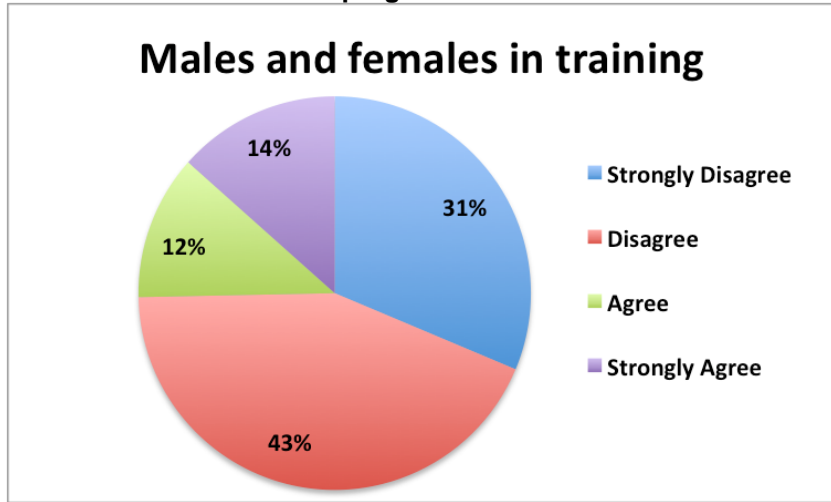
Figure 4.18: Males are more advantaged than women in training/mentorship programmes

Figure 4.18 illustrates the opinion of participants regarding their gender treatment in training/ mentorship programmes. About 31% of women strongly disagreed that men were more advantaged regarding training and/or mentorship programmes offered by the three selected petroleum companies in Gabon; and 43% disagreed that men enjoyed a greater advantage than they did for training and/or mentorship programmes. However, 12% of participants completely agreed with this statement, while 14% strongly agreed. It therefore appears that three-quarters of women (74%) disagreed that men were more advantaged than women when it concerned training and/or mentorship programmes, while approximately a quarter (26%) agreed that their male colleagues were advantaged.

Statement 13: Male colleagues are more advantaged than women regarding promotion offers in the organisation
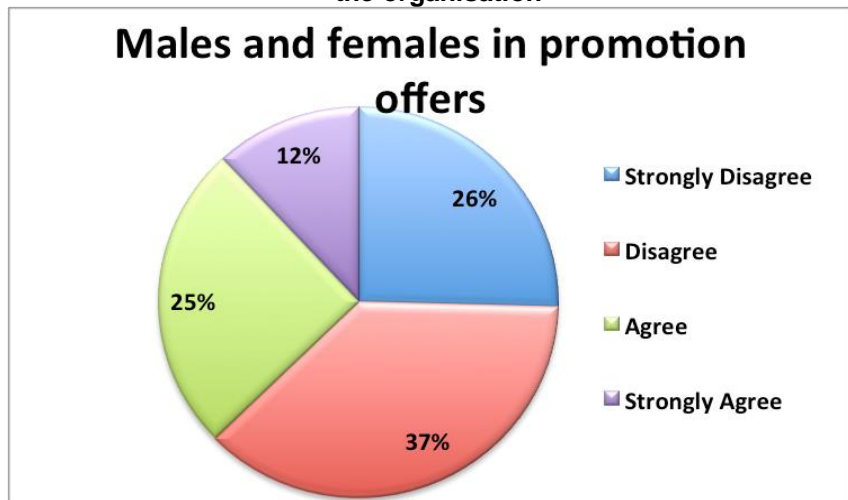
Figure 4.19: Male colleagues are more advantaged than women in promotion

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In Figure 4.19, 26% of respondents strongly disagreed that their male colleagues were more advantaged than female colleagues concerning promotion offers in the three selected petroleum companies in Gabon, while 37% of respondents disagreed with this statement. Still, 25% of respondents agreed that males had more opportunities for promotion than females; and 12% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement. Thus, while 63% of respondents disagreed that male colleagues were advantaged for promotions, 37% perceived males to be advantaged.

Statement 14.8: Family responsibilities may be a barrier to the career progression of women into management positions in the organisation
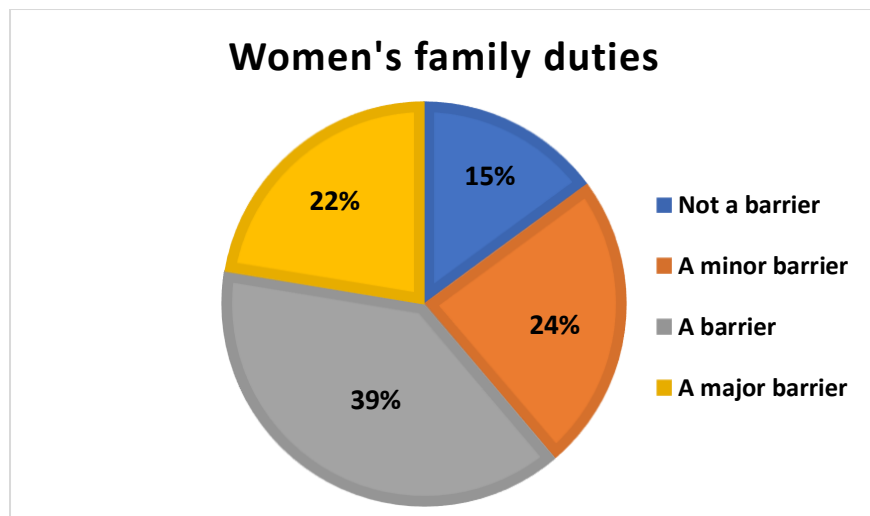
Figure 4.20: Family duties may be a barrier to women's career progression

Figure 4.20 shows that 15% of respondents regarded family responsibilities (such as child care, married life, family care) as not being a barrier at all regarding their career advancement, while 24% considered that family responsibilities were a minor barrier to their career advancement. Conversely, a relevant number of participants, representing 39% of women, believed that family responsibilities were a barrier to women's career advancement; and 22% thought that family responsibilities were a major barrier for them. So, the overwhelming percentage of women (61%) working in the three selected petroleum companies in Gabon believed that family duties were an obstacle to their career advancement.

Statement 15.1: Gender discrimination is a constraint to women's career advancement
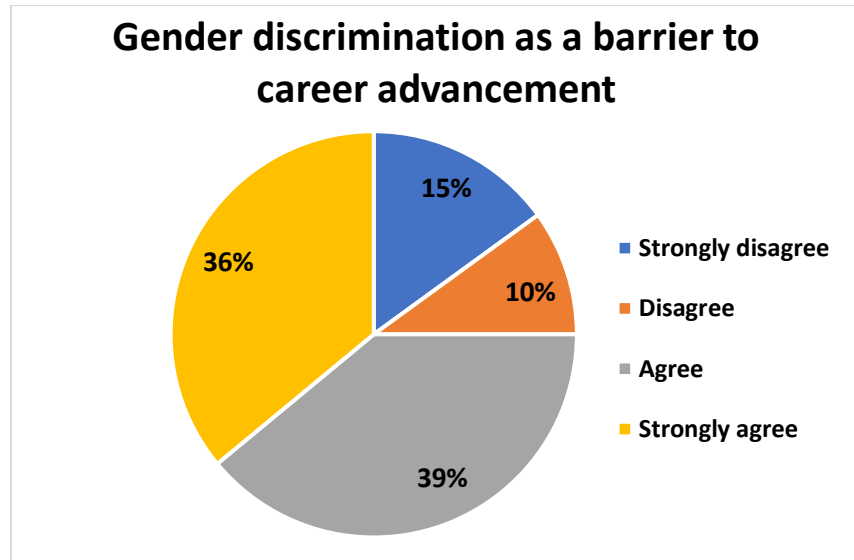
Figure 4.21: Gender discrimination as a barrier to women's career progress

Figure 4.21 shows that 15% percent of women strongly disagreed that gender discrimination was a constraint on their career advancement; and 10% of the respondents disagreed with this statement. By contrast, 39% of the respondents agreed with the statement that gender discrimination was a constraint on their career advancement; and 36% strongly agreed with this statement. In summary, the majority of respondents considered that gender discrimination was a barrier to women's career advancement in the three selected petroleum companies in Gabon.

Statement 15.2: Gender stereotypes of women limit them from career advancement
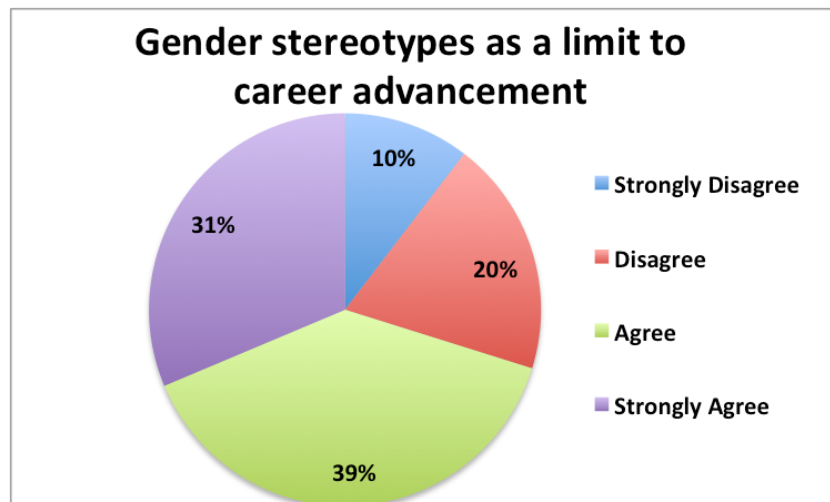
Figure 4.22: Gender stereotypes as a barrier for women's career advancement

Figure 4.22 elucidates that 10% of women strongly disagreed that gender stereotypes against women limited their career advancement, while 20% disagreed with this statement. By contrast,

39% of respondents agreed that gender stereotypes against women limited their career advancement; and 31% of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement. Consequently, it can be confirmed that most of the women agreed that gender stereotypes against women limited their career advancement in the three selected Gabonese petroleum companies.

4.3.4 Career progression for women in the Gabonese petroleum sector

In the category entitled 'career progression for women in the Gabonese petroleum sector', representing one of the four research sub-questions, information from respondents was grouped regarding the different barriers that women confronted in their careers which hindered them from reaching top management positions in the three Gabonese petroleum companies.

Statement 14.2: Lack of equality in training may be a barrier to the career progression of women into management positions in the organisation
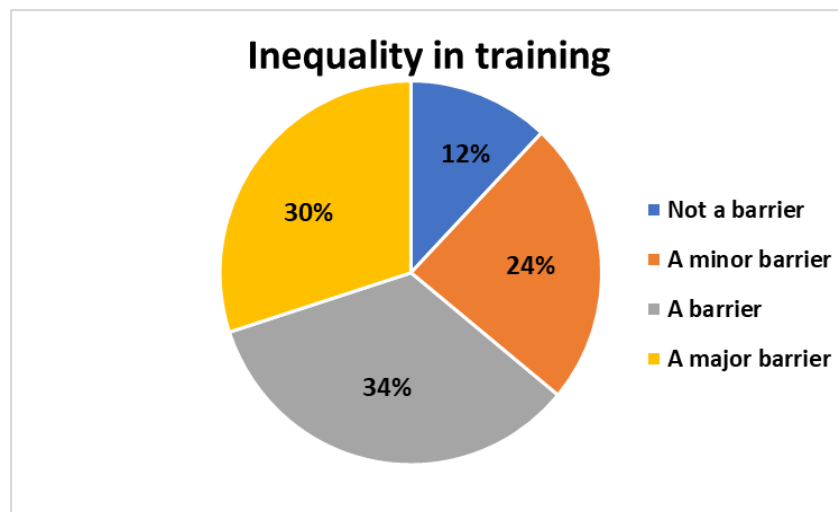
Figure 4.23: Inequality in training may be a barrier affecting women's career progression

Figure 4.23 shows that 12% of respondents believed that inequality in training in the selected petroleum companies was not a barrier affecting their career progression, while 24% considered that inequality in training was a minor barrier. However, 34% considered that inequality in training created a barrier to their career progression, while 30% confirmed that inequality in training was a major barrier to their career progression. Therefore, the majority of women were of the view that a lack of equality in training constituted a barrier to their career progression in the three selected petroleum companies in Gabon.

Statement 14.3: Lack of equality in remuneration may be a barrier to the career progression of women into management positions in the organisation
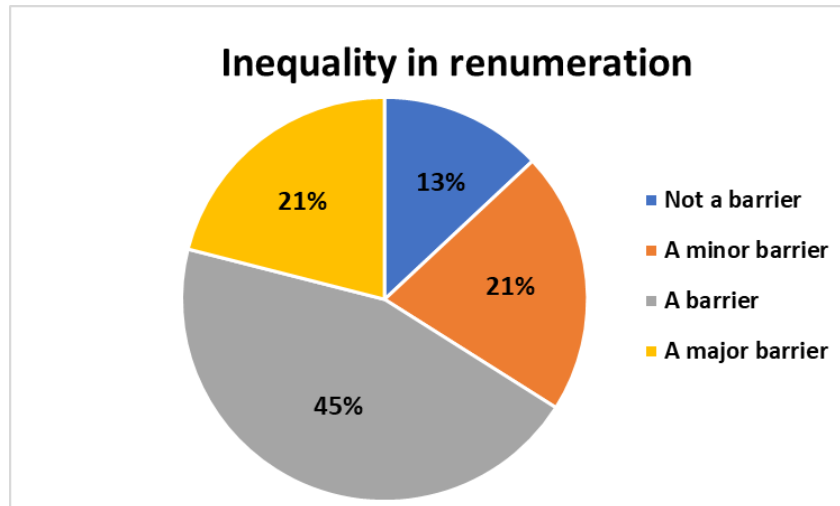
Figure 4.24: Inequality in remuneration may be a barrier affecting women's career progression

Figure 4.24 reflects that 13% of respondents believed that a lack of equality in remuneration was not a barrier to women's career progression, while 21% thought that a lack of equality in remuneration constituted a minor barrier affecting their career progression. Conversely, 45% of respondents considered that a lack of remuneration equality was a barrier to their career progression; and 21% of respondents judged unequal remuneration to be a major barrier to women's career progression. Therefore, most of the respondents confirmed that inequality in remuneration for women working in the three selected Gabonese petroleum companies was a barrier to women's career progression.

Statement 14.4: A lack of support systems at work may be a barrier to the career progression of women into management positions in the organisation
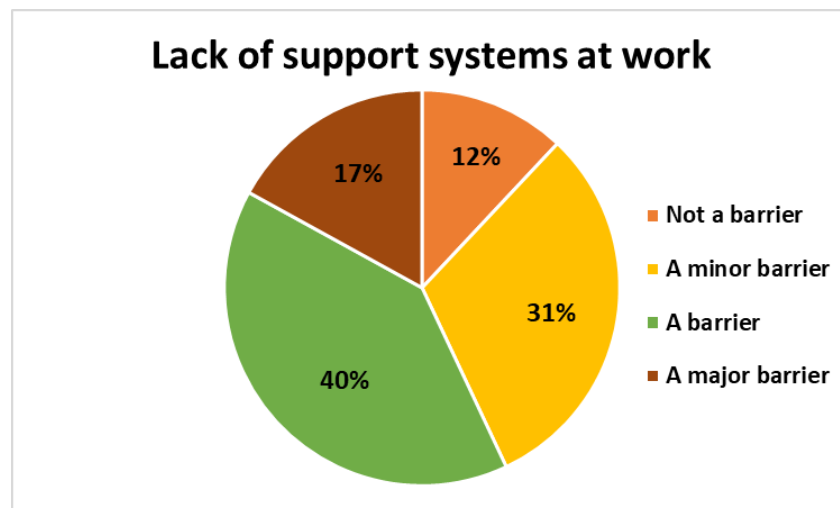
Figure 4.25: Lack of support systems at work may be a barrier to women's career progression

Figure 4.25 demonstrates the opinion of participants regarding the lack of support systems at work. About 12% of respondents believed that the lack of support systems in the selected petroleum companies, like computers programmes and new software, was not a barrier to their career progression, while 31% of respondents thought that the lack of support systems was a minor barrier for them. It is notable that 40% of respondents confirmed that they regarded the lack of support systems at work as a barrier to their career progression, with 17% of respondents more strongly confirming that this lack was a major barrier for them. As result, for the majority of women working in the three selected petroleum companies in Gabon, the lack of support systems at work is regarded as a barrier affecting their career progression into management positions.

Statement 15.3: Females face significant obstacles to career advancement, compared to males in my organisation
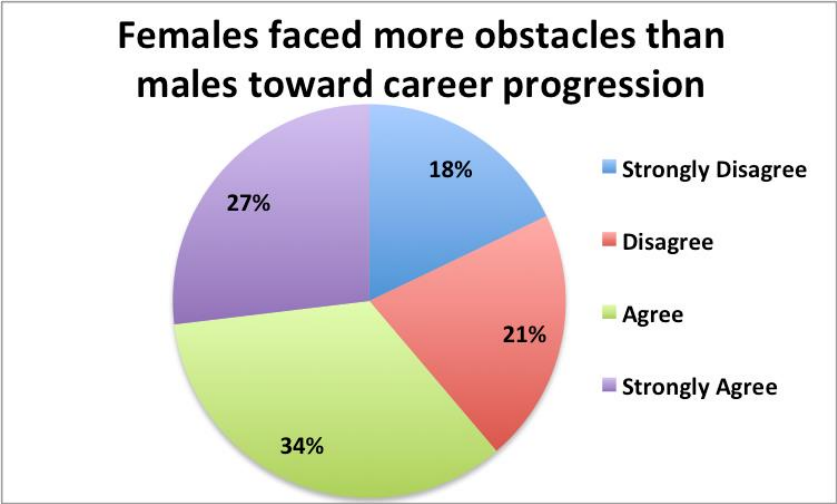
Figure 4.26: Females face obstacles for their career advancement

As Figure 4.26 shows, 18% of respondents strongly disagreed that women faced significant obstacles to career advancement compared to men, while 21% of respondents disagreed with this statement. Nonetheless, 34% of respondents agreed that females faced significant obstacles to their career advancement compared to males; and 27% strongly agreed with this statement. These findings indicate that most women consider that they struggle more than men to deal with various obstacles to advancing their careers in the three selected Gabonese petroleum companies.

Statement 15.5: My organisation is committed to Government legislation (Gabonese Labour Code Act 2000) to promote women's empowerment
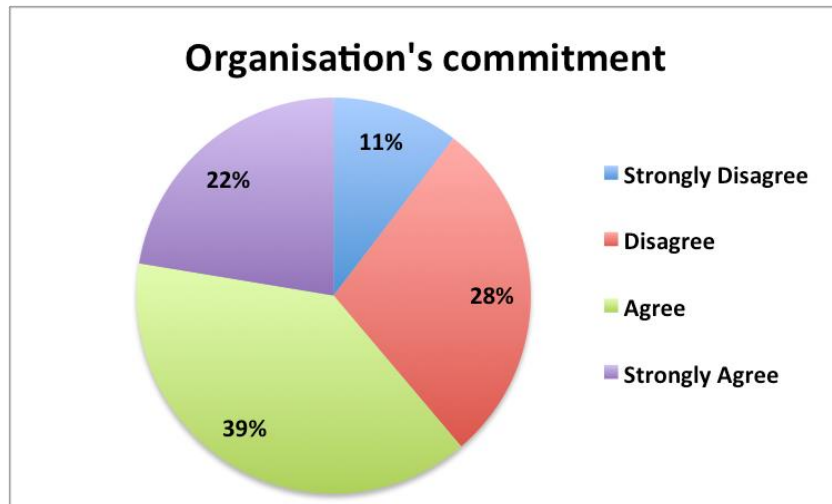
Figure 4.27: Organisation's commitment to Government legislation to promote women's empowerment

In Figure 4.27, it is illustrated that 11% of women strongly disagreed that the three selected petroleum companies for which they worked were committed to the Gabonese Labour Code Act 2000 to promote women's empowerment, while 28% disagreed with this statement. It was of interest, though, that 39% of respondents agreed that the petroleum companies were committed to Government legislation; and 22% strongly agreed with this statement. This confirms that the majority of women working in the three selected Gabonese petroleum companies agreed that petroleum companies were committed to the Gabonese government legislation.

Statement 15.6: Government legislation, such as the Gabonese Labour Code Act No.12 of 2000, helps to promote women's rights
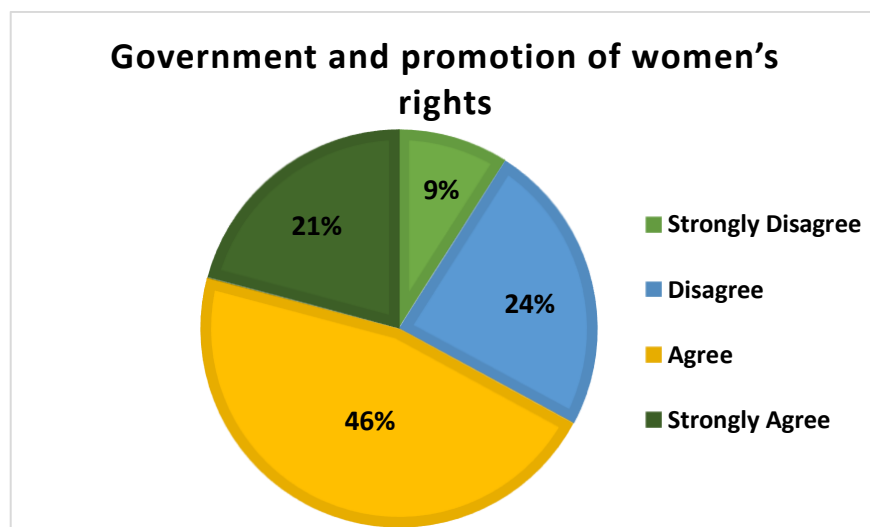
Figure 4.28: Government legislation and promotion of women's rights

Figure 4.28 demonstrates that only 9% of women strongly disagreed that Gabonese government legislation contributed towards promoting women's rights in the workplace. Likewise, 24% of respondents disagreed with this statement. On the other hand, 46% of women agreed that Gabonese government legislation supported the promotion of women's rights in the workplace, and 21% strongly agreed with this statement. Thus, a large majority of women (67%) concurred that the Gabonese government legislation promoted women's rights in the workplace.

4.3.5 Main quantitative findings

In the context of this study on women's career progression in Gabonese petroleum companies, the main findings from the analysis of quantitative data gathered from the targeted research sample of female employees were the following:

- Most women employees (58%) were single. About one-third (33%) of women held a supervisory position; and most of them (51%) had been working for less than four years in the selected petroleum companies. About three-quarters (72%) of the women had worked in the same position for between one and four years. The workplace was often dominated by women between the ages of 26 and 45 years, with the majority qualified with a bachelors, honours or master's degree. Also, the majority of women were already qualified, while several others had plans to pursue their studies.
- Training and mentorship programmes were offered to the majority of women at least one to three times per year; and, for 66% of the respondents, the gender of the mentor did not influence women's perception of the training or mentorship programmes.
- For 81% of the women, support and guidance from a mentor was very important for their career progression.
- The majority of respondents confirmed that a lack of mentoring/coaching was not a barrier to their career progression into management positions.
- Of the respondents, most of women believed that barriers affecting their career progression to management positions included several job characteristics (59%) and sexual harassment (43%).
- Most women considered preferences of gender, culture and tradition as major barriers to their progress to reach top management positions in the selected Gabonese petroleum companies.
- That women played an important role in the selected petroleum companies was confirmed by 84% of the respondents.
- Most of women had received a promotion in the selected Gabonese petroleum companies.
- Three-quarters of women (74%) disagreed that men were more advantaged than they were for training and/or mentorship programs, while a quarter (26%) agreed that their male colleagues were advantaged.
- The majority of respondents (63%) disagreed that male colleagues were advantaged during promotions, while more than a third (37%) perceived males to be more advantaged.

- About 61% of women considered family responsibilities as a barrier to their career progression.
- Gender discrimination and gender stereotyping were perceived by women as barriers limiting their career advancement.
- The majority of women (64%) agreed that inequality in training was a barrier for their career progression in the selected petroleum companies in Gabon.
- Remuneration inequality was also considered by 66% of the respondents to be a barrier to women's career progression.
- The lack of support systems at work was perceived by 57% of women as a barrier to their career progression.
- For 61% of women, the three selected petroleum companies were committed to abiding by the Gabonese government legislation.
- A large majority of women (67%) concurred that the Gabonese government legislation promoted women's rights in the workplace.
- The majority of women struggled more than men to manage various obstacles to advance their careers in the selected Gabonese petroleum companies.

Factor analysis summarizes collected information to explain relationships and patterns (Yong & Pearce, 2013: 79). In this investigation, factor analysis was conducted on the 16 items of the questionnaire and the four questions of the interview for these purposes: 1. to determine if opportunities exist for women employees to go on training to groom them for management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector; 2. to determine if there is bias towards women employees in the Gabonese petroleum sector that prevents them from being sent on training for management positions; 3. to identify the influence gender roles can have on the recognition of women employees applying for management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector; and 4., finally, to determine the factors that can positively influence the career progression of women employees in the petroleum sector in Gabon. Furthermore, the researcher and statistician ran a factor analysis on statements 11 to 13 and all the statements in Question 14 of the questionnaire. Statement 10 was discarded by the statistician as having no effect on the analysis. Three factors contributing to the 16 items in the questionnaire were retained as mentioned above and described in Table 4.3 below:

Table 4.3: Factor analysis

Factor titles	Descriptions
Factor 1 **Women's constraints at the workplace** (Cronbach alpha coefficient is 0.75)	This factor describes the different barriers, such as lack of mentorship, discrimination, marginalisation, and the glass ceiling confronted by women who consequently struggled to reach top management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon.
Factor 2 **Masculinity vs. femininity in the workplace** (Cronbach alpha coefficient is 0.67)	This factor designates the main disadvantages, like male dominance, culture and tradition, gender role, family conflict and commitment affecting women in the petroleum sector, when men, their colleagues, are privileged.
Factor 3 **Government and organisation's commitment towards women** (Cronbach alpha coefficient is 0.75)	This factor demonstrates the role of government in women's emancipation. This relates to women's rights in the workplace and organisation's commitment. It relates to the conditions under which women work and how they are treated in the professional world; and the organisation's involvement in striving for women's emancipation.

The Cronbach alpha coefficient for all three factors was above the value of 0.65 and considered to be reliable (Goforth, 2015). To underpin the reliability and validity of all information gathered from women employees in the selected petroleum sector in Gabon, it is essential to indicate the association or disassociation existing with the factors analysed and the variables/elements from the four categories identified through the statistical significance level (p-value<0.05 or 0.01).

In Table 4.4 below, the result shows a significant correlation with a p-value<0.014, between lack of mentorship/coaching being a barrier and women's constraints at the workplace factor.

Table 4.4: Lack of mentoring/coaching may be a barrier to the career progression of women into management positions in the organisation

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	p-value	t	df	p-value (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
REGR factor score	Equal variances assumed	6.229	.015	-2.475	68	.016	-.57167593	.23101313	-1.03265546	-.11069640

		F	p-value	t	df	p-value (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Females' constraints	Equal variances not assumed			-2.522	64.942	.014	-.57167593	.22666909	-1.02437306	-.11897880
REGR factor score Males vs Females	Equal variances assumed	3.279	.075		68	.192	-.31394657	.23816738	-.78920217	.16130903
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.294	57.680	.201	-.31394657	.24252791	-.79947629	.17158315
REGR factor score Govern-ment/ Organisa-tion	Equal variances assumed	.003	.959	-.292	68	.771	-.07037797	.24104005	-.55136591	.41060997
	Equal variances not assumed			-.292	66.688	.772	-.07037797	.24137809	-.55221209	.41145616

Likewise, Table 4.5 reveals a strong correlation between job characteristics being a barrier and women's constraints at the workplace factor at $p<0.002$ and $p<0.001$ between job characteristics being a barrier and masculinity versus femininity at the workplace factor.

Table 4.5: Job characteristics may be barriers to the career progression of women into management positions in the organisation

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	p-value	t	df	p-value (2-tailed)	Mean Differ-ence	Std. Error Differ-ence	Lower	Upper
REGR factor score Females' constraints	Equal variances assumed	1.522	.222	-3.252	68	.002	-.74345508	.22862818	-1.19967551	-.28723465
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.179	53.445	.002	-.74345508	.23386761	-1.21244290	-.27446726
REGR factor score Males vs Females	Equal variances assumed	.673	.415	-3.514	68	.001	-.79454202	.22608711	-1.24569182	-.34339222
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.648	64.662	.001	-.79454202	.21779513	-1.22955209	-.35953195
REGR factor score	Equal variances assumed	.046	.830	-1.608	68	.113	-.38778042	.24122144	-.86913030	.09356947

				-1.62 2	59.7 26	.110	- .3877804 2	.239124 55	- .8661458 3	.0905849 9
Govern- ment/ Organisa- tion	Equal variances not assumed									

Table 4.6 below, demonstrates there is a high significance relationship, p<0, between sexual harassment as a barrier and women's constraints at the workplace factor.

Table 4.6: Sexual harassment may be a barrier to the career progression of women into management positions in the organisation

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	p-value	t	df	p-value (2-tailed)	Mean Differ-ence	Std. Error Differ-ence	Lower	Upper
REGR factor score Females' constraints	Equal variances assumed	3.577	.063	- 4.63 9	68	.000	- 1.03633 335	.223412 65	- 1.48214 634	- .59052 035
	Equal variances not assumed			- 4.30 9	36. 47 8	.000	- 1.03633 335	.240516 48	- 1.52390 147	- .54876 523
REGR factor score Males vs Females	Equal variances assumed	1.717	.195	- .495	68	.622	- .126734 66	.255872 88	- .637321 05	.38385 173
	Equal variances not assumed			- .537	54. 02 0	.594	- .126734 66	.236218 40	- .600319 92	.34685 061
REGR factor score Governme nt/Organis ation	Equal variances assumed	.066	.798	- 1.45 3	68	.151	- .366855 34	.252444 00	- .870599 51	.13688 882
	Equal variances not assumed			- 1.55 2	52. 05 2	.127	- .366855 34	.236407 30	- .841230 01	.10751 932

Table 4.7 shows that preferences of gender, cultures and traditions as a barrier have a high significant correlation (p<0.002) with women's constraints in the workplace.

Table 4.7: Preferences of gender, cultures and traditions may be barriers to the career progression of women into management positions in the organisation

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	p-value	t	df	p-value (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
REGR factor score Females' constraints	Equal variances assumed	.789	.377	-3.293	68	.002	-.75152534	.22823983	-1.20697083	-.29607986
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.218	53.390	.002	-.75152534	.23353415	-1.21985568	-.28319501
REGR factor score Males vs Females	Equal variances assumed	3.140	.081	-.737	68	.463	-.18049358	.24478577	-.66895598	.30796881
	Equal variances not assumed			-.772	65.817	.443	-.18049358	.23379314	-.64730094	.28631377
REGR factor score Government/ Organisation	Equal variances assumed	.132	.718	-1.288	68	.202	-.31282645	.24281688	-.79735999	.17170709
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.329	63.742	.188	-.31282645	.23532731	-.78298351	.15733061

Table 4.8 illustrates a high significance relationship, with p<0.001, between a lack of equality in training as a barrier, and women's constraints in the workplace.

Table 4.8: Lack of equality in training may be a barrier for the career progression of women into management positions in the organisation

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	p-value	t	df	p-value (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
REGR factor score	Equal variances assumed	2.204	.142	-3.522	68	.001	-.80714770	.22914613	-1.26440169	-.34989372

Females' constraints	Equal variances not assumed			-3.394	46.747	.001	-.80714770	.23783538	-1.28567920	-.32861620
REGR factor score Males vs Females	Equal variances assumed	5.627	.021	-.746	68	.458	-.18503553	.24816354	-.68023818	.31016711
	Equal variances not assumed			-.821	66.549	.415	-.18503553	.22541238	-.63501653	.26494546
REGR factor score Government/ Organisation	Equal variances assumed	.011	.917	-1.804	68	.076	-.43908835	.24342016	-.92482571	.04664901
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.837	55.568	.072	-.43908835	.23906905	-.91808331	.03990661

Table 4.9 displays a significant correlation (with p<0,001 and p<0.044) between a lack of support systems as a barrier, women's constraints in the workplace, and government and an organisation's commitment towards women.

Table 4.9: Lack of support systems at work may be a barrier to the career progression of women into management positions in the organisation

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
						p-value (2-tailed)	Mean Differ-ence	Std. Error Differ-ence	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	p-value	t	df				Lower	Upper
REGR factor score Females' constraints	Equal variances assumed	8.724	.004	-3.634	68	.001	-.80375571	.22116058	-1.24507478	-.36243664
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.510	51.818	.001	-.80375571	.22897175	-1.26325966	-.34425176
REGR factor score Males vs Females	Equal variances assumed	.962	.330	-.076	68	.940	-.01839767	.24167616	-.50065494	.46385961
	Equal variances not assumed			-.078	67.671	.938	-.01839767	.23668071	-.49072828	.45393295
REGR factor score Government/Organis ation	Equal variances assumed	.584	.447	-2.047	68	.045	-.48011500	.23456872	-.94818960	-.01204039
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.049	66.215	.044	-.48011500	.23435567	-.94799288	-.01223711

To summarise the main results from the questionnaire, there are four categories covering all the outcomes and these are related to the research questions of this study. The researcher will analyse and justify, through the consistency of Cronbach's alpha coefficient, if there is a significant correlation with the factors named "women's constraints at the workplace"; "masculinity versus femininity at the workplace" and "government and organisation's commitment towards women" and the themes developed below in the qualitative data analysis results.

4.4 Qualitative results

For this section, the researcher read transcripts of 15 interviewees' answers, precisely 3 female and 12 male managers, several times. These were transcribed into a spreadsheet to capture the interesting or relevant information related to the review of literature. Subsequently, the researcher went through the written notes listing the different information of themes found. Once the themes list was completed, the researcher consolidated each code and described categories. Moreover, the categories were compared to distinguish between minor and major categories, according to their relevance.

Responses to the four open-ended questions based on the research questions and composed for the semi-structured interviews were interpreted through the interrelationships between the following themes: (1) women in training and mentorship; (2) perceptions towards women in top management; (3) gender roles impacting on women; and (4) career progression for women in the Gabonese petroleum sector. Each respondent's answers were presented in text boxes and those themes were analysed and interpreted; also, a comparison was made between 12 male managers' responses and 3 female managers' responses within the specific categories attained from replicated data to obtain answers to the research questions (Alhojailan, 2012: 40). The interpretation section begins with the first theme, women in training and mentorship.

4.4.1 Women in training and mentorship

The first question of the interview was: "What do you think your organisation could do to better to prepare women for leadership positions in the company?" The question related to the measures that should be taken to provide training opportunities to women employees to groom them for management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector. The goal of this question was to get different proposed solutions that could motivate women to strive to attain top management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector. In Figure 4.29, respondents' opinions are displayed in text boxes that the researcher used to organise and present the qualitative data gathered clearly

(Baaij, 2013: 525). The category that summarised the opinions appears in a vertical column alongside. Then, the categories obtained in each section are explained in main findings and grouped in a theme.
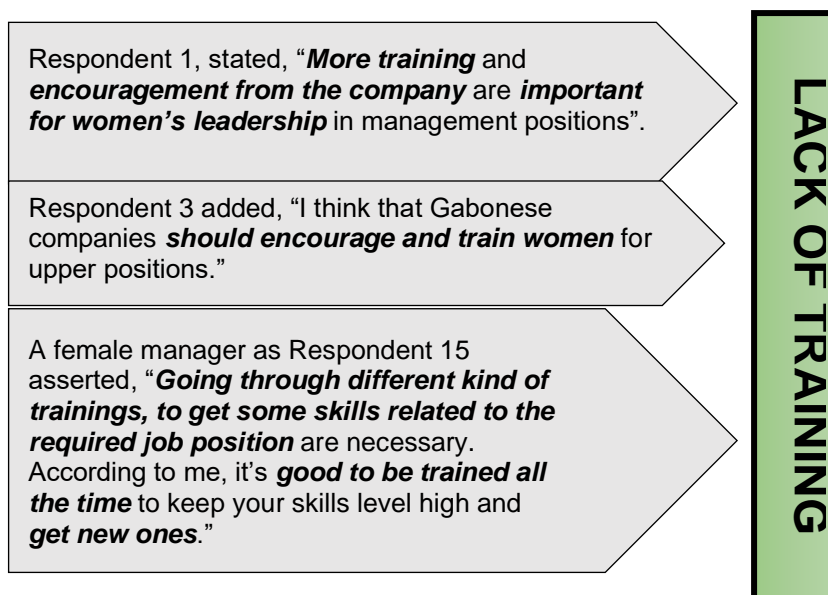
Figure 4.29: Lack of training in the petroleum companies in Gabon

The results in Figure 4.29, the words like "more training"; "encouragement from the company"; "important for women's leadership"; "should encourage and train women"; "going through different kind of trainings" (etc.) suggest that there is perception among some respondents of a deficiency of training. The proposed category to generalise all these meaning units is 'Lack of training' which is relevant in the petroleum companies in Gabon. Indeed, two male managers and one female manager recommended that women should be more encouraged to attend training programmes. According to the respondents, petroleum companies should be more and more frequently involved in offering training to women employees to improve their knowledge and acquire new skills.

Some respondents believed that training and/or mentorship programmes offered by the petroleum companies allowed women's emancipation in the professional world and created fairness in the workplace in the petroleum sector in Gabon.

Respondent 1 stated, "There are **many women in our company**, there is **no preference** regarding colour, gender, nationality, there is no judgment."

Respondent 2 said, "I think that **emancipating women is one of the company's roles**. The same way **they encourage men to progress** in their job position **they should also encourage women**. I think **that all training or skilling tools offered should be equitable for men like women** as well."

Respondent (woman manager 4) considered: "The **organisation encourages diversity of employees in top management** by helping the **management committee**'s group to be **led by women** employees where I am a member. Our mission is to go to schools, universities and institutions **to motivate young women to pursue their studies in sciences** to **become future engineers and managers** especially in the petroleum sector. **Women have an intellectual potential** and **need to be considered as men** in all sectors such as political, public and private."

A female manager (respondent 9), stated: "**Companies should create same trainings and mentorships for everybody, men and women**. To preserve **equality of chance** and to select only with **competence criteria, women should be encouraged and promoted to certain job positions.**"

A female (respondent 9) affirmed, "To have **the same programme than their male colleagues**, companies should **consider women at the same level** than their male colleagues".

Respondent 11 confirmed: "The **company prepares women to reach top management positions** considering **the responsibilities given to them** within the company."

Respondent 14 said, "The **company offers training** and **conferences to women to improve their skills** but also **learn something new.**"

TRAINING/MENTORING BENEFITS

Figure 4.30: Training and/or mentoring opportunities

Figure 4.30 shows through words and sentences like "emancipating women viewed as one of the company's roles"; "they encourage men to progress in their job positions, they should also encourage women"; "all training tools offered should be equitable for both men as women"; "same trainings and mentorships for everybody"; and so on. These are grouped in a category called 'Training and/or mentoring benefits. Four male and three female managers underlined the different opportunities (e.g., mentorship programmes, training and attending conferences) that companies could offer to women to contribute to their emancipation and ensure overall fairness in the petroleum sector in Gabon. In other words, training and/or mentorship programmes remain

important and beneficial for women's career progression, because they have the potential to create equality of chances in promotions for men and women in the workplace.

The main findings from the first question of the interview exposed firstly that managers believed that there is a lack of training and/or mentorship programmes offered by the Gabonese petroleum companies. According to the managers, women should be encouraged to attend frequent training and/or mentorship programmes. Most respondents, including men and women managers, agreed with this statement. Secondly, other respondents also considered that training and/or mentorship programmes offered by the petroleum companies were important because those programmes promoted women's emancipation. In fact, all three women managers, as well as men managers supported this argument. Then, some respondents, including female and male managers, declared that offering training and/or mentorship programmes to women working in the petroleum sector created fairness. Hence, the main findings maintain that training and/or mentorship programmes and support are beneficial for the emancipation of women and contribute to improve their equality of chances to be promoted in the petroleum industry. The appropriate theme found for this section was 'Women in training and mentorship'.

4.4.2 Perception towards women in top management

"Do you think that management positions (C.E.O., General Manager, Regional Manager, H.R Manager, Supervisors) in petroleum organisation should be considered according to the qualifications and competence than the gender?" is the third question of the interview about the employees' perception in the Gabonese petroleum sector regarding women employees reaching top management positions. The aim of this question was to determine the coherence or incoherence between qualifications, competence and gender regarding management positions. The different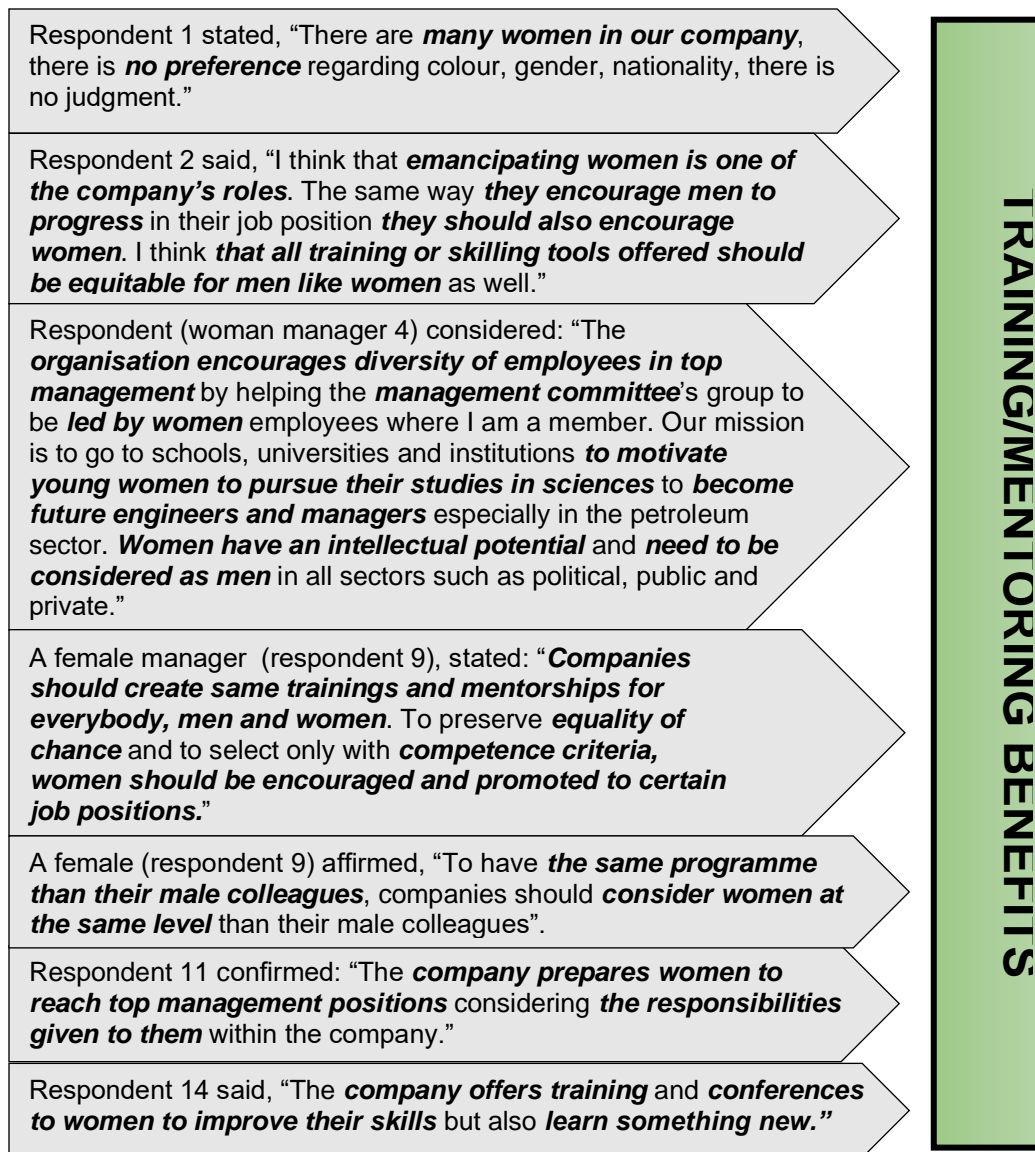 figures below represent and interpret the respondents' statements. The category proposed to summarise the opinions appears in a vertical column alongside. Afterwards, the categories obtained in each section are explained in main findings and grouped in a theme.

Respondent 1 considered: "Of course, everything is about *competency.* If someone *is competent, whatever the gender* is, *qualifications and experiences are the key* for management positions."

Respondent 2 acknowledged, "When it is about *qualifications and competence, gender is not important* and is not changing anything. Today, women proof enough *their value and participation in the labour force,* whatever the job positions they can fulfil them *according to their competence. Competence should be considered and not the gender* because a duty that a *man can fail, a woman can success* it, or the opposite."

Respondent 3 agreed, "Except our professional knowledge, we should have in addition *management competence* such *as how to manage and understand* your employees. *Gender is not important* regarding *qualifications and competence, otherwise this is discrimination."*

Respondent 5 admitted "I think that all *is about qualifications and competence,* they are playing the elementary role. *Concerning the gender, man or woman, it is not important.* In management positions, which are *responsibilities positions,* it is person's production at this post that is important."

A woman, Manager 9, declared, "I will say that organisations should *promote employees not according to the gender but to the management's capacities* of the individual, *capacities to assume responsibilities* rather than the gender."

Respondent 8 admitted, "The dominant are *qualifications and competence*, it is true that organisation's objectives should be considered too but the *gender does not oppose to management job positions.* The most important is the *contribution brought by the employee* to the organisation."

Respondent 10: "I say yes and without comments, *qualifications and competence* define your *potential and profit* for the organisation *whoever you are*."

Women Manager 15: "The *knowledge and know-how* are privileged therefore *constitute the competence and attitudes* of an individual. Everything is *function of the attitudes and competence*, the *intellectual facilities* that an individual will offer or invest at the service of his/her personal becoming."
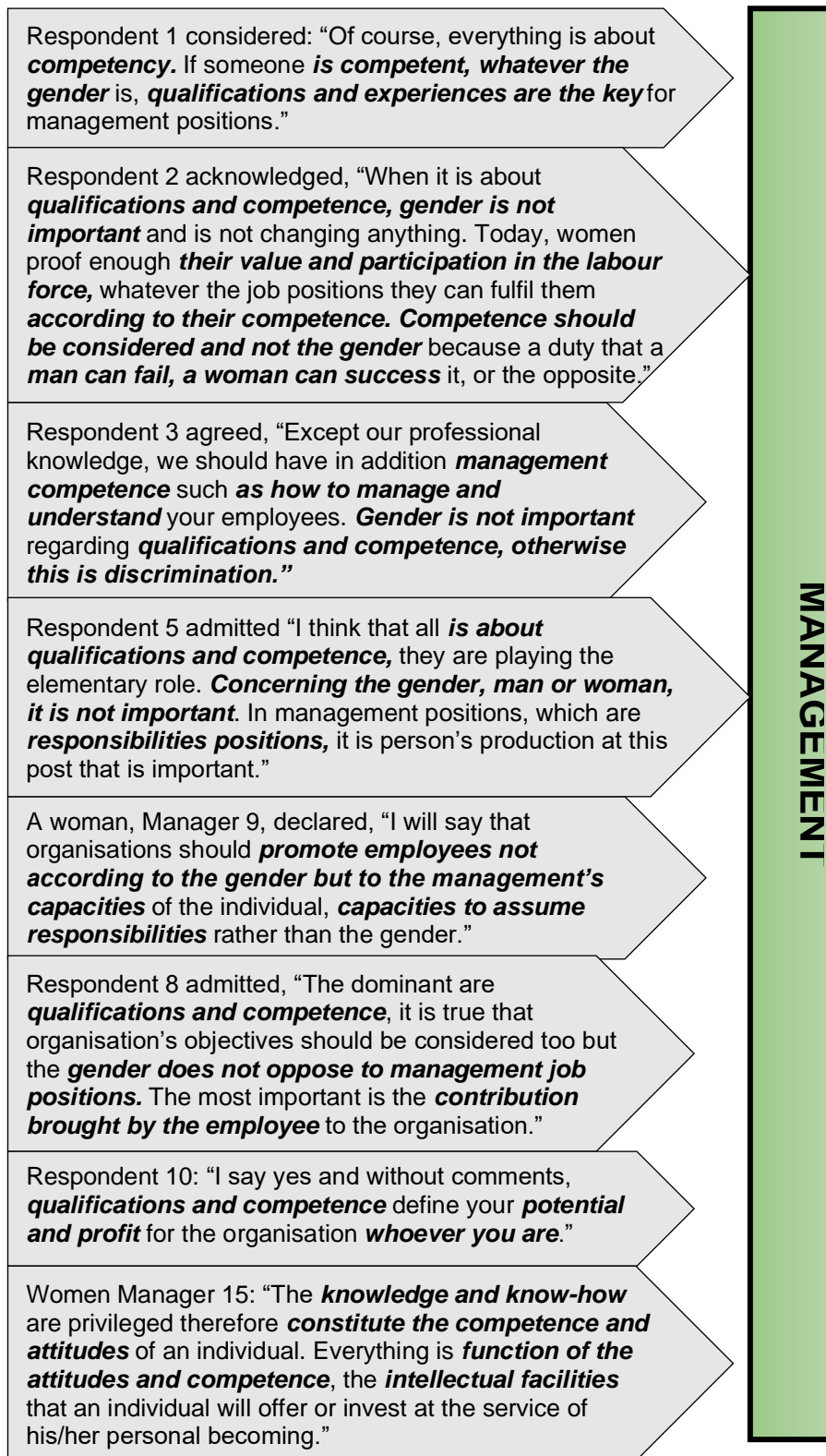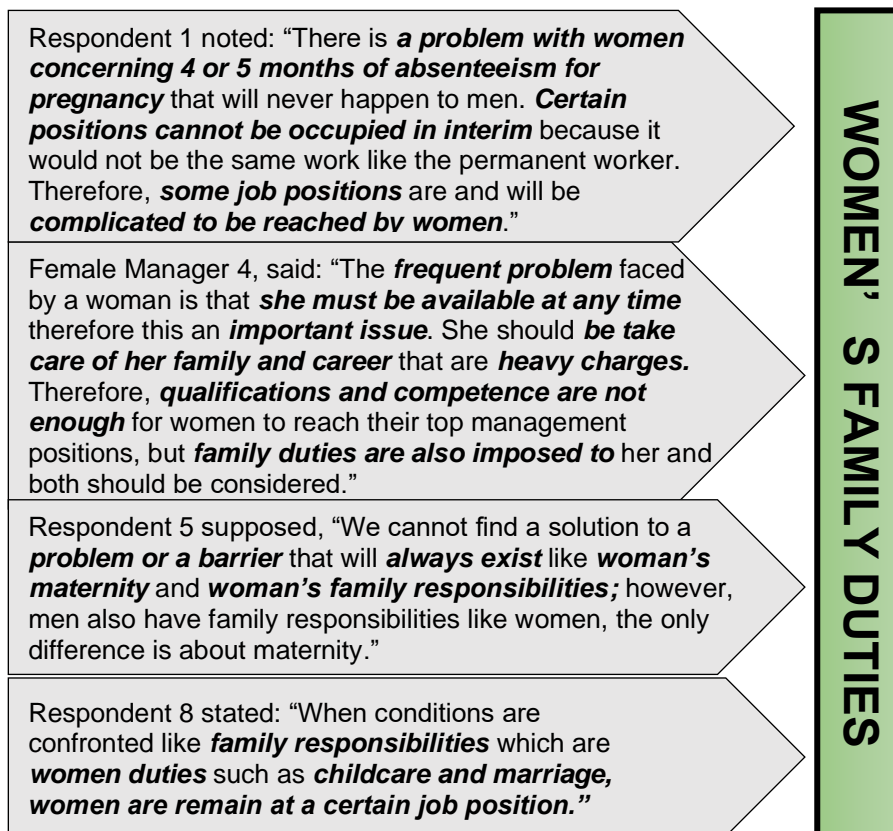
MANAGEMENT

Figure 4.31: Competence and qualifications

The results reflected in Figure 4.31 reveal several words and sentences, such as "competences"; "whatever the gender"; "qualifications and experience"; "gender is not important"; "their value and participation in the labour force"; "how to manage and understand", and so on. These can be categorised as 'Management'. This category is all about controlling and dealing with a company and its employees. In this section, 6 males' managers and 2 females' managers confirmed that holding a top management position depends on intellectual skills like knowledge and understanding, problem solving and creativity. All those criteria of intellectual skills are found through competence and qualifications of individuals. Thus, competence and qualifications are definitively not correlated with gender.

However, some managers pointed out that management positions required more effort from women compared to men because of women's family responsibilities. The statements below, in Figure 4.32, demonstrate that top management positions require the kind of availability that is more of an issue for women than for men.

Respondent 1 noted: "There is *a problem with women concerning 4 or 5 months of absenteeism for pregnancy* that will never happen to men. *Certain positions cannot be occupied in interim* because it would not be the same work like the permanent worker. Therefore, *some job positions* are and will be *complicated to be reached by women*."

Female Manager 4, said: "The *frequent problem* faced by a woman is that *she must be available at any time* therefore this an *important issue*. She should *be take care of her family and career* that are *heavy charges.* Therefore, *qualifications and competence are not enough* for women to reach their top management positions, but *family duties are also imposed to* her and both should be considered."

Respondent 5 supposed, "We cannot find a solution to a *problem or a barrier* that will *always exist* like *woman's maternity* and *woman's family responsibilities;* however, men also have family responsibilities like women, the only difference is about maternity."

Respondent 8 stated: "When conditions are confronted like *family responsibilities* which are *women duties* such as *childcare and marriage, women are remain at a certain job position.''*

WOMEN'S FAMILY DUTIES

Figure 4.32: Women's family duties as a barrier

Through various words and sentences illustrated in Figure 4.32, it is exposed that there is a problem with women concerning four or five months of absenteeism for pregnancy; certain

positions cannot be occupied in the interim; some job positions entail circumstances that are complicated for women to manage; and a woman in a senior position must be available at any time; and more. These meaning units are all grouped in a category named 'Women's family duties' which reflect barriers for women striving to be in top management. In fact, two male managers and one female manager underscored the reality that women's family duties, such as childcare, homecare and especially maternity, do not allow women to take advantage of some job opportunities, despite their competence and qualifications. However, one of the male managers (Respondent 5) pointed out that women's maternity and family responsibilities were natural problems and would always exist.

The main findings obtained from question three of the interview is that most of the interviewees, including men and women, considered that there is certainly not a relationship between management positions and gender in the petroleum sector in Gabon owing to the fact that whoever an individual is, a man or a woman, only competence and qualifications fulfil a job position in management. However, it was also found that family responsibilities are a barrier for women as they do not allow them to pursue some job opportunities, despite their competence and qualifications. The suitable theme extracted for this section was 'Perception towards women in top management.

4.4.3 Gender roles impacting on women

"Do you think that there is a difference between male and female supervising employees in the organisation?", was the second question of the interview, supposing gender roles as a stereotypical influence on the recognition of women employees applying for management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector. The purpose of this question was to gain a better understanding regarding the impact of gender stereotyping on women in management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector. The figures below present the respondents' statements, and this is followed by an interpretation of these statements through categories grouped in a theme.

Figure 4.33: Ineffectiveness of gender stereotype

Figure 4.33 reveals that words like "there is no difference"; "no difference in coaching regarding gender"; "professionally it's erased"; "strengths and weaknesses"; "compensated by others"; "knowledge of a manager must dominate on gender"; "intellectual attitude" and more, lead to a category named 'Ineffectiveness of gender stereotype at the workplace'. In this section, three male and two female managers shared the same point of view, namely that gender stereotype does not determine the intellectual ability or the understanding of a supervisor or a manager. The interviewees declared that there was no gender stereotype in supervisor positions in the Gabonese petroleum companies. In short, that means that gender stereotype is ineffective when it comes to evaluating an employee's competence and intellectual abilities. According to the respondents, men and women should be considered according to their professionalism and skills.

Secondly, several interviewees also announced that know-how (practical knowledge), qualifications and competence are dominant over gender. To support this statement, Figure 4.34 details the respondents' beliefs regarding gender stereotype and supervising.
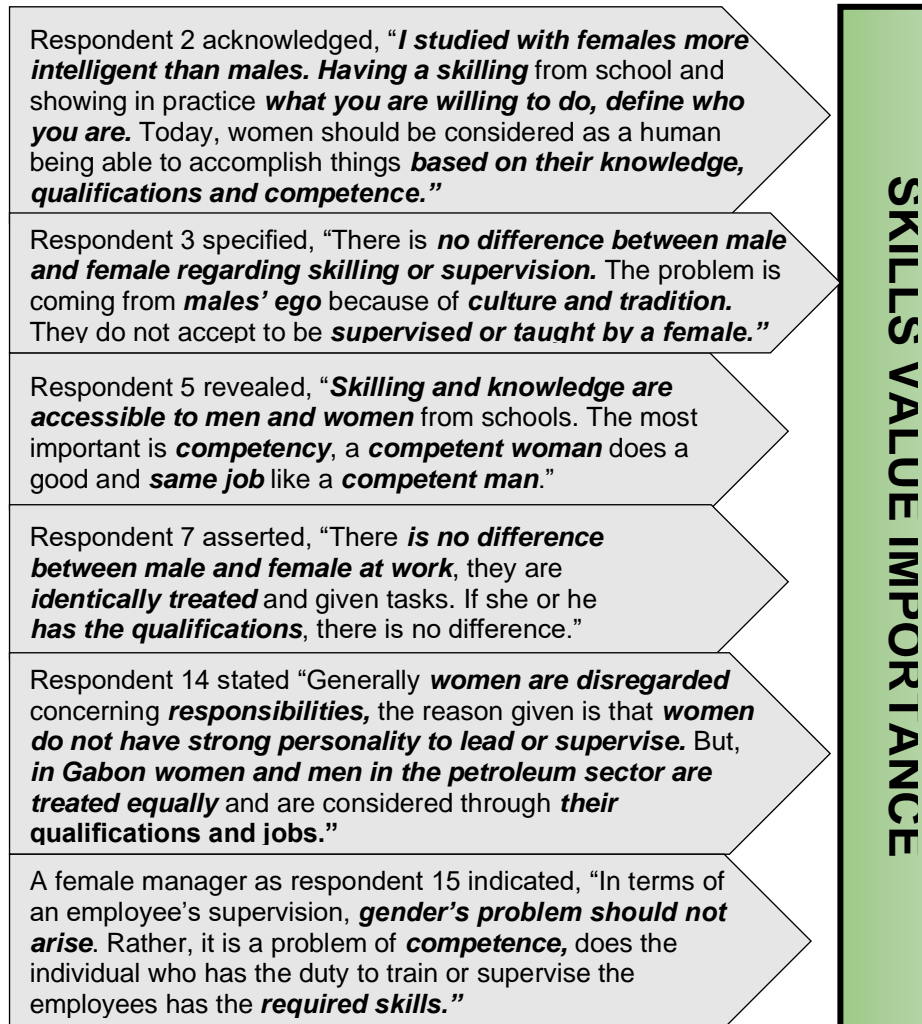
Figure 4.34: Unlink between gender stereotype and skills

The various words and sentences shown in Figure 4.34 divulge that "skilling and knowledge is accessible to men and women"; "having a skilling from school"; "I studied with females more intelligent than males"; "what you are willing to do define who you are"; "a competent woman does a good and same job like a competent man"; "required skills" and so on. These can be summarised as a category 'Skills value importance'. In this section, three male and one female manager shared the same point of view: that gender stereotype does not determine the skills values of a supervisor or a manager. In fact, an employee's skills can be valued or determined through her/his knowledge, qualifications and competence. However, one male respondent pointed out that, in some cases, women are disregarded concerning responsibilities because they do not have a sufficiently strong personality to lead or supervise. Another male manager stipulated that males' ego was a problem – they disliked being supervised or taught by a female due to

culture and tradition. Therefore, despite some exceptions, there is no link between gender roles stereotype and skills values of a supervisor or manager in petroleum companies in Gabon.

Finally, few respondents acknowledged that gender roles allow to identify women's abilities in the selected petroleum companies in Gabon. In other words, gender stereotype or bias can demonstrate what women can do better than men and their importance by contributing to the petroleum companies' productivity and also development.

Respondent 1 indicated, "A **woman could be more comprehensive, smooth** when a **man could be more hard, exigent or less comprehensive**. In supervision, for example, a **woman may be more implicated, organised and picky than a man**. For a training, I think that **a woman is better than a man** because she is **easily able to dialogue**, she is **more accessible to people, put herself in people shoes."**

Respondent 3 stated: "I will even say that the **communication with women is very easy** compared to men. Having a woman teacher **can motivate the understanding** by the way she explains a subject or supervises a project. There is **a positive difference when a woman supervising** than a man."

Respondent 13 believed, "If **women do very well their studies** at school compared to men therefore **women also can work on petroleum site** and can even **give better results than men.** Then, there is **no difference between a man and a woman's supervisor**."

WOMEN'S ABILITIES

Figure 4.35: Gender stereotype and women's abilities

The meaning units (words and phrases) in Figure 4.35 disclose much, such as "A woman could be more comprehensive, smooth", "more … organised and picky than a man"; "easily able to dialogue", "more accessible to people", and so on. This category is entitled 'Women's abilities identification'. Despite the statements by other managers, Figure 4.35 shows that three male managers confirmed that gender stereotype identifies women as self-disciplined, well-organised and possess good communication skills. In order words, through gender stereotype, women's capabilities or talents that men could do not have can add to their value and be strengths for women working in petroleum companies in Gabon. Thus, this statement shows the value of women working in the petroleum companies in Gabon.

Regarding gender roles and women in this section, the second question of the interview gathered findings from the respondents showing that firstly gender roles and stereotype are ineffective in predicting competence in supervising and managing. The majority of women and men working in top management in the Gabonese petroleum companies confirmed that gender does not determine the know-how (practical knowledge), qualifications and competence of an individual, who may be male or female. Secondly, the respondents specified that skills, qualifications and competence are not linked to gender. Moreover, two male respondents mentioned that gender stereotypes are often linked to men's self-esteem and culture. A minority of male managers in the Gabonese petroleum companies supported this statement. Then, only 3 over 12 male respondents believed that gender stereotyping was positively linked to women's abilities. The theme for this section was 'Gender roles impacting on women'.

4.4.4 Career progression for women in the Gabonese petroleum sector

"What do you think is the best way to advance in a career?" was the fourth interview question that focused on the different possibilities to progress in a career path. The purpose of this question was to gather a better understanding of women's career progression difficulties in the petroleum sector in Gabon. The three figures that follow illustrate and interpret the respondents' statements summarised in three categories shown in a vertical column alongside. The categories obtained in this section are explained and grouped in a theme.
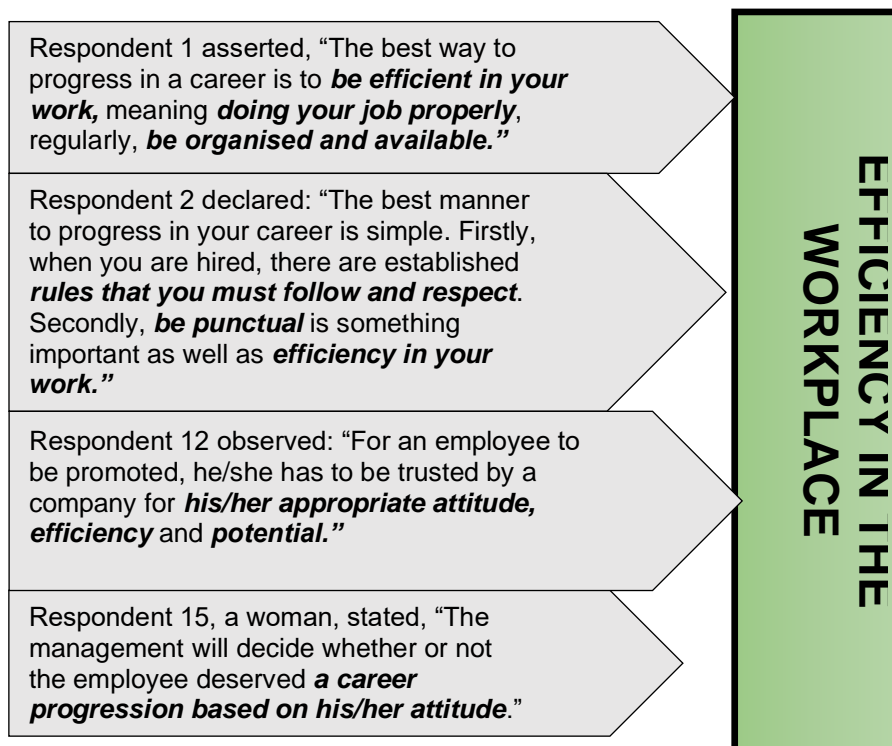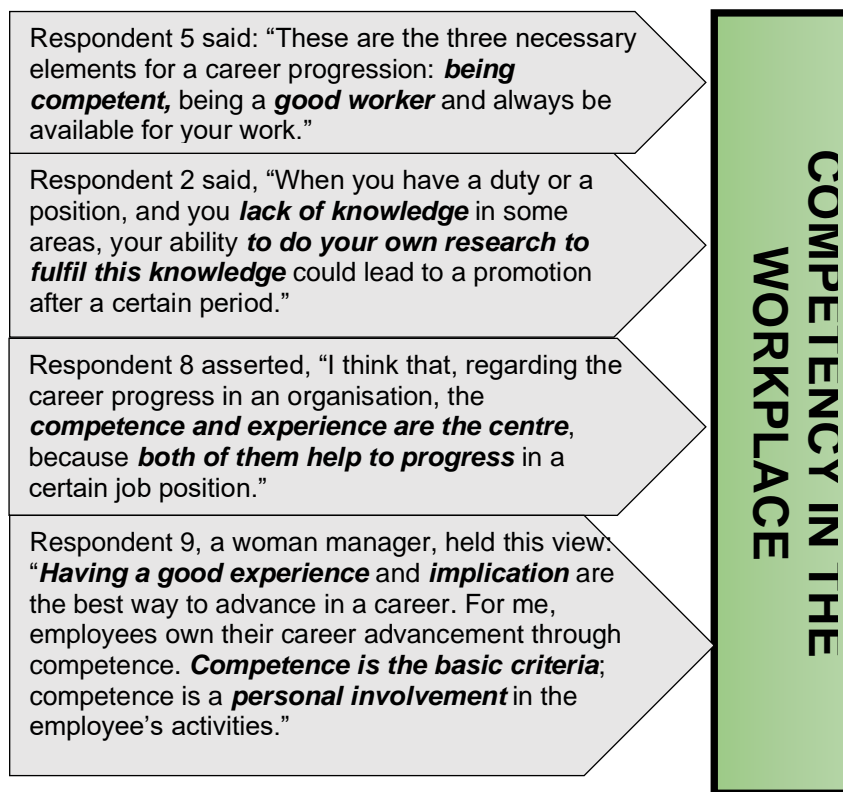
Respondent 1 asserted, "The best way to progress in a career is to **be efficient in your work,** meaning **doing your job properly**, regularly, **be organised and available."**

Respondent 2 declared: "The best manner to progress in your career is simple. Firstly, when you are hired, there are established **rules that you must follow and respect**. Secondly, **be punctual** is something important as well as **efficiency in your work."**

Respondent 12 observed: "For an employee to be promoted, he/she has to be trusted by a company for **his/her appropriate attitude, efficiency** and **potential."**

Respondent 15, a woman, stated, "The management will decide whether or not the employee deserved **a career progression based on his/her attitude**."

EFFICIENCY IN THE WORKPLACE

Figure 4.36: Efficiency for career advancement

The results illustrated in Figure 4.36 include several words and sentences, such as "being efficient in your work"; "doing your job properly"; "be organised and available"; "be punctual"; "rules that you must be follow and respect"; "appropriate attitude" and so on. Those meaning units gathered to a category called 'Being efficient in the workplace'. The managers, including a woman, expressed different ways to progress successfully in a career, like being efficient at work through self-discipline, doing a good work to the tasks and also being trustworthy by earning the employer's trust. Therefore, according to men and women managers in the petroleum companies in Gabon, efficiency is a contributor to career advancement at the workplace.

Other respondents' comments, illustrated in Figure 4.37, show that they regarded competency as one of the key elements for career progression. Four interviewees, which included one female manager, discussed competency as a contributor to advance in one's career.

Respondent 5 said: "These are the three necessary elements for a career progression: *being competent,* being a *good worker* and always be available for your work."

Respondent 2 said, "When you have a duty or a position, and you *lack of knowledge* in some areas, your ability *to do your own research to fulfil this knowledge* could lead to a promotion after a certain period."

Respondent 8 asserted, "I think that, regarding the career progress in an organisation, the *competence and experience are the centre*, because *both of them help to progress* in a certain job position."

Respondent 9, a woman manager, held this view: "*Having a good experience* and *implication* are the best way to advance in a career. For me, employees own their career advancement through competence. *Competence is the basic criteria*; competence is a *personal involvement* in the employee's activities."
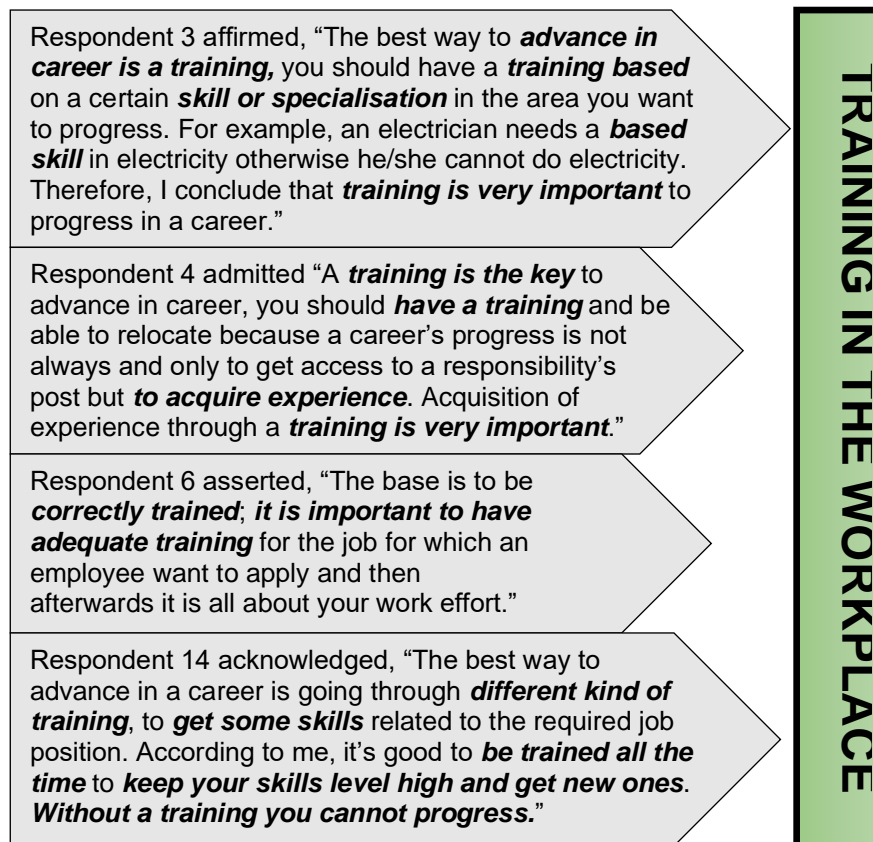
COMPETENCY IN THE WORKPLACE

Figure 4.37: Competency for career advancement

The results are illustrated in Figure 4.37, with certain words and phrases noticeable: "being competent"; "a good worker"; "good experience"; "competence is the basic criteria"; "knowledge", "ability to do your own research", and more. These led to a category 'Being competent in the workplace'. Respondents explained that, to advance in a career, the employee had to be

competent with necessary skills to do a job and acquire experience. A woman and male managers in the petroleum companies in Gabon asserted that competency is another important element and a contributor to one's advancement in a career in the workplace.

Finally, some respondents confirmed (see Figure 4.38) that the best way to advance in a career is through training.

Respondent 3 affirmed, "The best way to **advance in career is a training,** you should have a **training based** on a certain **skill or specialisation** in the area you want to progress. For example, an electrician needs a **based skill** in electricity otherwise he/she cannot do electricity. Therefore, I conclude that **training is very important** to progress in a career."

Respondent 4 admitted "A **training is the key** to advance in career, you should **have a training** and be able to relocate because a career's progress is not always and only to get access to a responsibility's post but **to acquire experience**. Acquisition of experience through a **training is very important**."

Respondent 6 asserted, "The base is to be **correctly trained**; **it is important to have adequate training** for the job for which an employee want to apply and then afterwards it is all about your work effort."

Respondent 14 acknowledged, "The best way to advance in a career is going through **different kind of training**, to **get some skills** related to the required job position. According to me, it's good to **be trained all the time** to **keep your skills level high and get new ones. Without a training you cannot progress.**"

TRAINING IN THE WORKPLACE

Figure 4.38: Training for career advancement

Figure 4.38 illustrates words and phrases, such as "specialisation"; "based skill"; "acquire experience"; "be correctly trained"; "it is important to have adequate training"; "different kind of training"; and more. Together, these points to a category called 'Training in the workplace'. Throughout the respondents' narratives, it emerged that employees should be trained to develop a particular skill for a particular job task. According to male managers, training was another important element and a contributor to career advancement.

The main findings from question four of the interview concerning career advancement were that, first of all, men and woman managers in the petroleum companies in Gabon considered that, to progress in a career, it was important to be efficient via self-discipline, be productive, do good

work to earn the company's trust. Secondly, apart from efficiency, a woman and men managers asserted that, to progress in a career, employees should be competent and show that they have the necessary ability, knowledge or skills to fulfil their job tasks successfully. Finally, to progress in a career, besides being efficient and competent, an employee should be trained by the company according, to her/his field or department, to perform her/his duties better. Efficiency, competency and training are therefore three necessary elements that contribute to an employee's career progression. The theme elaborated upon for this section was 'Career progression for women in the Gabonese petroleum sector'.

4.4.5 Main qualitative findings

The main findings amassed through the qualitative data were the following:

- For the theme of women in training and mentorship, two categories were found, namely, a lack of training and its importance, and training and/or mentoring benefits. The main findings indicate that regular training and/or mentorship programmes and support are beneficial and necessary for the emancipation of women and their equality of promotion chances in the petroleum companies in Gabon.
- The theme of perceptions towards women in top management was identified through two categories, namely, management and family duties as a barrier to women's advancement into top management positions. The main findings acquired through the respondents were that there was no relationship between management positions and gender in the petroleum sector by virtue of the fact that, irrespective of who an individual was, a man or a woman, only competence and qualifications led to acquiring a position in management. However, it was also found that family responsibilities were a barrier for women and these prevented women from pursuing some job opportunities, despite their competence and qualifications.
- For gender roles impacting on women's theme, three categories called ineffectiveness of gender stereotype at the workplace, skills' values importance and women's abilities identification were found to identify this theme. The main findings were that gender does not determine the know-how (practical knowledge), qualifications and competence of an individual, who can be a male or a female, to supervise and manage. In addition, gender stereotype advantaging men's self-esteem and culture cannot be negated. Therefore, gender stereotype is positively linked to the identification of women's abilities.
- The theme of career progression for women in the Gabonese petroleum sector was analysed by three categories, namely, being efficient in the workplace, being competent in the workplace, and training in the workplace. The main findings obtained by the respondents related that the best way to advance in a career has three key elements, namely efficiency, competency and training. All are necessary contributors to an employee's career progression.

By conducting the interview explained in detail above (sections 4.4.1 to 4.4.4), the researcher was able to gain in-depth information from recorded and transcribed data, then combine these findings with those gathered through the questionnaire. The results obtained from both qualitative and quantitative sources were analysed and are discussed in the next section. The quantitative factors are used as a lens and correlated with the main qualitative themes developed.

4.5 Discussion of research results

The quantitative and qualitative data results (see previous sections, 4.3 and 4.4), were analysed to reveal the findings relevant to this research study. It is important to clarify that the questionnaire and interview were constructed according to each research question of this study.

Concerning the biographical and educational background of the participants, the researcher found that most of female employees in the Gabonese petroleum companies were single, aged between 26 and 45 years, with less than four years' experience as supervisors. They also had qualifications, such as bachelors, honours or master's degrees. The majority of these women were already qualified and others had plans to pursue their studies.

The three main factors gleaned from the quantitative data results are named "Women's constraints in the workplace"; "Men vs women in the workplace" and "Government and organisation's commitment towards women". In addition, four themes, named "Women in training and mentorship"; "Gender roles impacting on women"; "Perception towards women in top management"; and "Career progression for women in the Gabonese petroleum sector" emerged from the qualitative data results. This section discusses the researcher's findings from a combination of the quantitative and qualitative data and includes points of view from the literature to articulate responses to the research questions of this study.

4.5.1 Women's constraints at the workplace factor

This factor described earlier, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.75, shows that there are different barriers confronted by women, who consequently struggle to reach top management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon. This section details all items that are common to and characterise this factor. In the first theme, "Women in training and mentorship", the main findings were that a lack of training is one of the job characteristics contributing to women's constraints in the workplace; conversely, frequent training and mentorship programmes are beneficial. This theme is better analysed and discussed through the importance of training and development opportunities, along with support and guidance. In the second theme, "Perception towards women

in top management", it was found that there is no relationship between management positions and gender perceptions. This theme was elaborated upon in relation to women's importance in organisational development, as a characteristic discussed below.

4.5.1.1 Training and development opportunities

Researchers demonstrated that there are several different situations in which people will need training and support for personal or organisational involvement. One finding from the questionnaires and interviews pinpointed that petroleum companies should encourage women to participate in training and mentorship programmes. Such programmes must be accessible to both, men and women employees working in the Gabonese petroleum companies. Figure 4.9, representing 76% of the respondents in this study, confirmed that training and mentorship programmes were offered to women at least one to three times per year, but this number was insufficient. Also, Figure 4.23 shows that respondents felt that lack of equality in training was a barrier to women's career progression in the petroleum companies. There was a significant link, with $p<0.001$, between a lack of equality in training and women's constraints in the workplace (see Table 4.8). This statement is affirmed by International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2012: 6) that emphasises that a lack of training is a global problem and challenge in the petroleum industry. A reason for skills deficiency is demographic, as an increasing number of knowledgeable male employees are retiring, while less young, skilled employees are joining the petroleum sector, with the focus on male employees. As seen in Figure 4.38, managers confirmed the importance of training to develop a particular skill for a particular job task, as that could contribute to an individuals' career advancement. Training and development play an important role in enhancing the organisations' effectiveness and employee experience, as well by providing, obtaining and improving necessary skills to achieve the organisation's goals (Nikandrou *et al.,* 2009: 255). In the same vein, according to Involve (2012: 6), training and support should not be seen as one-off events, meaning that organisations should offer continuous training or support to be responsive to their employees' needs if they are to meet the organisation's goals.

Another result from the findings in this study is that, as shown in Figure 4.30, managers indicated that training and mentorship programmes offered by the Gabonese petroleum companies support women's emancipation and fairness in the workplace. Indeed, the skill and competence of the person delivering training and support often results in women's empowerment and equality of chances to reach top management positions. This finding is verified by Nikandrou *et al.,* (2009: 259) and Involve (2012: 6) who deduce that the trainee, either a woman or a man, entering the workplace after training can influence the interests of the organisation or job directly and indirectly

through their newly acquired knowledge and skills. Trained employees may demand more independence, task variety and job involvement. Costen and Salazar (2011: 274) concur, and state that Human Resources Training and Development programmes directly affect workers' competency levels and work output, impacting both men and women, which could affect employee job satisfaction. In addition, elements, which are anti-female in nature institutionalize gender discrimination in organisations, limiting women's involvement in networking procedures, and not providing coaching, training and development opportunities, which have contributed to the slow progression of women's careers (Kirai & Elegwa, 2012).

The findings of this study therefore concur with other research that clearly stipulates that training and development opportunities remain important for women's career progression through training programmes and support frequently offered in petroleum companies in Gabon.

4.5.1.2 Support and guidance

The results of this research are shown in Figure 4.12 which indicate the lack of mentoring/coaching as a barrier to women's career progression in the petroleum companies in Gabon. Interestingly, the lack of mentorship/coaching was not seen as an obstacle by the majority of respondents (54%), but a minority (46%) confirmed that a lack of mentorship and/or coaching was a barrier. Nevertheless, it is important to notice that training and mentorship/coaching are equally important. Mentoring/coaching is the facility or guide to apply new skills acquired during training. Therefore, mentorship and/or coaching, as well as training, both offer some benefits. Table 4.4 confirms the finding of a significant correlation, with $p < 0.014$, between lack of mentorship/coaching and constraints affecting women's advancement in the workplace. One benefit of support and guidance is that the company ensures that the staff receives training, new responsibilities, and engage in new interests. In addition, organisations are turning to training and mentoring programmes to develop employees' talents through learning activities inside or outside the company (Kulkarni, 2013: 2).

Providing support and guidance through training not only builds individual skills, but contributes to improve teams as well. In Figure 4.10, three-quarters of women in the three selected petroleum companies in Gabon confirmed that support and guidance from a mentor was perceived as very important. Nikandrou *et al.,* (2009: 259) reveal that the opportunity of working in a group during training allows individuals, including men and women, to develop indirectly a variety of valuable qualities like self-confidence and self-esteem, and encourages them to become more responsible and reliable. These developments may also contribute to enhance their work performance. These

outcomes support those of other researchers who found that offering support and guidance through mentorship programmes is also important in training in the petroleum sector and are correlated.

4.5.1.3 Women's importance in organisational development

Male managers in this research study recognised the necessity to have women working in the Gabonese petroleum sector. In other words, respondents admitted that women play an important role in that sector. Figure 4.16 demonstrated that 84% of women agreed that their role was significant in the workplace; and male managers confirmed in Figure 4.35 that women can add their value in the petroleum companies through capabilities or talents that men do not have. Also, 60% of women (see Figure 4.17) confirmed that they had received a promotion in the Gabonese petroleum companies. As shown Figure 4.18, three-quarters of women (74%) disagreed that men were more advantaged than they for training and/or mentorship programmes; however, a quarter (26%) were of the view that their male colleagues were more advantaged than they were. These differences raise the importance of women's participation in the development of the petroleum companies in Gabon and in that country's economic growth. These findings are confirmed by The Oil and Gas Year's (2014: 9) report illustrating that the President of the Gabon Oil Union, Jacqueline Bignoumba, was appointed to an important role as the representative of the domestic oil and gas industry, and also served as the link between management and industry. Along the same lines, Chen (2014) reported that Jan Combopiano, Chief Knowledge Officer at Catalyst, said, "Women are a powerful force in the economy, but yet they are not well represented on company boards." Similarly, as shown in Figure 4.19, the majority of women (63%) disagree that male colleagues are advantaged during promotions; yet more than a third (37%) perceive males to be advantaged. There is an amelioration of consideration and treatment regarding women's contribution to the Gabonese petroleum companies. The findings are reinforced by Bosch (2011: 35), who divulged that females are adept at recreating regulations, add value to the organisation's vision, and can transform difficulties into possibilities in a highly technological business world. According to Bosch (2011; 35), women are beneficial for organisations because of their skills and abilities. It is also important to note that with the essential backing to create and boost their administration and leadership styles, females can transform, develop and change organisations. Thus, the findings of this research are consistent and concur with other researchers who aver that women play an important role in the workplace by contributing to decision-making, labour development and organisational development.

In sum, many women are facing various barriers, such as a lack of training and a lack of mentorship/coaching through insufficient support and guidance from the petroleum companies in Gabon. Those barriers are slowing their career progress and constraining them in the same management positions. However, women's participation in the workplace has an important role to play in the development of Gabonese petroleum companies and the growth of the economy. The researcher found that a relationship exists between women's constraints in the workplace (a dominant factor with 0.75 as Cronbach alpha coefficient); and the themes "Women in training and mentorship" and "Perception towards women in top management". This relationship can be explained by the fact that all characteristics named the importance of training and development opportunities, support and guidance through mentorship then women's importance in organisational development influence negatively or positively women working in the petroleum sector in Gabon.

4.5.2 Factor: men versus women in the workplace

This factor, with a 0.67 Cronbach alpha coefficient, was designated as the main disadvantage faced by women owing to issues such as male dominance, culture and tradition, gender roles, family conflict and commitment affecting women in the petroleum sector, whereas their male colleagues are privileged. This section detailed all items that are common to and characterise this factor. Effectively, different characteristics and stereotypical beliefs or perceptions of women can have positive as well as negative effects on women. The themes "Perception towards women in top management" and "Gender roles impacting on women" are two other contributors to the factor of men versus women in the workplace, reducing women's advancement into management positions. Those contributors are demonstrated and discussed in the sub-sections that follow, focusing on women's family responsibilities, women and sexual harassment, masculinity versus femininity and, finally, male dominance.

4.5.2.1 Women and family responsibilities

Family responsibilities were found to be a barrier especially for women owing to the fact that they are called to meet many traditional obligations related to their gender, such as maternity, caretaker and more (Jonkeid & Mango, 2008: 10). Managers (see Figure 4.32) stated that family responsibilities can have a negative effect on women's performance in the workplace in the Gabonese petroleum sector. In Figure 4.20, it is clear that the overwhelming percentage of women (61%) agreed that family responsibilities are an obstacle to their career advancement. In other words, family obligations are perceived as one of the biggest challenges preventing women from advancing in their careers in the Gabonese petroleum sector. This finding corresponds with

findings from Scholarios and Taylor's study (2011: 1298), which found that family structure, being married and/or having children, is connected to career progression for both genders, but mainly affects women. The issue of family responsibilities arises when expectations and family obligations interfere with professional duties, making it impossible to manage both (Dartey-Baah, 2015: 292).

Additionally, the researcher found, by a male manager in Figure 4.32, that women are particularly affected by family responsibilities compared to men because of the need to take maternity leave for at least three months, thus putting at risk their work positions at the petroleum companies. Women also have more family duties than men, such as household chores and those related to maternity and marriage that men do not have. To support this finding, Hoobler *et al.*, (2011: 156) attest that family-work conflict was mostly reported by female workers rather than males. However, working arrangements should be suitably adaptable to allow employees of both genders to engage in training and development programmes, both for work and career purposes, as well as for personal development too (ILO, 2012: 17).

It is necessary to emphasise that family conflict is generated by several variables; and it persists in being a barrier confronted by women which is disregarded by the petroleum companies in Gabon which need to facilitate women's productivity and job satisfaction in the workplace.

4.5.2.2 Women and sexual harassment

The findings of this research (see Figure 4.14) revealed that the majority of women working in the petroleum companies in Gabon had experienced sexual harassment, another form of discrimination, which had been a major barrier slowing their career progression. Table 4.6 demonstrates that there is a highly significant relationship, p<0, between sexual harassment creating a barrier to women's career advancement, and women's constraints in the workplace. In other words, women are most often victims exposed to sexual harassment, conditioning them to carry on with their advancement, despite their qualifications and skills. According to Stange *et al.,* (2011: 594), in Gabon, violence against women is a major problem; moreover, sexual harassment is widespread, but unfortunately no official action has been taken to deal with it. In other words, there is no law against sexual harassment and domestic violence in Gabon.

Similarly, McGregor (2015: 124) asserts that sexual harassment, including forms of sex discrimination, is one of the biggest barriers to women's progression in the workplace, and so, too, in the petroleum sector. This research study focused on sexual harassment in the workplace

in South Africa. The findings of McGregor (2015: 124) provides statistics showing that sexual harassment against women is ongoing and rising, despite tools to curb it. Another study by McLaughin *et al.*, (2012: 627) investigated how and why there are uneven sex ratios in workplaces, and found that organisational norms and opportunity structures contributed to sexual harassment. Women in leadership positions, such as women supervisors, are potential targets for such harassment. Their study method included a longitudinal data survey and qualitative interviews from the Youth Development Study. The results underlined that many respondents experienced sex-based discrimination, including sexual harassment, deterring them from progressing in management positions (McLaughin *et al.,* 2012: 627). Consequently, the current study findings are supported by other researchers and the finding that sexual harassment has been, and remains, an issue affecting women and their progression to top management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon is a reliable finding.

4.5.2.3 Masculinity versus femininity

Mandal (2012: 8) defines social femininity and masculinity as patterns (social roles) for men and women, along with idealised images of women and men's personality (assigned behaviours), and their interactions. The findings from the current study results revealed some positive and negative opinions that have been discussed. It was revealed by the respondents that gender discrimination and gender stereotype were barriers to women's career progression (see Figures 4.21 and 4.22), whereas the managers revealed that there is ineffectiveness of gender stereotype in the petroleum companies in Gabon (Figures 4.33 and 4.34). For the respondents, men and women should be considered from in relation to their professionalism and skills, not their gender. Clearly, there has been an improvement regarding gender equity in the Gabonese petroleum sector seeing that women and men are considered equally; and yet there are still some barriers against women.

The researcher has highlighted that there are gender preferences that are in line with cultures and traditions (see Figure 4.15), and many women considered that preferences on gender, cultures and traditions were barriers preventing them from reach top management positions in the selected Gabonese petroleum companies. Similarly, Rhode and Kellerman (2007) reveal that women meet more limitations than their male counter-parts partners in the workplace owing to traditional gender stereotypes. As a negative point, respondent managers mentioned that culture or tradition continues to influence some men's views or perceptions in the petroleum companies. This is shown in Table 4.7, where there is a highly significant correlation between preferences of gender, cultures and traditions and women's constraints in the workplace. These findings concur

with those of Makama (2013: 115-116) who points out the roles of mother and caretaker of the family, ascribed to women by culture, affect women in their careers in adult life, making them lose self-confidence and have low self-esteem. Concerning femininity versus masculinity, one male manager (see Figure 4.34) commented that men's low self-esteem is also a barrier for women's career progression, because men's egos and traditional culture encourage men to keep women subservient to them. Today, the majority of men have accepted the reality that, in the intellectual world, women can fulfil their professional duties as well as their gender duties, in other words as employee, wife and mother. However, the social roles of culture and tradition remain an influence on some men and the way they regard women in the workplace. In fact, in Gabon, there are men who do not accept being supervised or managed by a woman because, socially, all decisions are made by men only.

Childcare and maternity leave is an additional disadvantage affecting women's career advancement. Females have more tasks than males regarding childcare and must give more of their time to these duties than men. Figure 4.13 shows that women are affected not only by domestic duties and responsibilities, but also certain job characteristics like irregular hours, extra hours or travelling for work, which are not always beneficial. It was found that the majority of women employees in the selected petroleum companies in Gabon considered such job characteristics as barriers preventing them from reaching top management positions. To better demonstrate this issue, Jonkeid and Mango (2008: 10) comment that concerning gender equity, in general, in South Africa, female managers had an additional challenge of managing their family and home life. Consequently, it is unsurprising that there are few females in top management positions. In the same vein, Hind (2015) states that working environments appear to have constantly privileged males over females culturally; but there is also a significant issue affecting female career progression, which could be called 'the motherhood manacle'. This term is explained as regarding having children as a setback to female career advancement. The problem emerges when women take time out of work take time off to care for their kids; however, on their return to work, they are commonly unable to secure jobs at the same level of responsibility or reward as previously.

On the other hand, male managers (see Figure 4.35) specified women's abilities by announcing that gender does not determine the knowledge, qualifications and competence of an individual to supervise and manage. In other words, women are just as capable as men of being a good manager and able to lead people according to qualifications and competence, as well as some skill to do so. Figure 4.35 shows that three male managers confirmed that gender stereotype

identifies women as self-disciplined, well-organised and possess good communication skills. To justify this statement, Bosch (2011: 20) describes attributes that are usually associated with female leadership: these include being optimistic; sympathetic; calm under pressure; honest; supportive; steadfast; and has a capacity to remain in power. Those peculiarities enable women to fulfil their tasks and are a bonus for them, compared to men. Gabonese petroleum companies have recognised some women's abilities and leadership potential, like their ability to understand and communication with people. Mensi-Klarbach (2014: 545) supports this study's findings regarding women's leadership and their abilities by concluding that females do in fact add distinctive, authoritative characteristics such as optimism, positivity, and self-confidence to top management positions. These leadership traits demonstrate that women have the required abilities and experience to add to organisations' success.

Therefore, women can have some family responsibilities and duties requesting most of their time, which in turn can insecure their job position at the workplace. However, this natural phenomenon called women's family duties like maternity leave or childcare should be accepted to deal with and consider women's abilities and skills as benefits for both parties: women employees and the petroleum companies.

4.5.2.4 Male dominance

In this research, some male managers (see Figure 4.34) declared that, in the Gabonese petroleum companies, men's ego, a cultural trait or personality, resulted in male domination in both, public and private sectors. A male manager pointed out, "Women do not have strong personality to lead or supervise"; and another said, "The problem is coming from males' ego because of culture and tradition. They do not accept to be supervised or taught by a female." This means that their view was that men tend to control women's lives, especially in labour power. They also manage women's productivity both in the household and outside in paid employment. Women are limited in decision-making compared to men, despite their intellectual participation and commitment to their shared society. It was outlined in the literature review that male dominance is a system of patriarchy, which was cemented by the historical, traditional roles of both genders (Christ, 2013). Similarly, Phoenix (2012) commented that a powerful male is commonly acknowledged as one who uses his physical or mental capacity to manage over others. More often, women are dominated; while men seek to rule everyone and everything in their respective environments.

Male dominance remains an issue obstructing women's emancipation, particularly in African countries. This issue is illustrated in Figure 4.26, where it was pointed out by respondents that

women struggle more than men with various barriers to advance in their careers in the Gabonese petroleum companies. Moreover, senior positions in the companies' executive levels and board of directors are mostly occupied by men. Operating in male dominated hierarchies decreases women's career advancement opportunities, since male managers are more likely to promote men to managerial positions, since men are more inclined to work with other men rather than with women (Kirai & Elegwa, 2012). However, Figures 4.16, 4.34 and 4.35 show that women are increasingly demonstrating their importance to the petroleum companies through their skills, abilities and productivity. Similarly, Watkins and Smith (2014: 206) found that political skill allows females to obtain positions of authority when they work in a male-dominated environment. They realised that when women work in male-dominated organisations they use their political skills better than those who are less politically skilled in respect of obtaining authority positions. Bolton (2015) also mentions that women are increasingly engaging in management careers, which has proven beneficial for organisations. Females are perceived to have effective relationship building abilities for management, that are knowledgeable about female purchaser power, and are skillful at getting employees to fulfil their assigned duties and tasks.

Bolton's findings also indicate that sexual harassment, a type of discrimination, is a contributor to retarding women's career advancement in the petroleum sector like in Gabon (Bolton, 2015). The findings concerning family responsibilities as a conflict verified that, despite the fact females and males have both family duties, the person most disturbed by family conflict is a woman. Hence, women are the most vulnerable in family conflicts but can be prevented to be affected at work or at home. Bolton (2015) also argued that male dominance still exists at home and the workplace, especially in African countries, including Gabon. In an analysis of positive and negative opinions towards masculinity versus femininity, a dominant factor with 0.67 as Cronbach alpha coefficient, showed consistency that women in the Gabonese petroleum companies are consistently confronted by the influence of gender roles impact and perceptions towards them, which can be demotivating as they try to pursue their careers. Through information collected from participants, it was exposed that the influential factor of men versus women in the workplace is generated by various elements that disadvantage women more than men, particularly in a male-dominated sector like the petroleum sector.

4.5.3 Government and organisation's commitment towards women

This factor, with 0.75 as Cronbach alpha coefficient, demonstrates the role of government in women's emancipation at the workplace in Gabon. This section also relates women's rights in the workplace and an organisations' commitment to protecting the rights of women. In depth, to better

understand how women are treated at the workplace and the organisation's involvement for women's empowerment at the workplace. The correlation between this factor and the themes, "Career progression for women in the Gabonese petroleum sector" and "Perception towards women in top management" is debated in relation to three characteristics, namely 'qualifications and competence', 'importance of organisational commitment towards women' and finally 'government policies and women', as follows:

4.5.3.1 Qualifications and competence

'Qualifications and competence' is one of the outcomes gleaned from the research findings. However, this outcome was a new characteristic emerging from the respondents, so it was not elucidated in the literature review. Qualifications and competence play an important role in evaluating an employee's knowledge and skills in the Gabonese petroleum companies. In Figure 4.34, it is clear that most managers attested that holding a top management position depends on intellectual skills, qualifications and competence, irrespective of whoever holds these. Thus, qualifications and competence and gender are not correlated. Also, through qualifications and competence, employees can be efficient and perform in their workplace. Buse *et al.,* (2013: 150) point out that knowledge and skills are essential for women's effective performance; and how individuals judge their capabilities affects their motivation and behaviour. Conversely, qualifications and competence are generally not fully considered in practice at the workplace. Kirai and Elegwa (2012: 205) argue that when promotion opportunities emerge, and an employer has to decide between hiring a man or a woman with the same or similar qualifications, the female is often perceived to be a bigger threat to the organisation, hence the position is likely to be offered to the male. To judge men and women equally when evaluating women regarding top management positions, it is therefore important and necessary to consider qualifications and competence as including interpersonal skills, values and personal capabilities.

Respondents believed that qualifications and competence could advance an individual to a better position in an organisation or company. In other words, a good educational level is necessary for women to access top management positions within the petroleum companies in Gabon. Qualifications and competence represent and confirm the know-how (practical knowledge) of a person. Qualifications and competence define a person's skills required to fulfil job tasks whoever that can be. As revealed by a female manager respondent (see Figure 4.37), "Having a good experience and implication are the best way to advance in a career. Employees own their career advancement through competence. Competence is the basic criteria; it is a personal involvement in the employee's activities". However, Cikara and Fiske (2009: 79-80) state that owing to societal

norms, qualified females are expected to be friendly and compassionate rather than competent and competitive, and are not expected to be both either. Therefore, employee abilities should be assessed purely on qualifications and competence, nothing else.

4.5.3.2 Importance of organisational commitment towards women

As pointed out in the analysis of this study, the respondents (see Figure 4.27) felt that petroleum companies are committed to abide by the Gabonese government legislation. In depth, companies in the petroleum sector ensure that rules and regulations guiding how employees should behave and the companies' goals achieved should be followed. Costen and Salazar (2011: 275) assert that organisational responsibility is associated with a worker's experience of the organisation. To clarify the importance of organisational commitment, organisational culture should be related to the organisation's commitment to government legislation. Organisational culture can be described as a series of beliefs, attitudes, practices, norms and customs and ways of behaving that characterise employees and workplaces (Arnold, 2005: 625; Belias & Koustelios, 2014: 132). It is important to notice that creating a strong culture through policies, values and beliefs, according to organisational commitment, influences the progression of women in the petroleum sector. A successful company has a culture that interests, retains and compensates individuals for performing tasks and accomplishing the organisation's objectives (Sun, 2008). To illustrate these findings, respondents confirmed (Figure 4.24) that remuneration inequality is a barrier to women's career progression in the petroleum companies in Gabon. To maintain satisfactory employee performance, organisations need to fulfil their commitments. This consists of an equitable salary, career advancement opportunities, access to these opportunities, and employer-driven initiatives to create a better work-life balance. Females are, consequently, incentivised to be as progressive, productive and faithful as their male counter-parts (Heathfield, 2018).

Moreover, respondents (see Figure 4.25) outlined that a lack of support systems at work, like computers programmes and other communication tools, was a barrier to women's career progression in the petroleum companies in Gabon. Additionally, Table 4.9, with p<0.044, showed a significant correlation between a lack of support systems and organisational commitment. In fact, organisations needed to offer, along with new technology, an attractive working environment and conditions, because these were important for the employees' performance and the organisation's turnover. Organisational commitment is very important for organisations because it is perceived as a determinant that affects the employees' relationship with their organisation, and it influences workers' conduct, welfare and involvement in organisational effectiveness (Bell & Mjoli, 2012: 453). International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2012) stipulates that consistent

human resource development regulations should be improved to guarantee sustainable development, considering the skills set, which is required from both male and female applicants.

In accordance with this statement, Bosch (2011: 35) states that constrained support structures and networking opportunities obstruct females' career progression. The latter details that organisational commitment and structure continue to prevent women from advancing in their careers, while outdated organisational policies like part-time and flexible time options, work-sharing and working from home, persist. All the previous studies found that there is a relationship between one's work environment and job performance. Consequently, there is coherence between organisational commitment and women's career progression through the impact, positive or negative, that organisational culture can have on women's job performance and satisfaction.

4.5.3.3 Government policies and women

For this study, respondents (see Figure 4.28) affirmed that the Gabonese government participates towards women's promotion in the petroleum companies in Gabon. Firstly, it should be noticed that a government is a system (composed of three organs named the executive, the legislative and the judiciary) leading a state or a community with the goal to keep order and peace through institutions, policies and laws (Omipidan, 2016). Secondly, the problem investigated by many researchers is that the role of government institutions in the promotion of women in the workplace is implemented, but not enforced. Concurring with this, the Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (2015) reports that concerning women's empowerment and entrepreneurship public policies, the Gabonese Government had been aware of females' significance for economic growth. Hence, it tried harder to establish a public policy that focuses on the real needs of women, including their well-being, training and development, and access to rights. Schwanke (2013: 17) deduces that women face societal issues which limit their career advancement, including some aspects of society's expectations of women entering professions in education, health services, and male dominated environments (Eagly & Sczesny, 2009: 34; Schwanke, 2013: 17).

The Gabonese government and petroleum companies are focused on some policies and regularities to promote women in the professional world and treat them equally with men. It was assumed by Oxford Business Group (2011: 26) that boosting the participation of women in Gabon's economy is a crucial component of the government's strategy to increase development and poverty alleviation, as well as reduce inequalities. By and large, the country's legal framework

is already well-adapted to provide for increased economic empowerment for women, and the law currently allows single women rights to the same access in education, investments, land, business, hiring, financing and salaries.

However, regarding the sexual harassment and remuneration inequality issues (Figures 4.14 and 4.24), the Gabonese government and petroleum companies remain inefficient, since respondents in this study attested that sexual harassment was a major barrier affecting women in their career progression in the petroleum companies. Moreover, most of women confirmed (Figures 4.21 and 4.22) that gender discrimination and stereotypes against them limited their career advancement in the Gabonese petroleum companies. To confirm those findings, Makama (2013: 122) assert that women are far from enjoying the same rights as men do in the labour market owing mostly to their domestic duties, low educational achievements, poverty, and bias against them for recruitment into certain industries or jobs, as well as unfair remuneration practices. Similarly, Davidson and Burke (2011: 7) state that in spite of occupying similar positions, females still earn a lot less than males globally, including in the petroleum sector. So, there is a consistency between these findings and other researchers' findings concluding that the Gabonese government and petroleum companies are working together for women's promotion, but remain inefficient regarding issues like sexual harassment, inequality of remuneration, gender discrimination and gender stereotypes.

Despite the fact that some managers believe that qualifications and competence are the key elements for career progression, others think that it is important to obtain the right qualifications and competence for the right job positions, especially for women working in the Gabonese petroleum companies. According to the researcher, the Gabonese government's policies and regulations are helpful for organisations, institutions and communities. Petroleum companies should be committed to their employees, particularly women, to promote them and in return to increase the companies' turnover. Nevertheless, some policies and regulations like those pertaining to sexual harassment, remuneration inequality, gender discrimination and stereotypes are neglected, with these being applied in theory but not in practice. Thus, the interventions of the Gabonese government and petroleum companies, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.75, can have a positive or negative impact on women's career progression and promotion.

4.6 Framework for women's career progression

Based on the findings grouped from the quantitative and qualitative information, a diagrammatical framework was developed from the findings to support and illustrate the effects of dominant factors retarding women in their career progression in the Gabonese petroleum sector, as illustrated in Figure 4.39.
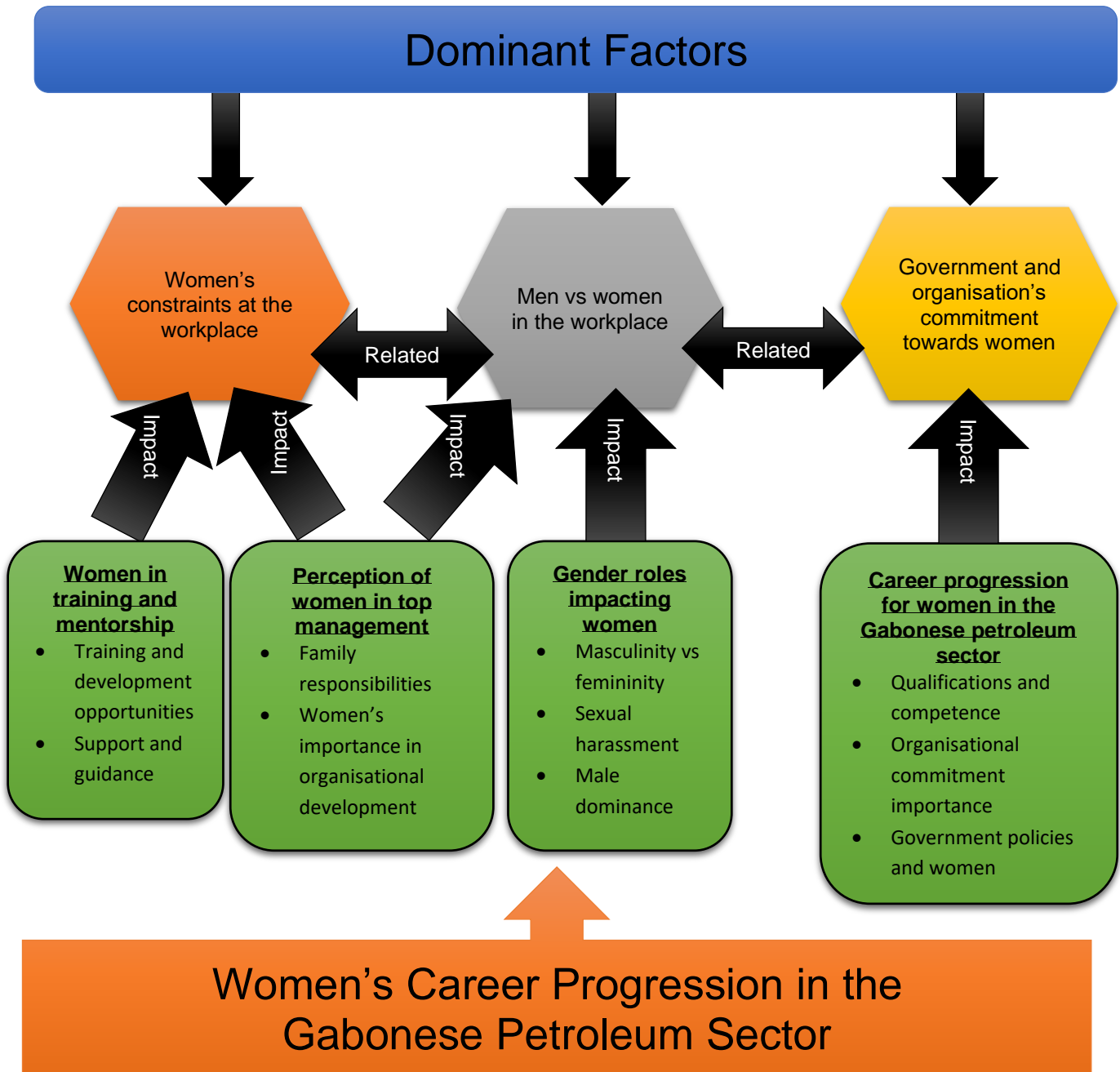
Figure 4.39: Diagrammatical illustration of research findings

To summarise the findings gathered from this study, the researcher proposed this framework which represents the three dominant factors influencing women's career progression in the petroleum sector in Gabon. Those factors are all related and respectively named 'Women's constraints at the workplace', 'Men versus women in the workplace' and 'Government and organisation's commitment towards women'. Furthermore, those factors are influenced by different variables which are 'Women in training and mentorship'; 'Perception of women in top management'; 'Gender roles impacting women'; and 'Career progression for women'. Each variable is also affected by different characteristics such as training and development opportunities with support and guidance to develop women through training and mentorship programmes. Likewise, family responsibilities and women's importance in organisational development are the characteristics changing, positively or negatively, the perceptions about female leaders in the petroleum sector in Gabon. Gender roles may influence women who are confronted by sexual harassment, issues of masculinity compared to femininity and also male dominance. Finally, career progression for women in the Gabonese petroleum sector is impacted by various elements, namely 'Qualifications and competence', 'Organisational commitment importance' and 'Government policies and women'. To conclude the framework explanation, the three factors affecting women's efforts to progress in their careers are dependent on four different contributors generating positively or negatively those three factors. Also, those four contributors can, in their turn, be influenced by different independent variables.

4.7 Summary

Throughout this chapter, data collected were interpreted, analysed and discussed. The researcher obtained three factors, four themes and ten characteristics that have been discussed or compared to the foregoing studies by other researchers. Firstly, within the theme of 'Women in training and mentorship', a lack of training opportunities and mentorship programmes was a constraint for women. However, it was found that training and development opportunities were important for women's skills improvement. The respondents explained that they are trained by petroleum companies in Gabon, but not enough. Also, newly hired employees needed mentors to guide them in their work for better performance and results. However, most respondents did not see a lack of mentorship/coaching as an obstacle, while a minority confirmed the lack of mentorship/coaching as a barrier to their career progress. A significant correlation was found between a lack of mentorship and women's constraints in the workplace. This means that a lack of mentorship can be a constraint for women working in the petroleum companies in Gabon. The findings of other researchers such as Kulkarni (2013: 2) and Nikandrou *et al.*, (2009: 259) support this statement. Then, support and guidance through mentorship programmes are beneficial to

emancipate women and increase their equality of promotion chances in the petroleum sector in Gabon.

Secondly, the theme 'Perception of women in top management' revealed some positive and negative issues. On one hand, male managers supervising and dealing with employees in the petroleum companies recognised the important role played by women through their capabilities or talents, add that they could add value where men did not. In addition, an overwhelming percentage of women agreed that women's role in the workplace was significant. It was found, though, that family responsibilities remained an issue for women who consequently struggled to reach top management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon. Despite this constraint, it was deduced that women's participation in the petroleum companies played an important role in contributing to decision-making, labour development, organisational development and the economy's growth. There was a relationship between women's constraints in the workplace, a dominant factor, and others' perceptions of women in top management contributing negatively and positively on women's constraints in the workplace factor. Also, another dominant factor 'Men vs women in the workplace' had a significant relationship with others' perceptions of women in top management through the positive view of male managers regarding women's latest participation and contribution in the development of petroleum companies in Gabon and its economy growth.

Thirdly, the impact of gender roles was an issue, within characteristics of workplaces that reduced women's chances to compete with men to reach top management positions in the petroleum sector. Those characteristics included three independent variables, named 'Women and sexual harassment', 'Masculinity versus femininity' and 'Male dominance'. Sexual harassment endures to be a problem, specifically for women. In the findings, the majority of women working in the petroleum companies in Gabon attested that sexual harassment, a type of discrimination, was a major barrier slowing their career progression. Many researchers like Stange *et al*., (2011: 594), McLaughin *et al*., (2012: 18) and McGregor (2015: 124) attested to this statement.

Moreover, it was confirmed by women and men respondents that notions of masculinity versus femininity constituted a major barrier for women, with women being more disadvantaged than men. However, women were starting to be considered on the same level as men in the Gabonese petroleum sector. The majority of women shared that gender discrimination and gender stereotypes were barriers to their career progression. However, it was found that stereotypes are increasingly ineffective in the petroleum companies in Gabon, with of respondents being that men

and women should be considered on the basis of their professionalism and skills, not their gender. Another finding underlined by the researcher was that gender preferences existed according to cultures and traditions. Previously, men tend to be favoured in the workplace because of preferences of gender, culture and tradition. Respondents confirmed that most women considered these preferences as barriers preventing them from reaching top management positions in the selected Gabonese petroleum companies. Maternity leave and job characteristics also remained barriers for women's career progression, compared to men, in the workplace. Respondents in this study also revealed that job characteristics (like irregular hours, and extra hours or travel) were not always of benefit to them and were barriers for them in their efforts to reach top management positions. The researcher emphasised that women may have some responsibilities and duties demanding their time, which in turn can make their chances of meeting the demands of senior positions insecure. It was suggested that, whether there is maternity leave or childcare, these are natural phenomena that should be accepted and considered as contributing to women's abilities and skills which are of benefit for both other employees and the petroleum companies.

It was demonstrated that male dominance still exists at home and in the workplace, especially in African countries, including Gabon. This statement was confirmed by some male managers who declared that men tend to control women's lives, especially in the household and in labour due to cultural and traditional attachment. Women attested that they struggled more than men to advance in their career owing to various barriers in the Gabonese petroleum companies. Many researchers like Phoenix (2012), Christ (2013), Kirai and Elegwa, (2013: 205) and Bolton (2015) supported this point of view by explaining that male dominance is a system of patriarchy privileging men and reducing women's advancement to top management positions in the petroleum sector. The factor of men versus women in the workplace is definitively linked and influenced by the two contributors, namely perception of women in top management and gender roles impacting on women.

Finally, the fourth theme named 'Career progression for women' in the Gabonese petroleum sector was developed and discussed regarding three characteristics, namely 'Qualifications and competence', 'Organisational commitment importance' and, finally, 'Government policies and women'. It was attested that for women's career progression, qualifications and competence, a characteristic obtained from the respondents' answers, plays an important role in evaluating an employee's knowledge and intellectuality by the Gabonese petroleum companies. Managers working in the petroleum companies demonstrated that qualifications and competence dominate over gender when they affirmed holding a top management position depends on intellectual skills,

which are qualifications and competence, irrespective of whether the candidate is male or female. Some of them thought that it was important to obtain the right qualifications and competence for the right job positions. Concerning organisational commitment towards women, it is important to notice that there is a link with organisational culture. This link is highlighted by the fact that organisational commitment and culture are related to how an employee feels about the organisation as a whole. Women confirmed that petroleum companies were committed to abide by Gabonese government legislation. However, some of the petroleum companies' commitment was not fulfilled when women agreed that remuneration inequality was a barrier to their career progression. Also, there was a lack of support systems at work, like new computers programmes and communication tools, which constituted barriers to women's career progression in the companies. The value of work environment and conditions in the Gabonese petroleum companies, which are crucial to organisational development and employees' increase performance, must be considered. There is a relationship between organisational commitment and women's career progression through the impact, positive or negative, that organisational culture can have on women's job performance and satisfaction. Regarding government policies and women, the Gabonese government determines the importance of women by assisting them through policies and valorising their rights. In fact, women affirmed that the Gabonese government participated in their promotion in the petroleum companies in Gabon; but they still needed to invest more time and attention to some policies that were not being applied in the Gabonese petroleum sector. Many researchers, such as Eagly and Sczesny (2009: 34), Makama (2013: 122) and Schwanke (2013: 1), would support this statement. Women in this study also attested that sexual harassment was a major barrier for women's career progression in the petroleum companies. Furthermore, most women confirmed that gender discrimination and stereotypes against them limited their career advancement in the Gabonese petroleum companies. Therefore, the Gabonese government and petroleum companies' interventions can have a positive or negative impact on women's career progression and promotion.

The findings of this study are highlighted in the framework above (Figure 4.39). The framework shows dominant factors obtained and explained, with contributors linked and the influence of ten characteristics, the independent variables, discussed. Each contributor and how it influences, positively or negatively, women's career progression in the Gabonese petroleum sector, is shown.

The next chapter will include a conclusion and recommendations related to this study which attempted to meet the research objectives, answer the research questions and address the problem statement announced in Chapter One.

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this research study was to identify various factors affecting women's representation in management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon; moreover, to assist Gabonese petroleum companies to encourage women's career progression into management positions. During the research study, the factors that can affect women in management in the petroleum sector were identified; and findings were considered in light of findings from similar studies in other contexts, not in the Gabonese petroleum sector.

The previous chapter highlighted findings gleaned from the questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. Those findings were all related to three factors and four themes, which were subsequently examined and explained. A discussion compared the researcher's findings with those of researchers in the literature to determine if a correlation or contradiction existed among the findings. A framework summarising all the findings was created to answer the research questions of this research study.

The goal of this chapter is to discuss how the study met the research objectives and provided answers to the research questions, as well as to provide recommendations based on the findings of the research.

5.2 Concluding remarks with respect to the objectives of this study

This research study achieved four research objectives; moreover, each research question linked with an objective has been answered in the next sub-section, based on this study's findings. Recommendations are also made.

5.2.1 Research objective 1

The research objectives were established to explore how to reduce the effects of obstacles contributing to the marginalisation of women in their career progression. This entailed, firstly, determining if training opportunities existed for women employees in order to groom them for management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector. In view of this objective, the following findings can be linked:

- The majority of women affirmed that training and mentorship programmes are offered to women in the Gabonese petroleum companies at least one to three times per year; and, for most of them, mentor gender does not affect training or mentorship programmes.
- Three-quarters of women considered that support and guidance from a mentor was very important for their career progression in the petroleum companies in Gabon.
- The majority of women indicated that lack of mentoring/coaching was not a barrier to women's career progression; but a considerable number of women believed that a lack of mentoring/coaching was a barrier affecting their career progression in the petroleum companies in Gabon. Thus, mentorship and/or coaching, as well as training, could offer some benefits.
- Three-quarters of women considered that women and men were equally considered for training or mentorship programmes but also for promotions in the Gabonese petroleum companies, while a minority disagreed.
- The majority of women agreed that a lack of equality in training was a barrier to their career progression in the selected petroleum companies in Gabon.
- Males and female managers expressed their view that training and mentorship programme regularity and support were beneficial and necessary for the emancipation of women and their equality of chances in the petroleum companies in Gabon.

The first research question focused on training opportunities and mentorship/coaching programmes being accessible to women, to groom them for management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon. The main findings from this study showed that most of the women hired in the petroleum companies were provided with training programmes and they had been trained at least one to three times per year.

In addition, managers who employed staff were aware that training opportunities and support gave women the chance to develop new skills and enhance their performance, therefore the effects of training should not be underestimated. That training was considered important was clear from the number of times training and support in mentoring/coaching opportunities were offered by the petroleum companies; however, in practice, there was insufficient training and mentoring offered to women working in the petroleum companies.

5.2.2 Research objective 2

The second objective established for this study was to understand the perception of employees and managers, working in the Gabonese petroleum sector, regarding women in management positions. In accordance with this objective, the following findings can be related:
- Numerous women specified that preferences of gender, culture and tradition were obstacles preventing them from reaching top management positions in the Gabonese petroleum companies.

- The majority of women testified that women played an important role in the petroleum companies in Gabon.
- Managers, including men and women, reported that competence and qualifications were the key elements needed to reach management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector.
- Family responsibilities were a barrier for women; and theses responsibilities did not allow them to take advantage of some job opportunities, despite their competence and qualifications.

The second research question was aimed at gaining insight into people's understandings of gender roles, particularly beliefs held by many men regarding women managing and supervising petroleum companies. The main findings showed that majority of women regarded preferences of gender, culture and tradition were barriers for women's advancement into management positions. However, it is possible that perceptions can change over time, as indicated by the fact that most of the managers, including males, agreed that women played an important role through their participation in the workplace.

The findings amassed for this study indicated that, despite the fact that women could play an important role by participating in the economic growth of companies and the country, perceptions of some people in the broader society and in organisations could retard women's progression into management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector.

5.2.3 Research objective 3

The third objective set for this study was to determine if gender roles influenced the recognition of women employees applying for management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector. In conformity with this objective, the following findings were correlated:

- The majority of women affirmed that family responsibilities, gender stereotype and gender discrimination were barriers to women's career progression in the petroleum companies in Gabon.
- The great majority of women agreed that remuneration's inequity was a barrier affecting women's career progression in these companies.
- Most women regarded certain job characteristics and sexual harassment as barriers to women's career progression in the petroleum companies in Gabon.
- Most women confirmed that they had received a promotion in the Gabonese petroleum companies.
- The majority of managers interviewed, including men and women, believed that gender did not determine the know-how (practical knowledge) of employees. Thus, gender stereotype in the workplace concerning knowledge and skills have not been effective.

- Men and women managers attested that only qualifications and competence of an individual, male or female, were of importance for leaders who needed to be able to supervise and manage people in the petroleum companies in Gabon.
- Some male managers confessed that women, compared to men, could play an important role in management positions in the Gabonese petroleum companies through their strengths and abilities.
- Some male managers underlined that gender stereotype advantaging men's self-esteem and the impact of culture on women's chances of promotion cannot be ignored, as well as women's abilities identification.

The third research question focused on how gender roles (the differences between men and women) affect women when applying for management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector. Previous research has exhibited that gender stereotype and discrimination tend to be evident in sexual harassment, women being held responsible for family duties, and gender preferences for employment emanating from culture and tradition. All of these contribute to women's marginalisation, with the many holding the view that males are most able as leaders in management in the petroleum sector.

The main findings of this study research underlined that the majority of women as well as men considered that gender does not determine the knowledge, qualifications and competence of an individual who is best suited to a senior position – the individual could be a male or a female. However, women complained of inequity in training and remuneration in the petroleum companies in Gabon, both of which could affect job performance. The findings revealed that gender roles were a contributor characterised by masculinity versus femininity, sexual harassment and male dominance, resulting in the underestimation of women and their being recognized as good leaders in the petroleum sector in Gabon.

5.2.4 Research objective 4

The fourth objective for this study was to propose a strategy for the transformation of women's career progression to management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon. The following findings can be associated with this objective:

- The great majority of women revealed that the lack of system support at work was a barrier to their career progression in the petroleum companies in Gabon.
- Most women agreed that the petroleum companies were committed to the Gabonese government legislation on labour code.
- Women employees confirmed that the Gabonese government participated to support women's promotion at the petroleum companies in Gabon by valuing their rights in the workplace.

➢ Male and female managers acknowledged that offering training and mentorship programmes to women working in the Gabonese petroleum sector created fairness; in other words, equality of chances.

The fourth research question focused on developing a strategy to realise women's transformation through their career progression within the petroleum sector in Gabon. This is a necessity in anticipation of women's emancipation in the top management positions in the petroleum sector. The main findings in this study exposed that, from the point of view of women in Gabonese petroleum companies, constraints very often confronted in the workplace were that they faced a lack of training and mentoring, sexual harassment, gender stereotype and discrimination, family responsibilities and male dominance, none of which motivated them to pursue their careers.

It is important to reveal the factors (of women's constraints and men versus women at the workplace) that were considered dependent variables impacting women's efficiency in the workplace, as these resulted in them not easily progressing in their careers. Through the studies research made, it was finalised that a strategy could be applied to stop women's marginalisation in terms of their career progression in the petroleum sector in Gabon. This strategy to be applied was focused on the following characteristics called qualifications and competence, organisational commitment importance and government policies playing respectively different roles.

Other factors that could facilitate the transformation of Gabonese women's career progress were the Government and organisational commitment to women's progression. Achieving organisational goals, while openly supporting the values, beliefs, interpersonal behaviours, and attitudes necessary to achieve this, could be communicated to shareholders and employees. The value of an emancipated work environment and organisational commitment to women's advancement in the Gabonese petroleum companies were crucial to organisational development and employee's enhanced performance. Government was involved in women's promotion; and their involvement was also a factor facilitating women's transformation through career progression. Though the Gabonese government already contributed programmes and foundations to assist women and value their rights, they still needed to invest more time and attention to achieve this goal.

The findings of this research study discovered that the efficiency of the strategy proposed was dependent on the contribution of these factors and results. It was concluded that qualifications and competence played an important role in evaluating an employee's knowledge and intellectuality by the Gabonese petroleum companies.

5.3 Study limitations, implications and suggestions for future research

This research study was chiefly limited to women in management positions, which included lower, middle and top level management: supervisors, regional managers, general managers, board of directors and chief executives from selected petroleum companies in Gabon. However, inclusion of some male managers was considered necessary to gather better results and findings to meet the study's objectives and attain answers to the research questions. For the review of literature, previous studies, journals and articles focused on women in the petroleum sector in Gabon were limited. The researcher had to consider more secondary sources focused on same topic but other African and European countries.

Triangulation of data through mixed method was the suitable approach using questionnaires and interviews as instruments to collect data for this research study. However, to obtain a 97% response rate from women participants, the researcher spent more time in Gabon than the two months planned to collect information. It was only once she had arrived in Gabon, other permissions were obtained from two more petroleum companies to conduct research.

This study research concentrated only on women working in the petroleum sector in Gabon. Nevertheless, there are other various private sectors, such as mining, agriculture and tourism, where women are marginalised and their career progression retarded. For further research, it would be helpful if other researchers conducted a study on other sectors in Gabon, or investigated the same study in other countries in Central Africa where women continue to be marginalised due to culture and tradition.

5.4 Significance and contribution of this research

The importance of this research was to examine different factors that constrain women's career progression to top management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon. The study was carried out by exploring different factors, namely, women's constraints, and men versus women in the workplace, as well as government and organisations' commitment towards women. As explained earlier, insight into these is all dependent on ten independent variables.

It is hoped that the findings will fill the gap in the literature of women's underrepresentation in management positions in developing countries within the petroleum sector. Considering that Gabon is a developing country, this study will contribute to the development of women's

representation in the top management positions. The recommendations could be applied to other developing countries in the petroleum sector.

5.5 Recommendations for this research

The researcher made some recommendations in line with the findings and discussion in this study. The purpose of the following recommendations was to improve the conditions of women regarding their career progression in the petroleum companies in Gabon and increase their representation in management positions.

5.5.1 Research recommendations 1

The following recommendations suggested by the researcher address the first research question and should be applied:

- Petroleum companies in Gabon should fulfil their responsibilities by offering more conferences, training and mentorship/coaching programmes to better prepare women, through enhanced efficiency and productivity, to reach top management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector.
- Mentors should enrich training and development support showing by the results their importance and benefits for employees and petroleum companies.

5.5.2 Research recommendations 2

The following recommendations suggested by the researcher address the second research question and should be useful:

- Women should create a positive perception of themselves by making a commitment, as well as by taking consistent action, through women's promotion groups or associations. In this way, they may develop and refine their image and enhance perceptions of their value and efficiency in the petroleum companies in Gabon.
- The senior management of Gabonese petroleum companies should be neutral, with no gender preferences, and so value women equally with men in the workplace.

5.5.3 Research recommendations 3

The following recommendations suggested by the researcher address the third research question:

- Petroleum companies' management should accept the reality that women's family duties, particularly maternity leave, are not a barrier but a natural fact which cannot be changed. On the contrary this phenomenon called women's family duties can be prevented by the petroleum companies' arrangements with their women's employees.
- Management should not underestimate women and pre-judge them because of their gender. Instead, they should consider the value of their qualifications and competence, knowledge, skills and participation to be of benefit for the company's development.

- Management should ensure fairness without distinction in the work environment regarding salaries, promotions, training and support.

5.5.4 Research recommendations 4

The following recommendations suggested by the researcher address the fourth research question and should be appropriated:

- Hiring of women by petroleum companies should be operated according to their qualifications and competence only, without any other influences, preferences or judgments.
- Gabonese petroleum companies should frequently offer leadership programmes to women to ensure that they are able to lead people and be promoted to top management positions in the petroleum sector.
- Gabonese petroleum companies should make information available to their employees regarding career paths, so that all may be aware about future positions and job responsibilities with training required.
- Women should be encouraged and promoted to certain job positions requiring feminine sensibilities; however, for other job positions, equality of chance should be applicable for men as well as women.
- Gabonese petroleum companies should better understand and consider obligations required by women, because employed women have two obligations: family responsibilities and work responsibilities.

5.6 Conclusion

This study emerged from the problem regarding women employees in the Gabonese petroleum sector being marginalised in terms of their career progression, which resulted in their underrepresentation in management positions. To address this problem, four objectives were set and, accordingly, four research questions to be answered. The aim of this research study was to identify the different factors that can affect women's representation in management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon; moreover, to assist Gabonese petroleum companies to encourage women's career progression into management positions. The researcher focused on this study to lend value to and enhance the promotion of women in the professional world and stop their marginalisation in terms of career progression. In other words, knowledge and skills are not limited by one's gender but anyone, whether a man or woman, is able to acquire and develop skills that can be applied for improvement or growth. The literature review provided a guide for the researcher's exploration of what has already been done concerning the phenomenon investigated. The literature review structure corresponded to the research questions.

This research study used a mixed method approach, with data triangulation via quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and findings combined for interpretation. The instruments used to collect information were questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. The target population for this study was limited to women and some men working in the selected petroleum companies in Gabon. Purposive sampling produced 71 women participants for the questionnaire, while snowball sampling produced 15 participants, consisting of 3 women and 12 men, for the interviews. The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS 23) and content analysis were the strategies used to analyse and interpret respectively the quantitative data and qualitative data. The questionnaire was implemented to gather data from women regarding their marginalisation in terms of their career progression in the petroleum sector; while the interview collected data from both women and men to provide an in-depth understanding of why women had limited access to a certain level in their professional careers and what employees' perception, particularly men, were regarding women in top management positions.

The findings of this research study confirmed the problem posed: at the time of this study, there was marginalisation of Gabonese women in the petroleum sector in terms of their career progression, resulting in their underrepresentation in management positions. The following contributors were pertinent aspects: women in training and mentorship; perception towards women in top management; gender roles impacting on women; career progression for women in the Gabonese petroleum sector; the factors constraining women in the workplace; men versus women in the workplace; and government and organisation's commitment towards women. These aspects have been developed and correlated owing to a lack of training and mentoring opportunities, but also owing to the persistence of constraints, resulting in the failure of women's development in new skills and performance. Training and development opportunities are important for women's skills improvement; and the training/mentoring programmes offered by petroleum companies in Gabon are insufficient. Women in training and mentorship have an influence on women's constraints at the workplace factor by the lack existing in the petroleum companies in Gabon. Perceptions of women are based on beliefs, opinions and preferences which are still influenced by culture and tradition; consequently, women's abilities are neglected. However, despite inaccurate perceptions slowing women in their career progression, it was recognised that women play an important role by virtue of their capabilities and talents that men do not have. Women's participation in the petroleum companies plays an important role as they contribute to decision-making, labour development, organisational development and the economy's growth. Family responsibilities, especially maternity leave, remain an issue for women who consequently struggle to reach top management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon.

Employees' perceptions of women in top management positions are influenced, negatively and positively, by two factors named women's constraints at the workplace and men vs women at the workplace. Persistent views of gender roles are one contributor to the notion of men versus women in the workplace, facilitating barriers such as sexual harassment, masculinity versus femininity, and male dominance, all of which marginalise women by keeping them on the same level in middle management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector. Despite those barriers, managers revealed that there was no relationship between management positions and gender. The Gabonese government and organisational commitment towards women occurred as an important human factor influencing women's skilling and growth, despite their inefficiency in applying some policies in the Gabonese petroleum sector. Gabonese government and organisational commitment towards women factor is influenced by specific characteristics, namely qualifications and competence, organisational commitment and government policies and women. Those specific characteristics can allow career progression for women in the Gabonese petroleum sector and good perceptions towards women in top management positions. Qualifications and competence including interpersonal skills, values and personal capabilities are regarded as necessary to evaluate women in the same way as men for top management positions. Organisational commitment remains important for women's career progression, with organisational culture ostensibly committed to upholding government legislation to keep employees' satisfaction regarding their work environment and conditions. The Gabonese government and petroleum companies are working together through policies for women's promotion, but companies remain inefficient regarding some issues like addressing sexual harassment, inequality of remuneration, gender discrimination and stereotypes.

In summary, the framework demonstrated that there is a correlation between the three factors identified as Women's constraints in the workplace, Men versus women in the workplace, and Government and organisation's commitment towards women, with the four contributors being Women in training and mentorship, Perception of women in top management, Gender roles impacting on women, and Career progression for women in the Gabonese petroleum sector. Those four contributors were generated by ten characteristics: Training and development opportunities; Support and guidance; Family responsibilities; Women's importance in organisational development; Masculinity versus femininity; Sexual harassment; Male dominance; Qualifications and competence; Organisational commitment importance, then Government policies and women. Inadequate training, perception, and gender roles are contributors reported to have a significant impact on recognising women to be as suited to top management positions as men are in the petroleum sector in Gabon. The strategies allowing the transformation of

women's career progression within the petroleum sector is realisable with influencing elements or characteristics, namely qualifications and competence, then government and organisational commitment through the recommendations made. Each of those characteristics have an important impact on women's transformation, because qualifications and competence are the key to determine if women are able or unable to lead other people and have the required knowledge and leadership skills. Furthermore, beliefs, opinions and preferences must be changed and designed by women employees and managers in response to the petroleum companies' culture and commitment to government legislation, or to the way people work, regardless of culture and tradition.

To minimise the negative effects of factors affecting women's progression to senior management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon, some recommendations were suggested. Concerning training and mentorship programmes, petroleum companies in Gabon should more frequently offer conferences, training programmes and mentorship to better prepare women through enhanced efficiency and productivity to reach top management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector. Perceptions can be changed, so women should create positive perceptions of themselves by making a commitment and by taking consistent action, such as through women's promotion groups or associations. Management should not only consider gender but knowledge, value and participation for the company's development via qualifications and competence. Also, fairness without distinction in the work environment, and parity of salaries, promotions, training and support should be ensured. Regardless of preferences, women should be estimated as the intellectual equal of men and their skills valued. It should be noticed that the social world and professional world are not correlated.

Further research studies working towards identifying factors affecting the representation of women in top management positions could be done on different sectors in Gabon, such as agriculture, mining, construction and transport sectors.

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APPENDIX A: Participant informed consent form for Women in Management questionnaire

Participant Informed Consent Form for Women in Management Questionnaire

Title of Research Study
Factors affecting the representation of women in management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon.

Researcher: Ms Georgie Antonia Awakossa Pounah
Supervisor: Dr Liiza Gie

Introduction
I am inviting you to fill the questionnaire regarding the 'Factors affecting the representation of women in management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon'. Please note that taking part in this research is entirely voluntary. Should you wish to participate, please sign the form below, indicating your willingness to participate.

Purpose of the Research
The purpose of this research study is to identify different obstacles affecting women's representation in management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon and also to assist Gabonese petroleum companies to encourage women's career progression in the management.

Research Method
This research study is limited to Gabonese petrol companies' staff members especially women. This study will not include men employees in the Gabonese petroleum companies. Self-administered questionnaires will be e-mailed to the Chief Executive of petroleum companies in Gabon in order to distribute the questionnaire to all women's employees. This questionnaire will include three sections: biographical information, career information and factors affecting women's career progression. Thereafter, a semi-structured face-to-face interview with four questions will be included to obtain in-depth information regarding the factors affecting the representation of women in management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector and the marginalisation in term of their career progression. Completed questionnaires should be collected by the researcher by no later than the 21st of March 2016.

Potential Benefits
The research outcomes will benefit all companies in Gabon in terms of women empowerment in the workplace and the society which in turn will improve performance levels and productivity in labour activities.

Statement of Confidentiality
Confidentiality of responses will be ensured and no person will be prejudiced for participating in this study, while quality control and secure storage of data will be maintained. All participants will remain anonymous and no probability of harm is expected.

Contact Information for Questions or Concerns
For any further information about this research, clarity on questions and /or concerns please do not hesitate to contact the researcher, Georgie Antonia Awakossa Pounah at +24103266060 or miss.gie2008@yahoo.fr

Participant: By signing this consent form, you indicate that you are voluntarily choosing to take part in this research.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

APPENDIX B: Participant informed consent form for Women in Management interview

Participant Informed Consent Form for Women in Management Interview

Title of Research Study
Factors affecting the representation of women in management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon.

Researcher: Ms Georgie Antonia Awakossa Pounah
Supervisor: Dr Liiza Gie

Introduction
I am inviting you for an interview regarding the Factors affecting the representation of women in management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon. Please note that taking part in this research is entirely voluntary. Should you wish to participate, please sign the form below, indicating your willingness to participate.

Purpose of the Research
The purpose of this research study is to identify different obstacles affecting women's representation in management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon and also to assist Gabonese petroleum companies to encourage women's career progression in the management.

Research Method
This research study is limited to Gabonese petrol companies' staff members especially women. This semi-structured face-to-face interview with four questions will be included to obtain in-depth information regarding the factors affecting the representation of women in management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector and the marginalisation in term of their career progression. Self-administered questionnaires will be e-mailed to the Chief Executive or Human Resources Manager of petroleum companies in Gabon in order to distribute the questionnaire to all women's employees. The questionnaire will include three sections: biographical information, career information and factors affecting women's career progression. Completed questionnaires should be collected by the researcher by no later than the 21st of March 2016.

Potential Benefits
The research outcomes will benefit all companies in Gabon in terms of women empowerment in the workplace and the society which in turn will improve performance levels and productivity in labour activities.

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Confidentiality of responses will be ensured and no person will be prejudiced for participating in this study, while quality control and secure storage of data will be maintained. All participants will remain anonymous and no probability of harm is expected.

Contact Information for Questions or Concerns
For any further information about this research, clarity on questions and /or concerns please do not hesitate to contact the researcher, Georgie Antonia Awakossa Pounah at +24103266060 or miss.gie2008@yahoo.fr

Participant: By signing this consent form, you indicate that you are voluntarily choosing to take part in this research.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

APPENDIX C: French version of participant informed consent form for Women in Management: Interview/Questionnaire

Lettre de consentement de participation à la recherche sur 'La position de la femme dans le management': interview/questionnaire

Titre du Projet de Recherche
Facteurs limitant la représentation de la femme dans les positions du management dans le secteur pétrolier au Gabon.

Rechercheur: Mlle Georgie Antonia Awakossa Pounah
Superviseur: Dr Liiza Gie

Introduction
Je vous invite pour un interview/questionnaire évoquant 'Les facteurs limitant la représentation de la femme dans les positions du management dans le secteur pétrolier au Gabon.' S'il vous plait veuillez tenir en compte que prendre part à cette recherche est purement volontaire. Pour confirmer votre volonté de participer, prière de signer ci-dessous la lettre de consentement après lecture du document.

Objectif de la recherche
Le but de ce projet de recherche est d'identifier les différentes barrières limitant la représentation de la femme dans les positions du management dans le secteur pétrolier au Gabon mais aussi, d'assister les compagnies pétrolières Gabonaises pour encourager et émanciper la femme dans sa progression de carrière dans le management.

Méthode de recherche
Le projet de recherche est limité aux employé(e)s des compagnies pétrolières Gabonaises. Ce demi-structuré face à face interview composé de quatre questions sera inclu pour obtenir des informations plus approfondies concernant les facteurs limitant la représentation de la femme dans les positions du management dans le secteur pétrolier au Gabon et la marginalisation par rapport à leur progression de carrière. Des questionnaires auto-administrés seront envoyés par email au Directeur général ou Directeur des Ressources Humaines des compagnies pétrolières au Gabon, qui en retour seront distribués à toutes les femmes employées. Le questionnaire comprendra trois sections: information biographique, information de carrière et facteurs limitant la progression de carrière de la femme. S'il vous plait, prière de noter que le rechercheur devra récupérer tous les questionnaires remplis au plutard le Lundi 21 Mars 2016.

Bénéfices potentiels
Les résultats de cette recherche seront bénéficiaires à toutes les compagnies au Gabon dans le cadre de l'émancipation de la femme au sein du travail et de la société, lesquels en retour amélioreront les niveaux de performance et de productivité dans les activités de la compagnie concernée.

Déclaration de confidentialité
La confidentialité de toutes réponses seront catégoriquement assurées et personne ne subira un préjudice pour leur participation à cette recherche, pendant que le contrôle de qualité et le stockage sécurisé des informations seront maintenus. Tout(es) participant(e)s à cette recherche seront gardé(e)s anonymes sans aucune probabilité d'être expos(é)es.

Contact pour informations
Pour plus d'informations à propos de cette recherche, plus de clarté sur les questions, prière de contacter le rechercheur, Georgie Antonia Awakossa Pounah au +24103266060 ou miss.gie2008@yahoo.fr
*Participant(e): En signant cette lettre de consentement, vous confirmez que vous avez volontairement choisi(e) de participer à cette recherche.

_____   _____
Signature de la Participant(e)   Date

The purpose of this survey is to examine factors affecting the representation of women in management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector and the marginalisation in term of their career progression. Any information provided in this questionnaire will be used for academic purposes, be kept confidential and anonymous. Please complete the following questionnaire correctly. Your cooperation and participation will be highly appreciated.

Section A: Biographical information

1. What is your marital status? **(Please tick the right answer)**

⬡ Single   ⬡ Married   ⬡ Divorced   ⬡ Widowed

2. What is your current position in the organisation?

General worker		Professional engineer	
Supervisor		General manager	
Brand/Regional manager		Other (specify)	

3. For how long do you work for the organisation? **(Please tick the right answer)**
⬡ 0-4 years   ⬡ 5-9 years   ⬡ 10-15 years   ⬡ 16-20 years   ⬡ More

4. For how long have you been in the same position? **(Please tick the right answer)**
⬡ 0-4 years   ⬡ 5-9 years   ⬡ 10-15 years   ⬡ 16-20 years   ⬡ More

5. How old are you? **(Please tick the right answer)**

21-25 years		41-45 years	
26-30 years		46-50 years	
31-35 years		51-55 years	
36-40 years		56-more years	

6. What is your highest educational qualification's level? **(Please tick the right answer)**

College certificate		BTech/Honours degree	
Matriculation		Master's degree	
Bachelor's degree		Doctoral degree	
National diploma		Other (specify)	

7. Do you anticipate continuing your study? **(Please tick and justify your answer)**

Yes	**No**
Reason:	**Reason:**

Section C: Factors affecting women's career progression in management position in the Gabonese Petroleum sector

8. Does your organisation offer you training/mentorship programs? **(Please tick the right answer)**
◯ Strongly disagree ◯ Disagree ◯ Agree ◯ Strongly agree

9. How many times in a year the company offers you have training/mentorship programs? **(Please tick the right answer)**
◯ 1-3 times ◯ 4-6 times ◯ 7-9 times ◯ 10-more ◯ None

10. Support and guidance from a mentor is very important. **(Please tick the right answer)**
◯ Strongly disagree ◯ Disagree ◯ Agree ◯ Strongly agree

11. The fact that a mentor is a male or female can influence women employees during training/mentorship programs. **(Please tick the right answer)**
◯ Strongly disagree ◯ Disagree ◯ Agree ◯ Strongly agree

12. Male colleagues are more advantaged than women regarding training/mentorship programs. **(Please tick the right answer)**
◯ Strongly disagree ◯ Disagree ◯ Agree ◯ Strongly agree

13. Male colleagues are more advantaged than women regarding promotion offers in the organisation. **(Please tick the right answer)**
◯ Strongly disagree ◯ Disagree ◯ Agree ◯ Strongly agree

14. Please indicate your experience regarding each of the following variables that may be barriers to the career progression of women into management positions in the organisation. **(Please tick the right answer)**

Variables/Factors	Not a barrier	A minor barrier	A barrier	A major barrier
Lack of mentoring/coaching	1	2	3	4
Lack of equity in training	1	2	3	4
Lack of equity in pay	1	2	3	4
Lack of support systems at work (e.g. computers programs)	1	2	3	4
Job characteristics, e.g. irregular work hours	1	2	3	4
Sexual harassment at work	1	2	3	4
Preferences towards gender and cultures/traditions	1	2	3	4
Family responsibilities, e.g. Childcare	1	2	3	4

15. Please indicate your opinion with regards to the following statements:
   1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree and 4=Strongly agree.

Statements	1	2	3	4
Gender discrimination is a constraint to women career advancement.	1	2	3	4
Stereotypes against women limit them to advance their careers.	1	2	3	4
Females face significant obstacles to career advancement compared to males in my organisation.	1	2	3	4
Women play important roles in the workplace.	1	2	3	4
My organisation is committed to Government legislation (Gabonese Labour Code Act 2000) to promote women's empowerment.	1	2	3	4
Government legislation such as Gabonese Labour Code Act No.12 of 2000 helps to promote women's rights.	1	2	3	4

16. How many times have you been promoted to a new position in the organisation?

◯ Never   ◯ Once   ◯ Twice   ◯ Three times   ◯ Four times   ◯ More

17. Where do you project yourself in the next 5 years?

_____
_____
_____

Thank you for your time and participation for the completion of this questionnaire ☺

APPENDIX E: Questionnaire (French version)

L'objectif de ce questionnaire est d'identifier les différents facteurs limitant la représentation de la femme sur les positions de management dans le secteur pétrolier Gabonais et aussi leur marginalisation en termes de progression de carrière. Toutes informations tirées de ce questionnaire seront utilisées pour des raisons académiques et seront gardées confidentielles et anonymes. S'il vous plait, veuillez correctement compléter le questionnaire. Votre coopération et participation seront fortement appréciées.

Section A: Information Biographique

1. Quel est votre statut marital? **(Svp cochez la bonne réponse)**

⬡ Célibataire   ⬡ Marié(e)   ⬡ Divorcé(e)   ⬡ Veuve

2. Quelle est votre position actuelle dans la compagnie ? **(Svp cochez la bonne réponse)**

Ouvrière		Ingénieur professionnel	
Superviseur/Chef de services		Directrice régionale/adjointe	
Agent de maitrise/ Cadre		Autres (spécifié)	

3. Combien d'années travaillez-vous pour la compagnie ? **(Svp cochez la bonne réponse)**

⬡ 0-4 ans   ⬡ 5-9 ans   ⬡ 10-15 ans   ⬡ 16-20 ans ⬡ Plus

4. Combien d'années occupez-vous le même poste au sein de la compagnie? **(Svp cochez la bonne réponse)**

⬡ 0-4 ans   ⬡ 5-9 ans   ⬡ 10-15 ans ⬡ 16-20 ans ⬡ Plus

5. Quel est votre âge? **(Svp cochez la bonne réponse)**

21-25 ans		41-45 ans	
26-30 ans		46-50 ans	
31-35 ans		51-55 ans	
36-40 ans		56-plus	

6. Quel est votre niveau éducationnel/qualification le plus haut? **(Svp cochez la bonne réponse)**

Certificat de collège (BEPC)		Maîtrise	
Baccalauréat		Master degré	
Licence		Doctorat/DEA/DESS	
Licence professionnelle		Autres (spécifié)	

7. Planifiez-vous continuer vos études? **(Svp cochez et justifier la réponse)**

Oui	**Non**
Raison:	**Raison:**

Section C: Facteurs affectant la progression de carrière de la femme sur les positions de management dans le secteur pétrolier Gabonais

8. La compagnie vous offre-t-elle des programmes de formation/entrainement? **(Svp cochez la bonne réponse)**
◯ Pas du tout d'accord ◯ Pas d'accord ◯ D'accord ◯ Tout à fait d'accord

9. Combien de fois dans l'année la compagnie vous offre-t-elle des programmes de formation/entrainement? **(Svp cochez la bonne réponse)**
◯ 1-3 fois   4-6 fois ◯   7-9 fois ◯   10-plus ◯   Aucune ◯

10. Le support et le guide d'un mentor est très important. **(Svp cochez la bonne réponse)**
◯ Pas du tout d'accord ◯ Pas d'accord ◯ D'accord ◯ Tout à fait d'accord

11. Le fait que le mentor soit un homme ou une femme peut influencer les employées femmes pendant les programmes de formation/entrainement. **(Svp cochez la bonne réponse)**
◯ Pas du tout d'accord ◯ Pas d'accord ◯ D'accord ◯ Tout à fait d'accord

12. Les collègues masculins ont plus d'avantages que leurs collègues femmes concernant les programmes de formation/entrainement. **(Svp cochez la bonne réponse)**
◯ Pas du tout d'accord ◯ Pas d'accord ◯ D'accord ◯ Tout à fait d'accord

13. Les collègues masculins ont plus d'avantages que leurs collègues femmes concernant les promotions offertes dans la compagnie. **(Svp cochez la bonne réponse)**

◯ Pas du tout d'accord ◯ Pas d'accord ◯ D'accord ◯ Tout à fait d'accord

14. S'il vous plait, veuillez indiquer votre expérience avec les variantes suivantes qui pourraient être des barrières à la progression de carrière des femmes dans des positions de management au sein de la compagnie. **(Svp cochez la bonne réponse)**

Variantes/Facteurs	Pas une barrière	Une mineure barrière	Une barrière	Une majeure barrière
Le manque de mentorat/encadrement	1	2	3	4
Le manque d'égalité en formation/entrainement	1	2	3	4
Le manque d'égalité en rémunération	1	2	3	4
Le manque en support de système au travail (ex: programmes d'ordinateurs)	1	2	3	4
Caractéristiques de travail, ex : heures de travail irrégulières	1	2	3	4
Harcèlement sexuel au travail	1	2	3	4
Préférences envers le genre et les cultures/traditions	1	2	3	4
Obligations/responsabilités familiales, ex : maternité, garde d'enfants	1	2	3	4

15. S'il vous plait, veuillez indiquer votre point de vue avec attention aux arguments suivants : **1=Pas du tout d'accord, 2=Pas d'accord, 3=D'accord and 4=Tout à fait d'accord.**

Argumentations/Déclarations	1	2	3	4
La discrimination du genre est un bloquage pour l'avancement de carrière de la femme.	1	2	3	4
Stéréotypes contre les femmes les limitent dans le progrès de leurs carrières.	1	2	3	4
Les femmes affrontent d'importants obstacles face à leur progression de carrière comparées aux hommes au sein de ma compagnie.	1	2	3	4
Les femmes jouent un rôle important dans le monde du travail.	1	2	3	4
Ma compagnie est soumise/vouée à la législation du gouvernement Gabonais (Code du travail Acte 2000) pour promouvoir á l'émancipation de la femme.	1	2	3	4
La législation du gouvernement Gabonais, comme le code du travail Acte No 12 de 2000, participe à promouvoir les droits de la femme.	1	2	3	4

16. Combien de fois avez-vous été promue à un nouveau poste au sein de la compagnie? **(Svp cochez la bonne réponse)**

⬡ Jamais ⬡ 1 fois ⬡ 2 fois ⬡ 3 fois ⬡ 4 fois ⬡ Plus

17. Dans les cinq prochaines années, où vous projetez-vous?

_____
_____
_____

Merci pour votre temps et participation pour la réalisation de ce projet. ☺

Cape Peninsula
University of Technology

Interview Guide

The purpose of this interview is to obtain in-depth information concerning the factors affecting the representation of women in management positions in the Gabonese petroleum sector and the marginalisation in terms of their career progression.

Question 1: What do you think your organisation could do to better prepare women for leadership positions in the company?

_____
_____
_____

Question 2: Do you think that there is a difference between male and female supervising employees in the organisation?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Question 3: Do you think that management positions (C.E.O., General Manager, Regional Manager, H.R Manager, Supervisors) in petroleum organisation should be considered according to the qualifications and competences than the gender?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Question 4: What do you think is the best way to advance a career?

_____
_____
_____
_____

****END****

Cape Peninsula
University of Technology

Interview Guide

L'objectif de cette interview est d'obtenir plus amples informations concernant les facteurs affectant la représentation de la femme sur les positions de management dans le secteur pétrolier Gabonais et aussi leur marginalisation en terme de progression de carrière.

Question 1: Selon vous, quel est le meilleur moyen de progresser dans une carrière?
_____
_____
_____

Question 2: Pensez-vous qu'il y aurait une différence entre un homme et une femme supervisant/formant des employé(e)s au sein d'une compagnie?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Question 3: Pensez-vous que les positions de management (Directeur général, Directeur régional, Directeur de ressources humaines, Chef de services, etc.) au sein d'une compagnie pétrolière devraient être plus considérées selon les qualifications et compétences que le genre?
_____
_____
_____
_____

Question 4: Que pensez-vous du fait que votre compagnie pourrait mieux préparer des femmes pour des positions de dirigeante (haut management) au sein de votre compagnie ?
_____
_____
_____
_____

****FIN****

Gilles ALFONSO
Directeur

BP 505 Port Gentil - GABON
Fixe : +241 01 53 01 44 / +241 01 53 01 45
http://www.reyesgroupe.fr

Mobile +241 03 01 08 21
gilles.alfonso@reyesgroupe.fr

ATTESTATION D'INTERVIEW

Je soussigné, Mr Gilles Alfonso, directeur de la filiale reyes Groupe au Gabon, atteste pa r la présente avoir reçu melle Georgie Antonia Awakossa Pounah, afin de réaliser un entretien relatif à la position de la femme dans le management, en milieu pétrolier au Gabon.

Cette attestation est réalisée pour servir et valoir ce que de droit.

Gilles ALFONSO
Directeur REYES GABON
B.P. 505 -Tél : 03.01.08.21

REYES GABON
B.P. 505
Port Gentil - GABON
Tél. (+241) 01 53 01 44/45 (+241) 01 53 01 45

REYES GABON – BP 505 – PORT GENTIL GABON
☎ +241 01 53 01 44/45 – reyesgabon@reyesgroupe.fr – **NIF 730 962 D** - RCCM : RG/POG 2015 B 1667
Siège Social : REYES Constructions SAS au Capital de 110 000€ - ZI Jean Jaurès – 179 Avenue Marie CURIE -
BP106 - 07800 La Voulte sur Rhône

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APPENDIX I: Permission letter UPEGA

Union Pétrolière Gabonaise

Siège social : B.P. 1719 – PORT-GENTIL

(République Gabonaise)

Tél. : 01 56 22 31

Miss Awakossa Pounah Georgie Antonia,

We acknowledge receipt of your letter by which you hope, within the context of university research on « Factors affecting the representation of women in management position in the petroleum sector in Gabon », to obtain, through our channels, the possibility of gaining access to the individuals concerned through interviews and questionnaires relating to your study and other general information on the petroleum industry and companies in this sector.

We would like to encourage you and assist you in your research and initiatives. However, we would like to remind you that implementing this kind of operation is a lengthy process in terms of organization. This is why we have only responded to your request now.

We hope you receive this letter in good order.

Kind regards,

A. ANGUILET

General Secretary

Union Pétrolière Gabonaise
Siège Social B.P. 1719 - PORT-GENTIL
(République Gabonaise)
Tel : 56.22.31 - Fax : 56.49.20

Port-Gentil, le 21 mars 2016.

ATTESTATION D'INTERVIEW

Je soussignée, Jacqueline BIGNOUMBA, Président de l'Union Pétrolière Gabonaise, syndicat professionnel du patronat pétrolier, atteste par la présente avoir reçu en interview, Mademoiselle Georgie Antonia AWAKOSSA POUNAH dans le cadre de l'enquête relatif à la position de la femme dans le management en milieu pétrolier au Gabon.

Fait pour servir et valoir ce que de droit

Le Président
Jacqueline BIGNOUMBA ILOGUE

APPENDIX J: Statistical certificate

Cape Peninsula
University of Technology

_____

To whom it may concern:

GEORGIE ANTONIA AWAKOSSA POUNAH (Student Number 209008067) – MTech
Human Resources.

This is to certify that the statistical analysis of the data in this research project required by
the student was done by me, using SPSS 23.

My function was not to be involved in the interpretation thereof – that should be the student's own
work.

CMys.

Corrie Uys, DTech (Informatics); M.Sc (Statistics)

WRITE WTIH WRIGHT

FREELANCE ACADEMIC WRITING, PROOFREADING AND EDITING FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Tel. 021 851 8199
Cell: 083 6388484
E-mail: jennywright@mweb.co.za

19 Bayside Village
Pintail Way
Somerset Ridge
Somerset West
7130
Western Cape

11 March 2019

To whom it may concern

Letter of declaration

This letter serves to confirm that I have completed proofreading and editing of the first version of the following Master's thesis for Ms Georgie Pounah of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology:

Title: Factors affecting the representation of women in management positions in the petroleum sector in Gabon.

Yours faithfully

Jennifer Wright (Dr)