



An investigation of the career progression experiences of women in mid and senior-level positions in Cape Town's public relations industry

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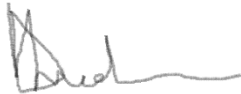
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ABSTRACT

In this research study, emphasis is placed on the career progression experiences of eight women in the Public Relations (PR) industry in Cape Town. The study identified the barriers causing career progression stagnation and its association with the glass ceiling effect, based on the experiences of the female PR practitioners in middle and senior-level positions working in the private, public, and non-profit sectors.

The gender-organisation system (GOS) theory supported the research to determine whether structures and systems in the workplace which contribute to the work/life balance, influence career advancement for women. Social cognitive career theory (SCCT) aided the investigation of elements associated with the glass ceiling effect which were identified in the literature review as the gender wage gap and gender stereotyping.

The qualitative study recorded the experiences of the participants and the data was analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. The main and sub-themes identified included the glass ceiling perspective, gender influence, transformation, and technological advances.

Key findings revealed that while some participants have not experienced 'a glass ceiling' prohibiting them from progressing in their career, other participants experienced personal encounters associated with the glass ceiling effect.

Participants also noted that there were fewer positions for senior roles and that the main challenges prohibiting female PR practitioners from career progression were organisations' budgets for training and development, transformation to enforce workforce diversity, the rapid growth of technological advancement and the "founders block".

Based on the findings of this study, future studies should investigate how to overcome the challenges identified that may enable PR practitioners to advance in their careers.

Keywords: Career progression, experiences, glass ceiling, advancement, public relations, gender influence, challenges.

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The African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child” is understood to mean that it takes an entire community of people to interact with children for those children to experience and grow in a safe environment. This proverb is what was practised during my master’s journey by, for the most part, my parents, and my grandmother. While I may never be able to repay them for their sacrifice in stepping up to look after my son when I needed time to focus on my studies, I can dedicate this achievement to them by simply saying: Thank you. Without your love, guidance and assistance and being my village in raising a child while trying to complete a degree, I would not be where I am.

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GLOSSARY

BBBEE	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
FEDSAW	Federation of South African Women
GL	Gender Links
GAD	Gender and Development
GOS	Gender Organisation System
IABC	International Association of Business Communicators
IBR	International Business Report
KPI	Key performance indicators
NPO	Non-profit organisation
PR	Public Relations
PRISA	Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa
SCCT	The Social Cognitive Career Theory
SANEF	South African National Editors Forum
US	United States
UK	United Kingdom
WEF	World Economic Forum

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

“You strike a woman; you strike a rock”, are the words which resonated in song on the 9th of August 1956. Led by a representative of each race group in South Africa, more than 20 000 women marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to deliver 14 000 petitions. Their protest was against the imposition of pass laws and all laws and regulations that discriminated against them and deprived them of their right to the advantages, responsibilities, and opportunities in society (IOL, 2016). The apartheid regime in South Africa began in 1948, imposed by a white-ruled South African Nationalist Party which institutionalised a system of racial segregation amongst South Africans (People’s Dispatch, 2020).

The significant contribution in opening the first public relations (PR) unit to disseminate information by the South African government attests to why the PR profession has and will always be governed by the past and future actions of this country (Azionya, et al., 2014:3).

In the apartheid era, non-white PR practitioners were known to be employed by businesses situated in their homeland and practised a progressive interactive technique, while white PR practitioners executed a (US and UK) westernised approach (Holtzhausen, 2005:408).

The PR industry in South Africa transformed and advanced to various stages between 1957 to 1994 from charitable campaigning and marketing to a reciprocatory method, following guidance and advocating (Azionya et al, 2014:3). In 1957, The Public Relations Institute of South Africa (PRISA) was established. Up until 1976, the institute comprised of largely white members which mirrored the apartheid environment during that time (Azionya et al, 2014:26).

1994 saw the birth of a democratic South Africa and government attempting to eliminate discrimination against women in the workplace by establishing the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (No 108 of 1996). In Section 9 it reads:

Everyone is equal before the law and equality includes all the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedom to promote the achievement

of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken. (South Africa, 1996)

Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa included the Bill of Rights which concludes that no individual may be discriminated against race, gender, or disability (South Africa,1996). Further, the Employment Equity Act (No 55 of 1998) was enacted into law to allow that everyone enjoys equal and fair treatment in the workplace and that employees are protected from unfair treatment and discrimination of any form (Western Cape Government, 2019).

The transfiguration of a racially segregated South Africa to a democratic state, under the protection of the Constitution to protect every South African race from unfair discrimination, gave PR scholars and practitioners an imitable setting to study and practice PR and communications (Azionya et al, 2014).

PRISA (2005) defined public relations as the management, through communication, of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders.

The profile of the PR and Communication industry undertook a substantial shift from being predominately white to a racially diversified female superior field. Azionya *et al*, (2014:3) note that while the PR industry has made considerable steps in the right direction, transformation remains a challenge.

Wigley (2002) conducted a study with the assumption that the glass ceiling limits the role of women in public relations and management of corporate communications. He found that even though most PR practitioners were women, the representation of women in management in PR was still low.

O'Neil (2003:168) discovered that female PR practitioners have less formal structural power in hierarchal position when compared to male practitioners, which has led academics like Powell and Butterfield (2015) to believe that the glass ceiling in public relations still exists in South Africa.

A study on equal opportunity and affirmative action for South African women found that reaching top-level positions is still uncommon for South Africa's women, and that government legislation and policies are not changing to assist in supporting women's career growth and advancement (Mathur-Helm, 2005:56-71). Findings of the 2018 Grant Thornton International Business Report found that although almost a third (29%) of senior roles are now filled by women, one in five local businesses (20%) have no women at all who occupy senior positions (Business Brief, 2018). The low percentage of women in senior positions provides evidence that women remain underrepresented in positions of authority and power in the workplace.

In 2019, Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), recorded that 30 million (51%) of its population are female (Stats SA, 2019). While women amount to just over half of South Africa's population, only 7% of the 46% of women in the workforce are executive directors on boards (Bain & Company, 2017:3). The low visibility of women in senior positions in the PR profession and the broader workforce noted by Bain and Co (2017), reveals that more is needed to be done in terms of the plight for gender equality and equal employment opportunity of women in the workplace.

Six decades after the 1956 women's march for gender equality and equal employment opportunity, and despite South Africa's progressive legislative and policy measures, men continue to dominate the workforce, especially in top and senior management positions (Sinden, 2017).

Women in senior management aid to increase the rights, freedoms, and opportunities for all women. If women want to experience equality in the workplace, women need to progress into positions of authority and power in their organisations (Schein, 2007:6).

This study focused on the career progression experiences of female PR practitioners from selected organisations in the private, public, and non-profit sectors in Cape Town. To investigate the low visibility of women in senior positions in the PR profession, the researcher identified the challenges they encounter regarding career advancement in the workplace.

The role and function of the PR practitioner are different in each sector. It was therefore beneficial to the study to investigate how the career progression experiences of female PR practitioners differ or coincide.

The private sector in South Africa supports up to 70% of the South African economy and therefore plays a vital role in bringing South Africa's growth rate to the level necessary for a sustainable economy (Mathebula, 2019). Some of the participants of this study who work in the private sector are employed by investment administration, health, and financial services organisations.

As South Africa has undergone a significant transition, so has its public sector which has become more representative of the diverse backgrounds and needs of the South African people (McKinsey, 2020). The public sector is responsible for helping the government provide education, healthcare, and infrastructure development to the people of South Africa. Participants of this study who work in the public sector are from tertiary education institutions and biodiversity conservation organisations. Both play a vital role in providing services of learning to local and international students as well as the maintenance of South Africa's land conservation.

Non-profit organisations (NPO's) were established in response to the inequalities created by apartheid and provided social services to the deprived populations (Choto, Iwu & Tengeh, 2020:591). After the apartheid era, the government was regarded as liable for providing the entire population with resources and services. However, as it could not effectively carry out this role, it initiated partnerships with NPO's to cater for the needs and provide resources for South African citizens who could not be reached by the government (Deegan, 1999). The non-profit organisation investigated in this study is a patient support fund that assists patients with blood disorders who are unable to afford the costs associated with transplants.

To date, there are a range of studies that examine the status and experiences of women in management in the context of the glass ceiling phenomenon, such as those conducted by Mathur-Helm (2005) and Powell and Butterfield (2015). Few focus on the career of women in management in the PR industry, with the exception of those such as Krugler (2017) and Geyer (2009).

This study is important to the PR profession as the advancement of female PR practitioners can assist in closing the gap of inequality and lack of progress of affirmative action experienced by women in the PR industry in South Africa.

Further investigations as to how to overcome the barriers identified in the study will support the improvement in the ratio of women in senior leadership roles in the PR profession in South Africa.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to Bain and Co (2017:3), 7% of the 46% of women in the workforce are executive directors on boards. While South Africa has attempted to eradicate the discrimination against women suffered through apartheid (through the institution of the Constitution's Bill of Rights and Employment Equity Act (No 55 of 1998), women remain underrepresented in top-level positions and men continue to dominate the workplace, especially in top management roles (Sinden, 2017). Mathur-Helm (2005), in her study on equal opportunity and affirmative action for South African women, concluded that reaching top-level positions remains uncommon for South African women.

The concern that women do not have equal opportunity in the workplace can be applied to the PR industry, where female PR practitioners have a significantly lower hierarchical position than their male counterparts (O'Neil, 2003:168). Wigley (2002), found that although most PR practitioners were women, the representation of women in management in PR was still low.

The study investigated the problem of female representation in senior positions in the PR industry by examining why women in PR are underrepresented in senior management roles and identified the barriers prohibiting their career progression.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The main objective for this study was to investigate the career progression experiences of mid-and senior-level female PR practitioners working in the public, private, and non-profit sectors in Cape Town, to identify the challenges prohibiting career advancement of women in the PR industry.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions focus on examining the experiences of female PR practitioners to identify the career advancement challenges these women encounter in the workplace.

Each participant's perception of the glass ceiling effect was investigated as well as how their organisation's organisational structure and culture support them in career advancement. As the study was conducted across the public, private, and non-profit sectors, the researcher explored similarities and differences referring to the career progression of women in PR.

The research questions were:

1. Are there barriers experienced by women in their career advancement in the PR industry in the public, private, and non-profit sectors in Cape Town causing glass ceiling effects?
2. What are the participants' perceptions regarding what their organisations are doing to support them to progress in their careers in the PR industry?
3. Are there similarities and differences in the way in which women progress in PR across the private, public, and non-profit sectors?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to identify the challenges prohibiting the career progression of female PR practitioners in the private, public, and non-profit sectors in Cape Town. The findings of this study will assist in further investigation of how to overcome the challenges identified, thereby enabling female PR practitioners to progress in their role. Schein (2007) explains that women need to progress into senior management in organisations to achieve equality in the workplace.

By investigating the career progression experiences of women in the PR profession and identifying the barriers prohibiting them from advancing in their careers, this study contributes to the PR profession by highlighting the challenges women in PR face. This could motivate further studies to research how women in PR can overcome these barriers and enable career advancement.

1.6 PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this qualitative study is to determine the challenges affecting career progression through the career experiences recorded by women working in private, public, and non-profit organisations in the PR profession in Cape Town.

1.7 NATURE OF THE STUDY

The study employed a qualitative methodological approach to draw attention to the career progression experiences of women in Cape Town's PR industry. Qualitative research methodology focuses on individuals' lived experiences as they are presented in thoughts, ideas, feelings, and perceptions (Ohman 2005:273).

Qualitative research design, in the form of in-depth interviews, was used to provide a rich description of the participant's experiences regarding their career progression.

Interviews aim to create data which are categorised and then analysed to find relationships between the categories (Charmaz,1990:1162). Once the in-depth interviews were conducted, a thematic analysis was employed to draw meaning from the data collected for the study. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006:81). The researcher analysed the data and explored the patterns identified to determine themes amongst the reported career advancement barriers experienced by the participants.

The study employed the SCCT theory and GOS approach as the theoretical framework. Literature was reviewed and summarised concerning the glass ceiling phenomenon and challenges identified by previous academics relating to the career advancement of woman were discussed.

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The inequality experienced by women in the workplace, which prevents them from progressing in their careers, can be linked to a unique form of unfairness known by the popular metaphor of the 'glass ceiling'. The term 'glass ceiling' is used to explain the inability of women to advance past a certain point in their occupation or profession, regardless of their qualifications or achievements. The metaphor of the glass ceiling refers to an unbreachable barrier that prevents women from climbing the corporate ladder (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission,1995:4). Wrigley (2002) describes this unbreachable barrier as restrictions experienced by women who are likened to being in a closed or confined glass room that limits their role advancement.

To evaluate the experiences encountered by the participants affected in their career progression journeys, the researcher identified the SCCT and GOS approach as theoretical frameworks for the study. In the literature review, the researcher discusses

the theoretical frameworks and details how both the SCCT and GOS approach assisted the study by providing meaning concerning the career advancement of woman. Further, themes related to the career advancement of women in the workplace were identified and discussed.

1.9 LIMITATIONS/DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown introduced in March 2020, the researcher was not able to conduct in-depth interviews with the participants face-to-face. This resulted in in-depth interviews being conducted via video communication.

For this research study, only the experiences of middle and senior-level female PR practitioners working in private, public, and non-profit sectors in Cape Town were recorded.

1.10 ASSUMPTIONS

The study is limited to the experiences of female participants who are currently employed in mid-level and senior-level roles in the private, public, and non-profit sectors in Cape Town. It is researcher's assumption that by recording the experiences of the female PR practitioners in various sectors, the challenges facing career advancement for women in the PR industry in Cape Town, will be identified, as well as differences and similarities of experiences in the private, public, and non-profit sectors.

The data also seeks to confirm whether the glass ceiling phenomenon in the PR industry in Cape Town is evident and if it plays a role in the career progression of female PR practitioners.

1.11 DEFINITIONS

1.11.1 Personal agency: An individual's ability to create and direct actions for given purposes. It is influenced by a belief in personal effectiveness in performing specific tasks, which are termed self-efficacy, as well as by an individual's actual skill.

1.11.2 Black: The B-BBEE Amendment Act 2013 defines Black as a generic term which means Africans, Coloureds, and Indians (Econoserv, 2015).

1.11.3 Status quo: A Latin phrase meaning the existing situation concerning social or political issues.

1.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This study focuses primarily on female PR practitioners working in the private, public, and non-profit sectors in Cape Town. By investigating their career experiences, the researcher aimed to identify the barriers they encounter regarding career advancement.

This chapter provides a background to the study and details the main research problem, the key objective, research questions as well as the significance of the study. The theoretical framework supportive of the study was also introduced and will be discussed comprehensively in Chapter 2.

As the public relations profession is influenced by the historical developments of South Africa (as noted by Azionya et al., 2014), the historical context of the developments of South Africa's Constitution, which promotes gender equality in the workplace, was addressed.

In Chapter 2, the literature review provides the reader with secondary research of past and current knowledge regarding the challenges which hinder women from progressing in their careers.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a literature review detailing the theoretical framework used for the study. SCCT provides a theoretical framework to study the career development of women. This framework was derived from Bandura's social learning theory with a focus on how individuals practice personal agency in their career development process and how extra-person factors enhance or inhibit personal agency (Ericksen, 2013:15).

The GOS approach supports the principle of the gender-centred perspective, which notes that women possess characteristics that are argued to be incompatible with key managerial roles (Horner, 1972: Fagenson, 1986). The GOS approach provides a well-rounded approach to the study of women's managerial advancement. Omar and Davidson (2001) note that the GOS approach is the most useful theoretical framework for women in management research.

The career progression challenges women encounter in the PR industry and background knowledge about the glass ceiling are critical to understand before proceeding to the discussion and analysis of findings from this research study. Secondary information presented from various sources provides background knowledge regarding the factors facilitating the career development of women in the PR industry. The research provided by previous studies shared insight into some of the key contributors to the glass ceiling effect as well as key barriers prohibiting career advancement.

In the sections that follow, the researcher details how the SCCT and the GOS approach were used to provide the theoretical framework and grounding for the study.

2.2 THE SOCIAL COGNITIVE CAREER THEORY (SCCT)

Ström and Bruvall (2018) found that previous studies on the glass ceiling focused on women in the workplace, leading existing literature to assume that the glass ceiling is a workplace phenomenon.

Recent work based on the SCCT acknowledges that the effect of the glass ceiling on women may begin even in their formative years before they enter the workplace (Cunningham, Doherty & Gregg, 2007; Yeagley, Subich & Tokar, 2010). The SCCT advises that the perception of the glass ceiling is not only a workplace phenomenon but something that can influence a person during various stages of their lives. Considering this, the glass ceiling could also affect the mental and physical health of an individual and could result in feelings of anger and resentment which can affect every area of that individual's life.

Derived from Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, Lent and Brown (1996) acknowledge three interlinked variables which regulate a person's career behaviour. Lent and Brown (1996) believe that the interaction of the self-efficacy belief, outcome expectations and personal goals aid in regulating career behaviour and thus career development.

Self-efficacy belief relates to the belief system that a person would develop over time because of past performance and academic accomplishments. If the individual experienced the glass ceiling in various stages of their life as recent SCCT research has stated, this would impact their self-efficacy belief negatively, creating a disadvantage to the interaction between the outcome expectations and personal goals which are interlinked to regulate their behaviour.

Outcome expectations are defined as the beliefs people have about the outcomes of their actions. In a workplace context, this is based on an individual's own experience from past behaviour. Personal goals are ways which people organise, guide, and sustain their efforts (Lent and Brown, 1992).

It is interesting to note how all three linkages of SCCT if impacted negatively based on an individual's own experience from past behaviour, could negatively impact their career advancement in the workplace they currently find themselves in.

LaMorte (2019) adds that while SCCT interlinks self-efficacy, outcome expectations and personal goals in regulating career behaviour, it is unclear to which extent each of factors influences an individual's behaviour and whether one factor could be more influential than the other.

The relationship of elements of the social cognitive career theory are represented in Figure 2.1.

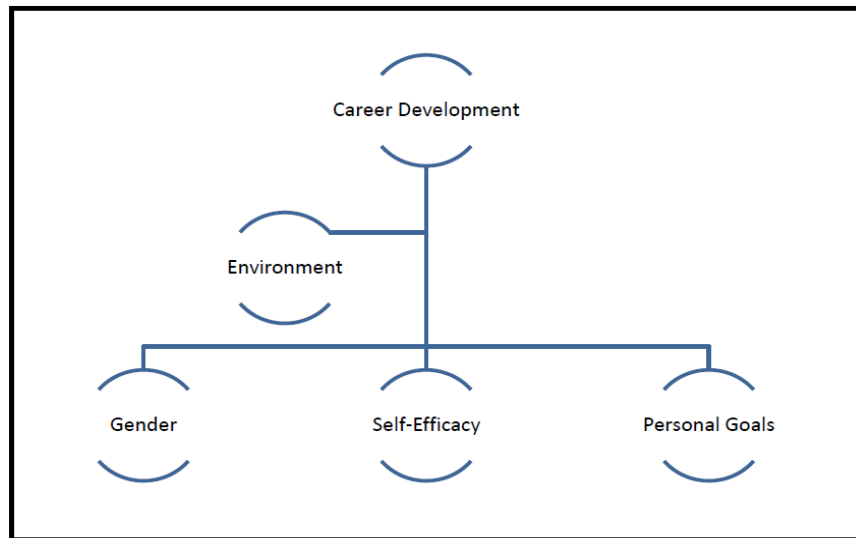


Figure 2.1: Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent & Brown, 1996:193).

The SCCT displays indications that the career development of an individual depends on a few factors which can be outside the individuals' control. This can include the environment in which the individual works, as well as gender.

While factors outside of an individuals' control like their environment, may impact their career development, SCCT cannot assume that changes in the environment will lead to changes in the individual (LaMorte,2019).

The environments which interact with self-efficacy, gender and personal goals are different supports or barriers - one example of a barrier being the glass ceiling (Lent, Brown & Hacket, 2000). Research has shown that woman, when compared to men, have a significantly higher perception of barriers in their careers and that the glass ceiling has a significant impact on women who want to advance to senior roles (Novakovic & Gnilka 2015).

Yeagley *et al.* (2010) used SCCT as a framework to help explain how internal interests and goals influenced female students' ambitions for elite leadership positions in their future careers. Their research confirmed that both the variables of self-efficacy and outcome expectations seem to influence women's interests and goals to reach senior leadership positions.

Yeagley et al's, (2010) findings also indicated that outcome expectations seem to have a more direct influence on goals compared to self-efficacy, which has shown to be related to barriers like the glass ceiling.

The SCCT has shown to be a good tool to measure female leadership and ambitions, which is why this framework will be part of the base of research to investigate the participant's perception of the glass ceiling and its influence on their career advancement.

2.3 THE GENDER-ORGANISATION-SYSTEMS APPROACH (GOS)

Omar and Davidson (2001) acknowledge that the GOS approach is a very useful theoretical framework when researching women in management, which is why it resonated with research into the glass ceiling effect and the attempt to investigate whether women can overcome it, should this be a barrier to their career trajectory.

The GOS approach is described as a third perspective approach which recognises the interaction between a person, an organisation, and society (Fagenson 1993). This perspective approach notes that the limited advancement of women in organisations is not due to their gender or the organisational structure, but that both influence women's behaviour at work. Fagenson (1993) believes that organisational structures delay women's entry to advancement in the workplace.

O'Neil and Hopkins (2015:83), note that although the GOS approach is useful for research relating to structural and individual factors obstructing women's progress in organisations, it neglects historical influences on the lives of women occupying senior levels in their organisations.

The GOS approach assisted the study to examine the experiences of women in organisations across organisational structure and gender to determine whether they could be identified as a challenge towards women's career advancement.

This interactionist approach is grounded on the understanding that interaction between gender, situations, and social systems is a continuous process, embracing the following assumptions (Terborg, 1981; Martin, Harrison & Dinitto, 1983).

1. Behaviour in organisations is a continuous interaction of feedback between characteristics of gender, situations regarding the organisational context and the social-institutional system in which these interactions occur (Terborg, 1981; Martin *et al.* 1983).
2. The individual in this interaction process is being changed by both the situation and social arrangements (Terborg, 1981).
3. Characteristics of people, situations and systems should be studied as shared factors of individual attitudes, cognitions, and behaviours, which influence each other (Terborg, 1981).

Rowley and Yukongdi (2009) identified three factors, according to the GOS perspective, for women's slow progress toward top management - namely, women themselves, organisational structure and community and family influences on a woman. O'Neil and Hopkins (2015) found that senior leadership could change organisational systems and structures, which is why it is imperative to include female views to advocate, inform and educate all members of the organisation.

While the GOS approach highlights rooted beliefs relating to gender regarding how organisations are viewed because of gendered assumptions in a wider context, Hartl (2003) argues that the approach lacks objective descriptions of management.

In Figure 2.2 below, O'Neil and Hopkins (2015) show the impact of gendered organisations on women and why the status quo is firmly ingrained. They suggest that the current structures work for those employed at senior levels, the majority of whom are men, which leaves no compelling rationale for changing the system since the status quo works for those in charge. The resultant impact of this leads women to have a lack of confidence and hyper-accountability. Therefore the status quo of having few women at the top remains due to the lack of change in organisation systems.

O'Neil and Hopkins (2015) believe that to change this, we need to continue to rebuild the systems and structures that continue to keep women from ascending to higher levels of the organisation. Through just organisational systems that work for both men and women, women can advance to senior leadership levels.

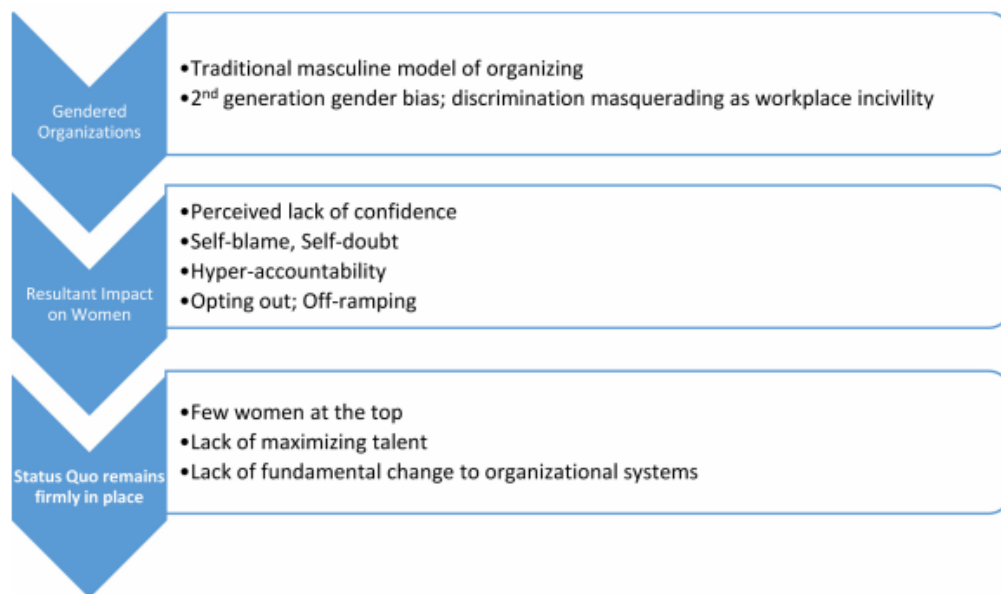


Figure 2.2 – Impact of GOS on women’s career advancement (O’Neil & Hopkins, 2015: 3).

By applying the GOS approach to this research study, the researcher was able to identify whether the characteristics of the organisational context, the social system and the individuals influence women to have limited success in advancing in their career in the PR industry.

2.4 THE HISTORY OF PR IN SOUTH AFRICA

Azionya et al. (2014), record that the public relations profession in South Africa is influenced by the historical developments in the country. To understand the context of the PR industry in South Africa, it is important to study the historical and theoretical views and how it has developed to become what it is today.

The Employment Equity Act 55 (South Africa, 1998:10-11), promotes the employment of disadvantaged groups to redress gender and racial imbalances and has placed a strong emphasis for placing competent and adequately qualified women in key positions in an organisation. A report by the Department of Women in 2015 highlighted that South Africa has achieved substantial progress in many aspects of women’s participation regarding credit access, land and properties, reduced poverty, and inequality and sharing of paid work. The report also claimed that ensuring economic empowerment to women will support economic growth and advance women’s rights (South Africa. Department of Women, 2015).

Despite the government's claims regarding the improvement made to better women's employment position, literature shows that progress towards gender equality in the workplace in South Africa remains unequal and slow (Sinden 2017:38).

Wittmann (2012;249) notes that numerous gender issues in South Africa result from historical context and that current gender issues result from the connection between racism and sexism in the apartheid state.

The trials experienced by women who aim to effectively infiltrate in what is known as masculine or male-dominated places of work, originate from conventional sexuality rankings and standards which are practised in personal units and civilisation. Regardless of the enablement of equal treatment of men and women, family units have long-established customs which consents to men as the superior sex (Hartmann, 2010). These over generalised beliefs of gender roles are then applied to structural procedures in the workplace to retain the inconsequential positions of females (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011; Cha, 2013) which results in a workplace ethos of sexism and discrimination (Prescott & Bogg, 2011).

Factors contributing to women not aspiring to senior leadership positions include misalignment with career aspirations, lack of confidence and inability to balance career and family (Fajardo & Erasmus, 2017:8). Ibrat (2015) believes that to achieve gender equality, organisational procedures such as flexible work hours, paid leave of absence, mentoring, networking, and creating a work-life balance must be encouraged.

The empowerment of women is central to the Gender and Development (GAD) approach which focuses on gender relations and views women as active agents and not as passive recipients of development (Ipinge, 2000; Jackson, 2002; Rowlands, 1998; Parpart, 2004). The approach seeks to analyse the causes of gender equality within the context of men and women in a social structure.

Manzini (1994,4) refers to empowerment as a revolutionary change of methods and procedures resulting in the reproduction and transformation of the female inferior role in the workplace. Empowerment does not only look at existing power relations and power structures between two gender groups but also focuses on relations and structures rooted in society such as race and gender (Wittmann, 2012:250).

Wittman (2012,257) acknowledges that to give proper consideration to the multiple forms of discrimination that women are confronted with, it is essential to analyse the unequal socio-economic positions of women in South Africa.

2.5 FACTORS INFLUENCING CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Steyn's (2009) study addressed the need for public relations to play a strategic role for top management based on her study of 103 CEO's who had the perception that the role of PR was not performed. Mathur-Helm's (2005) study identified factors influencing career advancement in women. These factors include the glass ceiling, organisational structure and culture, the gender wage gap, gender stereotypes, work-life balance, and the strategic role of PR for management. The factors identified will be discussed below to understand the challenges of career advancement women in the PR industry are experiencing.

2.5.1 The glass ceiling

In the PR industry, female PR practitioners have been found to have less formal structural power in terms of senior positions which has inquired academics to believe that the glass ceiling is still prevalent (O'Neil 2003:168). The SCCT suggests that the perception of the glass ceiling is not only a workplace phenomenon but something that can influence a person during various stages of their lives. To fully understand the effects of this phenomenon, literature about the glass ceiling and the insights of the glass ceiling needs to be addressed.

The phrase 'glass-ceiling', referred to as an invisible barrier to success that many women experience in their careers, was first used in 1978 by Marilyn Loden at a panel conversation focusing on women's ambitions. While other female panellists focused on the deficiencies in women's socialisation and how women behaved, Loden argued that the invisible glass ceiling which was causing a barrier to career advancement, was cultural and was doing the bulk of the damage to women's aspirations and opportunities (BBC, 2017). The term was then popularised in the 1980s when used by two Journal reporters from Wall Street in 1986 to describe the invisible barriers that prohibit women from senior roles in corporate America (BBC News, 2017). According to the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1995: iii), the glass ceiling metaphor is described as "artificial barriers in the advancement of women and minorities".

Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, and Vanneman (2001:655-81) explain the existence of the glass ceiling when the four criteria below are met:

(a) 'an unexplained gender or racial difference by other job-relevant characteristics of the employee. This means that glass ceilings are measured as the difference due to race or gender-based on education, experience, abilities, motivation, and other job-relevant characteristics.

(b) gender or racial differences that are greater at higher levels of an outcome than at lower levels of an outcome

(c) gender or racial inequalities where there is an opportunity of advancement into higher levels

(d) a gender or racial inequality that continues to heighten during a person's career'.

A study of how women perceive the glass ceiling in public relations and communication management identified five factors relating to the glass ceiling - namely, denial, gender role socialisation, historical precedence, females turning against each other and corporate culture (Wigley, 2002).

Denial is explained as being present when women tend to refute that gender bias exists in the workplace or pretend that it does not exist at all. Gender role socialisation proposes that people are biased against women in the workplace because of stereotyping learned during their upbringing (Purpura, 2019:12).

Gender role socialisation was noted in SCCT with regards to self-efficacy, which refers to the belief system that a person would develop over time in the light of past performance and academic accomplishments.

Historical precedence occurs when people focus on what has been done before. They are socialised into believing that what was done before is correct and are therefore not comfortable with change in the workplace. The GOS approach contends that behaviour in the organisation can be understood as relations between gender, situations, and the social institution system where interactions take place (Martin et al., 1983). Therefore, if management in an organisation are not comfortable with change in the workplace, this directly impacts on women's behaviour which influences career advancement, as referenced in the GOS approach.

The notion of women turning against women suggests that women are competitive with each other in the workplace. This term is also referred to as the 'Queen Bee syndrome' by Abramson (1975). It is used to describe the attitude of women in senior management who are unhelpful to other females, because of their desire to remain exclusive in the workplace (Davidson & Cooper, 1992).

The last factor identified as a factor influencing career advancement for women in PR is corporate culture. The assumption is that large organisations provide fewer opportunities for advancement in the workplace whereas smaller agencies are better for women who care about furthering their careers (Wigley, 2002).

For this study, the researcher will substitute the term 'corporate culture' with 'organisational culture' as a corporate culture only focuses on profit organisations. The term organisational culture, however, focuses on all forms of organisations which have been included in this study.

Evaluating the connection between organisational structure and organisational culture would be advantageous as both regulate the behaviour of organisation employees Janićijević (2013:36). This view is supported by the GOS approach which notes that conduct in the workplace is a product of the continuous communication between personal characteristics in an organisation where these exchanges occur.

2.5.2 Organisational structure

Organisational structure is described as a steady, prearranged, or unprompted, form of actions and interactions that organisation employees adopt for achieving their organisation's goals (Dow, 1988).

The GOS approach recognised that a women's conduct in the workplace is as a result of both gender and organisational structure. Martin *et al* (1983) build on the concept that organisational structure should not only consider power, job situations and the number of individuals that form and define women's conduct in organisations. The organisational structure should include organisational variables such as organisational culture, history, philosophy, and guidelines.

Referring to the concept of organisation structure, the low representation of women in senior positions could be as a result of the social and institutional systems which organisations follow (Janićijević, 2013:7).

This has been noted for reasons documented below which should not be studied in isolation as they, in turn, affect one another (Benson & Yukongdi 2005):

- Women placed in disadvantaged positions in organisations;
- The socialisation of women to demonstrate characters, personalities and manners that are unsuited with senior management positions; and
- The diverse outlooks placed on women by civilisation.

Janićijević (2013) regards organisational structure to be an exterior element, meaning that people's conduct is influenced from external factors with the implication that a person's actions in an organisation are because of the influence of the organisations' culture and structure.

2.5.3 Organisational culture

Organisational culture can be referred to as a system of "assumptions, values, norms, and attitudes which employees demonstrate that has been developed and adopted through mutual experience (Janićijević, 2011:72). The symbolic component of organisational culture consists of symbols that are a visible part of the organisation which manifests the cognitive component (Dandridge, Mitroff & Joyce, 1980: Alvesson & Borg, 1992). The cognitive component of organisational culture ensures that if a strong culture exists in the organisation, the members of the organisation will make decisions, take actions, and enter interactions in a foreseeable manner.

Schein (2004) explains that organisational culture creates a frame of reference for the actions and observations of an organisation by imposing assumptions. Organisational structure and organisational culture have a strong influence on the conduct and performance of both the employees and the organisation. While organisational culture supports the behaviour and decisions of employees, organisational structure institutionalises the culture which reflects the norms, values, and attitudes of the organisation.

While there have been researched studies that analyse the influence on the management of both culture and structure in their mutual interaction (Zheng, Yang & McLean, 2010; Wei, Liu & Herndon, 2011; Singh, 2011), Janićijević (2013) records that there has been very little extensive research exploring their direct mutual impact.

Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) acknowledge that although there has been much research and practical activity on SCCT, most of the work has focused on SCCT's cognitive-person variables alone and in isolation from important environmental elements. The environmental elements can be referred to as social, cultural, and economic variables that are assumed to influence both the cognitive-person variables and other aspects of career behaviour. Adopting the GOS approach supports the mutual impact of organisational structure and culture and believes that organisations or individuals cannot be understood apart from the culture or society they are embedded in.

2.5.4 The gender wage gap

The Global Gender Gap Report released by The World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2019, compares conduct towards gender equality around the world. The report examined factors such as educational opportunities available to each gender and the number of women in professional positions. The WEF concluded that it would take 200 years for economic, gender equality to emerge (Martin, 2019).

The distributional changes of the gender wage gap in the post-apartheid South African labour market found that the median wage gap due to inequality in South Africa was stagnant over the period 1993-2015. Mosomi (2019:31) explains that this finding is very interesting as it would have been expected that the gender wage gap had declined over time with the introduction of anti-discrimination legislation.

A study on gender disparity in South Africa revealed that 31% of South African companies have no female representation in senior leadership roles (Bain & Company, 2017:5). Study findings also revealed that a breach in self-confidence emerged in middle management for both genders. When female employees have been employed in a middle management role for two years or more, they no longer desire to reach senior management.

Bisseker (2020) found that the gender wage gap for women remains persistently wide for women in middle management in South Africa. Despite the presence of constitutional rights and enabling gender discrimination, South Africa continues to see a median gender pay gap.

The gender wage gap is considered as one of the gender differences by the GOS model that affects the progression of women to managerial positions because of structural and personal factors in the organisation.

While there is literature regarding the gender wage gap as a factor for career advancement, future studies such as this study are yet to confirm whether the gender wage gap is experienced in the PR industry and whether it is a barrier to the career advancement of women in PR.

2.5.5 Gender stereotyping

The term gender stereotyping is described as a national, cognitive thought process founded on personal views of social standards and expectations. When gender stereotyping is introduced into the professional environment, these stereotypes may have detrimental effects on female professionals (Skelly & Johnson 2011:59). Gender stereotyping is core to the debate of feminisation in public relations. Fröhlich & Peters (2007:232) explain that females have been labelled as the 'natural born communicator' which assists them at the early stages of their career. However, this appears to be viewed as an obstructive attribute when they aspire to senior-level positions.

The "PR bunny" label has been linked to female PR practitioners as attractive acquaintances of men at work gatherings using small talk as their occupation function. Fröhlich & Peters (2007) study found that because of this stereotype, female PR practitioners felt it would take twice as long to enter a senior PR position in an industry dominated by men in senior positions.

Women who experienced gender threat activation were found to have more profound implications on their identities, which lead to women more likely separating their female identity from their work-related identity (Von Hippel, Issa & Stokes, 2011).

The detrimental effects of gender labelling are harmful to women in male-dominated fields as they can cause women to extract themselves from leadership and business domains that arouse such stereotype threats in the workplace (Latu & Mast, 2014:4).

Gender stereotypes, as well as gender, can be a factor outside of individual control that would have a direct impact on the career development of an individual, as noted in the SCCT.

When considering gender and sex role characteristics as indicators of future success within an organisation, several researchers have found that being a woman or possessing feminine traits is seen as detrimental, whereas being a man or possessing masculine traits is seen as beneficial (Powell & Butterfield, 1979; Brenner, Tomkiewicz, & Schien, 1989; Ledet & Henley, 2000).

Female sex-role labelling considered damaging to career progression includes inactiveness, reliance, emotionalism, and obedience, while beneficial male stereotypes include traits such as aggressiveness, independence, supremacy, power, and level-headedness (Haan & Livson, 1973; O'Leary, 1974; Ledet & Henley, 2000).

As gender stereotypes are one of the most cited reasons as a deterrent to women advancing in a career (Jabeen, 2001), the GOS approach assisted the study to investigate if this was a barrier affecting career advancement of women in PR. In a survey conducted by Baum (1992) regarding stereotypes of family priorities, the assumption that these factors influenced career advancement did not apply to many of the participants, which indicates that stereotypes are unlikely to be true.

2.5.6 Work-life balance

The term 'work-life balance' is used to describe the equilibrium between an individual's personal life and professional life. The changing aspects of the work environment have applied a heavy burden on working women as they need to manage two full-time jobs - one at the office and one at home (Baum (1992). Work-family conflict has been regarded as one of the major restraints to women's career advancement (Bierema & Opengart, 2002).

As many industries are growing rapidly, they require working long hours which means a loss of family time for women. Multitasking work and family life remain a challenging task for women, which leads to difficulties in career progression. Women are spending long hours in the workplace and at times taking work home, which is compromising their quality of life.

Liu and Wilson (2001) revealed that work-family conflicts are experienced when pressures from work and family roles are mutually conflicting. Thus, focusing on one role makes it difficult to participate in another which, in turn, makes it difficult for women to advance in their careers.

Meyerson (2001) advises that this remains an issue unless men cease to place family responsibility and strain entirely on women, while organisations should also realise that the direct and indirect costs created by work and family conflicts affect both women and the organisation itself. This was also noted by Ibrat (2015) who recommends that work-life balance must be encouraged to achieve gender equality in the workplace.

The GOS approach and SCCT are of the understanding that organisational structure and the environment in which the female PR practitioners work play a role in their career advancement. By investigating what the participant's organisations are doing to encourage gender equality in the workplace, the work-life balance regime could be assessed as a possible barrier preventing career advancement.

2.5.7 The role of PR for management

During 1957 and 1994, The PR industry in South Africa transformed from a fundraising promotional marketing phase to practising mutual reciprocation and eventually advocating and counsel (Azionya et al; 2014). Moss, Warnaby and Newman (2000:299), believe that even though PR professionals provide guidance and counsel to senior management, they are not allowed to contribute at an executive level.

Steyn & De Beer (2012:49), note that PR practitioners need a reformed technique to change an organisations perspective from practising one-way communication to a two-way communication approach where their investors play a key role in their communication.

Steyn (2009:518) recognises that the changing role of business in society has major implications for the role performed by the PR function, which provides the PR profession with an opportunity for strategic role-playing. The PR strategist role could present itself as a factor preventing women in PR from advancing to senior levels in their organisation if PR practitioners are unable to adapt and evolve into a strategic role. Steyn (2009:2) records that the PR strategist assists the organisation by identifying stakeholders, values, norms, and expectations and adjusts organisational behaviour to be socially acceptable.

Before, organisations focused on the attainment of monetary objectives and considered societies values and norms to maintain a good reputation. Today, an

organisation's positive standing is reliant on being perceived as honourable and legitimate for corporate social acceptance (Holmström,2000).

To achieve validity and confidence for an organisation, PR practitioners need social accountability. This is required for them to present knowledge and data for the organisation's decision-making process (Steyn & De Beer, 2012).

Van Heerden and Rensburg (2005:69-88) confirm the strategist role in South Africa is an expectation by CEO's for top-level management but noted that further investigation as to whether senior PR practitioners are practising the role of the PR strategist needs to be conducted.

When Steyn (2009:9) interviewed a Chief Executive about the expectations from PR practitioners in senior management, it was noted: "top management does not know enough about communication to lead or know what to expect". CEO's should know the basic understanding and priorities of communication. CEO's expectations of a senior PR practitioner will only be fulfilled if the CEO is the person most involved in developing the complete strategy for communications (Argenti, 2013:54).

If Steyn's (2009) study proves to be correct and PR practitioners are still portraying their role as counsellors and advisors regarding communication-related problems, this will prove to be a barrier preventing them from participating at a senior level in their organisations.

2.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The literature review presented SCCT and the GOS approach as the theoretical framework and grounding used for this study. The researcher detailed how the use of each framework assisted the investigation of the career advancement of women in PR.

Background knowledge from various sources regarding the challenges related to the career development of women in PR was presented in secondary research. This highlighted the key barriers prohibiting career advancement and included insight into the glass ceiling phenomenon.

A discussion regarding the factors influencing the career advancement of women in PR was presented and arguments were made in support of SCCT and the GOS approach, which form the theoretical framework for the study.

Consideration of the role of a PR strategist as a basis for career advancement in the PR profession (Steyn, 2009), provided important context for further studies regarding the evolving role of a PR professional for career advancement.

Chapter 3 will review the research methodology, research approach and ethical considerations of the study. It will discuss the sampling of the participants for the study and detail the participant criteria and demographics of the female PR practitioners who participated in the study.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis process, used as the tool to analyse the data from the participants, will be presented. The emergent themes and sub-themes derived from the thematic analysis will be reviewed and discussed which will lead to categorising the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology of the study. The purpose of this chapter is to detail the methodological design, discuss the process chosen to analyse the data and present the thematic analysis used to identify the findings of the study. The researcher practised a deductive approach and used an interpretive theoretical perspective to understand the participants' experiences of career advancement in the PR industry as well as their understanding of the glass ceiling phenomenon, which is being investigated in this study.

The chapter expands on the details of the sample population for the study, the participant criteria, and demographics, as well as the data collection method and coordination of the data collection.

Considering the exploratory nature of the study, a qualitative method was considered appropriate for the investigation of career experiences of female PR practitioners. To investigate whether the glass ceiling phenomenon plays a role in the PR industry, in-depth interviews with female PR practitioners from private, public, and non-profit organisations were conducted. The qualitative survey used for the study allowed the researched to gather in-depth insights from the participants regarding their career advancement experiences.

The data from the interviews of the participants were analysed by using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis to identify the themes that categorised the findings of the study.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

The term 'methodology' refers to how researchers approach problems and seek answers (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Qualitative research methodology focuses on individuals encounters as they are presented in thoughts, ideas, feelings, and perceptions (Ohman, 2005:273). A qualitative research design was used to provide a rich description of the female participant's experiences of their career progression.

Interviewing PR practitioners from various sectors in middle and senior roles, enabled the researcher to identify similarities and differences in the way in which women progress in the public relations industry across the private, public, and non-profit sectors.

A deductive approach was used for the study, which involved approaching the data with preconceived themes which are expected to be found in the interview responses, based on theory or existing knowledge. The theoretical perspective used for the study was interpretive. Merriam (2002) describes an interpretive study as one where the researcher is attentive in understanding how participants make meaning of a problem or phenomenon. In this study, the phenomenon which will be focused on is the 'glass ceiling'.

3.3 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Ethical consideration was given to the participation of interviewees by inviting participants to give informed consent before the study commenced. The interview guide (Appendix 1) was discussed with the participants and used to guide the interviews. The confidentiality of all participants and their employers was guaranteed through the completion of ethics forms (Appendix 2) and signed permission letters ahead of the interviews.

It was agreed that the names of the participants and their organisations will not be disclosed in the final report. The data collected from the participants will be presented in the findings by using number codes for each participant, their management level, and the sector they work for.

As the study will relate to various questions about the organisation in which the female PR practitioners work, ethical clearance was requested from the organisations to grant permission for their employee to be part of the study.

3.4 SAMPLING

Eight PR practitioners from mid-level and senior-level management working in organisations of private, public, and non-profit sectors were interviewed for this study.

3.4.1 Participant criteria

The participant criteria form part of the guidelines used by the researcher to identify eligible participants for the study.

The criteria below describe the characteristics that must be shared by participants employed in mid-level management and senior-level management in the PR industry.

Mid-level management participants:

- Female
- Residing and working in Cape Town
- Tertiary qualification (National Diploma or Degree) in public relations or a similar profession, i.e., marketing, communications, media studies or journalism.
- Minimum 5 years' experience in public relations or a similar profession, i.e., marketing, communications industry
- The minimum duration of 3 years in a middle management role in their organisation.

Senior-level management participants:

- Female
- Residing and working in Cape Town
- Tertiary qualification (Degree) in public relations or a similar profession, i.e., marketing, communications, media studies or journalism
- Minimum of 10 years' experience in public relations or a similar profession, i.e., marketing, communications industry
- Minimum of 5 years in a senior management role in their organisation

3.4.2 Establishing participation criteria

According to PayScale's view of the average PR officer salary in South Africa, a mid-career public relations officer is expected to have 5-9 years' experience. Factors differentiating mid-level PR practitioners to senior-level PR practitioners are the years of experience and the timeline for a promotion (Payscale.com, 2020). PayScale rank experienced PR practitioners/officers in a senior role as having 10-19 years of experience in the industry (Payscale.com, 2020).

The distinguishing factor of the number of years of experience in the PR industry was used as the fourth element of the criteria used to establish senior PR practitioners suitable for participation in the study.

The last element that distinguishes mid-level and senior-level PR practitioners were based on the view of the CEO of ZipRecruiter, Ian Sieger, who suggests that employees should aim to get a promotion every three years (Vasel, 2019). Thus, mid-level PR practitioners should have a minimum of three years at their current company to be at a stage where they would be seeking career progression. For the participants to be classified as a senior-level PR practitioner, they would need to have 4-5 years' experience in their current role. If the senior-level PR practitioner has not been promoted after three years according to Sieger's timeline, they have yet to progress further in their career.

3.4.3 Participant demographics

Table 3.1 presents the years of experience of each participant, including the number of years in their current role. Their management level as well as their sector in which they work are also presented.

Table 3.1: Participant demographics

Participant	Experience (yrs.)	Years in current role	Level	Sector
1	10	4	Mid	Private
2	13	3	Mid	Private
3	13	3	Mid	Private
4	17	3	Mid	Non-profit
5	9	3	Mid	Public
6	12	6	Senior	Public
7	10	5	Senior	Private
8	10	5	Senior	Private

3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The gathering of information using a qualitative methodology was done through in-depth, online video communication calls via Zoom and Microsoft Teams. All interviews were recorded for data analysis. Initially, the intended method for data collection was to have face-to-face interpersonal engagements, but due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, which led to the South African Government implementing a national lockdown, any personal interaction was prohibited, and social distancing was encouraged to flatten the curve of the virus. To proceed with the study, participants were given the option of a video conference communication on either Microsoft Teams or Zoom.

The self-reporting method was used in the form of a questionnaire during the participant's interviews and relies on the participants own report of their behaviours, beliefs, or attitudes. This approach was originally applied with the notion of understanding that "no one knows you like yourself". It has been proven to be advantageous when accessing certain types of information only available to individuals such as intentions, motivations, and past experiences (Mount, Barrick, Strauss,1994).

Brutus, Aguinis & Wassmer (2013:48-75) note that there are potential sources of bias in self-reporting data which should be noted as limitations for this study:

- Selective memory – Remembering or not accounting for experiences that occurred in the past;
- Telescoping – Recalling events that occurred at one time as if they occurred at another time;
- Attribution – Attributing positive outcomes to one's action but attributing negative outcomes to external forces;
- Exaggeration – Representing outcomes or events more significant than is suggested by the data collected.

Methods for improving self-reporting are presented by the researcher applying the following tasks (Schwarz and Oyserman 2001:129):

1. Understanding the question being asked by the researcher;
2. Recalling relevant behaviour;
3. Inference and estimation;

4. Mapping the answer onto the response format; and
5. Editing the answer.

To ensure the validity of self-reporting for this study, the researcher explained and ensured that the participants understood each question before responding.

By setting a timeframe in terms of the participants' own career experience and what they are experiencing in their current organisation, the participants can account for relevant behaviour experienced as well as inference and estimation. In mapping the answer in the correct response format, the researcher recorded the responses in Microsoft Excel after transcribing the participants' interview recording and then edited the answers which are presented in the findings chapter.

3.5.1 Data collection method

Each video communication interview took 30-50 minutes. This was enough time to allow the researcher to explore the participants' perspectives on the topic of the study, resulting in rich data that was used to shape further questions relevant to the topic. The underlying themes of the study gave rise to the categories of interview questions. The interviews were recorded and saved to ensure credibility and safeguard the data.

3.5.2 Coordination of data collection

At the beginning of the video communication call, participants were made aware of the fact that the call would be recorded for transcribing and data analysis for the study. Participants were briefed on the objectives of the study and were asked questions based on an interview guide (Appendix 1), categorised under the following themes identified for the interview:

1. The public relations industry
2. Your sector
3. The organisation
4. Organisational behaviour
5. Gender -organisation-system

3.6 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

This section details the systematic approach to analysis, in the form of a Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, which was used to examine the data gathered from the in-depth one-on-one interviews with the participants of this study.

Adopting the thematic analysis process assisted in identifying themes and patterns in the data that relate to the research objective of the study, namely, to investigate the career progression experiences of female PR practitioners. For this study, the phenomenon being investigated is whether the glass ceiling exists in the PR industry.

Thematic analysis is a technique for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within data and is a commonly used system of analysis in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006:81). An advantage of using the thematic analyses is that it is a technique which is not tied to an epistemological or theoretical perspective, which allows the researcher to be flexible in analysing and understanding the data. Thematic analysis is described by Smith and Firth (2011) as an interpretive process whereby the researcher systematically searches through data to identify patterns to describe the phenomenon under investigation. The thematic analysis involves “a constant moving back and forward between the entire data set, the coded extracts of the data you are analysing, and the analysis of the data that you are producing” (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Braun and Clarke (2013) note that thematic analysis can address the research using the main interview questions as the themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) developed a six-step process for identifying, analysing and reporting qualitative data using thematic analysis. Table 3.2 details the thematic analysis process by Braun and Clarke (2006) required to identify themes to address the questions of the study.

Table 3.2 – Thematic analysis process (Adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2006:77-101)

Phases	Description of the process
1. Familiarisation	Transcribing, reading, and re-reading the data and writing down initial ideas
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion and collating data relevant to each code
3. Searching for themes	Evaluating codes into potential themes and gathering all the data relevant to each theme
4. Reviewing themes	Checking that the themes work with the codes and generating an analysis

5. Defining and naming themes and sub-themes	Continuous evaluation to enhance the details of each theme and producing clear descriptions and terms for each theme.
6. Producing the report	Analysis of the data by selecting compelling extract examples and a final analysis which relates to the research questions and literature.

3.6.1 Familiarisation

To be fully immersed and actively engaged in the data, the researcher listened to each recorded interview and transcribed each interview to ensure that the participant's experiences were transcribed correctly for the analysis. Transcriptions were checked against recordings for accuracy, thereby allowing the researcher to be further their familiarity with the content.

3.6.2 Generating initial codes

The researcher used Bree and Gallagher's (2016) approach to generate initial codes by using Microsoft Excel. The researcher transcribed the participant's responses from the questions asked from the interview guide for coding and thematic analysis of the data. Table 3.3 shows the initial codes identified from the data.

Table 3.3 - Generation of initial codes

Interview extracts	Initial codes
<p>The glass ceiling effect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I haven't experienced at this point, a hindrance in my career.</i> • <i>I don't see it as prevalent in the PR industry because it is primarily dominated by women.</i> • <i>The glass ceiling is definitely there, it's something I felt before in my personal experience.</i> • <i>There is definitely still a glass ceiling, especially in the corporate space when it comes to a woman in senior positions.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No hindrance from the glass ceiling • Woman dominated industry • Glass ceiling prevalent • Personal experience • Corporate • Woman in senior positions
<p>Opportunities for career progression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>As you go up in the organisation, there tend to be fewer opportunities</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few opportunities • Difficultly

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The progression is very tricky</i> • <i>It's actually a focus in my company and female progression is encouraged</i> • <i>There is an emphasis on affirmative action for career progression</i> • <i>There is no growth for me at the moment</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouragement • Affirmative action • No growth
<p>Career progression challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I would definitely say budget</i> • <i>There are very few opportunities so there isn't enough for everyone who would like to progress</i> • <i>The amount of red tape when it comes to approvals limits my creativity</i> • <i>Where I have not seen career progression opportunities, is because of the commitment to transform South Africa's workforce to reflect a greater diversity of other races than white, so obviously I am white, just for confirmation</i> • <i>Given certain technological development such as social media and all kinds of online tools and mechanisms, everyone thinks they can do PR and marketing</i> • <i>Training and development can be improved on</i> • <i>You have a founder's block in the NGO space resulting in their organisation structure being what they have envisioned</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation budgets • Limited opportunities • Red tape approvals • Transformation • Workforce diversity • Technological development • Misconceptions • Training and development • Founders block
<p>Organisation improvements for career progression assistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Encouraging my organisation to network with other industries</i> • <i>There isn't a holistic understanding of what the requirements are of a PR professional</i> • <i>Recognising skills where it's not necessarily in mainstream award systems</i> • <i>Having more internal leadership and mentorship opportunities</i> • <i>The only thing I have struggled because of the intensity of work and complex issues, there have been times that I have been close to burn out</i> • <i>If there can be a more defined line of approval</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-industry networking • Misunderstanding • Lack of recognition • Lack of leadership mentorship opportunities • Burn out • Approval processes • Succession planning

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Succession planning, I don't feel at the present moment they are doing enough if someone does leave, that they do have a succession plan</i> 	
<p>Understanding of the PR profession</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I constantly need to have to reaffirm and be firm about what I am here to do</i> • <i>I think they have a good understanding of my role</i> • <i>For the people who do not work directly with the PR department, they don't have a clue</i> • <i>I will say it's not very constant</i> • <i>Our organisation has taken comms and PR and media quite seriously</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaffirmation • Good understanding • Misconceptions • Inconsistent • Prioritisation
<p>Gender diversity improvements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I wouldn't say there are racial or gender grouping but more like-minded people</i> • <i>There is a cultural component when it comes to social systems in my organisation</i> • <i>We have two dynamics, regional social systems between different branches and between employees who have been at the organisation from the beginning versus employees who are new to the organisation</i> • <i>I would say race and gender are at play</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like-minded grouping • Cultural social systems • Regional social systems • Employee loyalty • Race and gender social systems
<p>Organisation policies and procedures to ensure female senior leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Each employee is signed to an HR consultant who mentors them from different perspectives</i> • <i>We have KPI reviews and that is every 6 months to ensure we are on track to achieving our goals and where we want to be in our career</i> • <i>We have a system of development dialogues which are like performance review which form part of the conversation about your succession in the organisation</i> • <i>We have career pathing by our HR department</i> • <i>We have an annual strategy session twice a year to assess employee growth and development within the organisation"</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentorship • KPI reviews • Development dialogues • Career pathing • Strategic sessions
<p>The culture towards women in the organisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>There are a lot of woman in senior management, so I don't feel there are any discrepancies or inequalities and I think we very pro-woman</i> • <i>Women are quite highly respected</i> • <i>We definitely embrace the progression of females</i> • <i>The culture towards a woman is largely supportive</i> • <i>There is obviously competition between woman, but the culture of woman allows us to stand in solidarity</i> • <i>Even though we have a lot of woman in our organisation, their levels of management are still a concern</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respected • Supportive • Competition • Solidarity • Concern
<p>The role gender plays in career advancement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It is more of an advantage in my company if you are a woman</i> • <i>Everywhere I went, I didn't feel any discrimination against my gender</i> • <i>It definitely plays a role, but age also plays a role</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advantageous • No gender discrimination • Career advancement factors

3.6.3 Identifying themes

Braun and Clarke (2006) understand that themes are characterised by their significance. The following themes and sub-themes were identified by examining the codes in Table 3.3 The themes and sub-themes identified in Table 3.4 answer the research intention of the study.

The main purpose of the study was to identify the career advancement challenges women in PR are experiencing. The themes and sub-themes identified in Table 3.4 present the findings of the challenges hindering career progression for women in PR, which included the glass ceiling effect, limited career progression opportunities, rapid technology and innovation, transformation, organisational improvements, the understanding of the PR profession, social systems, career path understanding, organisational behaviour and gender influence.

Table 3.4 – Identifying themes and sub-themes

Codes	Theme and sub-themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No hindrance from the glass ceiling • Woman dominated industry 	Glass ceiling

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glass ceiling prevalent • Personal experience • Corporate • Woman in senior positions 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few opportunities • Difficult • Encouraged • Affirmative action • Transformation • Workforce diversity 	Career progression opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation budgets • Limited opportunities • Red tape approvals • Technological development • Misconceptions • No growth • Founders block • Affirmative action 	Career progression challenges Technology and innovation Transformation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-industry networking • Misunderstanding • Lack of recognition • Lack of leadership mentorship opportunities • Training and development • Approval processes • Succession planning 	Organisation improvements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaffirmation • Good understanding • Misconceptions • Inconsistent • Prioritisation 	Understanding PR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like-minded grouping • Cultural social systems 	Social systems

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional social systems • Employee loyalty • Race and gender social systems 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentorship • KPI reviews • Development dialogues • Career pathing • Strategic sessions 	Career path understanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality • Respected • Supportive • Competition • Solidarity • Concern 	Behavioural culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advantageous • No gender discrimination • Career advancement factors 	Gender influence

3.6.4 Reviewing themes

Theme 1: Glass ceiling

The data collected on the theme of the ‘glass ceiling’ provided useful information on addressing the research question to determine if the glass ceiling phenomenon is experienced by women in the PR industry as a career progression barrier.

Theme 2: Career progression opportunities and improvements

Career progression opportunities were identified as a theme in the study. This theme assisted the researcher to evaluate what organisations in the public, private, and non-profit sectors are doing to assist PR practitioners in their career progression within their organisation.

‘Organisational improvements’ was identified as a separate theme in Table 3.4. When analysing the recorded data, it was decided that career progression and improvements should be linked under one theme as they analyse the opportunities afforded by the

PR practitioners organisations as well as the improvements which need to take place to further assist female PR practitioners in their career progression.

Theme 3: Career progression challenges

The data that emerged on career progression challenges of PR practitioners in the PR industry in Cape Town was significant to the study as it identified the barriers prohibiting female PR practitioners from progressing in their career.

Theme 4: Understanding PR

Steyn (2009:9), when investigating Chief Executive Officers (CEO's) expectations of a senior PR practitioner, found that senior staff do not know enough about communication to be able to lead PR practitioners or know what to expect from their role. Her findings concluded that CEO's should have a basic understanding of the priorities of communication. The understanding of PR by the organisation was recorded by participants as a career progression barrier as their role is often misunderstood, especially by departments in the organisation who do not work with them directly.

Theme 5: Social systems

The gender-organisation system recognises that the restricted advance of a woman in organisations is not because of their gender or organisational structure, but that both mutually influence woman's conduct at work. Terborg (1981) suggests that a person is affected by circumstances and social systems. The research findings of the study identified that social systems are at play in participant's organisations.

Theme 6: Behavioural culture

Terborg (1981:570) notes that individuals react to situations as well as generate them. In understanding the behavioural culture of each participant's organisation, particularly the culture towards woman, the data was able to identify Terborg's fourth meaning of person/situation interaction which is "reciprocal influence between the person and the situation over time" (Terborg,1981:572). If the behavioural culture towards women in the organisation is negative, as it has emerged in the findings, it would be identified as a barrier which has affected the career advancement of participant overtime at her organisation.

Theme 7: Gender influence

Fagenson (1993) noted that the limited advance of women in organisations is jointly influenced by gender and organisational structure, which influences women's behaviour at work. By understanding how gender influence affects the participants in their organisations, the researcher can determine whether the participant's behaviour directly affects their career advancement at work.

Sub-theme 1: Technological advances

Upon analysing the data, the challenge to constantly upskill and be knowledgeable about technological advances which are growing at a rapid pace was identified. As this was recorded in the PR practitioners' experiences as a hindrance to their career progression, technological advances are noted as sub-theme in the study.

Sub-theme 2: Transformation

The need for transformation in the workplace, based on affirmative action, was identified as a challenge for career progression. This is a legacy from South Africa's apartheid era which was a system of regulation that supported segregationist laws against non-white citizens of South Africa. The topic of this sub-theme can be linked to the social cognitive theory, which can show evidence that the career development of an individual depends on factors which are out of that individual's control. Transformation was therefore identified as a sub-theme as it described the experience of a PR practitioner in management through the incorporation of their own personal, organisational, and societal context.

Sub-theme 3: Career path progression

Career path progression can be accelerated when the organisation understands the role and expectations of the PR practitioner function. If this is evident, the correct career path progression for a female PR practitioner can be implemented to ultimately assist them in their career advancement.

3.6.5 Defining and naming themes

Phase 5 of the thematic analysis required the researcher to define and name the themes for the study by formulating exactly what each theme means and how it helps to understand the data and the relevance to the study. In Table 3.5, the defining and naming of themes and sub-themes for the study are recorded.

Table 3.5 – Defining and naming themes

Themes and sub-themes	Definition
The glass ceiling perspective	Data analysed, based on participant's responses, record perspective on their experiences as to whether they encountered a glass ceiling, as well as their view on whether a glass ceiling exists in the PR industry in Cape Town.
Opportunities and improvements for career progression	Opportunities and improvements identified by participants contribute to the study in accounting for positive attributes of each organisation for the career progression of the PR participants. The data also identifies what participants think could be improved on to further progress their career.
Career progression challenges	Challenges identified by participants is critical to investigating career progression experiences of PR practitioners and need to be analysed to identify glass ceiling effects still at play in PR in the public, private, and non-profit sectors.
The value of PR	Data collected on what participants think their organisation's understanding of the PR practitioner's role is. From this data, the researcher can identify if the organisation values the PR profession, which could impact the PR practitioner either positively or negatively when it comes to progressing their career.
Social systems	The theoretical framework for the study, which includes the gender-organisation-system approach, recognises the social systems of an organisation as a factor relating to women advancement. Based on the data collected, the researcher will determine whether social systems are a barrier prohibiting career progression.

Behavioural culture	Behavioural culture of an organisation is recognised by Terborg (1981) as an incessant communication of reactions between an individual's manner, circumstances, and their organisation's social systems where these interactions occur. Behavioural culture is an important factor to consider in identifying whether it is a limitation in the career progression of female PR practitioners.
Gender influence	Gender influence was recognised by Fagenson (1993) as a factor influencing female representation in senior leadership roles. Based on studies conducted on gender disparity in South Africa, gender influence has been identified as a theme for this study.
Sub-theme – Technological advances	The rapid growing pace of technological advances was a common theme in the participant's responses, which is identified as a sub-theme under career progression challenges. Technological advances can be regarded as an element which could potentially delay career progression.
Sub-theme – Transformation	Transformation in the workplace has been identified by Lent et al (2000) using social cognitive career theory, as a factor outside an individual's control. Thus, transformation needs to be investigated in terms of understanding how this could be a barrier to PR practitioners' career progression.
Sub-theme – Career path progression	Identifying processes and policies in each participant's organisation regarding how the growth of their staff is viewed in terms of career path progression, is of vital importance to the study as these policies or lack thereof could be identified as a barrier for career progression.

Defining and naming themes formed part of the last step of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis which identified the emergent themes and sub-themes portrayed in the thematic map in Figure 3.1 below.

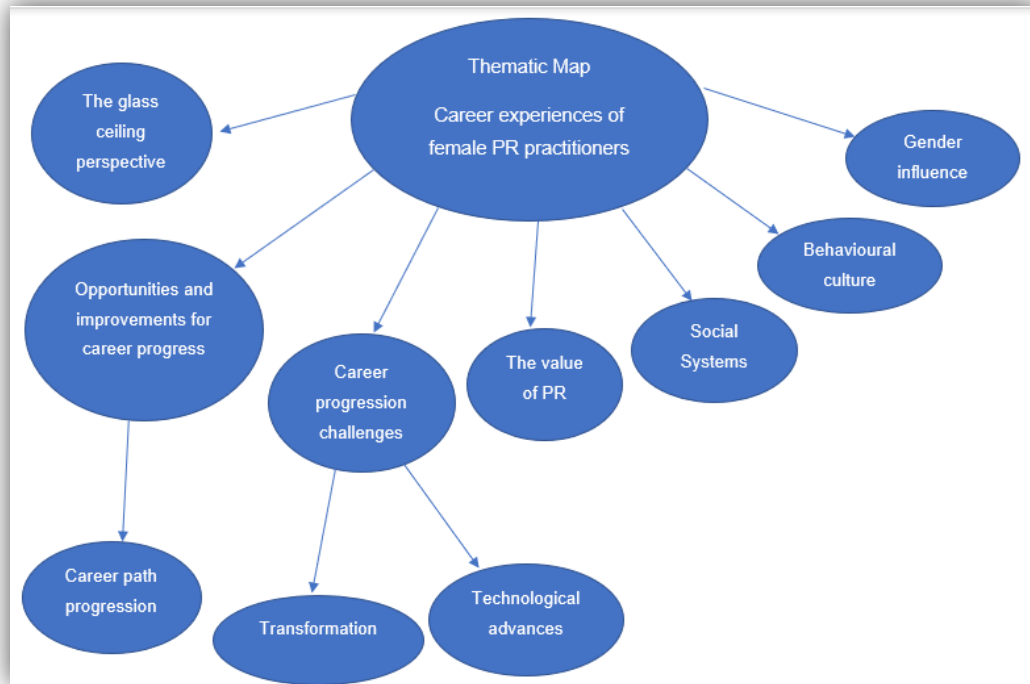


Figure 3.1: Thematic map of emergent themes and sub-themes

The glass ceiling perspective theme is argued by SCCT as not only a workplace phenomenon but something that can influence a person during various stages of their lives. It was discussed with participants to determine whether the glass ceiling still exists in the PR industry and prohibits career advancement. Opportunities and improvements by the participants' organisations to assist with career path progression can be directly linked to the organisational structure which Schein (2004) notes as the culture which reflects the norms, values, and attitudes of the organisation. Organisational structure is seen as an environmental element by Lent et al. (1994) which influences both the individual and other aspects of career behaviour. The GOS approach also believes that a women's behaviour in the workplace is an outcome of organisational structure and gender influence which has also been identified as a theme.

Transformation and technological advances were identified as sub-themes relating to career advancement challenges experienced by female PR practitioners.

Both sub-themes can also be recognised by SCCT as factors outside of an individual’s control that influences their career advancement. The value of PR was also identified as a theme and can be tied to SCCT as self-efficacy belief which Lent and Brown (1996) believes is an interlinked variable which regulates career behaviour and career development. If the organisation does not value the PR function, the PR practitioner would not be able to develop which can have a direct impact on her career growth.

The social systems theme identified is supported by the GOS approach which notes that the under-representation of women in management may be due to social systems in which organisations function (Akpinar – Sposito,2013:7). The behavioural culture theme is based on the culture of an organisation in which the GOS approach believes has a direct impact on women’s behaviour, which influences their career advancement.

Based on the thematic analysis conducted, the following emergent themes and sub-themes were identified and are presented in Table 3.6 below. The themes and sub-themes will categorise the findings of the study.

Table 3.6 – Emergent themes and sub-themes

Emergent themes	Sub-themes
The glass ceiling perspective	Technological advances
Opportunities and improvements for career progress	Transformation
Career progression challenges	Career path progression
The value of PR	
Social systems	
Behavioural culture	
Gender influence	

3.7 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Noble and Smith (2015) note that evaluating the reliability and validity of research is essential if findings are to be utilised. The reliability should be recorded to describe the consistency of the research design and methods used for the study.

Reliability is defined by Neuman (1994) as an instrument that can return the same or similar result even after or between certain periods of interval. To determine the reliability of this study, the interviews with the participants were conducted over 2 months namely, May and June 2020.

Validity is described by Noble and Smith (2015) as the integrity and application of the research design and methods practised as well as the accuracy of the research procedures used for the study. Presenting the validity measures for the analysis process of the study is important to ensure that the process of the analysis addresses the objective and focus of the study (Graneheim and Lundman. 2004:109).

Reige (2003) and Graneheim and Lundman (2004) note that there are authors who argue that in the context of qualitative content analysis, the confirmability, credibility, transferability, and dependability of the study are used to measure the quality of the qualitative content analysis.

Reige (2003:8) defines confirmability as the ability to correspond closely and that the researcher ensures that the interpretations of the data are done logically. To ensure confirmability, the researcher retained the recordings of the participant interviews and allowed the participants of the study to share their personal experiences relating to the barriers and challenges they have encountered which are prohibiting their career progression.

Credibility is defined by Graneheim and Lundman (2004:109) as the measurement of how accurately the data and process of analysis addressed the focus of the study. To ensure credibility, the researcher recorded each participant interview, transcribed, and used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis process to determine the themes and sub-themes which formed the categories used to present the findings of the study.

Transferability determines whether the findings of a study can be transferred to other settings (Gruneheim & Lundman, 2004:110). As this study evaluated the career progression experiences of female PR practitioners in Cape Town, it can only refer to the barriers female PR practitioners experience in the PR industry in Cape Town specifically.

Due to the sample size of the participants for this study, the findings cannot generalise that the career advancement challenges are experienced by all-female PR practitioners in the PR industry but can be referenced when researching the career progression of women in the PR industry on a greater scale.

Dependability is referred to as the stability of findings overtime (Bitsch, 2005:86). Dependability in this study was used by evaluating and interpreting the findings using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. The researcher also ensured that the participant interviews were recorded and transcribed accurately to ensure dependability.

All researchers must incorporate strategies to enhance the credibility of a study during the research design and implementation (Noble & Smith, 2015:34-35). To ensure the trustworthiness of the design and methodology used for this study, the researcher incorporated the following strategies:

1. The researcher accounted for personal bias as a limitation of self-reporting which was used in the study in the form of a questionnaire;
2. The researcher presented careful and diligent record-keeping and demonstrated a clear decision-making trail through the implementation of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis; and
3. The researcher established a comparison case in aid of seeking similarities and differences of the female PR practitioners working in the private, public, and non-profit sectors in Cape Town.

The reliability and validity of the research design and methods and the strategies incorporated in the study enabled the researcher to enhance the credibility of the study and ensure the quality of the qualitative content analysis of the study.

3.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter detailed the methodological approach selected to conduct and collect data for the study. The study employed a qualitative methodological approach to understand the career progression experiences of female PR practitioners working in public, private, and non-profit organisations in Cape Town. In-depth interviews, with the support of an interview guide, were used to interview participants who were selected based on the participant criteria requirements outlined in the chapter.

Using the thematic analysis method by Braun and Clarke (2006) enabled the researcher to analyse the data and identify patterns relevant to the research objective of the study. Using Bree and Gallagher's (2016) approach, the researcher used Microsoft Excel to generate codes based on the transcripts from the in-depth interviews with the participants. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process for thematic analysis, the researcher familiarised herself with the data by transcribing the in-depth interviews and reading through the data numerous times to generate the initial codes for the study. The researcher searched and reviewed the themes significant to the focus of the study and presented the emergent themes and sub-themes which will be used to categorise the findings of the study.

The reliability and validity of the study were also discussed, and the researcher presented the strategies implemented to ensure the credibility of the research design and methods used for the study.

The proceeding chapter will present the findings in consideration of the research questions identified in chapter 1. It will also present findings concerning the similarities and differences in comparison to women working in PR in the private, public, and non-profit sectors and will conclude with recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will outline the findings of the thematic analysis which categorised the emergent themes and sub-themes identified from the data collected for the study. Quotations from the participants have also been added to provide narrative accounts and to illustrate the themes and sub-themes that have emerged from the study. The similarities and differences between female PR practitioners working in various sectors will also be presented.

4.2 FINDINGS

The themes and sub-themes identified in the data analysis in Chapter 3 serve to categorise the findings from the recorded responses of the female PR practitioners who participated in the study.

4.2.1 The glass ceiling perspective

The first theme describes the participant's view and personal experience regarding the glass ceiling effect to determine whether the existence of the glass ceiling can be identified as a barrier that influences their career advancement. The results of the participants view on the glass ceiling perspective revealed that 62.5% (n=5) of the participants experienced no glass ceiling in their organisation while 37.5% (n=3) acknowledged that the glass ceiling was prevalent where they are employed.

Participant 4 noted that she experienced the glass ceiling in her corporate organisation when it comes to women in managerial roles. Participant 1 stated:

I have experienced the glass ceiling effect although the industry is dominated by women. While my progression is very different in comparison to other organisations, I still find managers that are women, but who are not heads of departments. (Participant 1)

Participant 1 also noted that, while she believes the glass ceiling still exists based on her experience, in a South African context it may be more race-related than gender-related. Participant 7 recognised that because she is a woman and younger than other female employees, she had to work harder to gain respect and therefore feels the glass ceiling still exists in her industry.

Participant 2 did not support the view that there was a glass ceiling, stating that “The glass ceiling is not prevalent in her industry because it is primarily dominated by women”.

Of the 62.5% (n=5) who did not believe there was an existence of a glass ceiling effect in the workplace, Participant 8 acknowledged that she had not yet experienced any restriction and has experienced various opportunities at her workplace. She did however point out that experiencing the glass ceiling effect could be linked to the sector you are working in as a PR practitioner. Participant 3 recorded that she has not experienced any glass ceiling that would not allow her to progress to the next level of her career, stating:

At this point, I have not experienced a hindrance in my career in a way that it relates to my gender and I have made successful moves into positions of progression. (Participant 6)

Participant 6 accounts that although there may have been other issues which have made career advancement challenging for her, she has not experienced the glass ceiling effect to be one of them. Participant 5 acknowledged that she had been very fortunate to climb the corporate ladder and that her progression has been gradual.

4.2.2 Opportunities and improvements for career progression

Opportunities and improvements for career progression were recognised as a theme for the study. Participants identified positive attributes of their organisation assisting them with career progression as well as what they recommend could be improved to further progress their careers. Participant 3 noted:

There is a strong focus in [my organisation] when it comes to female career progression and equal and fair opportunities are encouraged. (Participant 3)

The interview participants who felt that their organisations offered equal and fair opportunities included Participant 8, who acknowledged that she has received opportunities for career progression. Participant 4 noted that there are equal and fair opportunities for her career progression as she is privileged enough to work for an organisation dominated by females.

In contrast, Participant 5 reported:

In an attempt to progress to the next level of my career, I took it upon myself to fulfil additional responsibilities, but [my organisation] failed to recognise this as an attempt to enhance and progress in my current position. (Participant 5)

Participant 7 admitted that there is no growth for her currently and that, while she has been in her position for five years, she has been looking elsewhere for new career opportunities to progress her career. Participant 1 recognised that, because of the way her organisation is structured, her progression is difficult to negotiate and although she has been at her organisation for four years, her portfolio has grown but her management level has not changed.

Of the 10% (n=1) of participants who answered both 'Yes' and 'No' when asked if they thought their organisations offered equal and fair opportunities for career advancement, Participant 2 acknowledged that when she answered 'No', she was referencing that there are only limited positions from a PR perspective for career progression in her organisation. She is aware that there are fewer professionals at top management level which results in various middle management PR practitioners competing for single and fewer positions at the top. She explained that her organisation could recognise the PR profession and the work she does in award ceremonies, which would assist her with career progression in her organisation. When the same participant answered 'Yes', she recognised that there are opportunities provided in her organisation but believes there are only so many people who can hold those positions. Participant 2 acknowledged that her organisation does everything they can from a developmental perspective to assist in career progression.

"As an individual in [my organisation], I am responsible for my own ongoing development because training and development is not something the organisations budget allows for" (Participant 4)

Participant 5 explained that her organisation could assist her in her career progression by having less rigid internal processes and less red tape in approval processes.

Participant 1, who works in the corporate industry, explained that in her organisation, there are many parameters when it comes to career progression.

She explained that her organisation could assist her in career progression by not only having a focus on profits as this does not consider her area of expertise as a contributing factor. If her organisation could have a more holistic understanding of what makes a successful PR practitioner, she could progress in her career. Participant 3 considered that “More internal leadership and mentorship opportunities could be offered at her organisation to assist with career progression”.

Participant 7 emphasised that her organisation could assist her to progress in her role by having a more defined line of approval on the communication platforms they use, which would allow her to do more in her role. Participant 8 suggested that her organisation could offer succession planning and more hiring opportunities for internal staff when positions are made available.

4.2.3 Career progression challenges

The participants working in the PR industry recognised a range of career progression challenges in their organisations in the private, public, and non-profit sectors in Cape Town.

Participant 2 shared the view also presented by other participants, that her career progression was hampered by lack of opportunity:

There are very few opportunities available resulting in not everyone being able to progress. While opportunities do exist, you need to be able to sell yourself well. (Participant 2)

Participant 2 experienced great expectation from her superiors because she is a female in the PR industry in her organisation. Pressures that came from external environments, as well as the ability to believe in her own work, was also recognised as a challenge to her.

Participant 7 recognised the amount of red tape in her organisation as a career challenge which she feels limits her creativity. She also felt that when it comes to digital marketing, she must complete courses to ensure that she is keeping up with the modern advances in her profession as she does not want to put herself at a disadvantage because her organisation is not necessarily moving at the same pace. The advance of digital technology was also identified as a factor by Participant 8:

The digital space is growing at such a fast pace; it is a challenge constantly to keep up with. I need to be an all-rounder in my profession which means that I must ensure that I am upskilling myself, which can be challenging. (Participant 8)

Participant 5 recognised that her organisation's budget was a challenging factor resulting in the organisation neither hiring people nor growing the skill set of current employees. She felt that within her current company there is no room for additional staff members and that she would have to wait for someone to retire to get an opportunity to progress or be promoted.

Participant 6 noted that in her organisation, the PR field is often targeted for transformation appointments. She regarded this as a challenge as the higher she moved up in an organisation, the fewer opportunities there were because of her race. She revealed:

I have not seen career progression opportunities due to the commitment to transform South Africa's workforce to reflect a greater diversity of other races. (Participant 6)

Participant 4 explained that when the organisation is funded and run by one person for a very long time, individuals get held back by the organisational structure that the founder has envisioned for the organisation. Only once the organisation was managed independently, was she able to grow within her role and progress. She stated: "The challenge prohibiting my career progression is what they call the "founders block".

In contrast to the various views on the factors frustrating career progression, Participant 3 felt that no career progression challenges were prohibiting her and that her organisation would do what it could to assist her to advance in her career.

4.2.4 The value of PR

The value placed on the PR profession was determined by what the participants thought their organisation's understanding was of their profession. This was investigated to determine if it could be a factor influencing their career advancement.

As only parts of her organisation work with the PR department, the undervaluing of PR (which includes marketing and communications) was recognised as a challenge by Participant 2 for those who do not work with her directly and who do not necessarily know what her function is.

Undervaluing of the PR function in her organisation was also identified as a challenge by Participant 1:

Certain technological developments such as social media and online tools and mechanisms created the perception that everyone can do my job which is detrimental for my career progression and the breadth of work I am given. (Participant 1)

Participant 1 also indicated that the level of understanding of the PR function was inconsistent:

Understanding what I do is not always constant. Due to my organisation currently undergoing a major business-wide change, it results in a change of focus in my role. (Participant 1)

As a result of this, participant 1 felt that her organisation did not have a good understanding of her role because whenever she attempts to concretise her portfolio, it is disrupted by shifts in the organisation's business strategy. Participant 2 felt that the value of PR is underestimated by the divisions of her organisation that do not work directly with her department.

Participant 5 noted that communication and PR in her organisation have been taken quite seriously over the last few years and that her organisation is very much in favour of reputation management and prioritising public relations. Similarly, Participant 4 noted that:

Although there is no budget for the communications and marketing department, my organisations top priority is to bring awareness to their causes and for that reason, I feel that my organisation values my role. (Participant 4)

Participant 6 reported:

My organisation has quickly come to grips with how important professional communication is and they are much more understanding of the importance and the necessity of my role. (Participant 6)

Participant 3 acknowledged that organisations have a good understanding of their role as a PR practitioner while Participant 7 acknowledged that 70% of the organisation have a good understanding of her role. Participant 8 noted that her organisation has a great understanding of her role and that her CEO works very closely with her.

4.2.5 Social systems

The characteristics of the social systems in the participants' organisations, as recognised by the GOS approach, made it an important factor to investigate whether it can be identified as a barrier which influences a women's career advancement in the PR industry.

Participant 3 noticed social systems of executives of race and gender at play as well as work teams and people of similar age groups forming social systems in her organisation.

Participant 6 also experienced social systems of race and gender.

Although my organisation is conscious of the conversations of race and gender happening in my country, I am aware that social systems of race and gender are at play in my organisation. (Participant 6)

However, Participant 6 did acknowledge that it is difficult to change the behavioural culture of her organisation's social systems as they consist of pre-established relationships and networks, particularly between older staff members, which are very difficult to change. One of the big conversations in her organisation is about building the relationship between past professional staff and academic staff.

In contrast, Participant 1 recognised that the social systems at play in her organisation do not involve race or gender. Similarly, Participant 2 noted that "The social systems at play in my organisation are like-minded people who spend time together to work better".

Participant 8, working in the private sector, is aware that there are mixed social systems at play in her organisation involving young people spending time with middle-aged people in the organisation who are tech-savvy. Participant 7 noticed that in her organisation if people are not working in their offices, people of similar roles spend time together. Participant 5 is aware that there is a cultural component at play in her organisation where she sees people of the same religion spend time together. Participant 4 noticed social systems of regional branches who work differently and long-term employees of the organisation who distance themselves from new employees.

4.2.6 Behavioural culture

The influence that behavioural culture has on career advancement needs to be investigated based on the participant's views, as it involves the interaction of the individual's characteristics, circumstances, and their organisations' social system where these exchanges occur.

As her organisation consists of a large female component, Participant 5 noted no negative behaviour towards the culture of women in her organisation and found that there is a culture of solidarity amongst the woman she works with. Similarly, Participant 4 reported: "My organisation is female-dominated, the culture towards a woman is friendly and welcoming, but competitiveness between women is evident". Participant 6 concurred with: "In the space I operate in, the culture towards a woman is largely quite supportive".

Participant 2 reported that there were limits to the support that her organisation's behavioural culture provided:

My organisation embraces females and there is a positive reaction towards the culture of a woman once trust has been developed, but there is still a distinct difference between the management level of a woman in my organisation. (Participant 2)

Participants 7 and 8 reported being aware that women carry a large weight in their organisations and are respected in their management roles. They also acknowledged that there are many women in senior management and that their organisations are very pro-woman.

4.2.7 Gender influence

Gender influence was recognised in previous literature as a factor influencing female representation in senior roles. The participants' opinions on the role that gender plays in the advancement of their career were recorded. Participant 4 noted the influence of gender in interactions with her clients:

As a consultant, I experienced a gender struggle when my clients were very opinionated about the fact that there are certain roles, they would not employ a woman for. (Participant 4)

Participant 5 felt that although gender does play a role, as it forms part of her organisations Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) requirements to hire a woman in the workplace, her gender has not prohibited her being awarded opportunities in her organisation. Participant 6 acknowledged that her organisation is more focused on academic insight as a basis for career progression and that she has not experienced any issues regarding career progression when it comes to her gender. Participant 1 found that in her organisations there is more of a focus on EQ than gender, which is a struggle for both genders.

Participant 2 acknowledged that gender has not been a limitation. More positively, Participant 3 reported that "Being a woman works towards my benefit in my organisation". Similarly, Participants 7 and 8 are aware that being a woman in their organisation is an advantage as their organisation promotes woman. Participant 8 also explained that if an individual is ambitious and proves themselves in her organisation, their career will advance at the same pace as a man's career would.

4.2.8 Technological advances

The rapid growth in technological advances was mentioned by the participants of this study as a challenging factor and was recognised as a sub-theme which could potentially delay career progression. Participant 7 noted:

"One of the challenges which influence career progression is the ability to stay on track and informed with the rapid pace and growth of technological advances within my role" (Participant 7)

Participant 8 acknowledged that because of technological advances, she is required to constantly upskill herself to avoid being at a disadvantage in their organisation and the PR profession.

4.2.9 Transformation

The SCCT acknowledges that an individual's career advancement is based on factors such as the environment in which the individual works and gender, which are outside of an individual's control. Transformation in the workplace can therefore be regarded as a factor outside of the individual's control and was recognised by Participant 6 as a barrier for career progression.

Participant 6 accepts her organisation's support for affirmative action and has acknowledged that there is a likelihood that she may not get certain positions to further progress her career because of South Africa's history with apartheid which gave privilege to certain races. She noted that:

While I have received opportunities for career progression, because of my race being classified as a white South African citizen, there is an emphasis on affirmative action in my organisation. (Participant 6)

4.2.10 Career path progression

Organisational policies and processes influence the way people advance at work. The study sought to investigate how the participants experienced these policies themselves and how it influenced their progress. Several of the participants reported that their organisations have effective policies in place. For example, Participant 6 noted that every year her organisation conducts a performance review and discusses her career succession, which includes opportunities for training and development.

Participants 1 and 3 record that their organisations have standard processes in place which include annual key performance initiatives (KPI's) and performance reviews. Participant 2 acknowledged that in her organisation, each team is assigned to an HR consultant who mentors them from different perspectives and has discussions with them about their career and their progression in the organisation. These issues are also discussed between the individual and the manager they report to. It was also acknowledged by Participant 2 that organisations in the private sector have career pathing and offer study bursaries with KPI's to guide them in their career progression.

Participant 7 is aware that her organisation's senior management is concerned about staff career progression and development and, through performance reviews, employees can identify where they see themselves in the organisation in terms of progressing and can identify what their organisation can do to assist them to get there. Participant 8 confirmed that her organisation has presented a very clear career path for her and that should she decide to change her career path, her HR department would assist in her transition.

Participant 4 also reported clear direction on career progression, noting that:

Twice a year, my organisation assesses employees in the organisation in terms of their growth and development need. My involvement with the committee enables me to ensure that my development and the development of my colleagues are integrated into my organisation's annual strategy. (Participant 4).

One participant, Participant 5, reported that in her organisation there were no clear policies and procedures concerning career progression. She observed that:

My organisation does not show a clear understanding of my career or promotional path. I must take the initiative to enquire about opportunities for career growth in my field. (Participant 5)

4.3 SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IDENTIFIED ACROSS PR SECTORS

The study identified similarities and differences based on the experiences of the PR practitioners of the study. Table 4.1 below presents the comparison of the accounts of PR practitioners working in their organisations in the private, public, and non-profit sectors in Cape Town.

Table 4.1 – Similarities and differences of women in PR across sectors

Similarities	Differences
PR practitioners in the public, private, and non-profit sectors acknowledged that the PR industry is female dominated.	PR practitioners in the private, public and non-profit sectors had experiences of the glass ceiling whereas the majority of PR practitioners in the private sector did not have any experience of the glass ceiling effect.
PR practitioners recognised that their organisations had a good understanding of their profession.	In the private and non-profit sectors, PR practitioners did not feel gender plays a role in their advancement in their career. In the public sector, practitioners agreed that gender does play a role in the progression of their careers.

PR practitioners in all sectors identified that they would like to see more woman in executive positions.	
The PR practitioners in all sectors are in organisations where performance reviews, KPI's or annual reviews are used to discuss the growth and development of their careers.	
PR practitioners in all sectors noted that the culture towards woman was very positive and encouraging.	

4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

To conclude, the findings of the data collected from the participant interviews were presented and discussed under the themes and sub-themes determined in Chapter 3 after completing Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Quotations from research participants were added to provide context to the findings of the study based on the encounters of the participants.

By interviewing female PR practitioners across private, public, and non-profit organisations, the researcher also identified similarities and differences of experiences of the participants working in the PR industry in various sectors in Cape Town, which were presented.

The concluding chapter presents the most significant findings of the study and addresses the research questions based on the findings. Concluding remarks from the researcher and recommendations for future research are also presented.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The concluding chapter will present and discuss the key findings in the context of the research questions of the study. The main findings of the literature review are also presented to evaluate whether they concur or differ from the findings of the data recorded from the participant interviews of the study. The researcher will also discuss how the aims and objectives of the study were addressed and provide concluding remarks and recommendations for future studies regarding the career advancement of women in the PR industry.

Azionya et al. (2014) acknowledge that past developments in South Africa have and will impact the PR profession. The struggle of women's rights for equal opportunity since the 1950s resulted in South Africa establishing the Constitution's Bill of Rights and the Employment Equity Act (No 55 of 1998) to eliminate the prejudice against women and place a strong emphasis on placing women in key positions in organisations.

Previous studies (Wigley, 2002; O'Neil 2003; Powell & Butterfield, 2015) found that although women dominate the PR profession, the representation of women in senior PR roles is still low. Female PR practitioners have meaningfully less official organisational power, which has led academics to believe that the PR industry in South Africa experience the glass ceiling.

The researcher recorded the career experiences of mid-level and senior-level female PR practitioners to identify why women in PR have a low representation in senior levels in their organisations. The study also sought to confirm previous academics findings regarding the existence of the glass ceiling phenomenon as a career progression barrier in the PR industry.

5.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions focused on examining the experiences of female PR practitioners to identify the career advancement challenges women in PR are encountering in the public, private, and non-profit sectors in Cape Town.

5.2.1 Research Question 1

Research question 1 was: Are there barriers experienced by women in their career advancement in the PR industry in the public, private, and non-profit sectors in Cape Town causing glass ceiling effects?

62.5% (n=5) of the participants experienced no ceiling in their organisations, while 37,5% (n=3) of the participants experienced the glass ceiling effect in their workplace. Most past research, such as Powell and Butterfield (1994) and Yap and Konrad (2009), relied on the glass ceiling phenomenon to investigate the career progression of females in the working environment. Results from the data of this study show that, while there is a percentage of participants that are experiencing the glass ceiling effect, most of the participants are not experiencing it in their respective organisations.

Cotter, et al. (2001:655-81) describe the existence of a glass ceiling when there is an unexplained gender or racial difference by other job-relevant features portrayed by an organisation member. This occurs where gender or ethnic differences are superior at elevated levels in an organisation than at lower levels. Where there is an opportunity for career advancement, gender and racial inequality will continue to heighten during a person's career.

The findings of the study found that all participants recorded that their organisation's culture towards women is friendly and welcoming, with a sense of solidarity amongst women. The participants also recorded that female employees are embraced and highly respected in their workplace.

Of the percentage of participants that did acknowledge a glass ceiling effect, it was recorded that they have experienced gender struggles where clients would not hire females to undertake certain jobs they regarded are for males. A participant also acknowledged that she is aware her organisation must abide by BBBEE legislation and therefore gender does not play a role and has not prohibited her from advancing in her career.

According to the BEE codes, to encourage the advancement of women of colour in the workplace, organisations should strive to meet the following criteria (Transcend, 2018):

- 40% and 50% of the beneficiaries should be black women, based on the factors being evaluated on the organisation's scoreboard;
- Organisations being evaluated obtain points by securing requirements of black employees at various levels of management in the organisation.

The barriers identified by participants included pressures from external environments, the low value placed on the PR profession and the rapid growth of technological advances resulting in the need to constantly upskill themselves to stay ahead of the times. Budgets of organisations were also identified as a challenging factor resulting in the organisation not hiring additional people or being able to develop the skill set of current employees. Participant 4 experienced "founders block" as a challenge, resulting in her growth being held back by the organisational structure envisioned by the founder.

Based on the results of the study, the researcher can conclude that while the majority of the female PR practitioners do not experience the glass ceiling effect in their workplace, there are other barriers which have been identified and presented in the findings that are prohibiting the career advancement of women in the PR industry in Cape Town.

5.2.2 Research Question 2

Research question 2 was: What are the women's perceptions regarding what their organisations are doing to support them to progress in their careers in the PR industry?

Schein (2007) notes that for women to achieve equality in the workplace, they must progress into the role of authority and power. When asking the participants views on what their organisations are doing to assist them to progress in their careers in the PR industry, the study found that 70% (n=5) of the interview participants acknowledged that they have been afforded equal and fair opportunities by their organisations. A senior-level participant in the public sector acknowledged that while her organisation has afforded her equal and fair opportunities for career progression, she is aware of the emphasis placed on affirmative action in her organisation and has accepted that she may not get certain positions to further progress because of her race classification.

The study also found that 90% (n=7) of the interview participants understand their career or promotional path within their organisation and that 80% (n=6) of the interview

participants felt that their organisation has a good understanding of the role of a public relations practitioner.

The demographic change in the workforce structure, where an increasing quantity of women are entering the work environment, is recognised as a challenge that organisations are facing.

5.2.3 Research Question 3

Research question 3 is: Are there similarities and differences in the way in which women progress in PR across the private, public, and non-profit sectors?

All the participants working in private, public, and non-profit sectors acknowledged that the PR industry is female dominated but agreed that they want to see more women in PR in executive positions. Participants in all sectors investigated in the study noted that their organisation has a good understanding of their role and profession. The participants noted that their organisations had processes in place in the form of performance reviews and KPI's to discuss growth and development in their careers but would like to see more woman in executive positions. They also expressed that the culture towards woman in their organisations was positive and encouraging and that being a female did not prohibit them from advancing in their careers.

The differences between female PR practitioners across the private, public, and non-profit sectors in Cape Town concluded that only 2 participants from the private sector and 1 participant from the non-profit sector experienced the glass ceiling effect, while the majority of the participants from public and private organisations have not experienced a glass ceiling effect in their workplace. This concludes that while the glass ceiling effect is still experienced by some of the participants of this study who are working in the PR industry, there are other challenges female PR practitioners are experiencing which are not caused by glass ceiling effects.

PR practitioners in the private and non-profit sectors in Cape Town did not feel gender plays a role in the progression of their career. Participants working in the public sector in Cape Town acknowledged that gender does play a role in their career progression.

5.3 KEY FINDINGS

The following key findings were identified in the study relating to the career experiences towards career progression to senior level, of female PR practitioners working in the private, public, and non-profit sectors in Cape Town.

While previous studies contributed to the glass ceiling as a barrier for female career advancement, the findings of this study confirmed that the majority of female PR practitioners who participated in this study do not experience the glass ceiling as a barrier which influences career development in their organisation of employment.

More can be done by organisations for female PR practitioners in the private, public, and non-profit sectors in Cape Town in terms of career development in the form of better internal processes, recognition ceremonies, allocated budget for skills and development and providing more positions to enable career advancement.

The study found that the career progression challenges that women in PR were experiencing in the various sectors in Cape Town included limited opportunities for promotion in the workplace as well as pressures from external environments because of various departments within the organisation who do not work with the PR department. The participant working in a non-profit organisation in Cape Town also noted that the 'founders block' was also recognised as a barrier for career progression.

The rapid growth and developments in technological advances were also recorded as a challenge as participants felt that they need to constantly to keep abreast of the latest developments. A participant also noted that the technological advances and tools available have created the perception that anyone in the organisation can fulfil the PR function.

The need for budget allocation towards skills and development training was recognised by the participants of this study as an element that organisations in Cape Town can assist them with to progress in their careers.

5.4 CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

The study investigated the career experiences of female PR practitioners in mid and senior-level positions in the PR industry in Cape Town. To identify the barriers and possible existence of the glass ceiling phenomenon prohibiting career progression, a qualitative study of an exploratory nature was conducted.

Based on the data collected, findings indicate that while there is an existence of the glass ceiling effect experienced by female PR practitioners who participated in this study, barriers not associated with the glass ceiling effect were also identified as influences preventing career progression, which are consistent with the literature presented.

Furthermore, the study identified similarities and differences experienced by female PR practitioners from organisations in the private, public, and non-profit sectors in Cape Town which could prove useful to future studies investigating career advancement of female PR practitioners in these sectors.

The findings of this study can assist in the career progression of female PR practitioners as it identified the barriers prohibiting career progression, knowledge of which can equip women in the PR industry in closing the gap of inequality in the workplace.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While the findings of this study identified the existence of the glass ceiling effect and other barriers affecting the career progression of female PR practitioners in the PR industry in Cape Town, future studies are recommended to investigate why the glass ceiling and the barriers identified in the study exist in the PR industry. Future studies should also investigate how the glass ceiling and these barriers can be resolved to assist women with career progression in the PR industry. A broader study on the career advancement experiences of women in the PR industry that covers a larger region is also recommended.

The barriers identified in the study which are not associated with the glass ceiling phenomenon were noted in previous literature regarding career progression.

While this study identified the challenges women in PR are experiencing in their different organisations regarding career progression, future studies of how the PR function can evolve to progress to senior levels in organisations need to be conducted.

South Africa has come a long way in fighting for equal rights of women since 1956 but it still has a long way to go. It has yet to be seen that men and women work as equals in the workplace and the rise of female PR practitioners to fulfil their potential is witnessed through their advancement to senior levels in their organisations.

This study was conducted to contribute to the fight for equality of women in the PR industry in Cape Town. While it has only referred to one of the industries women are experiencing career progression challenges in, the researcher hopes that this study will contribute towards eradicating the inequality of women in the workplace.

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APPENDIX 1 – INTERVIEW GUIDE



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INTERVIEW GUIDE

Dear XXX

In 2020, women continue to face ascension challenges in the business environment of South Africa. The purpose of this interview is to investigate the status of career progression of women working in public relations in Cape Town. The interview will be done in confidence. The anonymity of the subjects is guaranteed. The findings of the study will form part of my Masters thesis which will be submitted in June 2020.

Semi-structured questions

The slow rise of women progressing to senior-level positions in the public relations industry, especially in South Africa is concerning and warrants one to investigate the status of career progression of women working in this field and if they experience the glass ceiling effect.

1. The Public Relations industry

1.1 As a woman, what is your view on the glass ceiling effect?

1.2 What has been your experience in working in the public relations industry in Cape Town?

1.3 Do you think that there are equal and fair opportunities for career progression in your organisation? Please elaborate.

1.4 What are the challenges you feel are prohibiting you from progressing your career?

2. Your sector

2.1 What do you think your organisation needs to improve on when it comes to assisting you in progressing in your career?

2.2 What do you think is your organisations understanding of the role of a public relations practitioner?

2.3 What improvements would you like to see in your organisation regarding gender diversity?

3. The organisation

3.1 How important is workforce diversity to your organisation?

3.2 What are the policies/ procedures in place to ensure representivity in senior management in public relations?

3.3 Social systems can be defined in an organisation of individuals into groups that have different functions, characteristics, origin, or status. A social system can break a larger population into family groups, races, affiliation, gender, wealth, or social classes. What social systems are at play in your organisation?

3.4 What has your organisation done to achieve diversity in the workplace in terms of management ranks?

3.5 How has your organisation ensured that you have a clear understanding of your career or promotion path?

4. Organisational Behaviour

4.1 How would you describe the culture towards women in your organisation?

4.2 How does your organisational structure in your organisation promotes career advancement for women?

5. Gender – Organisation system

The Gender- Organisation system perspective suggests that the limited advancement of women in organisations is not due to their gender or the organisational structure, but that both jointly influence women's behaviour at work.

5.1 What is your opinion on the role gender plays in the advancement of your career?

5.2 What do you feel influences your behaviour at work in aid of progressing in your career?

APPENDIX 2 – ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER



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Office of the Research Ethics Committee	Faculty of Informatics and Design
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22 May 2020

Ethics approval was granted to Ms Donna Liedemann, student number 208054081, for research activities related to the MTech: Public Relations Management at the Faculty of Informatics and Design, Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT).

Title of thesis:	An investigation of the career progression experiences of women in mid and senior level positions in Cape Town's public relations industry
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Comments

Research activities are restricted to those detailed in the research proposal.

 Signed: Faculty Research Ethics Committee	22 May 2020 Date
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