

**Gordon Institute
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Mentoring and networking as vital gears for the development of successful women business leaders.

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Abstract

Women constitute almost half of the world's population yet their representation in business does not correspond to this. They are faced with several challenges in both their social and professional spheres of influence which hinder them at times from succeeding in business. The research study sets out to investigate the role of mentorship and networking on the success of women business leaders and how these challenges can be mitigated. The ensuing benefits therefore make it necessary to investigate how the economy is impacted by the demise of women in business.

Qualitative research with an exploratory design was conducted, as a means to investigate this predicament. 13 in-depth interviews with successful well renowned business leaders across different industry sectors were held to unravel the challenges and pitfalls surrounding this issue. The invaluable data that was unearthed was analysed using thematic content and frequency analysis.

The empirical findings of this research found that women face a multitude of challenges when it comes to upward mobility in corporate organisations or in leading their own businesses. However mentoring and networking are some of the ways that are most effective in ensuring active and effective participation of women in business. The benefits of these are numerous and beneficial to individuals, organisations, society and the national economy at large.

Keywords

mentoring, women, business leaders, networks

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

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List of Abbreviations

BNI	Business Networking Institution
BWA	Business Women Association
IOD	Institute of Directors
MGD	Millennium Development Goals
UN	United Nations

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1 Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Rationale for Study

Mentoring is a topic that has received much attention from both academic experts, and professional managers (Seongseop, Im, & Hwang, 2015). Mentoring, involves an experienced employee helping a less experienced employee in order to “adapt to the organisations culture, performing tasks better, or developing a better career trajectory” Seongseop et al. (2015, p.68).

Fitzsimmons (2012) argues that the lack of mentorship and female role models is a key barrier to the success of women. This is supported by Evans' (2014) assertion that lack of mentorship is one of the main barriers to success for women. This study traces, therefore and explores the impact of mentorship on women’s progression.

Werhane and Painter-Morland (2011) trace the genesis of women’s empowerment to the 1960s, and refers to this as the feminist movement. Over time women have managed to take up leadership positions, however, it is not in such great numbers as expected. They point out that in 2011 only 14 women led the Financial Times Global 500 companies, implying that there is still a challenge in empowering women. Furthermore, a study conducted by Friedman (as cited in Werhane & Painter-Morland, 2011) predicted in the 1980s that by the year 2000, women, would earn half of all income and men would be doing half of all housework. In 2009, full-time female workers were still earning about 78 cents for every dollar men earned and men still do far less home and child care, even though it may be more than before (Werhane & Painter-Morland, 2011). Almost forty years after Friedman’s statement, the status of women in business has not reached the expected goals.

Research conducted by Clarke (2006), highlights that a third of women in business will leave within the first year if there are no provisions for mentorship. When women lack mentorship from their companies, they are compelled to leave, due to a feeling of loneliness and a lack of support (Werhane & Painter-Morland, 2011). Fitzsimmons (2012) further argues that female access to networks “remains a significant problem regarding women’s appointment to director positions because so much depends on access to informal networks” (Fitzsimmons, 2012, p. 559). This lack of access to networks can also contribute to lack of mentorship, i.e., women may not develop mentorship because of limited contact with potential mentors (Burke, 1990).

The results of a good mentoring relationship result in the following: role modelling, relationship building, emotional intelligence, building trust, performance enhancement, personal enrichment and management capability (Werhane & Painter-Morland, 2011). If this is the case, then it could be worthwhile to invest in the mentorship of women and promote and encourage expansion of their business networks.

1.2 The Problem

A number of studies have investigated mentoring relationships over the past 20 years, and one finding that is central to all these studies is the association between the presence of mentorship and career success (Singh, Rose, & Tharenou, 2009). Sojo, Wood, Wood & Wheeler (2016) opine that the participation of women in the labour force has increased consistently over the past 60 years worldwide. Although this sounds promising, a study by (Morehead, Maurer, & Schipani, 2012), conducted in the United States, shows that there continues to be disproportionately low numbers of women who hold senior management positions, even though women make up nearly half of the work force.

Several causes have been identified as the reasons to why women are lagging behind their male colleagues in business. These range from stereotypes and limited access to networks, to limitations, such as the type of tasks women are assigned after appointment (Fitzsimmons, 2012). Furthermore, Fitzsimmons (2012) mentions that missing leadership, which refers to the lack of mentorship and female role model, is a key barrier to the success of women, and this is backed up by the study conducted by Evans (2014).

The global economy has taken a different form or dimension where interrelationships and networks, not single leaders, are propitious leadership models. Hartman (2009) recognises that women now have a new power base in businesses, governments, unions, law firms, academia, international organisations and more. Women who recognise their power base can mobilise it to lobby and organise and benefit themselves as well as countless less privileged women (Hartman, 2009). Mentorship can drive this power recognition.

Former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, said that there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women (United Nations, 2015). Studies show that women reinvest at least 90% of their income into their families, while men are known to invest only as much as 40%. By inclusion of women in the economy, countries can realise and enjoy a positive growth in their overall development goals (United Nations, 2015).

Female role models and mentors can pave the way for other women (Fitzsimmons, 2012). This can only occur when there is access to networks and mentorship. This paper serves to explore how mentorship can advance women's careers.

1.3 Research Aim

St-Jean (as cited in Laukhuf & Malone, 2015) states that mentoring is essential in continuing professional development within business. Seongseop, Im, & Hwang (2015), state that mentoring has three functions, namely, career development, psycho-social support, and role modelling; with the career development function being the most frequently discussed. Studies attribute the cause of decreased success rates in business, especially for women, to be from a lack of mentorship. For women, this culminates in a number of barriers to advancement such as stereotypes, less access to networks, and lack of mentors and role models (Burke, 1990; Fitzsimmons, 2012; Evans, 2014).

This present study is critical as a number of studies show that having women in more leadership positions is beneficial for companies. Ernst & Young research (as cited in Morehead et al., 2012) shows that having a greater number of women in management and board positions significantly improves financial performance. In fact, a 2013 Catalyst Report advocating for diversity in business gives four key pillars for the business case to have more women in senior positions and onto boards. These include: improved financial performance, increased ability to leverage talent, active participation in the market place while building reputation and increased innovation and group performance (Shabangu, 2015). The fact that women in top positions improve financial performance is further reiterated by studies done by Tuhus-Dubrow (as cited in Morehead et al., 2012), that state that European firms with the highest proportion of women in top positions saw their stocks rise about 64% over two years.

Women entrepreneurs and women in top positions in business can bring about several benefits to an individual, a community, a country and the global economy at large. In brief these can be summarised as: economic growth, increased incomes, improved standards of living, increased investment opportunities, enlargement of tax base by a greater number of new firms, technological developments and increase in job opportunities (Nieman, Hough, & Nieuwenhuizen, 2007).

This research seeks to investigate and establish whether or not mentorship has an impact on the success of women leaders. The study will focus on the challenges of lack of mentorship and access to networks in an effort to ascertain whether these factors can add to

the success of women leading business. These are areas that may have not been fully explored and may bring some answers in alleviating some of the other challenges that women face in business.

1.4 Management Implications of Study

This research could possibly contribute to further studies that are reasoning out the factors that make women more successful in business, and as leaders. Study in this area might be useful in formulating policies that would assist developing countries such as South Africa that would promote more involvement of women in sustainable future business. This would grow the cohort of women who are more financially independent who, in turn, will contribute to the growth of their economies through active participation in commerce.

1.5 Research Questions

This research aims to study the impact of mentorship on the success of women in business. The research questions that have been selected to address the research problem in this study are listed as follows:

- **Research Question 1:**What impact, if any, can mentorship play in creating successful business women?
- **Research Question 2:**Do strong business networks play a role in mentoring of women?
- **Research Question 3:**Can economies benefit from investing in mentoring opportunities for women?

1.6 Research Structure

The remainder of this document is divided as follows: Chapter 2, which is the literature review, will sift and analyse existing literature, theories and frameworks, in relation to the role of mentorship in creating successful business women, thereby building an argument using the relevant research questions and propositions which are summarised in Chapter 3. The researcher aims to find a gap between present studies, and the study underwork within the literature review.

The document will then move on to describe the proposed research methodology and design, which takes into consideration methodology choice, population chosen, sampling method and size, unit of analysis, as well as limitations of the study in Chapter 4.

Following the research methodology will be chapter 5, 6 and 7. Chapter 5 presents the research findings that emerged from the qualitative research, and chapter 6 elaborates on and discusses the results of the study. The concluding chapter will provide feedback on the research questions and stipulate whether the research objectives of this study have been met. Chapter 7 also provides recommendations for future research.

2 Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The discussion around leadership has intensified both in academia and business practices (Pless, 2011). However, despite evidence showing that women in leadership positions are a source of competitive advantage, many corporations within South Africa, and globally, seem to be unable to retain women executives (Clark, 2006). Although women make up a good percentage of the workforce, the number of women who hold senior positions continues to be disproportionately low (Morehead et al., 2012). This fact, raises concerns about fairness and the equality of opportunity within the workplace.

According to Fitzsimmons (2012), the two main reasons that contribute to the decreased number of females in leadership positions include barriers such as the lack of mentors or female role models who have already made it to top positions, as well as limited access to networks. Numerous studies mention that well-structured mentoring programmes are a way to enhance career advancement of women, and access to informal networks could also promote more women into senior management roles or positions within business (Briggs, Jaramillo, & Weeks, 2011). The success of women in business is often limited by gender stereotypes, such as the fact that women in top management positions are considered “tokens”.

In this literature review, the researcher focuses on two central components which are thought of as barriers to career advancement, namely the lack of mentorship and the lack of access to networks. Using existing literature, the researcher will analyse on the economic and personal benefits of promoting women in business, as well as the challenges that these women face in the workplace. Moreover, the literature review aims to shed light on the influence of mentorship on women in business and the relevance of access to informal networks. Within the context of this study, women in business refers to both women in corporate and those who are entrepreneurs.

2.2 Women in Business

“Where a woman rules, streams run uphill”. This Ethiopian Proverb speaks about how an inclusive society has a higher chance of performing better in so many different ways (Blair, 2012). This proverb alludes not only to diversity but the power and positive outcomes that are achieved by including women in business matters. A Catalyst Report in 2013, advocating

for diversity in business, gives four key pillars for the business case to have more women in senior positions and as members on boards. These include, “improved financial performance, increased ability to leverage talent, active participation in the market place while building reputation and increased innovation and group performance” (Catalyst Report, 2013, p.3).

According to Sojo, Wood, Wood, & Wheeler (2016), the participation of women in the workforce has increased over the past 60 years, and educational attainments of women have even surpassed those of men in many countries. Today, around the world, a greater percentage of women hold leadership roles in the workforce than ever before (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). Eagle&Carli(as cited in Hoyt & Murphy, 2016), state that women can bring “unique and important perspectives” (p.387), which, not only enhances institutional effectiveness, but financial success within organisations as well (States & Fitzsimmons, 2016). A paper by (Liu, Wei, & Xie, 2014) which studied the impact of women directors on firm performance in China, shows that an increase in the number of women in senior positions have a significant and positive impact on the performance of a firm or organisation.

Not only does more gender diverse top management imply more success in business, but more success for women in business also implies better economic situations. Entrepreneurs bring about several benefits to an individual, a community, a country and the global economy at large. In brief these can be summarised as: economic growth, increased incomes, improved standards of living, increased investment opportunities, enlargement of tax base by a greater number of new firms, technological developments and increase in job opportunities (Nieman et al., 2007).

Women’s productivity is slowed down tremendously by inequality in education and unequal access to land and productive inputs (resources). The African Commission Report, which was published in 2007, reiterates the economic importance of women in Africa. The report emphasised the earlier arguments made, that women, have a greater potential in improving the economy through financial contributions than men do (Bardasi, 2007)

In line with what has been said in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), greater opportunities for women to take charge in business allows for them to earn better incomes, which in turn will aid poverty reduction (United Nations, 2015). Moreover, developing countries have tremendous potential in empowering women and transforming society in the region, however, it is unfortunate to note that in many countries, where the level of economic development is still very low, this potential is not yet fully exploited (Tambunan, 2009) In

many societies, in the developing world, women have always been facilitators for positive change in their communities. Investing in crucial issues such as the health, education, economic growth and equality of women and girls has numerous effects and positive outcomes for societies. In fact, a USAID report shows that when 10% more girls go to school, a country's GDP increases by an average of 3% (Agency & Development, 2013).

Unfortunately, women still remain underrepresented in higher positions within corporate (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). According to the World Economic Forum (as cited in Sojo et al., 2016), the gap between women and men in managerial roles, and positions of power remains wide. Women only held 10% of seats on boards within companies, and 20% of seats in parliament, across the world, by the end of 2014, and make up less than a quarter of senior managers (just 21%) in G7 economies (Alsop, 2015; Sojo et al., 2016). Unlike men, women business leaders face distinctive challenges emanating from the local market environment in which they must operate, and more often than not, it is these difficulties that lead to significantly low participation of women in the economies of their societies (Amine & Staub, 2009).

2.3 Challenges Faced by Women

According to Mullooly (2016) women are not being encouraged to pursue interests in business. As they get older, they receive less support than males would from their parents, teachers and colleagues to pursue difficult subjects such as technology, engineering, mathematics or entrepreneurship. The issue is not a lack of interest from women; it is a lack of encouragement from the environments they are exposed to. Since this "encouragement" is absent at the very beginning of their educational journeys, pursuing higher education in business is an option that, at many a time, would not even occur to capable, young women (Mullooly, 2016).

In countries such as Nepal, problems faced by women entrepreneurs are mainly around low access to finance and business networks, lack of access to collateral and reduced capacity to take risks, lack of access to technology, and tough competition from formal organisations both in the domestic as well as the international markets. These women have very low levels of self-confidence and experience social and cultural barriers as well as limitations on mobility (Tambunan, 2009)

Further, results from a study by Amine & Staub (2009) demonstrate that women business owners in sub-Saharan Africa face many challenges arising from their specific socio-cultural,

economic, legal, political, and technological settings in which they live. Hostile conditions in their laws and cognitive systems add pressure on women who desire to become successful business leaders (Amine & Staub, 2009).

Similarly, women entrepreneurs in Pakistan are disadvantaged, and do not enjoy the same opportunities as men because of long standing discriminatory socio-cultural values and traditions. Although there are some support structures in place to help women who are disempowered from succeeding, the full economic potential of female entrepreneurs is not being realised as they suffer from a lack of access to money, property, business premises, information technology, training and support (Tambunan, 2009).

2.3.1 Glass Ceiling

Recent studies indicate that having more women in leadership positions also increases the opportunity for women at lower ranks, and thereby reducing the gap in gender parity within organisations (Glass & Cook, 2016). Glass & Cook (2016) state that “gender stereotypes lead decision makers to view women as less capable and competent leaders” (p. 51).

The glass ceiling is a phenomenon which affects female managers and executives and is a term that was coined by the Wall Street Journal, to describe the “invisible, artificial barriers created by attitudinal and institutional prejudices that prevent qualified individuals from advancing within their organisations and reaching their full potential” (Sharif, 2015, p.330). In other words, it refers to the difficulty that women face to progress beyond certain levels senior top management positions, even though their qualifications are on par with their male counterparts (Sharif, 2015).

Many studies have found that many women leave corporate and join start their own businesses because they cannot infiltrate the glass ceiling (Sharif, 2015). Also, Moore (as cited in Sharif, 2015) argues that “ failure of more women (and minorities) to crack the upper levels of corporate management is a result of the ‘glass ceiling’ phenomenon” (p.330), and this phenomenon is said to be closely linked to a country’s gender inequality.

2.3.2 Queen Bee Syndrome

Workplace rivalry where women seek to destroy female colleagues has received much attention. A study by Dalton (2007) states that “women who achieve success build a moat around themselves rather than build bridges to enable and mentor other women” (p.350). Furthermore, the “queen bee” syndrome often leads women in high places to endorse

gender stereotypical views of other women, and to reproduce or even support the status quo in which “men take the majority of leadership positions and female leaders are an exception” (Ellemers, Rink, Derks, & Ryan, 2012, p. 180).0

Ellemers et al., (2012) further argue that the queen bees develop as a result of gendered leadership positions in the workplace, and this queen bee effect could be harmful to the career opportunities of women as a group. Since “queen bees” are protective of their status, so they will try and minimise any potential threats to their positions, and so the tactics women employ to mitigate their competition prove to be more “brutal than those typically engaged by men” (Dalton, 2007, p.320). Often times queen bee syndrome may be demonstrated in fear of competition or the belief that endurance and hard work should be the only enabling factor to ensure career advancement.

2.3.3 Patriarchy

Often women take on the secondary status when it comes to their family, even though they are as qualified as men. Patriarchy can be defined as “a system of social relations in which there is gender inequality between socially defined men and women”. Women in patriarchal societies are often excluded from political, social and economic positions. In such societies women find themselves being paid less for work of equal value. These women are also more likely to “experience poverty and unequal access to resources”. According to Yulina & Russell (1993), patriarchy is embedded in everyone, including women themselves. For women, priority is often given to different values, such as “concern for one’s neighbours, responsibility for children, self-sacrifices in the name of the wellbeing and preservation of the family”(Yulina & Russell, 1993 p. 61).

Although patriarchy seems to be something of the past, it is evident in today’s day and age. Take for instance beauty pageants, where a woman’s image is based merely on outward appearances. These programmes are broadcasted to millions of young viewers, enabling the continuing promotion of gender stereotypes and roles (Yulina & Russell, 1993).

2.3.4 Tokenism

Tokenism theory is used to identify the factors that contribute to the perception that an employee has that he or she is facing an unfair barrier or situation to advancement in their careers (Briggs et al., 2011). According to this theory, certain employees believe that they are under pressure, thus have to work harder in order to be recognised; that is: “employees

see themselves as encapsulated and separated from a more dominant group of employees” (Briggs et al., 2011, p.937).

Kanter(as cited in Liu et al., 2014) coins the scarcity of women or minorities in top management as “tokens” (p.171). Often times, observers distort the image of female token managers in a way that is more closely linked to femininity than leadership (Liu et al., 2014). Being a token has three social consequences: (1) visibility, (2) polarisation and (3) assimilation.

The consequence of visibility means that tokens are constantly being observed, hence there is a feeling of added pressure to perform. In this situation, tokens feel like they need to work harder than others in order to get acknowledgement and recognition (Elstad & Ladegard, 2012). Polarisation suggests that the dominant group (majority) feel uncomfortable or undermined around tokens, so they raise their barriers as a result of misinterpreting the intentions of the tokens; consequence tokens may be left out from vital social circles. Finally, assimilation infers that tokens are labelled according to cliché classifications by the dominant group, hence they are not seen for who they truly are (Elstad & Ladegard, 2012; Liu et al., 2014)

These gender-role stereotypes contribute to the pay gap between men and women; also this theory suggests that when there is only one woman on a board, it is easy for her ideas or suggestions to be swept aside, or dismissed (Fitzsimmons, 2012; Liu et al., 2014). Tokenism theory identifies three barriers to career advancement. These include, lack of mentorship, exclusion from informal networks, and lack of culture fit (Briggs et al., 2011).

2.4 Mentorship

Mentorship has enhanced many careers, and is considered an important factor in both job satisfaction and enjoyment; however, since mentorship is a relationship formed between two individuals, it can either be successful or unsuccessful (Maloney, 2012). Mentorship is hard to define, and so Maloney (2012) defines mentorship as an “association between two people focused specifically on career development” (p. 210); furthermore, the typical implication is that mentorship involves a senior member offering guidance to a younger member, in order to enhance the younger member’s career. This is consistent with the definition that Kram(as cited in Bozionelos, 2004) provides; i.e., mentorship is a developmental relationship that involves members of unequal status, or peers within an organisation; which include career development functions that the mentor provides the mentee.

Mentorship includes two different forms, psychosocial and professional advancement functions. Psychosocial functions include encouragement, friendship, advice and feedback, whereas professional advancement functions comprise of sponsorships, coaching and the provision of challenging career assignments. Maloney (2012) states that there are three distinct phases of mentorship, namely, the beginning or initiation phase, mentoring of the relationship, and ending. The beginning phase involves choosing the mentor, which is thought to be a crucial step in mentorship, because this is the phase at which boundaries are set and mutual goals and expectations are communicated. The second phase is spent on mentoring itself and usually takes the bulk of the time. The final phase is also an important aspect of the mentoring relationship, because mentorship that has no defined conclusion “dooms both the parties to a stagnant relationship or a power struggle” (Maloney, 2012, p.214).

The benefits of mentoring are extensive, not only for the mentee, but for the organisation as well. (Ensher & Murphy, 2011; Maloney, 2012). According to Ensher & Murphy (2011), individuals with effective mentors earn more, are promoted more rapidly and have greater flexibility and mobility within their careers compared to those with ineffective mentors or no mentors at all. Furthermore, the organisations benefit as employees who have been mentored are able to better communicate, are more loyal and have increased organisational commitment. Additionally, there is evidence in business, that people who have been mentored, are happier in their work. Furthermore mentorship is said to be helpful in three key areas: (1) career planning and coaching, (2) protection and career risk management and (3) increasing aspiration level and providing a role model (Maloney, 2012; Morehead et al., 2012).

According to Kram(as cited in Chen, Watson, & Hilton, 2016), there are nine key behaviours associated with mentorship: “sponsorship, role modelling, exposure, and visibility, acceptance-and-confirmation, coaching, counselling, challenging assignments, friendship, and protection” (p.22). The table below describes the benefits associated with mentorship, and could be used as a good starting framework to assess the influence of mentorship on the success of women in business.

Table 1: Benefits of Mentorship

Mentee	Mentor	Organisation
Facilitation of role transition Personal and professional growth and development	Professional and personal development Pride in watching others develop	Integrated staff members
Political and strategic power development	Sharing of experience and knowledge	Professional staff with ability to utilise power and strategic awareness appropriately Sharing of organisational culture, values and commitment
Empowerment	Positively challenged and stimulated, encouraging reflective practice Development of new ideas	Empowered, motivated, autonomous skilled work force
Increased job satisfaction and commitment to stay Improved knowledge base, with bridging of the practice-theory gap Enhanced competence Greater productivity Career development Increased self esteem	Increased job satisfaction Reciprocal learning, keeping practice up to date	Satisfied workforce Retention of staff Improved staff efficacy
Enhanced socialisation into new organisation and organisational insight	Increased self esteem	More confident workforce Socialisation of individuals able to contribute to the organisation earlier and subscribe to, and promote, organisation goals

Source: Rosser, Marie, Campbell, & Jack, (2004)

According to Noe (1988), the number of women seeking management positions is increasing; however, the number of mentoring relationships that are available to women do not seem to be increasing at the same pace. Organisations are facing difficulties in a number of areas: (1) developing managers for those retiring, (2) assisting managers who feel that they are trapped in the wrong job, and (3) reducing high turnover in early career stages (Burke, 1990). Briggs et al., (2011) identifies three potential barriers to career advancement: exclusion from informal networks, a lack of cultural fit, and a lack of mentoring.

Additionally, Maloney (2012) says that there is evidence in business, that people who have been mentored, are happier in their work and promoted more rapidly. Burke (1990) also re-emphasises this by saying that “mentors are linked with managerial and career success” (p.317). Furthermore, Morehead et al., (2012) state that mentoring programmes can help women overcome barriers which prevent them from reaching leadership positions in corporate. In addition to this, Ramaswami(as cited in Morehead et al., 2012), refers to

studies, which indicate that the impact of mentoring on women is the greatest in male-dominated professions, especially if they have a powerful male mentor.

One of the primary reasons attributed to the decreased number of women in executive positions within corporate is said to be the lack of mentorship and female role models (Fitzsimmons, 2012; Morehead et al., 2012). The relationship between mentoring and career success represents a long-standing belief in the mentoring literature (Singh et al., 2009). Furthermore, (Seongseop et al., 2015) says that mentoring is important in tackling issues such as stress, job dis-satisfaction, and turnover intention among employees.

Mentoring programs have been identified as one of the most effective path for avoiding barriers and moving easily into top management (Morehead et al., 2012). Fitzpatrick & Rappaport (as cited in Morehead et al., 2012) argue that the decreased representation of women in boardrooms and executive offices are a result of the lack of coaching and grooming for women who seek such positions—a further implication that well-structured mentoring programs play a central role in grooming employees, for leadership positions. Table 1 compares the barriers to career advancement between women and men.

Table 2: Barriers to career advancement, women vs. men

	Women	Men
Lack of mentoring opportunities	70%	38%
Exclusion from informal networks of communication	69%	53%
Lack of women role models	67%	25%
Failure of senior leadership to assume accountability for women's accountability	62%	22%
Stereotyping and preconceptions of women's roles and abilities	61%	27%
Lack of opportunities to take on visible and/or challenging assignment	54%	12%

Source : Maloney, (2012)

From the table it is evident that women feel the brunt of career advancement barriers more than men do.

Unfortunately, there is also a “dark side” to mentoring (Ensher & Murphy, 2011, p.254). Having a bad mentor could be worse than not having a mentor at all. Bad mentors could spread toxic behaviour such as bullying, jealousy and ungratefulness. As Fletcher and Ragins(as cited in Ensher & Murphy, 2011), put it, “mentorship relationships may flow through times that vary in the satisfaction they provide and the effectiveness” (p. 254).

2.5 Networks

Existing literature on gender and workplace networking suggests that women and men network differently (Alsop, 2015). A study conducted by Accenture (as cited in Clark, 2006) on male and female executives found that there were more similarities than differences between the two, yet the main reason for the lack of women in top positions is the fact that there is still the existence of male networks and family commitments.

According to (Briggs et al., 2011), “successful employees rely on networks to continually develop over time”(p.937). Networking is often associated with improved pay, higher performance, and career advancement, and employees who recognise and rely on these informal networks are often the top performing employees (Briggs et al., 2011). Although companies have both formal and informal networks, Briggs et al. (2011) state that access to informal networks, which Mohammadi, Hosseinzadeh, & Kazemi (2012) define as “personal and social relations which are formed out of organisational hierarchy spontaneously while people interact with each other” (p. 485) to have more of an impact on career advancement.

Women entrepreneurs in developing countries face a serious deficit in peer support networks when compared to men (Ming-Yen, 2007). This is despite the fact that various women entrepreneurs and industry associations are present to assist them to form networks, exchange information, and experiences. Unfortunately, women do not necessarily join these associations as they are weighed down with business and family duties. This limits their ability to seek informal advice, financing, and prevents them from forming information networks, which are imperative to the survival of their businesses (Parvin, Jinrong, & Rahman, 2012).

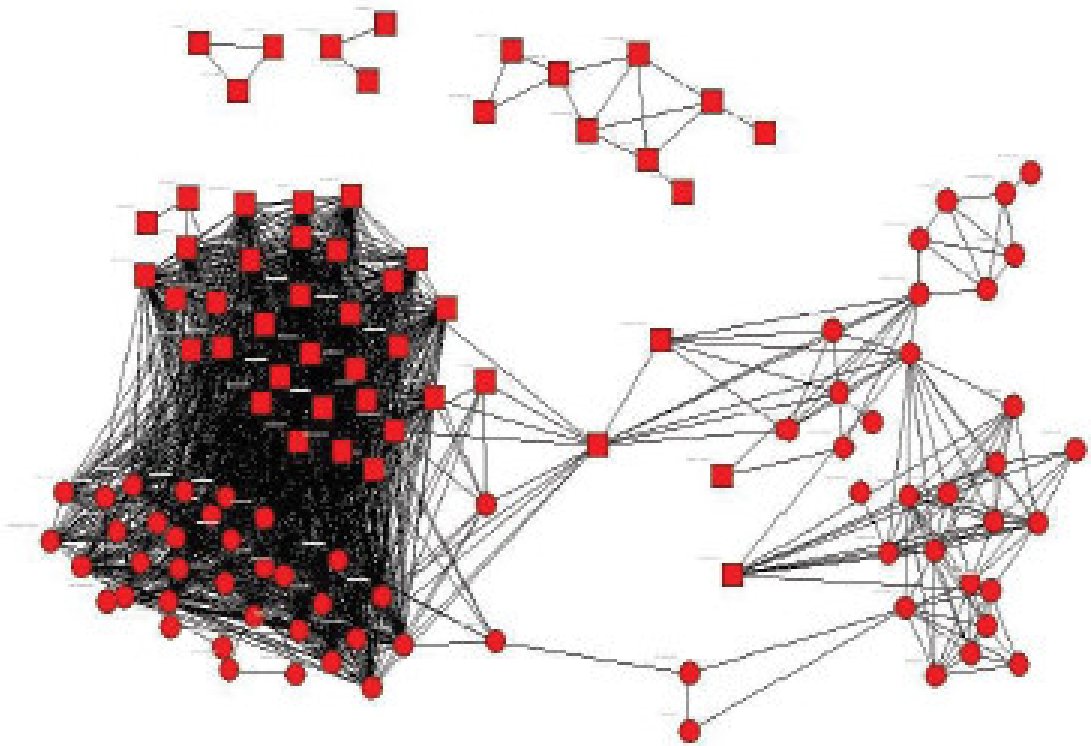
One of the main issues looked at in research over the past few years, is the relationship between gender and informal networks in the workplace (Mohammadi et al., 2012). According to this study, the main reason that women earn less, get promoted less and are less successful than their male counter parts is due to the fact that women do not have access to as many resources as their male colleagues. Morehead et al. (2012), points out

that women and minorities face barriers to career advancement and more senior positions due to the lack of access to information and networking. (Fitzsimmons, 2012) backs up this point by mentioning that access to informal networks remains a significant problem for women.

As stated by (Glass & Cook, 2016) “ aside from subtle and overt forms of bias and discrimination, women are less likely than men to have access to strong professional networks, social ties to elites” which provide critical support to leaders’ mobility” (p. 51). According to Jenner (as cited in Fitzsimmons, 2012), female representation on boards and senior positions are low because women do not have access to “ old boys’ networks” (p.559). However, women are also prevented by other women from having access to more networks. For instance , Fitzsimmons (2012) mentions that women may often be denied the opportunity to go on business trips with their senior male counterparts, because their wives oppose them from doing so.

Although there are studies that have identified the importance of access to networks as an important facet in career advancement and success, there are studies that oppose this view as well. A study by (Mohammadi et al., 2012) which looked into the intra-organisational informal relationships of 16 men and 12 women contradicts this. Figure1; shows the intra-organisational relationship between men and women; the squares represent women, and circles represent men. In Figure 1, it is quite evident that women engage in informal networks in the workplaces as well as men or even more than them. This could possibly be attributed to the fact that the types and depths to which informal networks are formed differ depending on the nature and type of work (Mohammadi et al., 2012).

Figure 1: Intra-organisational informal network of men and women



Source: (Mohammadi et al., 2012)

Like Mohammadi et al. (2012), Gremmen and Benschop (as cited in Werhane & Painter-Morland, 2011) also look at access to networks or the lack thereof from a different angle. They argue that one can challenge the popular belief that the most successful leaders are those who engage in networking. Gremmen and Benschop question whether networks are always beneficial, as well as oppose the fact that professional women's networks are empowering. They explain this by saying the value of women's networks can be explained by the fact that it operates within and in collaboration with a variety of other networks and dynamics, which may challenge the role it plays in subtle ways (Werhane & Painter-Morland, 2011).

This research aims to understand whether the impact of networks is indeed a barrier to the success of women business, within the South African context. The study also aims to establish whether improved mentorship also contributes to improved access to networks as well.

2.6 Social Cognitive Theory

Differentiation on the basis of gender is a phenomenon that affects everyone. “Social cognitive theory views personality as a cognitive–affective system resulting from the concerted action of functionally distinct mechanisms, which gradually take form over the course of development mostly under the guidance of experience” (Caprara, Vecchione, Barbaranelli, & Alessandri, 2013, p.145)

According to this theory gender concepts are generated from what is seen and heard from a very young age, i.e., “gender conceptions are constructed from the complex mix of experiences” (Bussey & Bandura, 1999,p.676), which are brought about by a broad network of social influences. Consequently, women may gravitate toward female-dominated occupations and move away from male dominated ones, causing a “disparity in the distribution of women and men across occupations that differ in prestige, status, and monetary return” (Bussey & Bandura, 1999, p.703).

Furthermore, because of these gender conceptions and roles, women in traditionally “male” occupations are viewed more negatively than women who involve themselves in more female dominated occupations. Such women are not viewed as competent as men in the work that they do. They also tend to receive less support from peers and mentors than their male colleagues, and are often excluded from informal networks and activities that are important for their career advancement (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

2.7 Trait Theory

Trait theory and social cognitive theory are considered two rival theories (Caprara et al., 2013). According to this theory, personality is conceptualised as “as a hierarchical organisation of stable patterns of affect, cognition and behaviour traceable to endogenous basic tendencies that from birth set the potential of what one person may become” (Caprara et al., 2013, p.145).The universe of traits can be organised into a hierarchical structure with six main traits, namely, “extraversion, agreeableness, honesty/humility, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and intellect” (Fleeson & Jayawickreme, 2015, p.83).

According to trait theory a person’s personality can be achieved by indicating the person’s level based on these traits. Also, the personality traits exhibited by a leader or person in a leadership can influence the performance of their employees or co-workers (Maisarah,

Ghani, Sara, Muhamad, & Saiful, 2016). Mentors are often leaders within their organisations or places of employment. Trait theory suggests that the personality of the mentor will affect the success of the mentee.

2.8 Conclusion

The business environment for women, is a complex interplay of different factors such as psychological, social/cultural, religion, economic and educational factors. Ultimately such factors results in the disadvantaged status of women in society (Tambunan, 2009).

Women remain far behind men in enjoying free will, others, basic human rights, and career advancement and thereby are not able to participate with men, on an equal benchmark, in economic undertakings (Fitzsimmons, 2012; Tambunan, 2009). It is evident that women have a number of barriers to overcome in order to achieve success in business. The literature review traces theories such as tokenism theory, and the concept of the 'glass ceiling' to understand why women face the barriers they do within workplace, and within top management positions.

In the case of South Africa, companies are legislatively compelled to become gender diverse, however, South African corporations seem to be unable to retain women executives despite evidence showing that women in top positions is a source of competitive advantage. Since studies such as the ones done by (Seongseop et al., 2015; Shabangu, 2015; Singh et al., 2009) suggest that there is a positive relationship between mentorship and career advancement and success; the question that arises is whether, lack of mentorship can be causing failed retention of women in top executive positions within South African corporates.

Women also face barriers such as the glass ceiling, as well as socio-cultural barriers(Glass & Cook, 2016; Sharif, 2015), so the gap that this study aims to address is to understand how much of an impact mentoring has on the success of women in business, within the context of other barriers that are present. Furthermore, most studies have been conducted in developed countries such as the US and UN, and focus primarily on the barriers women face within corporate. This study will address the influence of mentorship on success of women within the South African context, and will also look at the impact of the lack of mentorship with women entrepreneurs, in addition to its influence on women in corporate.

Chapter 2 presents existing literature that highlights the challenges faced by women in business, and the possible factors that influence the success of women in corporate and

entrepreneurship roles or environments. The study focuses on two main challenges—lack of mentorship and lack of access to informal networks.

3 Chapter 3: Research Questions

The research questions presented in this Chapter are used to understand the impact mentorship and networking has had on the success of women in business. From this study, the researcher seeks to make statements from the relationship that exists between mentorship, networking and the success of women in business. The questions have been informed by the literature review in Chapter 2. The literature proposes that although women face several challenges that hinder or slow down their success in business, and mentorship is becoming increasingly popular, as a driver for success. It also implies that women in general have less strong networks and that stronger networks do have a positive impact on performance. In the wider scheme of things economies which have more women who are empowered and who participate in the productivity of the land, perform much better and yield better results financially.

This research looks into the impact of mentorship on the success of women in business in South African Corporates or those leading their own businesses. It specifically seeks to find out how their mentors have impacted on their performance and the impact their networks have had towards their success.

3.1 Research Questions

The research questions that have been selected to address the research problem in this study are listed as follows:

- **Research Question 1**
What impact if any can mentorship play in creating successful business women.
- **Research Question 2**
Do strong business networks play a role in mentoring of women?
- **Research Question 3:**
Can economies benefit from investing in mentoring opportunities for women?

3.2 Conclusion

The researcher used the questions above to explore the impact of mentorship on the success of women business leaders and the role of strong networks in aiding this success. It

follows then that the next chapter will serve to justify the methodology the researcher chose to address the issues in question.

4 Chapter 4: Research Methodology

This chapter sets out the thinking behind the research design methodology, reasons for choosing the design, universe, population, unit of analysis, data collection process, data analysis approach and the limitations of the chosen research. The research is based on theory and previous case studies that have been done to determine the challenges that women leaders face in business. Lack of mentorship and networking was identified as one of the problems. The research conducted is exploratory in nature and was used to determine whether or not mentorship has had an impact on the success of women in business. Limited research has been conducted in this area in the South African market.

4.1 Research Method and Rationale

Since the research is of an unfolding nature, it was, therefore, more suited to a qualitative study (Punch, 2002). Qualitative research is exploratory in nature and is anchored in data. This data is informed by the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to human problems or social events (Creswell, 2013).

Qualitative researchers seek to understand a phenomenon in depth; the phenomenon is, therefore, context-bound (Bansal, 2013). The researcher collected data from the participants in their natural setting. Open-ended questions were used together with other multiple forms of data being gathered. This was in the form of recent articles written on the topic and talks or discussions held by experts in the field at public events. Qualitative research is based on textual data that is drawn from observations, interviews and archival documents (Bansal, 2013). The application of complex reasoning via inductive and deductive logic is applied throughout the research process. Inductive reasoning generates new theory and this is tested through deductive theorising (Bansal, 2013). Qualitative research is suited to emergent themes and an emergent design and the research plan has to be flexible with best practice being applied in order to obtain data that is textured and nuanced (Creswell, 2013).

4.2 Universe and Population

A population is the complete set of group members (Saunders & Lewis, 2013, p.132). The population in this research consisted of women who are in business leadership roles within corporate South Africa and women who fully or jointly own a business with others. This included women in large corporates who head up a single division or multiple divisions, also known as intrapreneurs. The research was limited to women in businesses operating in

South Africa. These women are all playing leading roles in the businesses they are involved with, and as such, are deemed successful. In addition, they have long track records within a business context.

4.3 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is the impact of mentorship on the success of women in business. The researcher sought to make comparisons between the experiences of different women in a mentorship relationship and the impact this may have or may not have had on their success.

4.4 Data Collection

4.4.1 Sampling Method and Size

Non-probability sampling is a sampling technique for selecting a sample when one does not have a complete list of the population (Saunders & Lewis, 2013, p.134). This method was used to ensure the population was representative of women in business. It was not possible to get the full list of all women in business in South Africa. It was also difficult to ascertain the chance of each woman in business being selected (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). This was exacerbated by the fact that operationally defining women business leaders is difficult as the criteria used by different companies differs. Non-probability sampling was, therefore, the best method for the purposes of this research.

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants. This means that the inquirer selected individuals and sites for study because they could purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2013). It was useful to select a small sample when collecting qualitative data. The researcher used personal judgment in choosing those who would best be able to help answer the research question. Purposive sampling allowed room to select women who have been mentored and mentors who are currently or have previously mentored women in business. It allowed room for selecting women heading large organisations with multiple divisions, intrapreneurs and entrepreneurs. The assumption made by this method was that all women in business have a mentor, which turned out to not be the case as shown by literature earlier on (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

Snowball sampling was used. The first participant to be identified and interviewed was asked to identify another who could be interviewed and give a referral where possible. Barbour (2008), states that snowball sampling capitalises on the networks of a few key interviewees in order to recruit others who share some of their characteristics. The researcher belongs to a group of business women who meet regularly to catch up and share their experiences in business in an effort to keep each other motivated. Respondents were pulled from this group of women. The researcher identified two business mentors and they in turn were asked to identify other people who play a mentoring role specifically to women. The researcher also used their networks to send emails and request interviews with women in business. The aim was to try and interview women from various industries to acquire varying perspectives. The Business Women's association of South Africa provided a great source of candidates at their mentorship programme launch. They have a network where they connect women in business in need of mentors and women who are willing and have capacity to mentor other women. The researcher approached potential interviewees at this launch.

4.4.2 Type of Study

A qualitative method was utilised to conduct in-depth interviews with women business leaders. The researcher used personal judgement to create an ideal mix of participants in order to ensure women from different industries were represented as well as different demographic groups.

4.4.3 Sample Size

Thirteen individuals were identified for the interviews. Seven were women in business who are currently in a mentoring relationship or programme, while six were men or women who largely play the role of mentor to one or more women currently in business. However, it was at this point the researcher observed that the data being collected was becoming homogeneous and the same themes and issues were emerging. Data was collected until saturation was reached, which according to Saunders & Lewis (2012), is the point at which additional data collection provides few, if any insights, into the research question and objectives? In qualitative research, sample specificity, rather than a representative sample, is more important. It is important within qualitative research to locate people who fit the sample than to have a large sample size (Thyer, 2001). The group of women interviewed was most likely going to be homogeneous. This also meant that a fairly small pool of participants was needed.

Table 3: Profile of participants

Respondent Code	Mentor/ Mentee	Level in company	Industry	Average years of experience	Gender
BE1	Mentee	Human Resources Director	Restaurants/ Fast Foods	16 to 20 years	F
BE2	Mentee	Executive Director	Mining	16 to 20 years	F
BE3	Mentee	Senior Manager, Procurement	Mining	21 to 25 years	F
BE4	Mentee	Executive Director	Banking/ Consulting	11 to 15 years	F
BO1	Mentee	Serial Entrepreneur	Media/Mining/ Property	16 to 20 years	F
BO2	Mentee	Entrepreneur	Human Resources	21 to 26 years	F
BO3	Mentee	Entrepreneur	Entertainment/ Fitness	6 to 10 years	F
FM1	Mentor	Business Owner	Legal Consulting Services	11 to 15 years	F
FM2	Mentor	Managing Director	Mentoring /Coaching	11 to 15 years	F
MM1	Mentor	Managing Director	Mentoring /Coaching	11 to 15 years	M
MM2	Mentor	Chief Executive Officer	Mentoring/ Media	16 to 20 years	M
MM3	Mentor	Chief Executive Officer	Mentoring/ Academic	11 to 15 years	M
MM4	Mentor	Chief Executive Officer	Oil/ Mentoring	21 to 25 years	M

4.4.4 Process and Instrument

The research instrument for this study consisted of both open and closed-ended questions, which allowed the participants to tell their own stories and journey into business. The questions endeavoured to dig deeper into perceptions of women business leaders and their relationship to their own mentors and mentoring relationships. Individuals who are currently mentoring a business woman leader or have previously mentored were also interviewed.

Semi-structured interviews were used. This method was most ideal for the qualitative nature of this study. Saunders and Lewis (2012), state that these interviews are most useful where the interviewer is unsure of the answers the respondents will give, the questions are complicated and where the order or actual questions may have to be varied. In these interviews the questions had to be adjusted at times depending on the answers being received. Sometimes respondents would answer or speak to a question which is found later in the questionnaire. The interviewer went along with their responses and would adjust the later issues or topics only to probe the next issue. With the respondents that answered more briefly, the guide was useful to dig deeper.

The order in which the questions were asked varied depending on which way the subject answered the questions. Some questions were not asked because the participant may have answered them in previous questions or the question may not have applied to them.

This research took the form of exploratory research. “Exploratory research aims to seek new insights, ask new questions and to assess topics in a new light” (Saunders & Lewis, 2012, p.110). The aim was to discover more information about the role of mentorship in the success of women in business. The exploratory study sought to provide tentative answers to the many unanswered questions around the impact of mentorship on the success of women in business and, according to Saunders and Lewis (2012); these questions need to be followed up with more detailed research to provide more dependable answers.

The way in which the exploratory research was conducted was informed by Saunders and Lewis (2012). The three ways which included were:

- Searching the academic literature. This included readings from journals. Business journals and entrepreneurship journals were most useful or others that addressed the issues of women in business with a particular focus on mentorship.
- Interviews with industry experts were conducted. This entailed interviewing people who have played a mentoring role in the life of a woman business leader and to assess whether they have seen a change or not in the mentee’s participation or performance in business. Industry experts included those who have researched the topic of mentorship and academia and understand what role they think mentorship plays. A speech during a business women’s mentorship programme launch was also used and recorded.

- Interviews were conducted with women business leaders, entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs.

The three methods explained above allowed for some degree of flexibility in the way interviews were conducted. However, the questionnaire gave a sense of direction to the enquiry on impact of mentorship on the success of women in business lead or owned-businesses. It was hoped that the study would help focus an initially broad topic into a narrower topic. It allowed for in-depth insights and a fuller understanding of this subject matter.

The researcher conducted all the interviews, and these were recorded with the permission of the interviewees. It was important that there was good rapport between the two as this made the interviewees more open and often led to authenticity and openness. Barbour (2008) suggests that it is best to start with the least threatening questions and to move gradually to those that probe a little more.

Most interviews took place at a location chosen by the participants as it was a place they were comfortable in, and free to talk. On average the interviews lasted forty-five minutes to an hour. The interviewer took into account the fact that people are pressed for time. However, some people took longer than others but it was important that the researcher went through all the questions in order to gain insights on the issues sort out. The interviews all took place at very different times of the day depending on the availability of the participants and all were conducted during the weekdays mostly during business hours. The researcher suggested that the interviewees choose the best possible time and place and where they were not particularly concerned. The interviewer chose places closer to the interviewees' place of work or residence, and preferably in a quiet area, to avoid too many distractions of any kind.

The researcher, although with permission to record, wrote important points down but without losing too much contact with the subject. Maintaining eye contact was most important and giving the interviewee time for reflection. So moments of silence were observed in-between questions. Often this also resulted in participants adding on something they felt they had omitted or re-emphasising a point or just probing further what they had just talked about. An electronic device was used to record the interviews and these were then used to transcribe the interviews later.

4.5 Data Analysis

Saunders and Lewis (2012) say definitive conclusions should only be drawn with extreme caution. Bearing in mind that the interviews are largely peoples' thoughts, opinions and personal experiences, they do suggest that exploratory research assists in deciding on the best research design, data collection method and selection of subjects. The research was open to the fact that an issue which may have been perceived to be of great importance (mentorship) may in fact be a non-issue. Also new issues which may have been overlooked or undermined were brought to the fore (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

The process of analysis needed to be transparent. The data further needed to be interpreted in such a way that it is proportional in depth and to the extent to which the information would be applied. The method of analysis had to be relevant to the research question that was asked. Any information that was discounted had to be identified first, considered, other explanations had to be justifiably discounted before any firm conclusions were reached (Pierce, 2008).

The analysis was done methodically. The interviews were recorded in audio format and then transcribed. The researcher ensured the quality and accuracy of the transcription by rereading and playing the audio each time after transcribing. The thick descriptions from the data collected, assist the researcher in coming up with a deep and detailed analysis (Patton, 2002).

The data was analysed as soon as possible after conclusion of the interview, when the information is still recent in the researcher's mind to avoid loss of critical information. Technological advances have allowed for processing and analysis of data. (Pierce, 2008). The analysis was done manually. Saunders and Lewis (2012) affirm that qualitative data can be analysed manually. They further state that the researcher can start analysing data before collecting all data as this allows them to note when they have reached saturation.

The data was separated into categories based on the themes set out in the research questions and as identified in the literature review (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The researcher then searched for similarities and differences across the interviews. Information was analysed to see if there are meaningful patterns emerging – such as the frequency of themes (Yin, 2009). Saunders and Lewis (2012) call the analysis of qualitative data completing a jigsaw puzzle “it is an exercise in looking for patterns by categorising data that

is similar to get a complete picture.” Literature from Chapter 2 is used to “review how the puzzle pieces fit together” (Saunders & Lewis, 2012, p. 191).

The researcher used deductive and some inductive reasoning. Deductive reasoning is “a research approach which involves the testing of a theoretical proposition by using a research strategy specifically designed for the purpose of testing” (Saunders & Lewis, 2012, p.108). The five sequential stages of deductive research were followed. These are:

- 1) Defining research questions from the general theory that exists.
 - 2) Specifying the way in which the questions would be answered.
 - 3) Seeking answers to the questions defined.
 - 4) Analysing the results of the inquiry to determine whether it supports the theory or suggests the need for its modification.
 - 5) Confirming the initial general theory or modifying it in the light of the findings.
- (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

Induction is a research approach which involves the development of theory as a result of analysing data already collected. It allows flexibility to permit changes of research emphasis as the research progresses. It could be that mentoring may present different advantages other than contributing to the overall success of women in business. The researcher was open to finding out if alternative explanations would begin to form (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

The following principles according to Yin (2009) are important to be observed in order for the analysis to be of the highest quality. The researcher tried to follow the three steps below to assure the quality of the analysis.

- 1) The evidence should leave no loose ends and the analysis should show how it used all the evidence available.
- 2) It must analyse alternative explanations.
- 3) Display knowledge of current thinking about the topic. This is duly followed in Chapter 6

4.6 Data Validity and Reliability

Creswell (2013) uses the postmodern perspective of the metaphorical image of a crystal. Data should be seen as “prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, recreating different colours, patterns and arrays casting off in different directions. What we

see depends on our angle of response not triangulation but rather crystallisation” (Creswell, 2013, p.249).

Creswell describes validation in qualitative research to be an attempt to assess the accuracy of the findings as best described by the researcher and the participants” (Creswell, 2013, p.249). It is suggested that any report of research is a representation of the author. It is important in the research process for the researcher to define the quality of the data that is being presented. This negates the validity and reliability issues that qualitative research presents. The main aim is to get credibility. Thyer (2001) suggests that too much structure may be too restrictive and result in researcher bias emanating from the research tool used. To avoid bias and ensure credibility the researcher followed the guidelines of the questionnaire which were clear, open ended and neutral. However, this was not always easy as the researcher may have been slightly biased when interviewing the mentees as these are a group of people they identified with most based on their gender. Some of the bias may have shown up in the researcher being more empathetic towards women business owners as it comes from their personal experiences.

Validation is a distinct strength of qualitative research in that the account made through extensive time spent in the field, the detailed thick description, and the closeness of the researcher to participants in the study all add to the value or accuracy of a study (Creswell, 2013, p.250). Triangulation was used to ensure validity as well. This is a method whereby multiple and different sources, methods, investigators and theories are used to provide corroborating evidence. Creswell states that “when researchers find evidence to document a code or theme in different sources of data, they are triangulating information and providing validity for their findings” (Creswell, 2013, p.251).

Reliability is the extent to which the data collection methods and analysis procedures will produce consistent findings. It is hoped that this research will:

- 1) Produce the same results if measures are used on other occasions.
- 2) Ensure that other researchers, when using the same methods and procedures will produce similar results.
- 3) Anyone interpreting the research results can see clearly how the researcher came to the conclusions they did from the data collected.

4.7 Limitations

Snow ball sampling could result in a homogeneous sample as those selected are likely to identify others similar to themselves or in similar industries resulting in a homogeneous sample. (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

Similar research done earlier by Ensher and Murphy (2011) had a group of mentors interviewed and they would then identify their mentees and these in turn were interviewed in order to get an opinion from a different group of people. In this research the mentor deliberately did not try and get matching mentors and mentees to try and avoid the bias and pool ideas from different perspectives. However, mentors were allowed to refer other mentors and the same with mentees.

The research was limited in that participants in the survey largely consisted of women leading and owning business in South Africa as they were more accessible. Due to time constraints it was not possible to interview more women business leaders or owners; however, rigour was ensured in the methodology to ensure that the data collected would be generalisable. Three of the original respondents were unavailable for the scheduled interviews, while three did not make it at all to the interview. They faced different challenges and could only reschedule for times beyond the time limits of this research. Access was an issue.

Subjects were difficult to access and mostly too busy to make time for interviews. This is due to the demanding nature of their roles, so time taken for the interviews was limited. This may have compromised the quality of the interviews and limited the issues that interviewees may have wanted to discuss.

Bias is a part of the research process as the research topic choice is personal; therefore, there was a danger of the researcher making their own inferences into the subjects' conclusions. The researcher tried to be aware of these at all times and minimising it by being flexible and intellectually aware.

Due to the busy nature of the participants, especially the mentees, it was vitally important that interviews started on time because participants would have other appointments to attend to after. The researcher found that once the interview started running late, there was anxiety that came with being aware of the time in order to leave on time for the next interview. This made it necessary to establish rapport quickly and may have impacted on the quality of the responses as often the responses especially with the last questions, which could have been rushed.

5 Chapter 5: Research Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the research questions set out in Chapter 3. These results were collected based on the research methodology presented earlier in Chapter 4, and the 13 in-depth interviews held during this enquiry were prolific in gathering a many of insights and real life experiences of mentees and mentors in the business space. Throughout the interviews there was a general appreciation of the value of mentorship and the role it plays in impacting positively towards the success of women business leaders. There were mixed sentiments on the role of the government in promoting mentorship, but the majority of participants felt very strongly about the positive impact mentorship has on the economy. Networks were also regarded as enhancing and easing the way business is conducted and the stronger the networks, the more likely the women business leaders were to succeed.

5.1 Description of the Interviewees and interview process

13 respondents were interviewed, of which seven were mentees, and six were mentors. The uneven numbers owe to a participant (mentor) that did not come for the interview as planned. The majority of the mentees had on average 11 to 15 years of experience, while the mentors had an average tenor of 16 to 20 years. Also, the majority of the mentors interviewed were male. The four male mentors interviewed had experience as mentors through the leadership roles they held in their organisations. Three hold dual roles, both as business executives, and professional mentors or coaches. These participants were chosen so as to get an alternate view from the female perspectives, and more so because most of the mentees had male mentees only or as their most significant mentors. The female mentors interviewed were also business executives, as well as professional mentors. The insights gained were rich owing to this mix; and the women openly shared their experiences.

Table 4: Profile of participants

Respondent Code	Mentor/ Mentee	Level in company	Industry	Average years of experience	Gender
BE1	Mentee	Human Resources Director	Restaurants/ Fast Foods	16 to 20 years	F
BE2	Mentee	Executive Director	Mining	16 to 20 years	F
BE3	Mentee	Senior Manager, Procurement	Mining	21 to 25 years	F
BE4	Mentee	Executive Director	Banking/ Consulting	11 to 15 years	F
BO1	Mentee	Serial Entrepreneur	Media/Mining/ Property	16 to 20 years	F
BO2	Mentee	Entrepreneur	Human Resources	21 to 26 years	F
BO3	Mentee	Entrepreneur	Entertainment/ Fitness	6 to 10 years	F
FM1	Mentor	Business Owner	Legal Consulting Services	11 to 15 years	F
FM2	Mentor	Managing Director	Mentoring /Coaching	11 to 15 years	F
MM1	Mentor	Managing Director	Mentoring /Coaching	11 to 15 years	M
MM2	Mentor	Chief Executive Officer	Mentoring/ Media	16 to 20 years	M
MM3	Mentor	Chief Executive Officer	Mentoring/ Academic	11 to 15 years	M
MM4	Mentor	Chief Executive Officer	Oil/ Mentoring	21 to 25 years	M

The mentees belong to different industries and these are summarised in the table above and range from mining, property, professional services, media, banking, entertainment, academia, state owned enterprises and many more, therefore this allowed for a rich assessment. Three of the mentees were entrepreneurs and running their own businesses in one or more industries.

“I often define myself as a serial entrepreneur...the oxford dictionary now defines people like me as people who have a portfolio career, and the thing is gone are the days where you had one track career path. Where the world is going, one has to have multiple interests.” (BO1)

For most of the mentees the interviews swayed occasionally to them speaking of their roles as mentors as they have found themselves in those roles with years of experience in business. It was almost difficult to separate the two roles as they gave accounts of their stories through business and mentoring. However, this resulted in uninhibited accounts of their journeys and experiences. This provided the interviewer with rich information and a plethora of experiences and views.

5.2 Mentee Perspectives

5.2.1 Challenges faced by women in business

This section will look at the first three questions which played a role in setting the tone for challenges women are facing in business and more specifically in choosing or getting a mentor or mentors. The interviewer posed the question of what the interviewees thought are the biggest challenges women face in business that prevents them from having more proportional representation in business.

The list of issues raised was wide-ranging. Due to the open-ended nature of the questions, the responses were fluid in that the respondents often gave what they felt were problems but more aligned to the topic. Table 5 depicts the main issues that came up. Thereafter the most significant or popular findings and the unique findings are quoted below.

Table 5: Challenges faced by women in business–mentee perspective

Challenges	Frequency
Lack of strong networks and support systems	7
Not enough women mentors	6
Lack of formal mentoring opportunities	6
Limited opportunities for women historically to take on challenging assignments	6
Historical Gender Bias resulting in disadvantaged position of women	5
Lack of adequate educational opportunities and exposure of women	5
Managing multiple roles concurrently	5
Socialisation	4
Abusive relationships in and outside of business	4
Limited resources to excel and expand in business	3
Glass Ceiling issues	3

5.2.1.1 Historical gender bias

Gender bias was raised as a challenge that spanned from the family social setting and was transferred into the business setting as well.

“We have got a lot of challenges, we have got family challenges, we have got social challenges, we have got inequality challenges.” (BE1)

“So I think its history, we all know its history but it’s also our responsibility as women to have the conversation.” (BE2)

On the contrary one individual was clear about not making gender an issue at all in the workplace.

“It has never been about gender. And unconsciously so...it has never been a gender thing for me, you know, I have never woken up and said I will show them that I’m a woman and I will make it.” (B03)

5.2.1.2 Limited resources

Women further faced challenges around accessing finance and other resources that would help them enhance their career paths.

“Money and finances is a big challenge in terms of growing your own business, and women face those challenges more so because it is again, the asking, but it comes at a price. It is very different compared to what men have to give to get money.” (B03)

5.2.1.3 Lack of adequate educational opportunities and exposure

There were negative connotations and challenges that were linked to a lack of education. This mainly came from the older mentees but the younger ones tended not to see this as a barrier.

“By that time I’d only been talking isiZulu as far as possible but fortunately there is a guy who was willing to help me learn the ropes. So I attached to him.” (BE2)

“The entrepreneur in me was really born out of my household...gave us good education, a decent education. Even though it was the era of apartheid, Bantu education but still, they (parents) did their very best.” (BO1)

“I didn’t quite know what to do because at that point it was 1990 and they didn’t really expose us to a lot of careers or a lot of options.” (BE3)

However, some looked at education in the new dispensation positively and lack of education was not a challenge or barrier for them.

“I live in a new dispensation, I have bigger opportunities, perhaps even better opportunities.”(BO1)

5.2.1.4 Not enough women mentors

In terms of navigating their careers female role models have been scarce and being working mothers has posed challenges, amongst other issues. However, several mentors did not feel that this was an issue as they have made themselves available for mentorship. They did however highlight that the majority of their mentors or sponsors were usually men.

“Because we don’t talk to each other, one of the things that is there is that the one who has gone through does not say to the other one this is how I manoeuvred or this is how I make it.” (BE1)

“I think when you are a working mom; you should extend the same grace to other working moms. I think when you are a female executive you should extend the same grace to female executives.” (BE4)

“There’s very few bosses that I’ve had that’s tried to promote me and I think it’s more a female thing.” (BE3)

“Unfortunately there aren’t a lot of women leaders that I leverage off because there aren’t any that are close by.” (BE3)

Some experienced mentors had a differing view which negates the idea that women do not like mentoring other women.

“I don’t think though, which is what people tend to assume, that as women we don’t like mentoring one another...I think that it’s a myth that women don’t support one another.” (BE2)

“It’s absolutely important that women empower other women and predominantly employ other women. I as a CEO of a company, how I can be able to change the lot of other women, because it is only through women that we can really change the world. When you think about the face of poverty in the continent, it’s a female face,” (BO1)

“I’m a firm believer that to who much is given, much is expected but also you have to lift as you rise. It’s important that you lift as you rise. And more so, also pay it forward. Pay it forward if somebody has mentored you, somebody has given you a chance at life, you cannot when you’ve reached the ladder, the top of the ladder, kick the ladder off when somebody wants to come up the ladder.” (BO2)

5.2.1.5 Lack of mentoring opportunities

The majority of the mentees share the view that they did not have formalised mentoring programmes and mentorship is mainly through informal mentorships.

“Find the person. So sometimes you have to go and seek mentoring because sometimes things are not just going to happen. We are women, we are being side-lined.” (BE2)

5.2.1.6 Lack of strong support systems at home and at work

This was unanimously raised as an issue by all the mentees. It was an issue most felt strongly about and for those that had realised and experienced this they were sensitive to the fact that those who did not have strong support systems at home were heavily disadvantaged.

“In the case of working moms determine how we are able to work optimally.” (BE4)

“We’re caregivers and there are times in our lives where we having children, we already get unplugged out of the system. And of course, it’s by choice and sometimes it’s not by choice, depending on the circumstances.” (B01)

“If you have support systems at home, you actually survive.” (BO2)

“I’m quite fortunate in that I have a strong support system at home. I think that the best career decision you can make as a woman is to marry the right person.” (BE4)

5.2.1.7 Socialisation

The way women are socialised affects the way they think and behave and how they make their business decisions.

“I think what’s failing a lot in getting women to advance is that oftentimes we are asking people to make decisions that are not natural to them. It’s like asking a turkey to vote for Christmas, he’s not going to do it. It’s naturally against their own species and their own way of doing life so I think it’s imperative upon a lot of us to start growing and creating opportunities for people who we know are facing the same things and making sure that their path is easier than the path we followed.” (BE4)

“Some of us don’t necessarily, sadly, realise our dreams, because we didn’t have that environment of mentors, we didn’t have that environment of parents who believed in us, we didn’t have that environment of being exposed. And so socialisation has a lot to do with it.” (BO1)

5.2.1.8 Glass ceiling issues

Women in corporates often get to a point where they feel they have hit an invisible wall and progression is difficult.

“I do a lot of work for the insurance sector and when I look there it’s like this automatic ceiling that has occurred there. It’s like looking at an Irish coffee. At the bottom there are a whole lot of black people and there is this very cream at the top but it’s difficult to break.” (BE4)

5.2.1.9 Limited opportunities for women

“There were so many little options and there are so many other careers that I’ve discovered a bit later in life and obviously ended up in.” (BO2)

“There was no money. There were no bursaries, I did well in matric but not well enough to get a bursary. I then had to find a job and how do you find a job as a young girl with very little experience?” (BE3)

“I started off as a teacher first and this is not because I had a burning ambition to teach people, it’s because at the time as most people of my generation there wasn’t money at home to pay for university fees so you had to look for areas where you were sure to get funding.” (BE2)

“My heart always goes out to rural women, who don’t have the infrastructure or the exposure or the ability to actually find a mentor for example.” (BO1)

5.2.1.10 Abuse in relationships in and outside of business

Several mentees raised the issue of abuse in one form or another. Some had experienced it personally and others had other women they knew of whom had gone through it.

“Why I bring that into my story (abuse) is that you either survive it or you don’t...you’ve got to toughen up and I remember when I was still in the finance role, I’d cry in meetings a lot. Now in later years I’ve realised it’s because I hadn’t toughened up.” (BE3)

My dancing can keep anyone strong, and also that’s why ...ladies who have been like in abusive relationships, and they come to dance to relieve stress, they come to dance because they have to gain their confidence (BO3)

5.2.1.11 Managing multiple roles concurrently

Women are now faced with the challenge of managing multiple roles concurrently. This can be overwhelming and difficult to manage.

“The Oxford dictionary now defines people like me as people who have a portfolio career, and the thing is gone are the days where you had one track career path. Where the world is going, one has to have multiple interests.” (BO1)

“Because of work pressures the one lady said to me no with her projects it is just too many, she does not have the time. She values the relationship, but she is settling in the job.” (BO1)

5.2.2 Characteristics of a good mentor or role model

This question addressed who the mentees find as important role models in their lives and what are the characteristics they find admirable in their mentors and wish to emulate. Some respondents also mentioned the non-desirable characteristics.

5.2.2.1 Pioneering

Mentees admired mentors who had initiated business and gone ahead of others.

“I like learning from people who have had tough journeys, not the people who have had an easy journey because I don’t know if they’ve learnt enough to be able to share with me and you can relate better to somebody that’s been on a tough journey. My story is also a tough story.” (BE3)

“I’m inspired generally by people who make it against all odds. Of course she may have been mentored here and there but this is just sheer will of a person who doesn’t really look at herself as a woman or as some underprivileged person.” (BE2)

“She was a trail blazer and so to grow up with a very strong woman like that...who was pioneering, who was not preoccupied by the noise.” (BO3)

“She is very bold and very courageous, where to some degree, I’m a very reserved person, I take a long time to warm to an environment, she has a very bold personality, she walks into an environment and takes charge.” (B01)

5.2.2.2 Parent figure

The issue of the mentor assuming or playing the role of the parent figure was raised on several occasions. Four mentees actually stated that their parents had been their primary mentors.

“He treated me more like a dad would and he really took me under his wing and actually really taught me.” (BE3)

“Because my dad was in the industry...so he was actually my mentor from like a young age, and he also tried to mentor me out of the industry. My mom was my biggest cheerleader and still is.” (BO3)

“My parents are my primary mentors; I gleaned a sense of discipline from watching them work hard. I gleaned from them a value system, a work ethos-- my father used to say hard work has never killed anybody so I gleaned all of those sorts of life values, principles that one needs if you’re going to be a success in life, if you’re going to run your own business.” (BO1)

“We still meet to talk about where it is going, so this father figure thing will be there for a while.” (MM4)

5.2.3 Traits of a good mentor

Some of the traits that the mentees saw in their mentors and wished to emulate are listed below. These included trustworthy, accountable, caring, supportive, sponsor, teacher, self-aware, authentic, leader, humble and experienced.

5.2.3.1 Trustworthy

Mentors need to be trustworthy.

“Trust is such a nebulous thing – the Mentor shares information about their past, introduces the Mentee to people they may know and endeavours to ensure the Mentee grows and learns through experience and the past experiences of the Mentor” (BE1)

“I need to be comfortable around you. You cannot be mentored by somebody you are not comfortable around. Or who you do not trust or you cannot be vulnerable around. Those things are just so important.” (BE2)

5.2.3.2 Accountable

Mentors need to be accountable and own up to their mistakes

“I think more than anything else if you would say to me what is that I have learnt from XXX is accountability and compassion.” (BE1)

“It’s about value systems...it it’s all about hard work, whether we’re selling sandwiches, whether I’m building buildings, it takes the same kind of ethos and discipline to be able to fulfil that vision (BO1)

“However, if you keep it just informal with no plan as to what you want to achieve in it, if you start a relationship be it formal or informal, it’s really important to say ok what are you expecting out of this?” (BE3)

5.2.3.3 Caring

Mentors need to be caring.

“They need to care and you need to feel that they care for you to be vulnerable and connect, because if you not vulnerable, if you are just putting a front, you not going to be able to connect.” (BE1)

“Being perceptive of the people around you, whether they’re mentees or whether they’re colleagues, whether they’re less or greater mortals, however you see it, just that little care makes a difference and I really think it’s that little things that really matter.” (BE3)

5.2.3.4 Supportive and sponsoring

Mentees prefer mentors who are supportive and a sponsoring mentor is even better.

“Basically really look me under her wing and was somebody who encouraged me.” (BO1)

“She also mentored me a lot on how to get back on to my feet, because like I said, I was at a point where I just wanted to give up.” (BO3)

“He gave me feedback, both positive and negative. He was very supportive and he made sure that I had the resources that I needed.” (BE4)

“The difference with the sponsor is that they act, they make stuff happen, they move barriers out of the way and they help to advance you. I think both have very important roles but I think sponsorship is extremely underestimated and underrated.” (BE4)

5.2.3.5 Teacher

The teacher trait in mentoring helps with personal growth and development in the mentees and improves their knowledge base.

“She mentored me to be honest, she gave me some ropes I learned a lot of things from her.” (BO2)

“Typically mentors will give you feedback.” (BE4)

5.2.3.6 Self-aware and authentic

This trait left the mentees feeling positively challenged and stimulated about what they can do and achieve.

“They have to be self-aware and self-assured enough to know that the people I’m developing may take my job but I think that comes with a lot of self-awareness and confidence because you are creating the next role for yourself.” (BE4)

“Sometimes hearing them say “I messed up”, helps because like I said it means it is okay to mess up. It allows me to be my best self, without holding myself back - just take the risk.”(BE1)

5.2.3.7 Leadership

Mentors have to be good leaders in order to fully carry out their roles.

“XXX for me was an exceptional leader” (BE4)

“Integrity and values are very ingrained in me and that comes from family and it’s something you don’t see often in leaders today either” (BE1)

“My style of leadership is very collaborative, I’d like to believe that I allow my people to be creative in their own environment.” (BO1)

“How do you deal with things as a leader, in general.” (BE2)

5.2.3.8 Experienced and credible

This increased their knowledge base and bridging the gap that formal education did not fill. The mentors found it very fulfilling to be able to share their experiences and knowledge and this left the mentees feeling empowered and created an empowered autonomous skilled workforce.

“I think I’ve always had a knack for learning so when I come into a new environment, I first understand that I don’t know everything and in all the environments that I’ve been, I will first look for and call on call the most resourceful person or someone to whom everybody looks

up to in terms of their organization knowledge skills and experience. And literally attach myself to them and learn.” (BE2)

“He was a walking source of information and wisdom and willing to share it. He would say, you should be able to learn tactic and strategy, he would show you by demonstrating how to keep a temperament that is conducive to leading people and he was essentially a great leader for me.” (BO3)

5.2.3.9 Humble

Mentees were inclined to attach themselves to leaders who are humble.

“Are you humble enough to be able to receive direction from someone else, is there willingness to differ to someone else, this mentor-ship in itself requires that the willingness to differ to someone else. (MM3)

“It needs them coming down to my level and having the conversation, just having to say how is your house, you know, you said you were building a house is it coming together, just brought joy into my life.” (BO1)

5.2.4 Role of mentorship in business

The questions here sought to find out if mentorship has a positive or negative impact on the success of women in business. The responses were mostly positively inclined. The jargon used by the mentees shows the positive changes in the way they conducted themselves due to the mentoring they got both on a formal and informal basis. These responses were based mostly on their experiences and their relationships with their mentors.

“I was very clear in terms of the short term goals, the medium term goals and the long term goals that I wanted to achieve and I always journal so I did exactly that.” (BO1)

“It’s about practical not book stuff.” (BE4)

“Dealing with people is something you need to learn, if it doesn’t come naturally. And if it does come naturally, there are some pointers you need for instance such as answering the phone.”(BO3)

“...they do it through mentorship and then when they saw that they could not teach me more than what I knew it’s then that they said “Go to do your MBA.”(BE1)

“So I always had that drive. So you have to have that. I do not think you can mentor somebody who does not have the ambition or the drive to get there...but the courage in terms of taking risks, and being comfortable with doing that, you I can be comfortable with taking the risk.”

“It allows me to be my best self, without holding myself back - just take the risk.”(BE1)

“My business partner who made me see myself differently and made me see the potential I had in operating and running one.” (BE2)

“I do think you need mentors and particularly in the early parts of your career where you are learning functional skills. You are learning the desktop skills that you need to do your job, you are out of university and you need to learn the building blocks to do what you need to do.” (BE4)

“I believe sponsors advance one quicker just because they are growing people and technically kind of surrounding themselves with the right people and then that enables them to move forward a lot quicker.” (BE4)

“I believe that sometimes leaders underestimate the value of that sort of stuff because the loyalty that it bought him and the delivery that he got out of me because I knew I was safe, I knew I was supported and I knew that he understood.”(BE2)

“Bridges a gap where formal education cannot fill.” (BE4)

“... to make sure that women are not oppressed and abused in the organisation... So there is immense pressure on you to deal with those kinds of things in an organisation and secondly to then open up the space for women.” (BE2)

“...but I think that has made me a lot more resilient and stronger now. And I can see in others even people that I am mentoring or who work for me, I can see it immediately.” (BE3)

The question was asked: Would you recommend that other women get a mentor if they want guaranteed success and why? All respondents had positive responses and strongly supported the idea. Reasons spanned from success and personal development which resulted in them performing better and work or in business. Conducting

themselves differently or even communicating better. Most have in turn also become mentors to others as a result and find great pleasure in mentoring others not only as a way of giving back but to ensure others don't go through some of the difficulties they faced.

"Do I think mentorship is important for women in business? I think it's cardinal, I think it's imperative, I think it's how - It's what's going to drive economic change and change the landscape of any industry." (BO1)

"I came in as an individual contributor, junior-junior-junior, when I left her I was a national HR manager, and then I went back to ops."

"If an organisation understands the benefits of mentoring, then they will understand that it is not as hard, things can be done quicker to grow leadership."(BE1)

"Intentionality you should get a mentor. And maybe not in a formal way but you should get a buddy, because things become clearer and the clearer things are the more you can see where you fit and what you can do and you can fight for that." (BE1)

"I think if you have been well mentored and well sponsored it comes naturally for you to do the same...It starts to become about your ability to influence...it starts to become about stretch assignments. I'm a huge fan of stretch assignments whether they are in your core area of focus or not. I believe the only way that you can jump the corporate ladder or get through that maze very quickly is stretch assignments." (BE4)

"I think that did also assist me in learning to be independent, make decisions, make mistakes, learn and ask for forgiveness and not permission after the fact that..." (BE3)

"...but I also want to save others from going through some of the painful journeys and changes that I have." (BE3)

"So these mentoring relationships they go beyond just mentoring, but that's family and life stories...So mentorship is also not necessarily about this one knowing better trying to teach that one. But out of a friendship can emerge such amazing life lessons and then one can take those life lessons and apply them to their lives. That is mentorship." (BO1)

"It's not necessarily just about teaching people, people teacher. It's about, even as equals, have so much to learn from each other. And it's not necessarily about a hierarchical structure, so to speak, it's just about people sharing common vision and wanting the other to grow." (BO1)

Reverse side of mentoring

Not all mentoring relationships or aspects of it were deemed in good light.

“I have got one of my mentors in the past where we say let’s meet once a month and I found that difficult because I might not need a mentoring session today at 4 and he says come prepared with what you want to discuss.” (BE3)

“Mentors themselves also run a risk of not realizing that you are now grown. So whatever it is that they are mentoring you on, because you came to them with some level of deficit in terms of level of experience and skills, they never realize when you have actually closed that gap. So it’s important to, detach.” (BE2)

5.2.5 The role of networks

This section answers Research Question 2: Do strong business networks play a role in mentoring of women? The mentees all agreed that strong networks in business have and did play an important role in enhancing their chances of being successful.

“They do because they are part of mentoring right, and mentorship, and I think it comes to skill. I am just a township girl, I don’t know, I learnt as I went in terms of me being and creating networks and all that. I don’t have strong ones; I don’t want to lie.” (BE1)

“So how do I network if I also don’t think ‘I am good enough to have a conversation’, and this is why I am saying mentoring addresses all that.” (BE1)

“I am not from Waterkloof Boys High. I did not grow up in that environment, but, don’t get it wrong, I have never made it an excuse.” (BE 1)

“I think that’s something that everybody needs to learn to develop, it’s not a skill that comes naturally because I think all of us fear, especially women, we don’t want to irritate. We feel like it’s going to be an inconvenience and maybe it’s not a good time.” (BE4)

“I network with a lot of different people, linked in accounts are huge and that kind of thing.” (BE3)

“These networks have helped me realise things I’m not doing, and what I should be doing, unconsciously, and that makes sense. So if they didn’t exist, I think I’d still be a dancer in one class.” (BO3)

“Okay. One of them is SABPP, it’s one of my networking platforms. Actually as I’m sitting here, most of the business that comes to my desk, I don’t go and ask, it’s a referral. I was the vice chairman of BWA, Business Women Association...” (BO2)

“So networking it’s one of the things that is powerful, you need to belong, belong to different associations. I’m a member of Business Networking Institute. BNI has got over 700 000 members, all over the world.” (BO1)

5.2.6 Benefits of mentoring women for the economy.

Research Question 3 assesses the benefits of mentoring beyond the individual. It looks at it from an organisational view, community and the larger country economy.

Both mentees and mentors were in agreement that the elevation of women in business and society results in better performance and therefore in a larger contribution to society from a social and financial point of view. Differing views were given on the suggestions as to whose responsibility it was to get this to be a more sustainable practice. Some people felt the onus is on the corporates while some felt the state has a part to play too.

“Therefore, that’s why we have to pull one another, because together we’re stronger. Together as a collective, as a mass, as a movement, we can be able to make a difference and a dent in this economy.” (BO1)

“I think that is a no-brainer, for us. We know that companies that have women on boards do better. It’s a business case, right, that’s business and you are saying, let’s go macro”. (BE1)

“If you look at reports right now, about women who are in decisive positions, there is a strong case that we can get more in there.” (BE1)

5.2.7 Suggestions on how to get more women involved

“I really would like to believe that it’s just an issue of numbers and a related issue with numbers is that affinity. You see, mentoring relationships require the two of you to have some form of affinity, to find something that is connecting you to the other, the other person, and be able to identify in a certain way.” (BE2)

“When you’re fighting just for the company to survive you don’t expect management to be driving a mentoring relationship. You must drive it” (BE2)

“Reasons BEE, and Employment Equity have been a success, is that it’s been legislated. There’s regulation around it and, therefore it has made a phenomenal shift to how companies run their businesses, for example. So when you think about mentoring, it actually should be mandatory for organisations and senior management staff and middle management to actually mentor their people.” (BO1)

5.2.8 Anticipated impact on the economy

The mentees were unanimous in that mentoring can have an impact on the economy. However, there were split ideas on how this can be done through mentoring and networking.

“So collaborating, sharing, innovating, is the way of the future and women tend to be better at collaborating and taking the team along and that’s critical.” (BE3)

“If you were to look at the government, there are lots of women there, whether they are the right ones and whether that’s advancing the right cause, that’s what I’m trying to steer clear from. Personally I think that we shouldn’t rely on government to drive business decisions. I think that government exists to create policy and to create an environment in which business can thrive. (BE4)

“Business must make business decisions. Business is there to create jobs, to drive the underlying core things of the economy. Government just has to create the environment for them to be able to do that particularly when it has to do with women.” (BO1)

“It’s been all over the news recently and one of the things I loved about it was eventually they are going to have a mentorship component where some of the most senior business leaders in South Africa will be in that mentorship panel and they get to interact with the CEO’s or leadership teams of some of these.”(BE4)

“I just have no faith in our government at the moment so that’s why we need to drive these solutions ourselves, without that we are going to struggle.” (BE4)

“You have me thinking that maybe we should open a mentoring school for township girls or

“So imagine if that’s the case where I think private is actually more structured and more stringent than government, so imagine if you get these women who are in government who I think are powerful, mentored by women who have ‘been there done that’ just how much that can impact the country.” (BE1)

5.3 Mentor Perspectives

5.3.1 Challenges faced by women in business

Responses from the mentors are recorded below and similar questions were asked so as to get a different view and note if there is similar or differing responses. In this set of interviews males were also interviewed as the majority of mentors the mentees had mentioned were male. Some of the males interviewed are professional mentors as well as business executives and this gave more perspective especially on the formal mentorship relationships as well as a perception from a gender point of view. What are the challenges faced by women business leaders?

Table 6 depicts the main issues that came up.

Table 6: Challenges faced by women in business–mentor perspective

Challenges	Frequency
Self-limiting perceptions	6
Historical gender bias	5
Socialisation	5
Stereotyping and preconceptions of women's roles and abilities	4
Lack of educational Opportunities	3
Lack of resources	3
Not enough female mentors and lack of teachers	2
Tokenism	1

5.3.1.1 Historical gender bias

“History has a role to play, culture perhaps depending on the country involved, how and also the reason one works in the first place... many of us need a job to survive so it is not always easy to chase bigger and better roles” (FM2)

“There’s the issue of privilege and how it plays out in the work place. So people who are privileged are blind to their privilege. White males are blind to the fact that they are privileged.” (MM1)

5.3.1.2 Socialisation self-limiting perceptions

“I want to say, possibly women’s own mind-set... So they’re not voicing - possibly - they’re not voicing their authentic self, and so they’re not asking for what they want, because perhaps, um, they think that if they ask, they seem weak, that’s a possibility... lot of it rests on the individual’s belief system themselves.” (MM2)

*“The one is the social barriers, or the gender roles that make males feel uncomfortable to engage with females in the work place...It’s an issue of individualism versus collectivism
“(MM1)*

“It’s really difficult to find that balance in gently leading and mentoring that they know you know but you don’t know, it’s really hard but it’s been useful in times where I’ve had ladies where they either are being victimised by the husband of the boys or the boyfriend or whatever and they’ve gone through tough times and you’ve got to be a lot more flexible with them, supportive of them and it’s a journey and they do trust you more.” (BE3)

“The one is that they count themselves out, um, before they get started. And so, from the time she steps into the work place, she’s already counted herself out of a whole bunch of things because she, she doesn’t know if she’s getting married, she’s going to have children. When a guy walks into the work place, that’s the last thing on his mind.” (MM1)

“There is a barrier maybe between cross-gender mentorship uh, so there might be a reluctance for cross-gender mentorship to take place because of just the perceptions we have about gender.” (MM1)

5.3.1.3 Patriarchy

“The world is largely patriarchal; so much of what is in the world is defined in male terms, and the expectation is that men provide, women receive and therefore business is orientated around the provider (MM3)

“I have had these experiences where male line managers are feeling highly threatened.” (MM4)

Yeah, and it’s a man’s world whether we like it or not [laughter]. Uh, particularly white male world,” (MM1)

“The benefits that get to be allocated for malesvs females are never the same. The scales weigh in favour of men than they do for women.” (MM2)

“Systemic sexism within the structures of the workspace... But it speaks to the systemic, even the broad understanding that when a woman walks into a room immediately she’s disadvantaged. By the mere fact that she’s a woman, and how people perceive her. And um, how deep our social structures have been embedded in how we see women, and that was women, so it wasn’t just a male class, it was a mixed gender, gender mixed class.” (MM1)

5.3.1.4 Lack of educational opportunities

“In some of the rural areas that we work and even in the not so rural areas, the family is poor, the girls get pulled out of school to go and help the family chores is not the boy.” (FM1)

5.3.1.5 Lack of resources.

“The Executive Director for UN women, decries the fact that the UN has 1% budget of its total budget devoted to women and that 1% came about when her office was established. So prior to that there was no money dedicated, no resources dedicated to women.” (MM3)

“So, most corporates, um, I think they dream and want to have a mentorship program, and they put everything in place to make it happen, but when the rubber hits the road, those things fall flat. I still need to see a mentorship program in the corporate space that is successful, and succinct, and works really well a formal one.” (MM1)

5.3.1.6 Lack of networking opportunities

“So, men tend to have broad, broad networks, but shallow relationships, so if you look at a multinational organisation and you look at the social networking of women and men, or social capital in organisations, men have lots of relationships, but very shallow, women have few relationships, but very deep.” (MM1)

“I am finding that there is a blurring of the lines, because it is very easy for a company to drive mentorship when it is doing well. This is what I find. When a company is doing well, they have all the time, financially things are not that tight. You find that companies are happy to let employees and their managers to engage. When things are tight, the target, the markets are tight, it is like training. It falls out of the agenda. And no one gets interested in it. Those who are passionate about wanting to grow their careers and the managers who want to develop people have to find time outside the so-called ‘prescribed time’ or formal time.” (MM4)

5.3.1.7 Socialisation

“What you’ll find in the pipeline is that there’s normally a 50/50 representation in the pipeline of big multinationals, in terms of gender, gender representation, but as they progress, you’ll see a tapering off of women, um, to senior positions in the business.” (MM2)

“So yes, not asking for help, not knowing how to engage in that process, because I think it was also like, asking for help means I didn’t know enough.” (FM1)

“Keep your hand up, women don’t keep their hands up.” (MM1)

5.3.1.8 Lack of leadership skills.

“If you are not yourself, for some reason it just shows in the discussion also and you do not want to be genuine in the discussion as a mentor or as a mentee” (MM4)

“Authentic leadership is important.” (MM1)

5.3.1.9 Tokenism

“So it talks about tokenism, so you’ll find a lot of boards in South Africa have one woman sitting on the board, and if you have to ask those men, they say, “Oh but we’ve got a woman in here, look there’s a woman, she’s here.” (MM1)

5.3.1.10 Lack of guidance

“People uncover those blind spots. And become conscious of areas that they are not aware of or they haven’t acknowledged, or seen yet.” (MM2)

“People sometimes don’t want to get out of their comfort zone, but when you push them to that, then they realise the value later.” (MM3)

5.3.1.11 Personal goals not aligned with those of the organisation.

“Your agenda has to be very authentically aligned with the agenda of the organisation. You can’t have two – you can’t have conflicting agendas: a personal agenda, and an organisational agenda.” (MM2)

5.3.1.12 Lack of empowerment opportunities.

“In your heart you feel you need to do more but you are actually not empowering the guy if you do more.” (MM4)

One mentee felt strongly that the issue of success is subjective and perhaps the issue of success needs to be more clearly defined. Also another felt that discriminating or singling out the women was not such a wise thing to do but still responded well to the questions as they chose not to make it solely about gender. They felt that people face the same challenges whether male or female as they try to rise the corporate ladder or venture into their own businesses.

“On the contrary do we perhaps need to be really clear on what women want or what they see as success?” (FM2)

5.3.2 Challenges faced by women in getting mentored

The mentors raised several challenges which they thought women face in business. These came from the experiences they know of as women mentors and also the male mentors had learnt of these throughout their mentoring relationships.

“I don’t know whether it’s the training, or the expectations, or whether mentorship is never supposed to be a formal thing, and that’s why it, it never really gets the type of grit or momentum or traction it needs in an organisation, maybe it’s not meant to be formal. And if we try fit it into a formal structure, that’s why it doesn’t work.” (MM1)

“The City of Jo’burg is a village, it’s a concrete jungle and so many young people need people who firstly believe in them, people who can give them direction, people who when the going gets tough, because often life throws curveballs, people who can inspire them to stay the course, to run the race, and then to finish strong. That’s what mentorship is about.”(BO1)

“Structurally, yes! Structurally, yes! But when you look into the issue of leadership it does not necessarily have to be somebody senior, because we have often come in to the work environment and spoken about reverse mentoring, where you have got older folk being mentored by younger folk.” (MM3)

5.3.3 Challenges in cross gender mentoring

“Mentorship is more touchy-feely, naval-gazing type stuff, and um, it’s this, maybe the social mobility within an organisation that, um, that mentorship speaks about. So,um,yeah. So maybe that reluctance of going too deep and touching on things that I’m not prepared to touch on, or want to touch on, personal stuff. No, the moment it gets personal, then people getuncomfortable,” (MM1)

“Allowing the silence, the tears to be part of the process of allowing someone to reflect, to grow.” (MM4)

“So if you had to come to me and say to me, “I’m pregnant”, I don’t know what to do with that [laughter]. Congratulations, but I’m not going to be able to give you the right kind of mentorship to guide you through this process, uh, um, so that you’re able to completely be fully functional.” (MM1)

“If mentorship was going to be successful in the work place, and uh, I think it needs to be male-female mentorship, men, the mentors need to be trained better to deal with the stuff that they would feel uncomfortable with.” (MM1)

“I think the promotion of mentorship is a promotion of learning, is a promotion of education, is a promotion of knowledge acquisition, which is - can only be a positive thing in my mind.” (MM2)

“I’m finding it difficult to differentiate between men and women. I mean, nothing is particularly standing out for me, that I feel is different when I coach women. I’m coaching a human being who responds, or doesn’t respond, or gets excited, or doesn’t get excited, or shows fear, or shows happiness and joy. They all go, we all go through the same range of emotions, we all have the similar fears, um, some of us have confidence, some of us are less confident, some of us have esteem, some of us have lower esteem, whatever the case may be. And so each person is, is a unique case. I cannot, in all honesty, differentiate between women and men.” (MM2)

“I think the line is blurring for me, as you point out that formally, I mean formal mentorship. Obviously if it is prescribed by the organisation, you will be a mentor or you will be a mentee.” (MM4)

“And in that cross-gender kind of thing your timing of your meetings is vital also. You cannot tell me you are going to be having meetings at night.” (MM3)

5.3.3.1 Guilt and fear of letting down the superior at work

“With a lady I mentored, I found she felt like she was sneaking out kind of thing. Meaning she was afraid that, her bosses, may find that she is actually doing it (getting mentoring). I think maybe it is the culture within the organisation?” (MM4)

5.3.3.2 Trust

“But I do sometimes find that black mentees may go for white mentors. That is one of the observations that I have made, because the issue again is about the issues that get discussed, the relationship is based on trust. The trust of, I can trust that you keep my business between the two of us. I have heard some really silly remarks like “I do not think I can actually trust him, we live together. I do not want my issues surfacing on the streets” [laughter]. (MM2)

5.3.4 Reverse mentoring.

“I do think in the advent of innovation and needing to move quicker and faster, needing to adapt to the millennials coming into the workplace, all of those sorts of things are going to change the way that we work and thank goodness for it! (BE4).

“So, you often find, as a mentor, you’re being taught more by your mentee than you’re teaching them, so there’s lots of challenging that happens So, we have, what we call upward mentors.” (MM1)

“There has to be an end point “, I say, “I’m ending the umbilical cord that you don’t want to cut.” (BO1)

“It’s not something that is given, it’s not that anybody who goes through my hands is going to be a success story, but it’s an honour to have had somebody spot something in me to say, in order for me to be able to advance to the next level can I bounce some ideas with you, that is a gift and I don’t take it lightly.” (MM3)

Not all relationships have been successful especially the formal ones. No issues or problematic issues were brought up with the informal relationships.

“I would say. I have seen, because of the variety of the people that I had to mentor, I have seen some successes, but I have also seen some derailments and disappointments along the way. (MM4)

5.4 Data results according to themes

13 interviews were conducted by the researcher. A summary of the core findings in relation to each of the three research questions are provided below.

5.4.1 Research Question 1

What impact if any can mentorship play in creating successful business women.

5.4.1.1 Giving guidance

“There is none so blind as somebody who has eyes.” (MM3)

“When I was in full time employment my mentoring role as a leader was towards my team and staff and any other employees who asked for help, or needed support without perhaps realising it, – this was not a formal process but rather a part of how I go about business.” (FM2)

“Getting involved in industry associations led to people contacting me for discussions – again this was informal and short term rather than formal mentoring.” (FM2)

“Subsequent to that she wanted to start a lifestyle institute and I invested some capital in her business to give her seed cap to grow the business, which she has.” (BO1)

“I have had both, majority of them have actually we have agreed to do it informally, in the sense that we did not sign any agreement but we agreed to be able to say on a two monthly - three monthly basis we touch base and in that process we will things that needs to be done when you meeting a particular obstacle you know what where to reach me,” (MM3)

“But it’s a very fulfilling journey to be a mentor to someone and then see them succeed. I often say that you know when you go on a race and you get on your mark and then you get set, before you go, just look back and see whose hand you can take to run the race with you.” (BO1)

5.4.1.2 Does mentorship play a role in the success of women in business?

“People talk about feedback; he would have a feed forward. So here are some of the ideas that I am wanting to go through and I am going to be talking to this particular audience, what are your thoughts? He had that. He had somebody like that. And mentorship has the opportunity, it requires the willingness to be vulnerable. The willingness to be able to acknowledge that I have short-comings.” (MM3)

“We all have a responsibility as a society to raise a society.” (BO1)

“I always say that she is one of my pet projects along with a few of them, because I want to challenge all of them to think beyond where they are and this is not the end.” (BE4)

“so the more that they’re exposed, the more that they understand, the more that they are given.” (BE4)

“But I think we are getting so much more out of Karen because she is able to go home, breastfeed her daughter, sort out her home because she has an older daughter who is in high school, get that stuff sorted and then at 5 o’clock she logs back on. She is on top of it and I think she knows that she is trusted.” (BE4)

5.4.2 Research Question 2

Do strong business networks play a role in mentoring of women? Do you feel your mentees have strong business networks? How do these contribute to their success?

All mentors felt that networks play an important role towards the success of women in business. There were variances in their responses as to how their mentees make use of their networks but most said they do and were willing to share their networks or introduce their mentees to their networks as a way of broadening their existing ones. This came in different forms. Some mentors would suggest to their mentees that they join certain groups or would deliberately introduce them to someone in their network whom they felt would make a difference in their life. However, some preferred and encouraged that their mentees request specific introductions as these would be ones they take seriously and appreciate more.

It was unanimously agreed that networks do play a role in mentoring of women but the breadth and depth of these varies and needs to be improved upon. The mentors felt by

virtue of their roles had stronger networks which the mentees could leverage off. It was apparent that the mentees or women in general are not as forthright as the men when it comes to requesting for help or asking for introductions or help from their networks.

“Mentees need reminding about networking and the importance of the quality of networks rather than just numbers, Linked-in for example.” (FM2)

“You must not be apologetic about using your networks, if you have to say, “actually, my other mother from the other mother is so and so ” and if it’s going to open a door, you just go right ahead honey, you just flaunt and don’t be apologetic, because men are not apologetic about who they know, about their networks, about leveraging from those networks, and about making those networks become their net worth. So I think it’s important for women to build about that, yes it might be a limited network to allow to, because there’s the boys’ club and the golf course, you know they have those environments to still strike deals but women equally so. I also find that it is important to also join organisations. When I was president of the Business Women’s association, it was very critical and mentoring was key to what we were about, but also we did a lot of networking events, understanding that captains of industry need to meet new talent and how that can be new leverage in both ways. So networking can create your net worth. (BO1)

“Not all of them take the time to manage their networks effectively and these can contribute to success BUT networks need to be sustained and hopefully be a “reciprocal” arrangement, not just one sided.” (FM2)

“A good many of them have strengthened their networks as a result of our conversations, often did not begin with strong networks so part of our conversations had been able to lead them towards, have you ever thought about talking to so and so?” (MM3)

“The males tend to be more aggressive in terms of “I want to be able to have these networks”. Females, the women, have been more kind of suggestive “I need to have these networks” but not kind of like forceful, “Can you break the door for me”. It does not come that way. (MM3)

“If you are going to create one, you need to be clear, and say I need a network, this is the kind of network that I need. You need to identify the sort of network. Maybe five things that you wondered about that network and then look at people in those that can give you access to that network.” (MM4)

“The notion that when you do a good job of networking you probably are somewhere between 3 and 7 steps away from the person you want to be able to get to. you know, and if you can narrow that from 7 to 3 steps, hey you are doing better.” (MM3)

“I think strong business networks in the form of collaboration. Cross-discipline collaboration or cross, um, cultural, um cross ethnic identity, cross sexual orientation, cross-everything. Cross-collaboration would make for a richer outcome. So if you want to call that a business network, that’s fine, but I’m just calling it collaboration in whatever form it might take.” (MM2)

“I think it takes a conscious effort and it is quite strategic in that there’s an intention behind it. You’re doing it for a reason.” (MM2)

“I had no idea about the networks that we were in operation out there. I kind of go back like ten years ago, there was the white male network and the black male network, and I had no idea that they existed.” (FM1)

5.4.2.1 Do your mentee/mentees make use of your business networks? How has this added value towards their success

“Yes sometimes, where I am unable to provide the best support I generally refer people to experts within my sphere, after confirming this is acceptable to them.” (FM2)

“Black Movement Forum or it is the Black Business Counsel I am able to pass those kinds of connections to them.” (MM3)

“What also becomes of importance is why or what reasons you are networking for sometimes a name drop can actually become a name bomb.” (MM3)

“I have to say that I have been to some of the women’s network and I don’t relate. I have never really related.” (FM2)

“I think the black women’s network is strong and there is a lot of mentoring support in there.” (FM1)

5.4.2.2 Do you think women lag behind when it comes to establishing strong business networks? How can this be improved?

There was a clear split in responses to this question. Three mentors agreed that women could do better in this area. Some felt that women are doing okay. One felt there is no difference with his mentees specifically.

“Possibly there is a greater need to understand a business network – Social Media has perhaps muddied the waters and once you consider all the options from Facebook through to Linked-in and Twitter the values of your networks becomes difficult to manage.” (FM2)

“You need to work on your networks and using a process to define the value (in your perception) of the various relationships in your networks to be able to maximise and work on developing (or dispensing with) people is recommended. You need to plan and keep your networks alive whether by phone, mail or social media.” (FM2)

“They call it hustling. Ladies don’t often talk about hustling, but guys talk hustling and that’s it...There have instances where they have actually come straight forward and say i need to be able to gain access to that particular place do you know anyone in that kind of environment, then I will be able to say yes or no and then there will be instances where we have gotten through the conversations, you know. I think that could be value in you in meeting with Google, at EY, there is something about what you are saying that could be enhanced when you meet up with them, that follows through from the conversation. So there are instances where i would have initiated and there will be instances where they would come inquiring and then i forward accordingly.” (MM3)

“Men are transactional women more relational. And that is why you will find that as women you are conscious of the fact that, “I have not spoken to so-and-so in 3 months, how will they take it if I make this inquiry of them now.” (MM3)

“I’m seeing a shift, but not quite as radical or drastic as it needs to - so there is a shift with one or two people, but the vast majority still, uh, go back to the old, um, paradigms that we, that we brought up believing... It’s a sense of, “I don’t want to look stupid, I don’t want to be vulnerable, so... so I’ll hold back.” (MM1)

“I think there is a desire on woman to use networks. Particularly the younger, the woman in their twenties up to their thirties. I think they are more open to networks. Networks driven by other women or they are forming their own networks. I am aware of a couple of networks; I mean the women themselves for instance.” (MM4)

“So it's a very - networking is a very... I think it's a very extrovert function. So some people are introvert and some people are extrovert. I don't think everybody's going to want to network, or enjoy networking.” (MM2)

“I am not a particularly good networker myself but I surrounded myself with people that are. So I have about 3 or 4 people around me so I know if I have to go to anyone of them.” (FM1)

“The work environment itself, disadvantages one. Your networks in terms of, let us just base them on gender for once. There would be fewer networks where, because we have fewer women, in the business areas themselves at the levels that you would expect these people to come from. You do not have enough, I mean, my experience is that women tend to, I tend to find a lot of women not going to other women, but going to other men. To network with men.” (MM3)

5.4.3 Research Question 3

Can economies benefit from investing in mentoring opportunities for women?

Reports have been written and conclude that women are empowered, economies benefit. Do you think mentoring can contribute to the success of women in business and in turn how can economies benefit? What suggestions would you give on how this can be done and to accelerate the growth?

“I think it would be hugely beneficial to any economy if more and more women were given these opportunities, because all that we are trying to do there is to level the play field. I think that is what we are trying to do with mentorship” (MM4)

“The Coaching and Mentoring Institute (COMENSA) is doing some great work on this. To my mind we need to formalise what Mentorship is about – there may even be (say) different phases or needs – and both in the relationship need to commit to the objectives.”

“I would use industry associations to promote mentorship.” (FE2)

“Businesses that have women at the helm are better run, are more ethical in the way they engage, and they have a higher, emotional intelligence.” (MM1)

“Too often we downplay the benefits of mentorship, and what is necessary is to be able to talk to those benefits. Highlight the benefits of what mentorship can do. I look for instance to

mentorship in what was in the relationship between Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu. They had a mentorship relationship, and most people would not even be aware of the fact that Nelson Mandela was mentored by Walter Sisulu. (MM3)

“Oftentimes it is about growing leaders who have a, what would I say, you need to have a very deep self-awareness and you need to have a deep sense of empathy for other people because you have been through stuff.” (BE4)

“That’s why I say, for me it’s about developing leaders who are selfless in a way, who are not threatened, who understand that this business is only going to grow if I grow others” (BE4)

“Too often we are reluctant to be able to indicate that we have short-comings. We would like to be able to present the stronger side of ourselves. So at a national level it would be a present, this country needs more and more of people who would be willing to be able to listen. Mentorship requires what the Chinese call virtuous listening.” (MM3)

“Thank you because it’s a nautical relationship, thank you for keeping me current and have the lingo. They always tell me, “You know Ma, this is what’s going down”. (BO1)

“So there’s power in the masses, there’s power in creating that dent, there’s power in being able to make sure that the economic viability in a country or a business, lies in the young people learning and gleaning from the best. That’s why if it’s legislated, it becomes an imperative.” (BO1)

“you have a responsibility to cultivate and nurture and grow this individual. That’s how I’m going to be able to create, as I said, movement around mentorship that is sustainable, that can deliver, that can be able to make an impact in our society.” (BO1)

“And when I have conversations around mentorship I would argue that between the “h” and the “t” in heart you have the word “ear”. And it is not there by mistake. So we need more of a nation that is willing to listen and to have an ear for what is being said and what is not being said, because very often we react to noise, we do not respond to what people are really saying.” (MM3).

“So what I am thinking now is the male network is more around networking I suppose to teaching. I think there might have been some kind of guidance but I am not sure, I think it was more informal, I am just making an assumption. And I think what woman do naturally is share and teach. I don’t know if that is a good generalization.” (FM1)

“So I think part of the mentoring of women and men is around integrating different perspectives of working with the world that business could benefit from.” (FM1)

“To drive a company- wide mentorship programme, really there must be a clear agenda from the side of the company. What are we trying to achieve as an organisation, with this, what are we trying to change in the organisation.” (MM4)

5.4.3.1 Do current government organisational policies support female leadership through facilitated mentoring programmes? What can be done?

There were mixed reactions to this question. While some mentors were aware of some initiatives present in current legislature none were currently being enforced. However, there were several reasons sighted for this and that is little or no resources are allocated to mentoring programmes in organisations. Suggestions varied as some mentors did not feel that it is was feasible to let government implement such programs solely but for businesses and individuals to also play their part. Some felt very strongly especially the female mentors that such policies should be legislated.

“They get to be pronounced, but not followed through. We have got for two terms of government now, we have got the Ministry for Women, but nothing really happens in the ministry for women. We even have the Ministry for Small Business, run by a woman minister, but she spends very little time helping women entrepreneurs, to become entrepreneurs and stand alone and be independent. So we are good in vision statements, pronouncements but not big in execution.” (MM3)

“Yeah, there’s no funding for this stuff.” (MM1)

“So that support, that um, institutionalised, sanctioned support, for ongoing learning and for the value that perhaps older more experienced people have and can pass down onto younger, less experienced people. I cannot see how that wouldn’t work, it can only be good.” (MM2)

“...And also the resources - if it’s sanctioned higher up, then I think resources would probably get focused on that, which would grow the marketing, which will grow the exposure, which will grow the awareness which will grow the perception, and it will be valued, potentially more.” (FM2)

“Make coaching compulsory at senior levels in government business... So I do work in senior government departments and levels and we actually have that coaching in government... the coaching and mentoring stuff. So I would make it far more compulsory in a way but also... education around it because I still think we try to make it compulsory because people don’t understand that does not mean they cannot do it, it means they can do it better.” (FM1)

“So education around what it can do. Easing the structure of mentoring and coaching into the structure of business and government promote education at top levels of business. Promoting and coaching is a culture of learning and development as an attitude and getting government and structures to support that.” (FM1)

A particular mentor felt strongly that segregating women from men perhaps was sending the wrong message. It was important that all business people receive good mentoring. *This is what they had to say*

“So if we promote woman in business, and I am not sure if we are promoting the right thing, we need to promote intelligence in business or wisdom in business or communities of practice in business which women bring. I don’t know if I am... because if we start to promote women, parse as an end results, I am not sure if we are going to get results we actually want, because then we have women and not wisdom and what might have women that are trying to be like men.” (FM1)

5.5 Conclusion

Mentorship has enhanced many careers, and is considered an important factor in both job satisfaction and enjoyment; however, since mentorship is a relationship formed between two individuals, it can either be successful or unsuccessful (Maloney, 2012). Several reasons have been listed as the reasons for success and failure of these mentoring relationships but the overwhelming response was that mentoring has proven to be successful in advancing women in business and there is a lot of mentoring going on informally and not enough formal mentoring taking place.

Networking is often associated with improved pay, higher performance, and career advancement, and employees who recognise and rely on these informal networks are often the top performing employees (Briggs et al., 2011). Companies also benefit from the networking relationships that form within and around their organisations. They add onto the intellectual capacity of the firm.

The findings of this study illustrated the importance of mentorship and networking on the success of women in business, and identified the benefits of mentoring women on the economy. The study also identified the challenges and factors that cause women to have less access to mentoring programmes and networks. Furthermore, the study identified the characteristics and traits of good mentors and from the responses of the interviewees it was

evident that these are the characteristics mentees try and emulate themselves. Suggestions were given on how mentoring and networking can be scaled up so that its benefits cannot only be realised by the individual but by companies and the country in alleviating poverty and meeting its millennium goals.

The details of the findings, and deductions will be elaborated in Chapter 6.

6 Chapter 6: Discussion of Results

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 5 the results from the research were presented as per the interviews with the 13 respondents. This chapter will discuss these findings and interpret the data from the two groups—mentors and mentees. Links will be made between the findings in Chapter 5, the literature review in Chapter 2, questions raised in Chapter 3, and the overall objectives that were set up for the study. These in brief were to understand and get an overview appreciation of the challenges faced by women in business and to understand the role of mentoring in creating successful business women. The study also sought to find out if strong business networks play a role in the mentoring of women and how this can benefit the women, their communities and the larger economy as a whole. The technique of frequency ranking allowed for the content to be ranked according to the regularity of comments by the respondents into themes. The general questions set to find out the challenges women face in business in general as a way of setting the tone for the challenges faced specifically in mentoring of women and how these may be linked or not linked to success in business. These are summarised below.

6.2 Research Question 1

What impact if any can mentorship play in creating successful business women?

In order to understand and appreciate the impact mentorship plays in creating successful business women it is important to understand the challenges women face that inhibit or slow down their success in business. Table 5 and Table 6 in sections 5.2 and 5.3, respectively summarised the challenges women face in business, emanating from historical gender biases against women, lack of women mentors, lack of strong networks, and the multiple roles that women play now in society.

6.2.1 Historical gender bias

Five of the mentees considered gender bias as a primary challenge. Terms such as inequality, and family challenges were raised, which suggested that women are aware that the society in which they are raised, is set up, in such a way which is disadvantageous to them. This challenge was especially raised by some of the more experienced mentees as an issue, perhaps because they have lived through a time in history when, not only did the laws not support women in business, but also society was set up such that women could not

advance. Certain issues were not questioned such as if money was an issue, why preference would be given to the boy child as opposed to the girl child to attend school. This is in line with Yulina & Russell (1993), who define patriarchy as “a system of social relations in which there is gender inequality between socially defined men and women”. Women in patriarchal societies are often excluded from political, social and economic positions. These women are also more likely to “experience poverty and unequal access to resources”. According to Yulina & Russell (1993), patriarchy is embedded in everyone, including women themselves.

Women were not included in mainstream business and therefore missed opportunities for promotion. Only in the last twenty or so years has this begun to evolve and change. Hence, women entered or are entering the business world on the back foot. In support of this it would be useful to look at the work by Werhane and Painter Morland (2011) which traces the empowerment of women back to the 1960s. However, by 2011, the representation of women in business was still very small. The 14 women cited as leading the Financial Times Global 500 companies were too few and this suggests that there are still challenges in empowering of women.

Friedman highlighted that by 2009, full time female employees were still earning about seventy-eight cents for every dollar that the men were earning. Although the laws in the country have changed in some situations this is still a harsh reality. Even the youngest of the mentees alluded to starting their own businesses at a time when the rules were unequal and only in recent times are the conversations changing even in the corporates.

The issue of “white privilege” was raised as a historical ill which still has not been completely removed from current business. The point made here is sometimes white males are blind to the fact that they are privileged, which makes it difficult at times to view these issues from a female’s point of view. Mentors unintentionally become harder on their white male mentees than female mentees. As a result, the males become more resilient and prepared for tougher times than their female counterparts. When it is time for promotion, the males then excel and occupy bigger roles and females have not gained enough resilience. Yulina & Russell (1993) maintain that these women are also more likely to “experience poverty and unequal access to resources”.

6.2.2 Limited access to resources

“Money and finances is a big challenge in terms of growing your own business, and women face those challenges more so because it is again, the asking, but it comes at a price. It is very different compared to what men have to give to get money.” (BO3).

Women especially in developing countries face challenges when it comes to accessing resources they need in business (Tambunan, 2009). From the results, it can be concluded that women face different challenges with regards to accessing finance, and other resources that could assist them in participating in business. Lack of learning opportunities in various forms were also raised as a challenge. Education too was a challenge. Most women did not have the finances to enrol into a degree of their choice. Without the same levels of education or without any education, women then struggle to forge forward in the business world. This finding is aligned with the study by Bardasi (2007), which stated that, women’s productivity is slowed down tremendously by inequality in education and unequal access to resources.

6.2.3 Lack of women mentors

The lack of resources is an issue that is linked to the lack of female mentors. Having a mentor is a form of learning. The absence of this kind of learning, and the passing on of experiences from mentors, is a disservice to women in business. The literature by Fitzsimmons reiterated that the lack of mentorship and female role models is a key barrier to the success of women. Evans (2014) asserts this finding in his study which traces, the impact of mentorship on women’s progression. Hoyt and Murphy (2016) allude to the fact that women still remain underrepresented in higher positions within corporate. By 2014 Women held 10% seats on boards and 20% of seats in parliament across the world. It then follows that there are not as many role models and women mentors to access.

Almost all the interviewees that were mentees agreed that, there were not enough women mentors to carry out this service. Reasons varied as some felt that it was because there were not enough female role models to access. Others felt that those who were great mentors are already overwhelmed and time becomes a great challenge. Others felt that women were not willing to mentor other women. The notion of the Queen Bee syndrome could perhaps explain this. A study by Dalton (2007) states that “women who achieve success build a moat around themselves rather than build bridges to enable and mentor other women” (p.350).

Ellemers et al., (2012) further argue that the Queen Bees develop as a result of gendered leadership positions in the workplace, and this Queen Bee effect could be harmful to the career opportunities of women as a group. Since “Queen Bees” are protective of their status, they will try and minimise any potential threats to their positions. Although this statement may hold some truth, it was interesting to note that some of the female mentors made extensive efforts to help other women. This was from both women in corporate and the entrepreneurs. This statement expresses the opinion of most of the women interviewed and especially as they spoke of their roles as mentors *“I think when you are a working mom; you should extend the same grace to other working moms. I think when you are a female executive you should extend the same grace to female executives.”* It is possible therefore that the mentees have a perception of the queen bee, and this limits them from asking female mentors to mentor them. The mentors are quite clear that it is their prerogative to assist and pull up other women.

6.2.4 Lack of strong networks and support systems

Mentees acknowledged that they do not have strong support structures in place, and that includes networks. It has been identified that the lack of networks hampers their progress in business. Strong business networks assist in accelerating the growth of women in business. A lack of strong networks means that they also lacked the support that comes from these support groups which helps them to accelerate in their work or business from day to day. This is in line with Ming-Yen’s(2007) findings that; women entrepreneurs in developing countries face a serious deficit in peer support networks when compared to men.

The study also found that there was a lack of strong support groups in the participant’s personal lives as well, especially from their spouse or partner or significant other. Issues about women abuse in the form of jealousy and bullying or emanating from bad marriages were brought up, and these were found to have negative repercussions on how such women conduct themselves in business. The study found that women needed extra support to deal with such and other issues. Unfortunately, women do not necessarily join any groups or associations that can give them this support as they are weighed down with business and family duties. This limits their ability to seek informal advice, financing, and prevents them from forming information networks, which are imperative to the survival of their businesses (Parvin et al., 2012).

Another form of support which women raised as lacking was sponsorships. The results of the study show that it is almost imperative that a mentor be a good sponsor and that

mentoring should be in conjunction with sponsorship. The findings showed that sponsorship is important and an imperative extension to mentorship. Sponsorship can be seen as the cherry on top after a good mentoring relationship has been established. Sponsorship is part of what Maloney (2012) terms as professional advancement functions in addition to coaching and the provision of challenging career advancement assignments. It is also evident from the results that sponsorships lead to women taking on more challenging assignments as their sponsors advocate for them to take on these roles. Furthermore, the results dictated that mentorship alone, as good as it is, is more effective if the mentor goes further to sponsor the mentee in some form. When sponsored, mentors are proactive and actually do things that support the enhancement of the mentee such as advocating for a promotion for them, as well as actively seeking a network and introducing them. In their words, the difference was in the action.

Numerous studies mention that well-structured formal mentoring programmes are a way to enhance career advancement for women, and access to informal networks could also promote more women into senior management roles or positions within business (Briggs et al., 2011). The mentees mostly admitted that although they realise the importance of networking within the organisation, they felt that they could do better in that area and were not engaging their networks to the fullest. The women felt that they were more comfortable with working or networking with people they know or are familiar with first before expanding or reaching out to people outside their circles. This issue is dealt with at a deeper level later.

6.2.5 Benefits of mentorship

The multi-faceted roles that women play as mother, family heads, providers, carers and others then make it necessary for women to require extra support and assistance. The literature says that women invest more of their incomes 90% as compared to men who invest 40% back to their families. Knowing this there is a strong case for women to be empowered to enhance in their careers. Women lack opportunities of advancement and with this need support and sponsorship in finding these opportunities and filling these spaces. The African Commission Report, which was published in 2007, reiterates the economic importance of women in Africa. The report emphasised the earlier arguments made, that women, have a greater potential in improving the economy through financial contributions than men do (Bardasi, 2007)

The psychosocial benefits as unanimously raised by the mentees was the encouragement they received from another person, which allowed them to realise their potential. It also helped them understand and work on their weaknesses. Mentees also said that they gained new friendships and relationships in other forms; and as such, these women alluded to gaining an extra parent or new parent in the absence of one. The advice they got from their mentors was irreplaceable and these lessons were not found in a formal educational setup but were real and practical learning, which can only come from experience. Furthermore, the findings showed that positive feedback from mentors enhanced the mentees approach to their work and their way of doing things. Maloney (2012) confirms this.

Mentoring helped in promotions to more senior roles, in the case of the corporate leaders, and for entrepreneurs, it was the courage to expand their business or take a leap into a new business. Performance is enhanced and a more flexible workforce is created. Furthermore, they were more committed to their roles, managers and their companies. Mentees become equipped to carry on their careers more boldly as they could tackle issues better and with more tact after being mentored. The study found that those who had mentors were less stressed and less inclined to move jobs. Furthermore, the female business owners felt that there was very little that could deter them from moving forward or taking on the next challenge in business. This confirms Maloney's (2012) findings that women were struggling to find and take on challenging assignments. In the presence of a mentoring relationship this was negated. Clarke's (2006) research confirms these results as the women indicated that without the mentors they often reached a glass ceiling and were compelled to leave. Clark sited that part of the reason women in senior positions exited was due to the lack of support and loneliness that came with such positions.

6.2.6 Challenges emanating from socialisation

According to the Socio Cognitive Theory, gender concepts are generated from what is seen and heard from a very young age, i.e., "gender conceptions are constructed from the complex mix of experiences" (Bussey & Bandura, 1999,p.676), which are brought about by a broad network of social influences. The research found that in the pipeline of big multinationals, there's normally a 50/50 representation in terms of gender representation, but as they progress, you'll see a tapering off of women, to senior positions in the business.

Bussey & Bandura (1999) rightly affirm this. The research findings were in line with this as most mentees broke established norms by being bold and seizing the opportunity to break out from the traditional roles and careers such as teaching, and move into industries such as construction and mining that were considered mostly for males.

According to trait theory a person's personality can be achieved by indicating the person's level based on certain traits. Also, the personality traits exhibited by a leader or person in a leadership position can influence the performance of their employees or co-workers (Maisarah et al., 2016). Mentors are often leaders within their organisations or places of employment. Trait theory suggests that the personality of the mentor will affect the success of the mentee. The mentees were very elaborate in describing the traits they admired the most about their mentors and those they wished to emulate. The study found that qualities or traits of a good mentor were: pioneering, trustworthy, accountable, caring, supportive, teacher, self-aware and authentic, leader, humble. It was evident from the findings that the mentors were also aware of these traits that they had and wanted their mentees to emulate these.

Furthermore, the results indicated that timespan was an important determiner in the effectiveness of mentorship. Mentees felt that unless the mentor-mentee relationship came to an end when the goals that had been set out in the beginning had been achieved, the relationship could start taking a negative dip. Maloney (2012) talks about the life stages in a mentoring relationship. There is a beginning middle and end. These are set up at the beginning of the relationship

6.3 Research Question 2

Do strong business networks play a role in mentoring of women?

This research question sought to understand what the benefits of networking are and how these could enhance the performance of women in business. If effective networking was a career advancer the research sought to find out how getting involved in networking groups or events could improve women's business skills. The responses with regards to suggestions on how to do this better between the mentees and mentors differed significantly. However, both groups felt strongly that networking was certainly a necessity. The results of the research showed that having good networks in business helped mentees move into the next level in their lines of business. Issues were raised that historically business networks were built by and around males, and therefore excluded females. Phrases such as the "old boys club" were used on several occasions and these suggested that the girls were feeling left out. The female mentees admitted that they are not great at networking, but would want to improve as they see the value this has. This aligns with (Briggs et al., 2011), who maintained that successful employees relied on networks to continually develop.

Women entrepreneurs in developing countries face a serious deficit in peer support networks when compared to men (Ming-Yen, 2007). This is despite the fact that various women entrepreneurs and industry associations are present to assist them to form networks, exchange information, and experiences. The results of the research show that in recent times the trend has been that women in business have started forming their own networks such as the Business Women Association of South Africa. Other groups mentioned were Business Networking Institute (BNI) and Institute of Directors (IOD). With technology has also come Social Media Networking groups such as LinkedIn. The findings indicated that although the social groups are less effective in business, it is more easy to ask for help within these groups than the professional ones.

Having a high network is closely linked to having a high net-worth. This is confirmed by the literature by Briggs et al (2011) who said that networking is often associated with improved pay, higher performance, and career advancement. Furthermore, employees who recognise and rely on these informal networks are often the top performing employees. They also mention that access to informal networks has more of an impact on career advancement. The mentees, especially the business owners, elaborated more on accessing their informal networks than formal ones and this was also closely linked to the fact that most of their mentoring relationships were informal. Mentors introduced mentees to new circles, often these were the mentor's personal links and connections. Consequently, the mentees networks also became larger and sponsorships and as promotion opportunities were presented to them. Mentees now had leverage to take them on.

The mentors realised the value of their networks and how they have been useful to them and so were keen to share these with their mentees. The male mentors were almost unanimous in that mentees, especially the women, were not necessarily good at networking or asking for help with access to their networks. The females were split on this issue as some admitted that they too were not necessarily good at networking but instead made use of their formal networks such as Professional Bodies (the Coaching and Mentoring Network) to assist them where there is a need. In some instances mentors would see value in connecting their mentees with someone influential in their network and would suggest that they connect to discuss certain issues. Research by Mohammadi suggests that access to informal networks formed out of organisational boundaries have more of an impact on career advancement. From the findings it is evident that male mentors seem to have better access to networks and social circles that could prove beneficial to the mentees. The reason for this could be the fact that female mentors are still relatively young in the industry, and previously being

disadvantaged, have not built up vast networks as their male counterparts (Mohammadi, Hosseinzadeh, & Kazemi 2012)

Fitzsimmons (2012) mentions that women are excluded from certain networks because they say that women may often be denied the opportunity to go on business trips with their senior male counterparts, because their wives oppose from doing so. This phenomenon was not entirely strange as the male interviewees did bring up the issue of being sensitive about the times that they meet with their mentees and also being sensitive as to how involved they get with their personal lives and space. The male mentors were more inclined to talk about the formal mentoring as they talked about contracting more than the female mentors. Contracting helped to create a safe space, yet conducive for learning.

Gremmen and Benschop question whether networks are always beneficial, as well as oppose the fact that professional women's networks are empowering. This may be confirmed by the research findings where some of the mentees said not all business networks they had been part of are beneficial and more so the social networks may not necessarily be valuable in certain areas but admittedly confirmed that the value of women's networks can be explained by the fact that it operates within and in collaboration with a variety of other networks and dynamics as suggested by (Werhane & Painter-Morland, 2011). This may also be reiterated by the fact that the mentors have different networks to meet different needs and aspects of their lives.

Existing literature on gender and workplace networking suggests that women and men network differently (Alsop, 2015). A study conducted by Accenture (as cited in Clark, 2006) on male and female executives found that there were more similarities than differences between the two, yet the main reason for the lack of women in top positions is the fact that there is still the existence of male networks and family commitments. Interviewees raised concerns the difficulty of accessing networks unless they knew or were mentored by someone who is already in some these networks. This re-iterates the importance and the need and advocacy for sponsors. Sponsors actively ensured that their mentees get exposed and deliberately introduced to networks that would enhance their businesses or careers.

One of the main issues looked at in research over the past few years, is the relationship between gender and informal networks in the workplace (Mohammadi et al., 2012). According to this study, the main reason that women earn less, get promoted less and are less successful than their male counterparts is due to the fact that women do not have access to as many resources as their male colleagues. Morehead et al. (2012), points out

that women and minorities face barriers to career advancement and more senior positions due to the lack of access to information and networking. (Fitzsimmons, 2012) backs up this point by mentioning that access to informal networks remains a significant problem for women. The research pointed out that possibly, women are less inclined to ask for help when they need it. Women are more sensitive or afraid of being perceived of exploiting a relationship when they have to seek help from someone whom they have not interacted with for a long time for example. Men do not really make this a serious consideration. If they need to make contact with someone they will do so.

As stated by Glass and Cook (2016) women are less likely than men to have access to strong professional networks, which help them get the much needed support they need in order to realise upward movement in business. The mentors supported this by calling males hustlers which was also driven by social roles that view the man as the provider of the family needs and the woman the recipient. Women due to their caring nature are sensitive to how they make use of their networks. Women are less inclined to call on a favour from a friend that they have not spoken to in a long time for fear of making them feeling like they are using them for their own benefit as compared to the males who can easily call upon a colleague they have not spoken to for years and request help due to their expertise. (Glass & Cook, 2016)

This is also reflected by women's behaviour in corporates. The study by (Mohammadi et al., 2012) which looked into the intra-organisational informal relationships, between men and women; it is quite evident that women engage in informal networks in the workplaces as well as men or even more than them. This could possibly be attributed to the fact that the types and depths to which informal networks are formed differ depending on the nature and type of work (Mohammadi et al., 2012).

6.4 Research Question 3

Can economies benefit from investing in mentoring opportunities for women and how?

Research Question 3 sought to assess the benefits of mentoring on a larger scale. It looks at it from an organisational view, community and the country at large. The question sought out to assess the benefits of mentorship beyond the individual. Since the benefits are deemed worthwhile the question would therefore be how can organisations and the state owned

entities get more involved in this process to get more women involved and hopefully in return grow the economy of the country?

6.4.1 Benefits for the companies

A Catalyst Report in 2013, advocating for diversity in business, gives the following four key pillars for the business case to have more women in senior positions and as members on boards: improved financial performance by companies, the ability to leverage talent is increased, active participation in the market place is realised while reputation and increased innovation and group performance are enhanced. All these issues were aligned to the research findings of this study. To quote one of the mentors *"I think that is a no-brainer, for us. We know that companies that have women on boards do better. It's a business case, right. Let's go macro."*(BE1)

Eagle&Carli stated that the advantages companies could enjoy from bringing in more women included bringing new unique and important perspectives. This means that they become more effective and enjoy financial success as well (States & Fitzsimmons, 2016). A paper by (Liu et al., 2014) which studied the impact of women directors on firm performance in China, shows that an increase in the number of women in senior positions have a significant and positive impact on the performance of a firm or organisation.

6.4.2 Benefits for the nation

The mentees and mentors were unanimous in that the empowerment and upward mobility of women in society results in better performing businesses. If businesses thrive, whether they are private or public entities, the communities in which they operate thrive and so does the national economy at large. There was a strong sense that came out from the participants that there is strength in numbers and women would be able to make a significant difference on the economy.

Leadership was an important issue brought up and it was suggested that the issue was not just about raising women business experts, but leaders in their various roles. Mentorship would teach these women not just to be smart but to be courageous, to have a heart and to be comfortable with themselves. Leadership was seen by others as being crucial and important in that it does not only look at the tangible issues but the intangible issues such as being able to give others hope, realising the potential others have and spurring them on. It is about connecting with people on a human level and ensuring they excel. Happy employees

bring benefits to the company and success in business results in a thriving economy. Success of the nation here is measured not only in financial deliverables but in the quality of people and lives that its citizens live. A very pertinent point was raised that mentoring is crucial in bringing up great leaders and highlighted the benefits that it can bring. An example was given of the mentoring relationship between Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu. They had a mentorship relationship, and most people would not even be aware of the fact that Nelson Mandela was mentored by Walter Sisulu. *In support of Kanter's notion of tokenism it is crucial to be aware that what the country needs is leaders and not just tokens. Women bring in true leadership and not just femininity*(Liu et al., 2014).

Entrepreneurs bring about several benefits to an individual, a community, a country and the global economy at large. In brief these can be summarised as: economic growth, increased incomes, improved standards of living, increased investment opportunities, enlargement of tax base by a greater number of new firms, technological developments and increase in job opportunities (Nieman et al., 2007). The African Commission Report, which was published in 2007, reiterates the economic importance of women in Africa. The report emphasised the earlier arguments made, that women, have a greater potential in improving the economy through financial contributions than men do (Bardasi, 2007)The results of the research glaringly state that there is power in the masses, there's power in creating that dent in the economy of the country.

Unlike men, women business leaders face distinctive challenges emanating from the local market environment in which they must operate, and more often than not, it is these difficulties that lead to significantly low participation of women in the economies of their societies (Amine & Staub, 2009). It is therefore important that attention is paid to these challenges in whichever form they present themselves. All interviewees were in agreement with this statement and had no doubts that the empowerment of women was for the greater good for all.

6.4.3 Suggestions on how mentoring can benefit economy

Suggestions were mostly positive but centred around embedding processes in legislature. The participants felt strongly that laws pertaining to Black economic empowerment (BEE) and Employment Equity for example have been a success in part because they are legislated. With this came the suggestion that mentoring especially in corporate organisations should be legislated.

Others suggested a more collaborative approach where the onus is on everybody, individuals and companies to work together in making mentoring a success in all processes. The reasoning was women are more collaborative and better at taking the team along and this is critical in the success of mentoring and getting critical mass. Business would do what they do best which is to make business decisions and then government supports them by creating policies that create an environment in which business can thrive (Shabangu, 2015).

With the numbers of women in business growing, and women in government too, the suggestions around that were that formal mentoring relationships be created between women in the private sector and those in government mentoring each other. This kind of mentoring is effective in that exchanges of ideas will take place and also strengthening of the cohort of women leaders that exist. The literature speaks about reverse mentoring.

The lack of trust between the genders is reflected in the female mentees not having much faith in government driving this forward or making it a priority on the goals of the nation. The males however acknowledged that there is room for making this a priority as the results of mentorship speak for themselves. The premise for this was if companies are quick to drop their commitment to the formal mentoring process when business is tough then it is most likely that this would be the case with Government.

Some respondents showed very little confidence in the system. They felt that although it is mentioned in the policies such as the MDGs which promote greater opportunities for women to take charge in business allows for them to earn better incomes which in turn will aid poverty reduction. The potential for women to empower the societies they live in has not been fully exploited and this research confirms this. On a positive note although no formal programs have been set in stone, recently there has been recognition of how mentorship can be made a part of government processes. *"It's been all over the news recently and one of the things I loved about it was eventually they are going to have a mentorship component where some of the most senior business leaders in South Africa will be in that mentorship panel and they get to interact with the CEO's or leadership teams of some of these,"* said one of the mentors.

Several reports such as the African Commission report (2207) reiterate the economic importance of women. It emphasises earlier arguments made that women have greater potential in improving the economy through financial contributions, more so than men. It then

becomes unquestionable that business entities and state organisations need to act on this and ensure that women receive the support they need to enhance this.

Conclusion

The 13 respondents gave insights that are rich and dense. Their journeys and experiences shared were priceless and gleaned on the challenges faced by women in business and how mentoring and networking play a role in alleviating the struggles women face. The two are highly necessary and interlinked such that it is imperative that all stakeholders invest in the process. Women bring in their willingness to participate in business and their strengths such as nurturing caring personalities and the mentors bring in their wisdom and expertise and time by making themselves available. The organisations and national economy benefit from the ripple effects that emanate from the empowerment and upward mobility of women in society. There is no doubt that when policies are made they should not overlook the benefits that come with the mentoring and networking of women in society.

7 Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This study set out to investigate and establish the role of mentoring on the success of women business leaders. The researcher sought to ascertain whether the challenges emanating from lack of mentorship and access to networks, can add to the success of women leading business. It was felt that the issues around mentoring of women and networking could bring some answers in alleviating some of the challenges that women face in business.

This chapter will examine whether these objectives were met. The main findings will be briefly summarised including the weaknesses of the study. Recommendations for future research will be discussed. Implications for management will be listed to assist organisations with future planning.

7.2 Research Relevance Re-visited

The issues are topical and currently under discussion. The research combines literature that has been written before and integrates the findings from the qualitative interviews conducted with new knowledge and understanding on mentoring and networking in business for women. The respondents shared some deep insights into the topic from their various experiences.

The findings presented in Chapter 5 and analysed in Chapter 6 are consistent with most literature. This chapter will then add to the broader literature and expand on the topic of mentorship and the use of networks in mentoring and business which enhances the empowerment of women in business.

The literature brought to the fore several issues:

- Women lag behind their male colleagues in business. What are the main reasons behind this?
- What role does mentoring and networking play in removing these key barriers which women in business face?
- Can businesses and the economies benefit from the mentoring of women in business and how can this be done?

7.3 Research Findings

7.3.1 Challenges faced by women in business

The results showed that women face various challenges in business and these varied from person to person and business to business but there were many commonalities too. These could be grouped into themes and mostly around psycho social issues and professional issues. The two are closely linked and related such that it is difficult to separate the psycho social benefits from the professional benefits that are realised when mentoring and networking are practised in business.

The most common themes that came up were: historical gender bias which results in the disadvantaged position of women. This was also as a direct result of socialisation and the different cognitive frameworks from which women and men operate. Patriarchy was one such named issue. These then translates into direct problems such as unequal or no access to resources for women specifically education and finance. It then follows that women lack formal mentoring opportunities in particular from other women and suffer the effects of the Queen Bee syndrome, lack strong networks and support systems. They then find themselves dealing with glass ceiling issues and tokenism. They then struggle to cope with issues around abuse in their personal and professional spaces and therefore are disadvantaged as compared to the men. These challenges present themselves in several ways in the lives of a lot of women.

7.3.2 The benefits for mentoring of women

Several benefits can be listed from the mentoring of women. These can be segmented into benefits for the individual, business and the country at large. The psychosocial benefits resulting from mentoring are encouragement from another person which makes mentees see and realise their potential where they could not see it before. It also helps them realise and work on their weaknesses. They gain new friendships and relationships in other forms. Women alluded to gaining an extra parent or new parent in the absence of one, within their mentors. The advice they get from their mentors is irreplaceable and these lessons are not found in a formal educational setup but is real and practical learning which can only come from experience. Feedback received from mentors is invaluable.

As a result, women get promoted faster to more senior roles corporates and the entrepreneurs find courage to expand their business or take on new business. The women perform better and are more flexible to take on a wider scope of duties. They are more committed to their roles, managers and the companies they worked for when they have been through the hands of a good mentor and become more loyal to them and felt less or no inclination to leave the organisations in which they are and the entrepreneurs were less inclined to quit or give up during tough times. They are less stressed, have more autonomy and work resulting in better performance of their duties. Overall mentees are happier and find their journeys with a mentor very fulfilling.

The benefits of mentoring are also realised by companies and the country these include, improved financial performance, increased ability to leverage talent, active participation in the market place while building reputation and increased innovation and group performance. It is also important for business to take note of the less tangible benefits such as loyalty and a healthier happier workforce. The empowerment and upward mobility of women in society results in better performing businesses. When individuals and businesses thrive so do the communities in which they live and operate in. In turn the national economy is boosted. The economy benefits from the power that comes from the collective effort and active participation of more women.

7.3.3 The role of networks in business

Effective networking has been found to be a career or business advancer. The benefits are centred mostly on gaining financial power or independence and knowledge in business as specifically around their particular industries. There are two types of networks formal and informal just as with the mentoring and the results showed that the informal networks are proving to have more of an impact on people's careers and businesses. The current situation is that women recognise the impact of mentorship but realise that they lag behind in their skills to network and there is room for improvement. There are increasingly more formal networks for women and these have proven to add value such as the business women's association and others and social media in the form of LinkedIn and numerous others. It would be beneficial to rid society of the long standing "old boys club" and create an "all-inclusive club" in society. Mentoring plays a significant role in expanding women's networks when implemented properly and effectively.

7.3.4 Impact of mentoring and networking beyond the individual.

In addition to some of the benefits of mentoring and networking already discussed earlier some additional ones include economic growth, increased incomes, improved standards of living for people, increased investment opportunities, enlargement of the country's tax base by a greater number of new firms, technological developments driven by innovation and increase in job opportunities. An issue that was raised was that the quality of leaders raised from this process is far richer than could have been imagined.

Figure 2: Mentoring and Networking Model



Source: Authors own

The mentoring Model Depicted above summarises in brief the advantages of mentoring and networking. The different triangles represent the main stakeholders in the process namely the mentees, mentors and business including the state. The triangles deliberately are pointing upwards to reflect the upward mobility of each group of stakeholders.

The yellow triangle called the 'sweetspot' represents the main benefits to all the stakeholders. The list is exhausted but encapsulates a few of them? When all the

stakeholders bring in their strengths and capabilities it results in the ‘sweet’ position of success for all.

7.4 Implications for Management

It is widely suggested and encouraged that businesses and government take mentorship and networking into their organisations with serious intent and that formal programmes be implemented and where possible be enforced since the benefits have proven to be beneficial to all stakeholders. There is a widespread view that informal mentoring and networking are most effective but are difficult to enforce but must be highly encouraged promoted and perhaps incentivised. A more collaborative effort is needed in this aspect.

It is recommended that companies invest in formal mentoring and networking programmes and encourage informal mentoring and networking. This can be done in several ways such as formalising mentoring programmes, incentivising and rewarding success, identifying talent and sponsoring individuals to success, coaching of women and men to empower them to mentor others.

7.5 Limitations of the Research

The research was limited in that participants in the survey largely consisted of women leading and owning business in Gauteng South Africa. They were more accessible. Due to time constraints it was not possible to interview more women business leaders or owners; however, rigour was ensured in the methodology to ensure that the data collected would be generalisable.

Subjects were difficult to access and mostly too busy to make time for interviews. This is due to the demanding nature of their roles and time was very limited.

Bias is a part of the research process as the research topic choice is personal and of high interest to the researcher; therefore, there was a danger of the researcher making their own inferences into the subjects’ conclusions. The researcher tried to be aware of these at all times and minimising it by being flexible and intellectually aware.

Due to the busy nature of the participants especially the mentees it was vitally important that interviews start on time as often they would have other appointments to attend to after. The researcher found that once they were running late there was the anxiety that came with being aware of the time in order to leave on time for the next interview. This made it necessary to establish rapport quickly and may have impacted on the quality of the responses as often the responses especially with the last questions could have been rushed.

7.6 Suggestions for Future Research

Some suggestions that can be given for future research include looking more at the less spoken of issues that were raised as challenges for women. Specifically, around abuse of women which comes in the form of jealousy and mistrust from their superiors or those more experienced in business. A more collaborative and inclusive approach to mentoring and networking needs to be considered and a realisation and acceptance of the fact that the softer intangible issues affecting people are a driving force in business and cannot be ignored.

Further research may be important to elicit responses from a broader sample of women in corporates and business owners. This research was based on thirteen interviews with successful women in business and mentors perhaps a wider pool could bring more perspectives regarding the challenges women face in advancing in business.

The key challenges unravelled in this research could possibly not be the only or key challenges. Future research could quantitatively test whether these are really the key issues and confirm their ratings. A more longitudinal research could be conducted which will take place over a couple of years instead of a few months to give more time to the observations on the impact of mentoring.

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9 Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview Schedule (Mentees)

General Questions

Job Title

Industry

Years of Experience

- 0-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15
- 16 -20
- 21-25
- 26-30
- 31+

Gender :

Research Question 1: What are the challenges faced by women business leaders?

1. Women constitute about 50% of the world population yet their representation in business is much less. What do you think are some of the biggest challenges women face in business that prevents them from having more proportional representation in business?
2. Who inspires you and why?
3. Do you have a mentor or mentors in your life? What role have they played in your business life?
4. What qualities or traits do you see in your mentor that you wish to emulate?

Research Question 2: What impact if any can mentorship play in creating successful business women?

1. Do you notice a difference in the way you conduct business since you had a business mentor? How has this contributed towards your success?
2. Would you recommend that other women get a mentor if they want guaranteed success and why?

Research Question 3: Can economies benefit from investing in mentoring opportunities for women?

1. What do you think has been your contribution to the economy of this country? Has your mentor played a part in assisting you to be more successful?
2. Do you feel you are ready to contribute more meaningfully to your community around you?
3. What suggestions would you give to get more women involved in mentorship programmes?
4. How do you see this impacting on the growth of the national economy?

Research Question 4: Do strong business networks play a role in mentoring of women?

1. How strong are your business networks?
2. Do you think your networks have assisted in mentoring you towards your success?
3. Would you have still made the same achievements without these networks?

Appendix 2

Interview Schedule (Mentors)

General Questions

Job Title

Industry

Years of Experience

- 0-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15
- 16 -20
- 21-25
- 26-30
- 31+

Gender :

Research Question 1: What are the challenges faced by women business leaders?

1. What has been your journey into business? How has that been for you?
2. Women constitute about 50% of the world population yet their representation in business is much less. What do you think are some of the biggest challenges women face in business that prevents them from having more proportional representation in business?
3. How has mentorship been a challenge for women in business?

Research Question 2: What impact if any can mentorship play in creating successful business women?

1. How did you meet your mentee or mentees?
2. Do you feel mentorship has a role to play in the success of women in business?

Research Question 3: Can economies benefit from investing in mentoring opportunities for women?

1. Reports have been written and conclude that women are empowered, economies benefit. Do you think mentoring can contribute to the success of women in business and in turn how can economies benefit?
2. What suggestions would you give on how this can be done and to accelerate the growth?
3. Do current government organisational policies support female leadership through facilitated mentoring programmes? What can be done?

Research Question 4: Do strong business networks play a role in mentoring of women?

1. Do you feel your mentees have strong business networks? How do these contribute to their success?
2. Does your mentee/mentees make use of your business networks? How has this added value towards their success?
3. Do you think women lag behind when it comes to establishing strong business networks? How can this be improved?

Appendix 3

Consent Letter

Dear Madam

The impact of mentorship on the success of women in business

This letter serves to obtain the consent or disapproval of a third party to participate in an interview used in research conducted in the process of fulfilling the requirements for a Master's degree at the University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science.

I am conducting research on the impact of mentorship on the success of women in business. Our interview is expected to last approximately one hour and will help me understand how mentorship may have had an impact on your success as a woman in business. I am hoping that the results will assist businesses in their decision-making around investing in mentorship programmes for women. It may further assist those women in business who are not currently in mentoring relationships to realise the value that this may bring in accelerating their growth path.

Please note: Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. All data will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be provided in the research report.

If you have any concerns, please contact me or my supervisor. Our details are provided below.

Researcher

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Research Supervisor

Verity Hawarden

Email pvharden@global.co.za

Phone: 0823313575

Signature of participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of researcher: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 4

Consent Letter (Mentors)

Dear Sir / Madam

The impact of mentorship on the success of women in business

This letter serves to obtain the consent or disapproval of a third party to participate in an interview used in research conducted in the process of fulfilling the requirements for a Master's degree at the University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science.

I am conducting research on the impact of mentorship on the success of women in business. Our interview is expected to last approximately one hour and will help me understand how your expertise in mentoring may have had an impact on the success of a woman or several women you would know in business. I am hoping that the results will assist businesses in their decision-making around investing in mentorship programmes for women. It may further assist those women in businesses that are not currently in mentoring relationships to realise the value that this may bring in accelerating their growth path. It is hoped that it will also encourage more people like you who have the capacity to get involved in mentoring someone.

Please note: Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. All data will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be provided in the research report.

If you have any concerns, please contact me or my supervisor. Our details are provided below.

Researcher

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Research Supervisor

Verity Hawarden

Email pvharden@global.co.za

Phone: 0823313575

Signature of participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of researcher: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 5

Ethical Clearance consent form

Dear Ms Sandra Nyarenda

Protocol Number: Temp2016-01465

Title: The impact of mentorship on the success of women business leaders.

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been APPROVED.

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.

We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

Kind Regards,

Adele Bekker