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## The impact of South African culture on the work-life balance of women in leadership positions

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### Abstract

Women are the pillars of every healthy society. Numerous socio-cultural practices, especially patriarchy and religion in African communities deprive women of equality and justice across all sectors of society. However, younger and educated generations seem to adopt a different attitude. This paper explores the impact of South African culture and the work-life balance (WLB) of women in managerial positions since the democracy's inception. A survey based on elements of three complementary theories: the role of congruity, feminism and cultural dimension theories was used to collect data from 187 women in leadership positions in the Mangaung metropolitan municipality in the Free State province of South Africa giving a 75% return rate. A factor analysis was conducted to determine the loading of items. The reliability of instruments using the Cronbach alpha value was reported at 0.87. Results reveal that 47.1% bemoan cultural tendencies at work. Furthermore, 35.7% opined that the choice between adoption and conceiving children is non-negotiable, despite pressing work demands and 34.3% agreed that culture makes them feel guilty if they give their work preference over their family life. Crafting human resource strategies that advocate for 'gender equality or sensitivity' and harmonise the work-life balance of female staff in order to enhance their performance in a sustainable way is long overdue and needs to be prioritized by any South African organizations.

**Keywords:** African culture, Entrepreneurial, Gender roles, Self-efficacy, Socialization, Women leadership, Work-life balance.

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## 1. Introduction

The eradication of gender discrimination and inequality has been a serious issue worldwide since time immemorial. Pervasive socio-cultural changes in modern times have resulted in a diverse set of pros and cons for African female leaders. Women perform numerous duties both at home and at the workplace and how women comprehend and practice managerial roles continues to generate increased interest from research and in practice [1]. This paper examines the role played by African culture within the context of the South African situation without making any assertions or claims about cultural homogeneity. The socialisation of the boy and girl child is done differently within African communities and manifests itself as such in their later years as adults. Anderson [2] states that people's behaviour is affected and determined by the values and beliefs that they learn during the enculturation process. Enculturation is the process of socialisation where a homogenous clan learns and absorbs the cultural norms, traditions and customs of the cultural clan to which they belong [3].

Magubane [4] opines that indigenous African women have cultural hardships, oppression and raw deals that is, discrimination and unfair treatment from all spheres of society. Jackson and Fransman [5] concur that these three forms of oppression relate to violence against and abuse of women, poverty and poor health status in general. Although, there are patriarchal tendencies in the amend, with men engaging in problem solving efforts, for instance, abuse of women and justice and fairness in the workplace, engrained African culture does not make it easy for working women to find a work-life balance relative to men. The distinctions between genders are still evident. In addition, litany of research reflected on matters pertaining to women's vulnerability with ingrained traditional practices running havoc in deliberate efforts to fight Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) as well as a broad range of gender issues amplifying gender roles and consciousness towards gender injustices and inequality. Nkomo and Ngambi [6] state that researchers must be aware of the significant contributions of African women in leadership positions, their status and any experiences or barriers to their success. The intention is to contribute to a topical discourse around socio-cultural transformation and to propose strategies that assist in eradicating gender stereotypes pertaining to woman leaders within South African communities.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. The Mediation Role of Culture in the Relationship between Work-Life Balance and Women's Leadership Performance

Various studies conducted have not only focused mainly on organisational culture but have also reported that it plays a mediating role in work-life balance and leadership performance. Berson, et al. [7] found that entrepreneurial cultures mediated the relationship between work-life balance and company sales growth of Chief Executive Officer (CEOs). Similarly, Cegarra-Leiva, et al. [8] in their study on 229 Small and Mid-size Enterprises (SMEs) representing the metal industry sector of southeast Spain found that an organisational culture (WLB supportive culture) mediates the effect of the availability of WLB practices on organisational and leadership performance. Munn [9] demonstrated in his study that the mediating role of organisational culture on work-life benefits financial and leadership performance. Finally, Hua, et al. [10] reveal in their study that organisational culture among Chinese women leaders can be enhanced by work-life balance improvements. In this study however, the context of culture is viewed through the lens of a particular community, specifically 'South' African culture with no claim to cultural homogeneity. In view of that, we hypothesized that South African culture mediates the relationship between work-life balance and women's leadership performance.

### 2.2. African Culture and Female Leadership in Perspective

Salgado, et al. [11] claim that in today's highly competitive environment, organisations need to focus on organisational culture that will support the development of all employees' knowledge and potential. Culture is the glue that holds families, organisations and groups together. To retain a good, talented workforce, the organisation has to create a positive and conducive environment for the output required [12] for all and sundry. Successful organisations tend to respect their employees and adapt their policies to be more flexible for the benefit of employees so that a greater level of employee engagement can be achieved [12]. Continuous staff turnover in a company indicates that the culture of that organisation is dogmatic and employees' dissatisfaction causes them to quit their job. This shows that the culture of any organisation plays a vital role in retaining employees' in a company for a long period of time [13].

According to Hofstede [14], culture is defined as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others". Culture is the totality of the customs, traditions, beliefs, behaviour, dress and attitude to life among other things of a people who vary from society to society [15]. In African culture and traditional life, gender is defined according to the roles and functions in the society. It is what it means to be male or female in a certain society that shapes the opportunities one is offered in life, the roles one may play and the kinds of relationships one may have [4]. An ingrained male dominance in African culture has been a key factor in how women conduct their private and family business. Magubane [4] adds that macro-economic and political factors are still in favour of men in South Africa and this exacerbates gender inequalities. Women do not have control over matters related to their lives and this deprives them of greater access to economic opportunities and resources. This study embraces their view based on previous cultural literature. We define culture as a system of implicit and explicit beliefs, values, norms, preferences and behaviours that are stable over time and are held in common by a group of people and that distinguish one group from another.

Mbiti [16] amplifies this ingrained African practice when he alludes to the fact that the individual has little latitude for self-determination outside the context of the traditional African family and community. He writes:

*Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group and whatever happens to*

*the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: 'I am because we are and since we are therefore I am.' This is a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man.*

Ngubane [17] posits that the traditional South African family is patriarchal. Men are considered the heads of their households. Women and children are expected to accept men's authority. Women are expected to leave their families to live with their husband's family. This behaviour is based on the value that it is good to respect men as heads of families and as leaders in society. It is based on the conviction and belief that God (god) appointed men as heads and leaders of the whole community. Because of respect for God (god) and the ancestors who play an intermediary role between God and men, men must thus be obeyed. But Nyasani [18] is very helpful in warning against not scrutinising cultural beliefs and practices and argues that:

*[Norms of culture] are merely received but never subjected to the scrutiny of reason to establish their viability and practicability in society. Maybe it is because of this lack of personal involvement and scrutiny that has tended to work to the disadvantage of the Africans especially where they are faced with a critical situation of reckoning about their own destiny and even dignity.*

Grobler, et al. [19] found that most black South Africans are representatives of the collectivistic culture (a group orientation) while white South Africans are mostly individualistic (focusing on individual needs). Their study contradicted the results of previous research by Hofstede that characterised South Africa as an individualistic nation [19]. Another common tool that has been used to study cultural variability is the use of the terms individualism and collectivism Jung-Soo [20]. Hofstede [14] distinguishes between the two opposite terms "individualism and collectivism" by indicating that an individualistic society ties between individuals are loose while people in a collectivistic society are integrated into strong and comprehensive groups.

Evidence shows that the percentage of women in senior management teams has on average been rising slowly but steadily from 26% in 2014 to 29% in 2018. These are among the findings of the 2018 Grant Thornton International Business Report which focused specifically on research regarding women in business. A plethora of empirical evidence asserts that women experience different challenges from those faced by their male counterparts in the workplace [21-23] in terms of work- life balance. Although, almost one third (29%) of senior roles in South Africa are now filled by women, one in five local businesses (20%) still have no women at all in senior positions.

### 2.3. Leadership Roles as Defined in Traditional (Southern) African Societies

According to Biri and Mutambwa [24], African women have the following roles: woman, mother and wife. Females are subordinated because of social, religious, cultural practices and beliefs in society. Moreover, Chigwata [25] states that during the formative years in African society, female and male children are taught some societal beliefs and practices that emphasise maleness above femaleness. These inhibit female participation at all levels and in all spheres of the development process. Therefore, performing a leadership role in the workplace becomes enormous due to the sociocultural practices and beliefs that affect the female gender negatively [26]. A study conducted by Mwale and Dodo [26] in Zimbabwe revealed that seven traditional leaders highlighted that the sociocultural belief systems of the Shona people were very conservative. Seven participants indicated that the Karanga people believe that women are helpers and not leaders. They also believe that a woman's place is in the kitchen and that women are there to help their male counterparts not to lead men. Others revealed that they were ambassadors for upholding the cultural values of the people of Sanyati. They added that the Sanyati are highly patriarchal with the Karanga being the major group.

#### 2.3.1. Women Leaders' Self-Efficacy

Generally, self-efficacy is the capability of achieving a specific goal or performing a specific task. Perceived self-efficacy is defined as "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence events that affect their lives". Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave [27, 28]. It is generally accepted as a norm that women are naturally endowed with multi-tasking prowess and they have not only embraced this distinct and ingrained talent but also used it with pride as leverage against the opposite sex. In terms of the self-efficacy theory of motivation [28], the higher your self-efficacy the more you will believe, you are capable of achieving a task or goal. A plethora of documentary evidence suggests that women often underestimate their skills and abilities [29-31]. Moreover, women and girls often attribute their successes to effort and hard work while men and boys often attribute their successes to ability [30]. Interestingly, when women and girls fail, they often associate their failure with a lack of ability as opposed to a lack of effort [30]. Other research suggests that how women and girls are socialised contributes to their tendency to underestimate their abilities and downplay their successes [31-34]. "Girls, especially smart girls, learn to underestimate their ability" [30] and come to believe that they have to work harder than boys to be successful. In addition, women often experience the "imposter syndrome" whereby they doubt themselves, underestimate their abilities and essentially feel like a fraud or imposter, even when they have past experiences and skillsets that suggest they will be successful [35].

Understanding how African women leaders adapt and adjust to life's infinite challenges can be better explained through their self-efficacy comprehension. For example, it is recognized that much discourse in higher education today focuses on gender differences and the disparities among students enrolled in colleges and universities. It is apparent that there is more women attending colleges and universities than men and they are reported to perform academically much better than their male counterparts [31, 32, 36]. Although some may assume there is no longer a need to focus specifically

on college women, a number of challenges exist for college girls [29, 37]. Among these challenges is women's confidence in their skills and abilities. As a result, the underlying hypothesis is as follows:

*H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant and positive relationship between South African culture and women leaders' work-life balance within African communities in South Africa.*

#### 2.4. Work-Life Balance and its Effects

Gurvis and Patterson [38] define work-life balance as "the equally weighted time for an individual to experience their expectations of commitment to career, family, friends, community and leisure pursuits". Work-life balance continues to grow as a priority of prospective employees and as an expectation of those who comprise an organisation's workforce. Mušura, et al. [39] maintain that work-life balance (WLB) and work-life satisfaction may have an impact on productivity in the workplace. This is further confirmed by Chimote and Srivastava [40] who state that reducing absenteeism and turnover improving productivity and image and ensuring loyalty and retention are the benefits of WLB from the organisational perspective. Job satisfaction, job security, autonomy and stress reduction improved health as the benefits of WLB from the employees' perspective. Many organisations explore various alternative work arrangements (AWA) to capitalise on the benefits of WLB. This paper focuses on the relationship between African culture and WLB.

Dulewicz and Higgs [41] believe that leadership performance is the basis for people to work together in a team and is considered the most important aspect of human behaviour research. The performance of leadership is a way to manage and adjust leadership behaviours, strategies and outcomes including the three important elements of realizing organisational, team and individual performance. Some of the characteristics of leadership measure the success or failure of a project are motivating others, managing resources, delegating and developing Dulewicz and Higgs [41]. In the context of this study, female leadership performance is based on five factors: cultural demands and children, understanding of African culture, cultural priorities, cultural hindrances to work and culture and equality [42].

### 3. Theoretical Framework

A couple of theories could easily be relevant to this study. The authors chose to anchor the study on the lessons drawn from three complementary theories namely, the role congruity theory, the feminist theory and the cultural dimensions theory. The role congruity theory contends that perceived incongruity between the female gender role and leadership roles leads to two forms of prejudice: perceiving women less favorably than men as potential occupants of leadership roles and evaluating behaviour that fulfills the prescriptions of a leader role less favorably when it is enacted by a woman Heilman [43]; Eagly and Karau [44]; Eagly, et al. [45]; Hoyt and Burnette [46]. Stephens, et al. [47] define feminism as a movement aimed at fostering greater gender equality, generally through the legal recognition of women's rights and the legal protections of these rights. Since, the introduction of the concept in the 19th century, feminism has developed beyond legal boundaries to incorporate various aspects that affect a woman's life. Chilisa and Ntseane [48] view feminism from a cultural perspective. Roosth and Schrader [49] continue that feminism is a science. African feminism brings perspective on the centrality of motherhood in the household and family [48]. With regard to the cultural dimensions theory, Hofstede, et al. [50] developed a comprehensive national cultural model that comprises six dimensions used to distinguish among cultures Leslie and Inouye [51]. Mpofu and Hlatywayo [52] add that there are four work-related cultural dimensions theory namely: individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, power distance and uncertainty avoidance. Hofstede's model has been widely validated by theoretical and empirical evidence [53] despite numerous claims against it.

### 4. Problem Background

With increasing demands in the workplace and at home, the work-life balance of female employees is at stake. Women employees working in various sectors experience a disturbed work-life balance leading to an increasing number of divorces, strained relationships among family members, conflicts in organisations and suicides [54]. This research project intends to explore the role of African culture on the abilities of women leaders to find a balance between work and life. Mwale and Dodo [26] argue that women have been labelled as the weaker sex in most patriarchal societies on African continent. Zunge [55]; Dodo [56] and Dodo, et al. [57] also believe that sociocultural beliefs have been a major hindrance to women's participation in leadership positions despite their capabilities and qualifications. Grundling and Bosch [58] assert that in Africa cultures and organisations have been constructed by and for men thereby accepting and reflecting masculine traits and behaviours that are often detrimental to women's skill acquisition and career progression. Although, Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment promotes the appointment of women in senior positions and at executive levels in South Africa, the level of compliance still needs improvement [58].

### 5. Methodology

Methodology is a method of collecting and evaluating information to improve a researcher's knowledge of the phenomenon being studied [59].

#### 5.1. Research Design

The exploratory sequential mixed method design allowed us to first collect and analyse the qualitative data and these findings were used to inform the subsequent quantitative data collection and analysis [60]. The data collected from the in-depth interviews together with the intensive desktop literature reviewed informed the contents of the questionnaire designed for quantitative data collection through an online, i.e. QuestionPro survey. By adopting a mixed methods



approach, the study hoped to fine-tune the pre-conceived notions of women's leadership roles from the perspective of African culture and then extrapolate the thought process to analyse and estimate the female leaders' perceptions [61].

### 5.2. Population and Sampling Method

This study adopts a purposive sampling technique with the unit of analysis or population drawn from mainly African women in leadership and management positions across various sectors (both private and public) of the South African economy operating exclusively from the Free State province of South Africa.

### 5.3. Data Collection

First, a pilot survey of 30 women leaders from the Mangaung metropolitan municipality area was conducted. The pilot study's data was used to assess the reliability of the multiple-item measurement scale used in the questionnaire by employing Cronbach's alpha. The range of Cronbach's alpha from 0.816-0.855 indicated the satisfactory reliability of the measures and implied that all the measurement scales were good enough to be used for the actual data collection phase [60]. Second, a questionnaire was distributed among a conveniently identified target group using QuestionPro. Owing to the difficulty of precisely determining the exact number of female leaders in the Free State province, a non-probability approach, i.e. purposive sampling was employed. A total of 194 valid responses were received from 260 expected participants for a response rate of 74.6%.

### 5.4. Data Presentation and Analysis

A computer software package Statistical Package for the Social Sciences [62] was employed to present and analyse the collected data i.e. both descriptive and inferential statistics. Cronbach alpha coefficients ( $\alpha$ ) and inter-item correlation coefficients were used to determine the internal consistency (reliability) of the measuring instruments and descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. Pearson correlations were used to assess the extent to which one variable is related to another. For factor loadings, this study employed principal component- based, exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation and yielded five components in the rotated component matrix.

## 6. Results

### 6.1. Demographic Variables of the Study Sample

In this section, frequency tables are used to present the profile of respondents. Demographics include gender, race, age, home language, sector, marital status, job title, highest level of qualification and work experience in the same job and within the same company.

**Table 1.**  
Gender.

	Frequency	Percentage
Female	140	100
Total	140	

The results in Table 1 indicate that only females (100% of the participants) participated in the study.

The study sample consisted of women in places of employment and no males were included. Results in Table 2 show that the majority of the respondents were African (71.1%) mostly in the 36-45 (40.8%) and 46-55 (30.3%) years' age groups. Most of the respondents spoke either Southern Sotho (49.4%) followed by those who speak Tswana (23.4%) and Afrikaans and Xhosa (7.8%). The majority plied their trades in the education and training sector (34.3%). A total of 82.1% were single or unmarried. Most of the respondents possess a degree (45.5%). There was an even distribution of respondents across all levels of work experience in the same job and the same applied to work experience within the same company.

### 6.2. Central Tendency Measures

Central tendency measures were conducted to assess how the construct involved in the study is distributed. A five-point Likert scale where the value 1 corresponds to "strongly disagree" and the value 5 corresponds to "strongly agree" was used to measure African culture. Regarding 2.5 (5/2) as the mid-point of the 5-point Likert scale, any mean scores below 2.5 indicate that most respondents tend to either "strongly disagree" or "disagree" with the statements. The mean scores between 2.5 and 3.4 suggest that most respondents tend to neither "agree" nor "disagree" (be neutral) about the statements. All the mean scores equal to or above 3.5 suggest that the majority of respondents tend to either "agree" or "strongly agree" with the statements measuring the construct.

#### 6.2.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis of Cultural Issues

Table 3 shows the results for the exploratory factor analysis of questionnaire items that deal with cultural issues. The results show that out of the 17 questionnaire, 5 latent factors were obtained using principal component- based exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation. The items of each latent factor will be analysed separately and appropriate names for what they measure will be suggested according to what the questions in each factor address.

**Table 2.**  
The frequency distribution of demographic variables

Demographic variable		Frequency	Percent
Race	African	171	88.2%
	Coloured	10	5.3%
	Indian	3	1.3%
	White	10	5.3%
Age	25-35 Years	23	11.8%
	36-45 Years	79	40.8%
	46-55 Years	59	30.3%
	56+ Years	33	17.1%
Home language	Southern Sotho	96	49.4%
	Tswana	45	23.4%
	English	10	5.2%
	Afrikaans	15	7.8%
	Xhosa	15	7.8%
	Zulu	8	3.9%
	Other	5	2.6%
Marital status	Married	35	17.9%
	Single	159	82.1%
Highest qualifications	Bachelor's degree/Diploma	23	11.7%
	Honours degree or PG diploma	88	45.5%
	Master's degree	40	20.8%
	Doctoral degree	30	15.6%
	Other	13	6.5%
Work experience in the same job	0-5 Years	54	27.6%
	6-10 Years	54	27.6%
	11-20 Years	43	22.4%
	21+ Years	43	22.4%
Work experience in the same company	1-5 Years	41	21.1%
	6-10 Years	51	26.3%
	11-20 Years	64	32.9%
	21+ Years	38	19.7%

The first latent factor comprises questions 7, 8, 9 and 20 which generally address cultural demands and children. The second latent factor comprises questions 1, 2, 4 and 14 which generally address the understanding of culture. The third latent factor comprises questions 12, 13, 17 and 21 which generally address cultural priorities. The fourth latent factor comprises questions 6 and 19 which generally address cultural hindrances to work. The fifth latent factor comprises questions 3, 10 and 11 which generally address culture and equality.

### 6.2. Analysis of Factor 1: Cultural Demands and Children

The results presented in Table 4 show that most of the respondents do not agree that culture puts heavy socio-cultural demands on them as shown by the low percentages of those “agreeing” or “strongly agreeing” with the statements posed. In fact, the majority of the respondents did not seem to feel any cultural pressures or prejudices as most “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with the statements of such prejudices.

Culture puts more demands on women than on men. Only 17.3% “agreed” or “strongly agreed” while 72.0% “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed”. Similar patterns of responses are apparent in other items of this construct. The items of this construct have good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha=0.778) which means that 4 items reliably measure the intended construct.

### 6.3. Analysis of Factor 2: Understanding of Culture

The results presented in Table 5 show that most of the respondents do not fully understand cultural issues. The percentages of those “agreeing” or “strongly agreeing” with the statements posed are very low (ranging from 2.7% to 25%). In fact, the majority of the respondents did not seem to understand their culture at all, as most “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with the statements on the understanding of culture (percentages disagreeing or strongly disagreeing ranged from 64.5% to 90.7%).

The items of this construct have good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha=0.720) which means that 4 items reliably measure the intended construct.

**Table 3.**  
Exploratory factor analysis of cultural issues

Questionnaire items	Rotated factors				
	1	2	3	4	5
8. In my culture, the choice between adoption and conceiving children are non-negotiable despite pressing work demands.	0.867				
9. In my culture, taking care of children, the husband and family are not negotiable.	0.713				
7. My culture puts more demands on women than on men.	0.675				
20. I feel my culture is not keeping up with the demands of a working woman.	0.605				
1. I am proud of who I am i.e. my cultural practices.		0.823			
2. I understand the dictates of my culture.		0.913			
1. I understand my socio-cultural roles between men and women.		0.698			
14. My cultural requirements are not a hindrance to the execution of my job.		0.407			
12. My culture dictates that a good mother prioritises her family's happiness over her job.			0.831		
13. My culture demands that a good wife priorities her husband's needs over her job.			0.672		
17. Culture makes me feel guilty if I give my work preference over my family life.			0.507		
21. I believe 'lobola' i.e. 'dowry' is the main cause of most cultural demands on women.			0.710		
2. My culture is one of the stumbling blocks in the execution of my job.				0.869	
19. I could do more work if it were not for the cultural demands placed on me.				0.642	
3. My culture accords equal status to men and women.					0.736
10. In my culture women are equal providers of household needs.					0.853
11. My culture demands that a woman enjoy freedom and assume an independent mind.					0.417

**Note:** Extraction method: Principal component analysis.  
Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization.

**Table 4.**  
The frequency distribution of responses to cultural demands and children's questions

Cultural demands and children		Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Neutral	Agree/ Strongly agree	Mean	Std. dev.	Latent factor coefficient
3. My culture puts more demands on women than on men.	Count	140	21	34	2.15	1.23	0.864
	%	72.0%	10.7%	17.3%			
4. In my culture, the choice between adoption and conceiving children are non-negotiable despite pressing work demands.	Count	89	41	64	2.70	1.31	0.781
	%	46.1%	21.1%	32.9%			
5. In my culture, taking care of children, my husband and family are not negotiable.	Count	132	21	41	2.08	1.29	0.731
	%	68.0%	10.7%	21.3%			
20. I feel my culture is not keeping up with the demands of a working woman.	Count	110	23	61	2.51	1.30	0.721
	%	56.6%	11.8%	31.6%			
Cronbach's alpha					0.778		

#### 6.4. Analysis of Factor 3: Cultural priorities

The results presented in [Table 6](#) show that most of the respondents “disagree” with the fact that their culture compels them to consider certain family priorities over their jobs. The percentages of those “agreeing” or “strongly agreeing” to the statements posed are very mild (ranging from 14.5% to 30.7%). The majority of the respondents do not seem to feel any pressure over such priorities as most “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with the statements posed.

The items of this construct have good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha=0.781) which means that 4 items reliably measure the intended construct.

**Table 5.**

The frequency distribution of responses to items that address the understanding of culture

Understanding of culture		Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Neutral	Agree/ Strongly agree	Mean	Std. dev.	Latent factor coefficient
1. I am proud of who I am i.e. my cultural practices.	Count	173	16	5	1.44	0.76	0.836
	%	89.3%	8.0%	2.7%			
2. I understand the dictates of my culture.	Count	176	5	13	1.76	0.90	0.912
	%	90.7%	2.7%	6.7%			
4. I understand the socio-cultural roles between men and women.	Count	153	29	13	1.96	0.91	0.748
	%	78.7%	14.7%	6.7%			
14. My cultural requirements are not a hindrance to the execution of my job.	Count	125	20	49	2.42	1.24	0.525
	%	64.5%	10.5%	25.0%			
Cronbach's alpha					0.720		

**Table 6.**

The frequency distribution of responses to items that address cultural priorities

Cultural priorities		Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Neutral	Agree/ Strongly agree	Mean	Std. dev.	Latent factor coefficient
12. My culture dictates that a good mother prioritises her family’s happiness over her job.	Count	138	28	28	2.13	1.16	0.875
	%	71.1%	14.5%	14.5%			
13. My culture demands that a good wife prioritises her husband’s needs over her job.	Count	128	18	49	2.42	1.29	0.889
	%	65.8%	9.2%	25.0%			
17. Culture makes me feel guilty, if I give my work preference over my family life.	Count	111	23	60	2.53	1.33	0.751
	%	57.3%	12.0%	30.7%			
21. I believe ‘lobola’ i.e. ‘dowry’ is the main cause for most cultural demands on women.	Count	103	57	34	2.41	1.24	0.581
	%	53.3%	29.3%	17.3%			
Cronbach's alpha					0.781		

#### 6.5. Analysis of Factor 4: Cultural Hindrances to Work

The results presented in Table 7 show that most of the respondents seem to identify cultural hindrances to their work even though they have previously indicated a general lack of understanding of culture itself. The percentages of those “agreeing” or “strongly agreeing” to the statements posed are higher than in the other constructs (47.4% and 60.0%) respectively.

**Table 7.**

The frequency distribution of responses to items that address cultural hindrances to work

Cultural hindrances to work		Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Neutral	Agree/ Strongly agree	Mean	Std. dev.	Latent factor coefficient
6. My culture is one of the stumbling blocks in the execution of my job.	Count	47	31	116	3.47	1.23	0.836
	%	24.0%	16.0%	60.0%			
19. I could do more work if it were not for the cultural demands placed on me.	Count	74	28	92	2.95	1.31	0.836
	%	38.2%	14.5%	47.4%			
Cronbach's alpha					0.567		

The items of this construct have mild internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha=0.567).

#### 6.6. Analysis of Factor 5: Culture and Equality

The results presented in Table 8 show mixed sentiments about culture and equality. The majority seems to agree that culture accords equal status to men and women (61.6%) only 37.3% “agree” or “strongly agree” that women are equal providers of household needs and 43.4% agree that their culture demands that a woman should enjoy freedom and assume an independent mind.

The items of this construct have mild internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha=0.653).



### 6.7. Exploratory Factor Analysis: Work-Life Balance Issues

Table 9 shows the results for the exploratory factor analysis of questionnaire items that deal with work-life balance issues. The results show that of the 13 questionnaire items, 4 latent factors were obtained using principal component based exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation. The items of each latent factor will be analysed separately and appropriate names for what they measure will be suggested according to what the questions in each factor address. Question 16 of the questionnaire did not seem to align with any other question. Thus, it was left out of the determination of the sub-constructs of work-life balance.

**Table 8.**

The frequency distribution of responses to items that address culture and equality

Culture and equality		Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Neutral	Agree/ Strongly agree	Mean	Std. dev.	Latent factor coefficient
3. My culture accords equal status to men and women.	Count	37	37	120	3.55	1.14	0.821
	%	19.2%	19.2%	61.6%			
6. In my culture, women are equal providers of household needs.	Count	91	31	72	2.84	1.23	0.743
	%	46.7%	16.0%	37.3%			
7. My culture demands that a woman enjoys freedom and has an independent mind.	Count	61	49	84	3.24	1.21	0.742
	%	31.6%	25.0%	43.4%			
Cronbach's alpha					0.653		

**Table 9.**

Exploratory factor analysis of work-life balance issues

Questionnaire items	Rotated factors			
	1	2	3	4
15. I am able to balance my work and my family life.	0.797			
23a. I feel I enjoy authority and respect at home, the same as my husband.	0.723			
30. I enjoy both my work and family life.	0.686			
29. Balancing my work and family life is never a concern for me.	0.636			
22. As a leader, I enjoy authority and respect at work.		0.669		
24. As a leader, I enjoy more authority and respect at work than at home.		0.638		
5. I enjoy my work as a leader.		0.627		
18. I feel my family has empathy for and appreciation for the demands of my work.		0.592		
25. I do not feel undermined as a leader by my male counterparts.			0.797	
23. As a manager, I am treated the same as my male counterparts at work.			0.786	
28. I feel respected by my male colleagues, despite my cultural dictates.			0.543	
26. It is easier to lead female workers than male workers.				0.838
27. I enjoy more respect from female colleagues than from male colleagues.				0.805

**Note:** Extraction method: Principal component analysis.  
Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization.

The first latent factor of work-life balance comprises questions 15, 23a, 29 and 30 which generally address work and family life. The second latent factor comprises questions 5, 18, 22 and 24 which generally address work leadership. The third latent factor comprises questions 23, 25 and 28 which generally address work and male counterparts. The fourth latent factor comprises questions 26 and 27 which generally address work and female counterparts.

**Table 10.**

The frequency distribution of responses to items that address work and family life

Work and family life		Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Neutral	Agree/ Strongly agree	Mean	Std. dev.	Latent factor coefficient
15. I am able to balance my work and my family life.	Count	133	18	43	2.29	1.22	0.852
	%	68.4%	9.2%	22.4%			
23a. I feel I enjoy authority and respect at home, the same as my husband.	Count	98	47	49	2.57	1.05	0.706
	%	50.7%	24.0%	25.3%			
29. Balancing my work and family life is never a concern for me.	Count	66	23	105	3.18	1.21	0.600
	%	34.2%	11.8%	53.9%			
30. I enjoy both my work and family life.	Count	168	10	15	1.84	0.85	0.724
	%	86.8%	5.3%	7.9%			
Cronbach's alpha					0.688		

### 6.8. Analysis of Work-Life Balance Factor 1: Work and Family Life

The results presented in Table 10 show that most of the respondents are not really able to balance work and family life as only 22.4% “agreed” or “strongly agreed”. Only 25.3% feel that they enjoy the same authority and respect as their husbands. Most respondents indicated that they were single. Only 7.9% indicated that they enjoyed both their work and family lives. However, the majority (53.9%) felt that balancing work and family life was not a concern for them.

The items of this construct have mild internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha=0.688).

### 6.9. Analysis of Work-Life Balance Factor 2: Work Leadership

The results presented in Table 11 show that most of the respondents are not really satisfied with the respect they get as leaders at home as well as at work as indicated by the low percentages that “agreed” or “strongly agreed” to the leadership issues raised.

**Table 11.**  
The frequency distribution of responses to items that address work leadership

Work and leadership		Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Neutral	Agree/ Strongly agree	Mean	Std. dev.	Latent factor coefficient
5. I enjoy my work as a leader.	Count	170	21	3	1.69	0.78	0.680
	%	87.8%	10.8%	1.4%			
18. I feel my family has empathy for and appreciation for the demands of my work.	Count	146	26	23	2.09	1.10	0.699
	%	75.0%	13.2%	11.8%			
22. As a leader, I enjoy authority and respect at work.	Count	153	23	18	2.05	0.91	0.749
	%	78.9%	11.8%	9.2%			
24. As a leader, I enjoy more authority and respect at work than at home.	Count	56	56	82	3.04	1.11	0.446
	%	28.9%	28.9%	42.1%			
Cronbach's alpha					0.523		

The items of this construct have mild internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha=0.523).

### 6.10. Analysis of Work-Life Balance Factor 3: Work and Male Counterparts

The results presented in Table 12 indicate low percentages of women who agree that they are treated or respected the same as their male counterparts at work. The majority feel that they do not get respect from their male counterparts (64.5%).

**Table 12.**  
The frequency distribution of responses to items that address work and male counterparts

Work and male counterparts		Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Neutral	Agree/ Strongly agree	Mean	Std. dev.	Latent factor coefficient
23. As a manager, I am treated the same as my male counterparts at work.	Count	100	26	68	2.84	1.22	0.734
	%	51.4%	13.5%	35.1%			
25. I do not feel undermined as a leader by my male counterparts.	Count	100	33	61	2.75	1.16	0.810
	%	51.3%	17.1%	31.6%			
28. I feel respected by my male colleagues despite my cultural dictates.	Count	125	46	23	2.38	0.86	0.710
	%	64.5%	23.7%	11.8%			
Cronbach's alpha					0.610		

The items of this construct have mild internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha=0.610).

### 6.11. Analysis of Work-Life Balance Factor 3: Work and Female Counterparts

The results presented in Table 13 indicate that when compared to the results in Table 12, respondents felt better and were appreciated more by females than by their male counterparts as the percentages “agreeing” are much higher.

**Table 13.**

The frequency distribution of responses to items that address work and female counterparts

Work and female counterparts		Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Neutral	Agree/ Strongly agree	Mean	Std. dev.	Latent factor coefficient
26. It is easier to lead female workers than male workers.	Count	26	75	93	3.45	0.86	0.868
	%	13.3%	38.7%	48.0%			
27. I enjoy more respect from female colleagues than from male colleagues.	Count	36	66	92	3.36	0.90	0.868
	%	18.4%	34.2%	47.4%			
Cronbach's alpha					0.672		

The items of this construct have mild internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha=0.672).

**Table 14.**

Correlations between cultural and work-life balance issues show that cultural issues mainly impact on work and family life and work and leadership

Pearson's correlations		Work and family life	Work and leadership	Work and male counterparts	Work and female counterparts
Culture and children	Correlation	-0.498**	-0.015	-0.148	0.052
	P-value	<0.001	0.900	0.209	0.662
	N	73	72	74	73
Understanding of culture	Correlation	0.486**	0.338**	0.214	-0.164
	P-value	<0.001	0.003	0.065	0.162
	N	74	74	75	74
Cultural priorities	Correlation	-0.335**	-0.218	-0.087	0.070
	P-value	0.004	0.065	0.459	0.554
	N	73	72	74	73
Cultural hindrances to work	Correlation	-0.460**	-0.196	0.016	-0.034
	P-value	<0.001	0.095	0.890	0.772
	N	74	74	75	74
Culture and equality	Correlation	0.385**	0.091	0.293*	-0.178
	P-value	0.001	0.445	0.012	0.134
	N	72	72	73	72

Note: \*The correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## 7. Correlations for Cultural and Work-Life Balance Issues

To commence the inferential part of the study, we present the correlations between cultural and work-life balance issues as discussed in the sections above. The results show that culture and children (correlation=-0.498, p-value<0.001), cultural priorities (correlation=-0.335, p-value=0.004) and cultural hindrances to work (correlation=-0.460, p-value<0.001) have a significant and negative impact on work and family life. The understanding of culture (correlation=0.486, p-value<0.001) and culture and equality (correlation=0.385, p-value=0.001) positively impact work and family life.

The results also show that work and leadership are significantly and positively impacted by understanding culture (correlation=0.338, p-value=0.003). The other four cultural issues have no significant impact on work or leadership. Culture and equality have a positive impact on work and male counterparts (correlation=0.293, p-value=0.012).

### 7.1. Effects of Cultural Issues on Work-Life Balance

As a follow-up to the correlation analysis above, regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the effects that cultural issues have on the four work-life balance constructs when they are considered together. This helps to investigate the effects of the cultural issues on work-life balance after adjusting for the joint effects the cultural effects have on the response variable.

### 7.2. Effects of Cultural Issues on Work and Family Life

Results in Table 15 show that when the cultural issues are considered together, culture and children (B=-0.233, t=-2.232, p-value=0.029) and cultural hindrances to work (B=-0.199, t=-2.377, p-value=0.021) have a significant and negative impact on work and family life while understanding of culture has a significant and positive effect (B=0.371, t=3.171, p-value=0.002).

**Table 15.**

Regression results for the effects of cultural issues on work and family life

Dependent variables: Work and family life	Coefficients		T	P-value
	B	Std. error		
(Constant)	2.420	0.501	4.835	<0.001
Culture and children	-0.233	0.104	-2.232	0.029
Understanding of culture	0.371	0.117	3.171	0.002
Cultural priorities	0.040	0.104	0.389	0.698
Cultural hindrances to work	-0.199	0.084	-2.377	0.021
Culture and equality	0.143	0.092	1.547	0.127
R <sup>2</sup> =0.473				

The other two cultural issues have no significant effect on work and family life (p-values>0.05).

### 7.3. Effects of Cultural Issues on Work and Leadership

Results in Table 16 show that when the cultural issues are considered together, the understanding of culture has a significant and positive impact on work and leadership (B=0.296, t=2.580, p-value=0.012) while cultural priorities have a significant and negative impact on work and leadership (B=-0.223, t=-2.176, p-value=0.033).

**Table 16.**

Regression results for the effects of cultural issues on work and leadership

Dependent variables: Work and leadership	Coefficients		T	P-value
	B	Std. error		
(Constant)	1.983	0.486	4.078	0.000
Culture and children	0.168	0.104	1.615	0.111
Understanding of culture	0.296	0.115	2.580	0.012
Cultural priorities	-0.223	0.102	-2.176	0.033
Cultural hindrances to work	-0.043	0.081	-0.528	0.600
Culture and equality	-0.029	0.090	-0.323	0.748
R <sup>2</sup> =0.189				

The other two cultural issues have no significant effect on work or leadership (p-values>0.05).

### 7.4. Effects of Cultural Issues on Work and Male Counterparts

Results in Table 17 show that when the cultural issues are considered together, none has a significant impact on work or male counterparts (p-values>0.05).

**Table 17.**

Regression results for the effects of cultural issues on work and male counterparts

Dependent variable: Work and male counterparts	Coefficients		t	P-value
	B	Std. error		
(Constant)	1.750	0.643	2.724	0.008
Culture_and_children	-0.103	0.135	-0.759	0.451
Understanding of culture	0.154	0.151	1.018	0.313
Cultural priorities	-0.031	0.135	-0.230	0.819
Cultural hindrances to work	0.086	0.107	0.800	0.426
Culture and equality	0.179	0.120	1.501	0.138
R <sup>2</sup> =0.115				

### 7.5. Effects of Cultural Issues on Work and Female Counterparts

Results in Table 18 show that when the cultural issues are considered together, none has a significant impact on work or female counterparts (p-values>0.05).

## 8. Discussion and Managerial Implications

African culture and work-life balance play a crucial role for women leaders in South Africa. South African society is gradually teetering towards progressive and transformative cultural advances, especially for educated women but still resembles patriarchal and chauvinist tendencies. Hence, the need for continued support and advocacy for progressive campaigns such as “16 days of activism against women and children.” The above tendencies persist in hiding behind culture and religion to suppress gender equality and universal liberties. Interestingly, this study confirms previous studies on the relationship between work-life balance and women’s leadership performance, work-life balance in African culture

and the influence of African culture on women's leadership performance. South Africa recorded marked strides towards the promotion of human rights and gender equality across all sectors of society. This has happened through the constitution, the bill of rights and a number of regulatory frameworks and promulgations. The workplace Labour Relations Act and the Basic Conditions of Employment compel compliance by management to ensure that human resource practices, policies and procedures are aligned with these regulations. Another milestone for the ruling party is its insistence on 50/50 gender parity in all of its structures with the government subtly pressuring and insisting all follow suit.

**Table 18.**

Regression results for the effects of cultural issues on work and female counterparts.

Dependent variables: Work and female counterparts	Coefficients		T	P-value
	B	Std. error		
(Constant)	4.363	0.632	6.904	0.000
Culture_and_children	-0.043	0.133	-0.321	0.749
Understanding of culture	-0.185	0.150	-1.232	0.223
Cultural priorities	0.062	0.134	0.461	0.646
Cultural_hindrances_to work	-0.092	0.107	-0.867	0.390
Culture and equality	-0.109	0.119	-0.920	0.361
R2=0.058				

## 9. Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper sought to investigate the impact of African culture on the work-life balance of women in leadership roles within various economic sectors in the Free State Province of South Africa. A litany of documentary evidence is congruent with the inhibiting and oppressive nature of African culture towards the female gender. Surprisingly, the findings in this study dispel this generally accepted notion and underlying hypothesis that there is a significant correlation between South African culture and the ability of women in leadership to balance work and family life. This study also revealed that when the cultural issues were considered together, none had a significant impact on work and female counterparts ( $p$ -values > 0.05) within African communities and unmarried women. Considering the above, the following recommendations become necessary:

- Device an equitable gender sensitive strategy and policies that promote harmony between work and family life.
- Intensify advocacy towards adaptive and transformative African cultural practices, particularly lobola or dowry and its effect on chauvinism and patriarchal tendencies.
- Feminism is predicated on enhanced self-esteem, assertiveness, self-reliance, independence and self-love which are qualities that must feature strongly in 'female' leadership programmes.
- Progressive community and family values coupled with early childhood education can better socialise and overhaul the upbringing of a 'boy child' towards the observation and respect for the equal rights of all human beings especially their female counterparts.

## 10. Ethical Considerations

Permission was secured from the university through ethical clearance prior to approaching respondents and distributing the questionnaire. Respondents' consent was obtained after the purpose of the study was explained and they were informed that their participation was voluntary. The confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents and their associated companies were also ensured [60].

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