THE ROLE OF FEMALE MENTORSHIP IN ADVANCING WOMEN'S CAREERS IN TIER 1 BANKS IN NAIROBI

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DECLARATION

I declare that this work has not been previously submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the dissertation contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the dissertation itself.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis first and foremost to God, whose grace, wisdom, and strength have sustained me throughout this journey. To my family, for your unwavering support, sacrifices, and belief in my dreams – this achievement is as much yours as it is mine. To my friends, thank you for your encouragement, patience, and constant motivation during both the challenging and rewarding moments. I also dedicate this work to everyone who inspired me to persevere and to pursue knowledge with purpose and passion. Finally, I dedicate this work to all women striving to overcome barriers and achieve professional growth and leadership in their respective fields.

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ABSTRACT

A significant disparity in career progression persists between men and women globally, including in Kenya, as evidenced by the low representation of women in senior leadership positions within the banking sector. This study examined the influence of mentorship on the career development of women in Tier 1 banks in Nairobi. Specifically, the study sought to determine the effect of mentorship psychosocial support, overcoming gender-specific barriers, and mentorship attributes on women's career development. The study was anchored on Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) and Social Role Theory, which provide insights into both individual and structural dimensions of career advancement. The study adopted a positivist research philosophy and employed a descriptive cross-sectional research design. The target population comprised 364 women working in Tier 1 banks in Nairobi, from which a final sample of 341 respondents was obtained using purposive sampling. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires. Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics, including correlation and multiple linear regression analysis, to examine relationships between the study variables. The findings revealed that mentorship psychosocial support, overcoming gender-specific barriers, and mentorship attributes all have a positive and statistically significant influence on women's career development. Among these variables, mentorship psychosocial support emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by overcoming gender-specific barriers and mentorship attributes. The results further indicated that mentorship factors collectively explain a substantial proportion of the variation in career development outcomes, highlighting the critical role of mentorship in advancing women's careers within the banking sector. The study concludes that effective mentorship is a key driver of women's career progression in Tier 1 banks. Based on the findings, it is recommended that organizations institutionalize structured mentorship programs with a strong emphasis on psychosocial support, implement policies that address gender-specific barriers such as limited access to networks and leadership opportunities, and enhance mentorship quality by ensuring mentor accessibility, relatability, and role modelling. The study contributes to theory by reinforcing the relevance of SCCT and Social Role Theory in explaining career development outcomes and provides practical insights for organizations seeking to promote gender equity in leadership within the banking sector.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACCA	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
CBK	Central Bank of Kenya
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPA	Certified Public Accountant
ESSA	Education Sub Saharan Africa
FFPs	Family Friendly Policies
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HRM	Human Resource Management
KCB	Kenya Commercial Bank
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
NCBA	National Commercial Bank of Africa
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
SCCT	Social Cognitive Career Theory
SD	Standard Deviation
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Career Development

Career development refers to an ongoing process involving acquiring knowledge, skills, experiences and opportunities that enable women to advance and navigate their professions while at the same time over-coming gender-specific barriers (Kinyanjui, 2019; Soares & Sidun, 2021).

Mentorship

Mentorship is defined as a developmental relationship whereby an experienced person (the mentor) offers advice, support and guidance, to a less experienced person in order to assist them achieve professional and personal growth (Shen et al., 2022).

Mentorship Attributes

Mentorship attributes refer to the qualities, behaviors, and characteristics that shape the effectiveness of the mentorship relationship and its impact on career development (Bosch, 2017).

Mentorship Psychosocial Support

Psychosocial support is defined as psychological, social and emotional assistance that mentors provide to mentees to building their resilience, self-esteem and confidence (Abalkhail & Allan, 2015).

Overcoming Gender-Specific Barriers

Overcoming gender-specific barriers is defined as the extent to which mentors identify, address and assist women overcome obstacles that disproportionately affect women in the workplace, such as bias, discrimination, gender pay gaps and glass ceiling, that tend to limit the career development of women (Dezsö & Ross, 2012).

Tier 1 Banks

According to the Central Bank of Kenya (2023b), commercial banks are categorized into three tiers using a weighted index based on net assets, deposits, capital, and account volumes. Banks scoring 5% or higher on this index are classified as large (Tier 1) banks.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Across the globe, women continue to experience slower career progression than men despite significant improvements in educational attainment and labor force participation. Although women now earn more bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees than men in several developed countries, including the United States, this progress has not translated into equivalent representation in senior leadership positions (Catalyst, 2022). Women account for only 8.8% of Chief Executive Officers and hold approximately 30% of board positions in the United States, while they occupy only 40% of board positions and 42.1% of directorships in the United Kingdom (Catalyst, 2022; UK Parliament, 2024). Similarly, women occupy only 32.2% of senior leadership positions globally (World Economic Forum, 2023). These disparities demonstrate that improvements in education and workforce participation alone are insufficient to ensure equitable career advancement. Instead, they suggest that career progression is shaped by organizational, institutional, and social factors that continue to disadvantage women despite improvements in human capital.

Across Africa, similar patterns persist despite growing recognition of gender equality as an economic and developmental priority. Although reducing gender inequality has been identified as a key strategy for improving productivity and economic growth (Glass & Cook, 2016; Kinyanjui, 2019), progress towards gender parity remains slow. The McKinsey Global Institute (2019) estimates that achieving gender parity across Africa could take approximately 140 years, reflecting persistent inequalities in employment, leadership, and decision-making. While countries such as South Africa have made notable progress, women across much of the continent continue to encounter structural, institutional, and socio-cultural barriers that restrict advancement into senior management positions (McKinsey Global Institute, 2019). These barriers extend beyond workforce participation and include gender stereotypes, unequal access to professional development opportunities, limited leadership visibility, unconscious bias, restricted access to productive resources, and the disproportionate burden of unpaid care responsibilities (Lituchy, Galperin, & Punnett, 2016; Opoku et al., 2018; Musyoka et al., 2024). Consequently, career

advancement remains influenced not only by individual capability but also by the organizational and societal environments within which women pursue their careers.

These global and regional patterns are also evident in Kenya. Although Kenya has made progress in expanding women's participation in education and formal employment, significant disparities remain in career advancement and leadership representation. Kenya was ranked 109th out of 153 countries in the 2020 Global Gender Gap Index, reflecting persistent inequalities in economic participation and leadership opportunities (World Economic Forum, 2023). Women occupy only 18–30% of leadership positions despite relatively high labor force participation, while representation in both corporate leadership and public decision-making remain considerably lower than in several neighboring East African countries (Rotich, 2021; UN Women–Africa, 2023). These statistics suggest that increasing women's participation in the labor market has not translated into proportional representation in senior leadership. Rather than reflecting deficiencies in education or workforce participation, the disparities point to organizational and institutional processes that constrain women's progression into decision-making roles.

The persistence of these disparities is particularly evident within Kenya's banking sector. Banks are generally characterized by formal human resource systems, structured promotion procedures, leadership development programmes, and well-established governance frameworks. Under such conditions, one would expect equitable career progression based primarily on competence and performance. However, evidence suggests otherwise. Women account for approximately 43% of employees in the banking sector but remain underrepresented in executive leadership and board positions (Central Bank of Kenya, 2023a). The Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (2022) further reports that women occupy only 29% of board seats in Kenyan banks, only three major banks are led by female Chief Executive Officers, and gender pay disparities widened from 31% in 2019 to 46% in 2022.

The persistence of gender disparities within such highly structured organizations suggests that formal organizational policies alone are insufficient to guarantee equitable career advancement. Instead, barriers appear to be embedded within less visible organizational processes such as informal promotion systems, leadership sponsorship, access to influential professional networks, career visibility, and developmental relationships (Opoku et al., 2018; Kinyanjui, 2019). These challenges are likely to be more pronounced within Tier 1 banks, where competition for senior

leadership positions is greater and organizational hierarchies are more complex. Consequently, understanding why women continue to experience slower career progression within these institutions requires examining organizational mechanisms that influence career development beyond formal employment policies.

Among the organizational mechanisms that have received increasing scholarly attention is mentorship. Mentorship provides career guidance, psychosocial support, professional networking opportunities, and exposure to organizational knowledge that may strengthen women's career progression (Kinyanjui, 2019; Shen et al., 2022). Nevertheless, existing evidence suggests that mentorship programmes within Kenyan organizations remain inconsistent in their implementation and effectiveness, and women continue to experience limited access to structured developmental relationships (Kinyanjui, 2019; Noormahomed et al., 2019). This creates the need to examine the contribution of mentorship to women's career development within Tier 1 banks, where leadership progression occurs within highly competitive and complex organizational environments.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite increasing participation of women in Kenya's banking workforce, their progression into senior management and leadership positions remains disproportionately low (Opoku et al., 2018). This disparity is reflected in persistent gender pay inequalities and the underrepresentation of women in executive leadership. The gender pay gap within the banking sector increased from 31% in 2019 to 46% in 2022, while women continue to earn substantially less than men performing comparable roles (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, 2023). For example, women employees at Equity Bank reportedly earn 52% less than their male counterparts in equivalent positions (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, 2023). This limited career progression has important organizational implications because evidence shows that greater female representation in leadership enhances organizational performance, decision quality, profitability, innovation, and institutional stability (Dezsö & Ross, 2012; Flabbi et al., 2019; Ochenge, 2024). Despite these demonstrated benefits, women remain underrepresented in leadership positions within Kenya's banking sector, suggesting that existing organizational interventions have not adequately addressed barriers to career advancement.

Mentorship has increasingly been promoted as an important organizational strategy for supporting women's career development. However, existing evidence regarding its effectiveness remains inconclusive. While several studies report that mentorship enhances women's career advancement by improving professional support, networking opportunities, confidence, and access to organizational resources (Farkas et al., 2019; Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021), others report weak, insignificant, or inconsistent effects (Francis, 2017; Hill & Wheat, 2017). These inconsistencies make it difficult for organizations to determine whether mentorship is an effective strategy for promoting women's career advancement and, more importantly, which aspects of mentorship contribute most to career development.

The uncertainty surrounding mentorship is particularly evident within Kenya's banking sector, where empirical evidence remains limited despite the sector's strategic importance to the country's economy and its relatively high proportion of female employees. Much of the existing mentorship literature has been generated from contexts such as South Africa (Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021), Australia (Francis, 2017), and the United States (Farkas et al., 2019), whose organizational, institutional, and socio-cultural environments differ substantially from those of Kenya. Cross et al. (2019) further argue that mentorship outcomes are highly context-dependent, emphasizing the need for evidence generated within specific organizational settings. Consequently, it remains unclear whether existing findings can adequately explain women's career development within Kenya's Tier 1 banking institutions.

Therefore, the central problem addressed by this study was the limited empirical understanding of how mentorship contributes to women's career development within Kenya's Tier 1 banks. Specifically, the study sought to generate context-specific evidence on the influence of mentorship on women's career development in order to inform organizational policies and practices aimed at improving women's progression into leadership positions within the Kenyan banking sector.

1.3 Research Objective

The aim of this study was to examine the role of female mentorship in advancing women's career in Tier 1 banks in Nairobi.

1.3.1 Specific Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives for this study were:

i. To investigate the effect of mentorship psychosocial support on the career development of women in Tier 1 banks in Nairobi.
ii. To examine the influence of overcoming gender-specific barriers on the career development of women in Tier 1 banks in Nairobi.
iii. To investigate the influence of mentorship attributes on the career development of women in Tier 1 banks in Nairobi.

1.4 Research Questions

The current research answered the following questions:

i. What is the effect of mentorship psychosocial support on the career development of women in Tier 1 banks in Nairobi?
ii. What is the influence of overcoming gender-specific barriers on the career development of women in Tier 1 banks in Nairobi?
iii. What is the influence of mentorship attributes on the career development of women in Tier 1 banks in Nairobi?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research provided significant value for financial sector policymakers and regulators focused on gender equity. The findings offered evidence-based insights into the barriers to women's career advancement in banking and demonstrated mentorship's potential as a strategic intervention. These insights can inform the formulation of gender-responsive policies, including mentorship frameworks, gender-balanced leadership pipelines, and workplace equality policies. In turn, such policy initiatives may support Kenya's broader commitment to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 on Gender Equality.

With regard to practice, the study was instrumental for banking institutions and human resource practitioners seeking to strengthen talent management strategies. The findings shed light on the mentorship attributes and support structures that most effectively promote women’s career growth.

This can guide organizations in designing or refining mentorship programs tailored to the unique needs of female employees, particularly in male-dominated sectors. By understanding what works, HR departments and managers can implement structured mentorship initiatives that support leadership development, reduce gender disparities, and improve organizational performance through a more inclusive workforce.

A key contribution of this study is the theoretical extension of mentorship and career development concepts within a gendered context. Furthermore, the study addressed conceptual inconsistencies in current literature by empirically testing the relationship between mentorship variables and career outcomes for women. This can enrich theoretical discourse on how mentorship can challenge gender norms and foster equitable professional advancement. Also, the study offered recommendations for further research that can be useful in advancing understanding of the topic of mentorship.

1.6 Scope of the Research

This study was conceptually limited to examining the influence of mentorship on the career development of women, specifically through mentorship psychosocial support, gender-specific barriers, and mentorship attributes. The research was theoretically grounded in Social Role Theory and Social Cognitive Career Theory. Methodologically, the study adopted a quantitative approach and employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. Structured questionnaires were used to collect primary data during the period of February–March 2026. Geographically, the research was confined to Nairobi City County. The study population consisted of women employed in Tier 1 banks within Nairobi; therefore, the unit of analysis was an individual woman working in a Tier 1 bank in Nairobi. The target sample was 364 participants selected using a judgmental sampling technique.

1.7 Chapter Summary

Chapter One introduced the study, detailing the persistent global and local gender disparities in career progression within Kenya's banking sector. It outlined the problem's background, focusing on women's underrepresentation in leadership and the scarcity of tailored mentorship. The problem statement identified key conceptual, contextual, and methodological gaps in the literature, justifying the research. The chapter also presented the research objectives and questions, defined

the study's geographical, population, and methodological scope, and discussed its significance for policy, practice, and theory.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of existing literature on mentorship. The discussion is organized into sections covering the theoretical foundations, empirical literature, identified research gaps, the conceptual framework, and the operationalization of study variables.

2.2 Theoretical Foundation

This study was grounded in two complementary theories: Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) and Social Role Theory. The anchoring theory is SCCT since it provides the core explanatory framework for how mentorship affects women's career development through psychological and behavioral mechanisms. Social Role Theory served as the supporting theory by offering a sociocultural perspective on how gender norms influence professional opportunities and constraints. Together, these theories provided a holistic foundation for understanding both individual and societal dimensions of mentorship and career progression.

2.2.1 Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), introduced by Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994), applies Bandura's social cognitive principles to career development. Its core constructs, self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goal setting, explain how career interests and successes are shaped by an individual's belief in their abilities, their anticipated outcomes, and environmental support (Lent & Hackett, 1994).

In this study, SCCT provided the framework to understand how mentorship influences women's career trajectories by enhancing their self-belief, resilience, and motivation. For instance, when mentors offer encouragement, share experiences, and provide strategic feedback, they boost the mentee's self-efficacy, which is an essential factor for career persistence and leadership aspiration. SCCT aligns closely with Objective 1 (psychosocial support) and Objective 3 (mentorship attributes) since it explains how internal motivation and external guidance intersect to influence women's career outcomes (Wang et al., 2022).

The strengths of SCCT include its wide applicability across cultures and industries, its predictive power regarding behavior and outcomes, and its capacity to integrate personal and environmental factors (Lent & Brown, 2019). It is especially useful for understanding how mentorship affects psychological processes such as confidence and career planning. However, a limitation of SCCT is that it focuses more on individual agency and less on structural or institutional barriers like gender bias or workplace discrimination, which are issues particularly relevant in male-dominated workplace settings (Wang et al., 2022).

2.2.2 Social Role Theory

Social Role Theory, developed by Eagly and Wood (2012), offers a social-psychological perspective on how societal expectations influence gender roles. The theory argues that differences in behaviors between men and women arise from societal norms shaped by historical divisions of labor, rather than biological differences (Eagly & Wood, 2012). According to the theory, societal expectations assign nurturing, communal roles to women and agentic, leadership-oriented roles to men. These deep-seated stereotypes shape workplace culture, constraining women's access to leadership roles and reinforcing gender-specific obstacles to career progression.

Social Role Theory posits that individuals are socialized to conform to gender roles that align with societal norms (Eagly & Wood, 2012). In professional environments, this socialization often leads to biases and stereotypes that challenge women’s ability to rise into leadership positions or fully realize their career potential (Garvey et al., 2021). Mentorship, particularly from female leaders, can challenge these stereotypes by exposing women to role models who defy traditional gender roles. Mentors who model assertiveness, competence, and leadership help mentees expand their perceptions of what is possible, empowering them to overcome societal and workplace barriers.

The strengths of Social Role Theory lie in its comprehensive explanation of how societal norms shape professional dynamics and its emphasis on the importance of challenging these norms through mentorship (Garvey et al., 2021). It provides a robust framework for understanding gender disparities in the workplace, offering insights into how systemic barriers arise and persist. Furthermore, the theory’s emphasis on societal norms makes it widely applicable across different cultural and organizational contexts (Schneider & Bos, 2019). However, it has some limitations. The theory tends to oversimplify gender dynamics by focusing predominantly on societal

expectations, potentially overlooking individual differences and intersecting factors such as race, ethnicity, and class. Additionally, it assumes that societal norms are static, whereas these norms may evolve with cultural and organizational changes (Schneider & Bos, 2019). Finally, while it highlights the existence of barriers, it offers limited guidance on specific strategies for overcoming them.

In relation to this study, Social Role Theory was particularly relevant to the second research objective, which explored how mentorship helps women in the banking sector overcome gender-specific barriers. This theory is essential for Objective 2, which examined how mentorship can help women overcome gender-specific barriers in the workplace. Through mentorship, especially by female role models, women are exposed to alternative narratives and professional pathways that challenge traditional gender norms. Mentors can help mentees navigate a workplace culture shaped by stereotypes, enabling them to redefine what leadership and career success look like. The theory provides a lens for understanding how societal and organizational stereotypes shape the challenges faced by women in advancing their careers (Schneider & Bos, 2019). Mentorship emerges as a powerful tool for addressing these barriers, as it challenges gendered expectations and provides role models who exemplify leadership and professional success (Garvey et al., 2021). By drawing on this framework, the study examined how mentorship reshapes perceptions of women's roles and supports their career development, particularly in male-dominated sectors such as banking.

By combining SCCT and Social Role Theory, the study benefitted from both a micro-level (individual) and macro-level (societal) understanding of how mentorship influences women's career development. SCCT explains how mentorship enhances women's self-efficacy, confidence, and career motivation, while Social Role Theory contextualizes the gendered barriers and societal expectations that shape women's workplace experiences. These theories also informed the operationalization of the study variables and guided the development of the questionnaire items used in the quantitative cross-sectional survey design. Specifically, the theories informed the selection of the independent variables namely mentorship psychosocial support, overcoming gender-specific barriers, and mentorship attributes, as well as the dependent variable of career development. Table 2.1 demonstrates the alignment between the study objectives, guiding theories, and their methodological contribution to the study.

Table 2.1: Theoretical Alignment with Study Objectives

Objective	Primary Theory	Complementary Theory	Theoretical Contribution
Objective 1	SCCT	Social Role Theory	SCCT explains how psychosocial support enhances self-efficacy and career motivation, while Social Role Theory acknowledges that such support is provided within organizational contexts shaped by gender norms.
Objective 2	Social Role Theory	SCCT	Social Role Theory explains gender-based barriers, whereas SCCT explains how mentorship strengthens women's confidence and persistence in overcoming those barriers.
Objective 3	SCCT	Social Role Theory	SCCT explains how mentorship attributes influence career behavior and aspirations, while Social Role Theory explains how mentor characteristics help challenge gender stereotypes and expand leadership opportunities.

Source: Researcher (2026)

As shown in Table 2.1, SCCT guided the measurement of psychosocial support and mentorship attributes by emphasizing self-efficacy, motivation, and career expectations, which were quantitatively assessed through structured questionnaire items. On the other hand, Social Role Theory informed the examination of gender-specific barriers by explaining how societal stereotypes and workplace norms affect women's career advancement. The integration of the two theories therefore provided a comprehensive basis for the study variables, research instrument, and interpretation of findings.

2.2.3 Integration of Social Cognitive Career Theory and Social Role Theory

Neither Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) nor Social Role Theory independently provides a complete explanation of women's career development within organizational settings. Although both theories explain important aspects of career progression, each focuses on different but complementary dimensions of women's career experiences (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Lent et al., 1994). Consequently, integrating the two theories provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding how mentorship influences women's career development within Kenya's banking sector (Garvey et al., 2021; Lent & Brown, 2019).

Social Role Theory explains the structural and societal conditions that shape women's career opportunities. According to the theory, gender stereotypes, traditional divisions of labor, and organizational norms create unequal access to leadership opportunities, professional networks, and career advancement (Eagly & Wood, 2012). These structural constraints influence how women are perceived within organizations and often limit their progression into senior leadership positions regardless of their qualifications or competence (Garvey et al., 2021; Schneider & Bos, 2019). While the theory effectively explains why gender disparities persist, it provides limited explanation of how individual women successfully navigate or overcome these barriers once they exist (Schneider & Bos, 2019).

In contrast, Social Cognitive Career Theory explains the individual psychological processes through which women respond to career opportunities and constraints. SCCT proposes that self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and career goals determine career-related behavior, persistence, and career success (Lent et al., 1994; Lent & Brown, 2019). Within mentoring relationships, psychosocial support, encouragement, constructive feedback, and role modelling strengthen women's confidence, resilience, and leadership aspirations, thereby increasing their willingness to pursue career advancement despite workplace challenges (Lent & Brown, 2019; Wang et al., 2022). However, SCCT primarily emphasizes individual agency and environmental supports while offering limited explanation of how broader organizational cultures, gender stereotypes, and institutional practices create the structural barriers that women experience in the workplace (Wang et al., 2022).

The integration of the two theories therefore creates a logical sequence through which mentorship influences women's career development. Social Role Theory explains the origin of gender-specific barriers by demonstrating how organizational cultures, stereotypes, and societal expectations constrain women's career opportunities (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Garvey et al., 2021). SCCT then explains how mentorship enables women to respond to these constraints by enhancing self-efficacy, strengthening career motivation, improving outcome expectations, and encouraging goal-directed behavior (Lent et al., 1994; Lent & Brown, 2019). In this respect, mentorship serves as the mechanism that links structural constraints with individual career agency. Rather than eliminating organizational barriers directly, mentorship equips women with the psychological resources, professional guidance, leadership confidence, and career-related competencies

necessary to navigate and overcome many of the obstacles created by those barriers (Wang et al., 2022; Garvey et al., 2021).

The complementarity between the two theories is particularly relevant within Kenya's Tier 1 banking sector. Although banks operate formal human resource systems and merit-based promotion structures, women's career progression continues to be influenced by informal organizational processes such as leadership visibility, sponsorship, professional networks, and persistent gender stereotypes (Central Bank of Kenya, 2023a; Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, 2022; Kinyanjui, 2019). Social Role Theory explains why these institutional barriers continue to exist despite formal equality policies by highlighting the influence of deeply embedded gender norms and organizational expectations (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Schneider & Bos, 2019). Conversely, SCCT explains why women who receive effective mentorship are more likely to develop the confidence, resilience, leadership aspirations, and career behaviors necessary to succeed within such environments (Lent & Brown, 2019; Wang et al., 2022). Consequently, neither theory independently provides sufficient explanatory power for the current study; together they explain both the external constraints influencing women's careers and the internal mechanisms through which mentorship facilitates career development.

The integrated theoretical framework also informed the conceptualization of the study variables. Social Cognitive Career Theory primarily underpins mentorship psychosocial support and mentorship attributes by explaining how mentor behaviors strengthen self-efficacy, motivation, outcome expectations, and career aspirations (Lent et al., 1994; Lent & Brown, 2019; Wang et al., 2022). Social Role Theory principally informs the examination of gender-specific barriers by explaining how organizational cultures, workplace stereotypes, and societal expectations influence women's career opportunities and advancement (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Garvey et al., 2021). Together, the theories explain how mentorship simultaneously addresses organizational constraints and strengthens women's individual capacity to achieve career advancement. This integrated perspective therefore provided the theoretical foundation for the study objectives, guided the operationalization of the study variables, informed the development of the research instrument, and provided the basis for interpreting the empirical findings (Lent & Brown, 2019; Garvey et al., 2021).

2.3 Conceptual Review

2.3.1 Career Development

Career development has also been defined as the process of finding an alignment between one's personality (skills, values and interests) and their work environment, which allows them succeed and progress upwards in their fields, leading to professional mobility and personal fulfillment (Glass & Cook, 2016). From an organizational and human resource perspective, Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) described career development in terms of measurable outcomes, like compensation increases, title changes, and promotions. This view of career development is hierarchical wherein people climb the organizational ladder based on tenure and performance.

Some scholars have conceptualized career development in a non-linear fashion and incorporate other dimensions, such as flexibility in career paths, skill development and personal development. For instance, Seehusen, Rogers, Al Achkar and Chang (2021) described career development in terms of personal fulfilment and self-direction, instead of using external concepts like salary or promotions. Based on this view, career development prioritizes personal growth and alignment of one's career with life goals. According to Yoshihara (2020), career development is about progression across multiple industries, roles and organizations instead of upward mobility within a single organization. This view emphasizes mobility, networking and flexibility in one's career. For Mcilongo and Strydom (2021), career development focuses on personal accomplishment and career fulfilment, in addition to upward progression.

Some authors have provided conceptualizations of career development that are specific to the experiences of women, which acknowledge the work-life challenges, discrimination and bias that women experience in professional settings. In this regard, career advancement for women does not only focus on upward mobility but also successfully navigating the obstacles (Kinyanjui, 2019). Soares and Sidun (2021) stressed the need for considering life-stage events, like caregiving and childbirth, that interrupt the progression of women's careers. As a result, career progression for women might involve stepping back or re-entering the workforce; hence, the traditional linear, upward mobility of career progression does not adequately capture the experiences of women (Soares & Sidun, 2021).

Although the literature presents career development as either upward mobility, personal fulfilment, career flexibility, or professional growth (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017; Glass & Cook, 2016; Seehusen et al., 2021; Yoshihara, 2020), this study adopts an integrated perspective that combines both objective and subjective dimensions. This position was adopted because women's career progression cannot be adequately captured solely through promotions or salary advancement, particularly in contexts where gender-specific barriers may interrupt traditional career trajectories (Kinyanjui, 2019; Soares & Sidun, 2021). Therefore, career development in this study incorporates both advancement outcomes and the acquisition of skills, responsibilities, and opportunities that facilitate long-term professional growth (Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021; Kinyanjui, 2019).

For this study, career development was defined as an ongoing process involving acquiring knowledge, skills, experiences and opportunities that enable women to advance and navigate their professions while at the same time over-coming gender-specific barriers (Kinyanjui, 2019; Soares & Sidun, 2021). The indicators that were used to measure women's career development are promotions, skill development, and leadership and responsibility (Kinyanjui, 2019; Soares & Sidun, 2021).

2.3.2 Mentorship

Numerous factors have been reported in literature that contributes to career development in women. These factors include government and organizational policies, top management commitment, organizational support system, networking, training and development, organizational culture, and mentorship (Carli, 2015). These factors have a positive influence on the career advancement of women. Government and organizational policies that seek to increase workplace diversity and equality can create conditions that can allow women to advance their careers (Carroll & Sanbonmatsu, 2013). Supportive work environments, characterized by family friendly policies (FFPs), commitment of the top management to implement these FFPs, and organizational culture of respecting women as equal partners, can better the chances of women advancing their careers (Coleman, 2020). Organizational support systems, such as measuring the performance and promotion of women and identifying and addressing discrimination, play a key role in facilitating women's development (Glass & Cook, 2016). Training and development programs, especially those tailored to meet the needs of women, positively influences career advancement of women (Maheshwari, 2023). Organizational culture is one of the determinants of

a supportive work environment. In organizational cultures where gender equity is emphasized, the proportion of women in management positions is likely to be higher (Hill et al., 2016). Mentoring constitutes another factor associated with the career advancement of women.

While there are numerous factors that influence the career advancement of women, this study focused on mentorship. Mentorship is defined as a developmental relationship whereby an experienced person (the mentor) offers advice, support and guidance, to a less experienced person in order to assist them achieve professional and personal growth (Shen et al., 2022). The process of mentorship entails knowledge sharing, providing encouragement, and building the confidence and skills of the mentee through tailored advice and regular interactions (Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021). Mentorship is one of the potentially effective instruments that can be used to empower, develop and inspire women to not only join the workforce but also advance their careers (Ughasoro et al., 2022). Mentors with advanced knowledge and experience and who are committed to developing their mentees or protégés can significantly help women who are aspiring to become future leaders (Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021).

Various dimensions of mentorship and their effects on career development have been studied in the extant literature, including guidance and coaching, skills development, social capital and networking, sponsorship and advocacy, psychosocial support, performance evaluation and feedback, role modelling, challenging assignments, work-life balance support, overcoming gender-specific barriers, and mentor's gender (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2021). These factors have been reported to positively impact the career development of women. For instance, career coaching and guidance are useful in helping female mentees identify opportunities for career advancement (Ivey & Dupré, 2022). Skills development is associated with readiness for new responsibilities and promotions, which in turn facilitates career progression. Sponsorship and advocacy can enhance the visibility of women in an organization or the industry (Kiiru & Barasa, 2020). Moreover, psychosocial support has been shown to positively influence emotional resilience and confidence of mentees (Atieno & Ong'ondo, 2021).

This study focused on psychosocial support, gender-specific barriers, and mentorship attributes. Psychosocial support refers to the psychological, social and emotional assistance that mentors provide to mentees to build their resilience, self-esteem and confidence (Abalkhail & Allan, 2015). These factors were selected because of their unique relevance to the challenges that women face

in advancing their careers. Therefore, understanding how they influence career development can provide useful insights into formulating effective mentorship programs for women (Kiiru & Barasa, 2020). Women in the workplace usually experience additional psychological, social and emotional pressures, like societal expectations about balancing family and work life, gender bias and self-limiting beliefs of being in a patriarchal society, which can affect their decision-making and confidence (Opoku et al., 2018). Women also experience different work stressors, such as heightened scrutiny and isolation in fields that are male-dominated (Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021). For this study, the indicators that were used to measure psychosocial support include emotional support in mentor, confidence building, and stress management (Abalkhail & Allan, 2015; Atieno & Ong'ondo, 2021).

Overcoming gender-specific barriers refers to the extent to which mentors identify, address and assist women overcome obstacles that disproportionately affect women in the workplace, such as bias, discrimination, gender pay gaps and glass ceiling, that tend to limit the career development of women (Dezsö & Ross, 2012). In the workplace, it is common for women to experience unique structural barriers, including unequal opportunities, gender stereotypes and access to leadership positions (Musyoka et al., 2024). Female mentors who have been successful in navigating these barriers can provide actionable advice and insights for mentees (Soares & Sidun, 2021). For the current study, the indicators that were used to measure overcoming gender-specific barriers include access to networking opportunities, challenging gender-based stereotypes, promoting leadership aspirations, and advocating for career development opportunities (Musyoka et al., 2024).

Mentorship attributes refer to the qualities, behaviors, and characteristics that shape the effectiveness of the mentorship relationship and its impact on career development (Bosch, 2017). Key attributes include the structure of mentorship, where formal programs provide consistency, while informal relationships foster trust and flexibility (Soares & Sidun, 2021). Mentors also act as role models, with their relevance determined by shared experiences, professional alignment, and relatability, which inspire confidence and career aspirations (Obara, Saiki, Imafuku, Fujisaki & Suzuki, 2021). Accessibility and availability are crucial, as mentors who actively engage with mentees provide consistent guidance and create opportunities for growth (Roepe, 2019). Similarly, shared experiences and relatability foster trust and understanding, allowing mentors to offer tailored advice and address specific challenges (Soares & Sidun, 2021). Lastly, expertise and

influence equip mentors to provide strategic career guidance and open doors to professional networks (Soares & Sidun, 2021). The indicators that were used to measure mentorship attributes are shared experiences, gender of mentor, role modelling and accessibility of mentor (Bosch, 2017).

2.4 Empirical Literature

This section presents a review of existing studies on the topic of female mentorship. The scope of this review is on the effects of mentorship support, overcoming gender-specific barriers, and mentorship attributes on career development.

2.4.1 Mentorship Psychosocial Support and Career Development

Empirical evidence generally suggests that psychosocial support contributes positively to women's career development by strengthening confidence, resilience, organizational commitment, and leadership aspirations. Across different occupational settings, researchers consistently report that mentors provide emotional encouragement, reassurance, and interpersonal guidance that improve women's preparedness for leadership roles, although the mechanisms through which these outcomes occur differ across studies. For example, qualitative evidence from the United Kingdom indicates that psychosocial support enhances women's confidence, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment by creating psychologically safe environments in which mentees can openly discuss workplace challenges and receive constructive career guidance (Chang et al., 2022). Similar findings were reported in India's service sector, where psychosocial mentoring improved career resilience, adaptability, and reduced burnout, enabling women to navigate demanding organizational environments more effectively (Chauhan & Mishra, 2021). Comparable evidence from South Africa's public sector further demonstrates that psychosocial mentoring increases leadership visibility, confidence, and willingness to pursue promotion opportunities among female employees (Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021), while studies conducted within East Africa similarly associate psychosocial mentorship with enhanced leadership confidence, emotional resilience, and professional self-belief (Musyoka et al., 2024). Collectively, these studies suggest that psychosocial support contributes to career development primarily by strengthening women's psychological resources, thereby increasing their capacity to pursue leadership opportunities.

Beyond strengthening individual psychological capacities, several studies argue that psychosocial support contributes to career development because it facilitates organizational integration and access to career-enhancing resources. For example, Okolie et al. (2020) found that mentorship promoted promotions and upward mobility among graduates in Nigeria by providing career guidance, organizational knowledge, and strategic advice regarding professional advancement. Likewise, a systematic review by Farkas et al. (2019) concluded that mentorship programmes consistently improved women's retention and promotion in academic medicine because mentors increased professional visibility, expanded collaborative networks, and facilitated sponsorship opportunities. Similar conclusions were reached by Aggarwal et al. (2024), who reported that psychosocial mentoring strengthened organizational commitment and career adaptability among women working in financial institutions by improving access to professional networks and developmental opportunities. While these studies consistently report positive outcomes, they also demonstrate that psychosocial support rarely operates independently. Rather, its effectiveness depends upon organizational environments that provide leadership opportunities, transparent promotion systems, networking opportunities, and institutional support capable of translating increased confidence into observable career advancement.

However, empirical evidence is not entirely consistent. Studies conducted in male-dominated industries and institutions with less structured mentorship systems frequently report weaker or insignificant mentorship effects. Francis (2017), studying Australia's construction industry, found that career advancement depended more on proactive personality, career planning, and individual initiative than mentoring relationships, concluding that organizational mentoring contributed little to women's mobility within the sector. Similarly, Hill and Wheat (2017) reported that many women university leaders achieved senior positions without formal mentors, instead attributing their advancement to academic credentials, professional competence, and accumulated experience. Chang et al. (2015) likewise found that although psychosocial support improved mentees' experiences, career-related mentoring exerted a stronger influence on measurable outcomes such as promotions and salary progression.

The divergence across these studies reflects more than simple disagreement regarding the value of mentorship. Instead, it highlights important contextual, methodological, and conceptual differences that shape observed outcomes. Contextually, studies reporting strong mentorship

effects have largely been undertaken in healthcare, public administration, and financial services, where organizations typically possess formal promotion pathways, structured leadership development programmes, and institutionalized mentoring systems that allow psychosocial support to translate into tangible career advancement (Chang et al., 2022; Farkas et al., 2019; Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021). Conversely, industries such as construction are characterized by informal promotion processes, project-based employment, fewer female role models, and deeply entrenched masculine organizational cultures, limiting the extent to which emotional encouragement alone can overcome structural barriers (Francis, 2017). Similarly, university promotion systems depend heavily on objective performance indicators such as publications, qualifications, and research productivity, reducing the relative influence of mentorship on career progression (Hill & Wheat, 2017).

Methodological differences further contribute to the inconsistent findings. Qualitative studies primarily capture participants' perceptions of confidence, motivation, and emotional support (Chang et al., 2022; Hill & Wheat, 2017), whereas quantitative studies evaluate measurable outcomes such as promotions, salary progression, and leadership appointments (Chang et al., 2015; Chauhan & Mishra, 2021). Systematic reviews, while providing broader evidence, combine studies that employ different definitions of mentorship, diverse research designs, and varying outcome measures, making direct comparison difficult (Farkas et al., 2019). Moreover, researchers conceptualize psychosocial support differently, with some limiting it to emotional encouragement and confidence building (Banwell et al., 2021), while others include coaching, sponsorship, networking, and career guidance within the same construct (Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021; Shen et al., 2022). Consequently, studies labelled as examining psychosocial support are often measuring different mentorship functions, which partly explains the divergent findings.

Overall, the literature indicates that psychosocial support is an important component of mentorship, but its effectiveness depends on organizational context, institutional career structures, and the way mentorship is conceptualized and measured. Although considerable evidence exists from healthcare, public administration, higher education, and other professional sectors, little empirical research has examined whether these relationships hold within Kenya's Tier 1 banking sector, where formal human resource systems coexist with informal career processes such as sponsorship, leadership visibility, and organizational networking. Consequently, there remains

limited context-specific evidence regarding the extent to which mentorship psychosocial support influences women's career development within Kenya's banking industry

2.4.2 Mentorship and Overcoming Barriers in Career Development

Empirical evidence consistently identifies mentorship as an important mechanism for helping women overcome gender-specific barriers that limit career advancement. Across different organizational contexts, mentorship has been shown to reduce the effects of workplace discrimination, strengthen access to professional networks, improve leadership visibility, and increase women's confidence to pursue senior positions. Studies conducted in the United States, Australia, South Asia, and Kenya generally demonstrate that women who participate in structured mentorship programmes are better equipped to navigate gender stereotypes, challenge discriminatory practices, and access career opportunities than those without mentoring support (Jayachandran, 2020; Liani et al., 2021; Stewart et al., 2021; Tabassum & Nayak, 2021). For example, Tabassum and Nayak (2021) found that mentorship combined with self-advocacy significantly improved women's ability to overcome workplace discrimination and achieve promotions within corporate organizations. Similarly, Stewart et al. (2021), through a systematic review, concluded that mentorship complemented organizational interventions such as transparent promotion systems, flexible work arrangements, and diversity policies in increasing women's representation in leadership positions. Comparable findings were reported by Jayachandran (2020), who observed that mentorship programmes enabled women working in South Asia's technology sector to overcome cultural stereotypes, biased hiring practices, and limited access to technical career opportunities. Within Kenya, Liani et al. (2021) similarly found that mentorship provided women executives with strategic career guidance, leadership exposure, and professional networks that enabled them to navigate organizational barriers associated with gendered leadership stereotypes and unequal resource allocation. More recently, Orembo et al. (2026) reported that women participating in structured mentorship programmes within Kenya's corporate sector experienced improved leadership visibility, expanded professional networks, and greater access to career advancement opportunities, while Dohna and Westphalen (2025) found that mentorship reduced perceptions of workplace discrimination and increased women's participation in managerial decision-making.

Although these studies consistently report positive mentorship outcomes, they also demonstrate that the nature of gender-specific barriers differs substantially across organizational settings. Studies undertaken within corporate organizations primarily identify barriers relating to exclusion from influential professional networks, limited sponsorship, leadership visibility, and restricted access to strategic decision-making processes (Liani et al., 2021; Orembo et al., 2026; Tabassum & Nayak, 2021). Conversely, studies conducted in academic institutions emphasize patriarchal organizational cultures, gendered allocation of responsibilities, limited representation of women in senior positions, and restricted access to suitable mentors (Hill & Wheat, 2017; Malelu, 2017). Cross et al. (2019) further broadened this perspective by categorizing mentorship barriers into personal, relational, and organizational dimensions. Their systematic review identified challenges including the scarcity of experienced female mentors, poor mentor-mentee compatibility, power imbalances within mentoring relationships, inadequate institutional support, lack of formal mentorship programmes, and insufficient organizational incentives for mentors. Collectively, these studies suggest that mentorship does not address a single universal barrier but rather assists women in navigating barriers that vary according to organizational structure, leadership composition, institutional culture, and career progression systems.

Despite broad agreement regarding the value of mentorship, important differences remain concerning the extent to which mentorship alone can overcome structural gender inequalities. Several studies argue that mentorship is most effective when accompanied by wider organizational reforms rather than functioning as a standalone intervention. Stewart et al. (2021), for example, observed that although mentorship contributed positively to women's advancement, its effectiveness depended upon complementary institutional policies addressing gender bias, transparent promotion criteria, and flexible work arrangements. Similarly, Cross et al. (2019) concluded that mentorship programmes often fail where organizations lack senior female role models, leadership commitment, or formal mentoring structures. Hill and Wheat (2017) further demonstrated that many women university leaders advanced without formal mentors, instead relying on professional competence, academic achievements, and accumulated experience, suggesting that mentorship alone cannot fully compensate for structural inequalities embedded within organizational systems. These findings imply that mentorship primarily equips women with strategies for navigating existing barriers but cannot independently eliminate organizational cultures or institutional practices that generate those barriers.

The divergent findings reported across the literature are largely explained by contextual, methodological, and conceptual differences rather than by contradictory evidence regarding mentorship itself. Contextually, studies have examined mentorship within markedly different institutional environments including higher education, technology, public administration, and corporate organizations. These settings differ substantially in promotion criteria, leadership structures, gender representation, and organizational cultures, all of which influence both the barriers women encounter and the capacity of mentorship to address them. For instance, universities often operate under merit-based promotion systems emphasizing research productivity and academic qualifications, whereas corporate organizations rely more heavily on networking, leadership visibility, sponsorship, and succession planning (Hill & Wheat, 2017; Liani et al., 2021). Consequently, mentorship may exert a stronger influence within organizational environments where informal networks and leadership exposure significantly shape career advancement than within settings where promotions are primarily determined by objective performance indicators.

Methodological differences also contribute to variation in reported findings. Qualitative studies, such as those conducted by Hill and Wheat (2017) and Liani et al. (2021), provide rich insights into women's lived experiences of discrimination, exclusion, and mentorship but cannot quantify the relative contribution of mentorship to career advancement. Survey-based studies such as Tabassum and Nayak (2021) statistically estimate relationships between mentorship and career outcomes but provide limited explanation of the organizational processes through which mentorship influences women's careers. Systematic reviews conducted by Cross et al. (2019) and Stewart et al. (2021) synthesize evidence from multiple countries and industries but combine studies employing different definitions of mentorship, varying measures of career development, and diverse organizational contexts, thereby introducing substantial heterogeneity into the evidence base. Consequently, apparent inconsistencies across studies often reflect differences in research design rather than genuine disagreement regarding mentorship effectiveness.

Conceptual differences further complicate interpretation of the literature. Researchers do not conceptualize gender-specific barriers uniformly. Some studies define these barriers primarily as workplace discrimination, gender stereotypes, and unequal treatment (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021), whereas others adopt broader perspectives incorporating organizational culture, leadership representation, networking opportunities, promotion systems, work-life balance, and access to

mentors (Cross et al., 2019; Malelu, 2017; Stewart et al., 2021). Because different studies measure different forms of barriers, they inevitably evaluate different functions of mentorship. This conceptual inconsistency makes direct comparison difficult and partly explains why studies report varying levels of mentorship effectiveness.

Overall, the literature suggests that mentorship contributes meaningfully to helping women overcome gender-specific barriers, but its effectiveness depends on the organizational environment, institutional support, and the specific barriers being addressed. While substantial evidence exists from higher education, technology, public administration, and broader corporate settings, limited empirical research has examined how mentorship assists women in overcoming gender-specific barriers within Kenya's Tier 1 banking sector. Given the sector's hierarchical organizational structures, highly competitive leadership pathways, and continuing underrepresentation of women in senior management, it remains unclear whether mentorship addresses the same barriers reported in other sectors or whether different organizational dynamics shape women's career progression. Consequently, further empirical investigation is required to establish how mentorship contributes to overcoming gender-specific barriers within Kenya's Tier 1 banks.

2.4.3 Mentorship Attributes and Career Development

Empirical literature demonstrates that mentorship attributes significantly influence the quality of mentoring relationships and subsequent career outcomes for women. However, researchers differ regarding which mentor characteristics contribute most to effective mentorship. While some studies emphasize accessibility, role modelling, professional credibility, and shared experiences, others argue that gender similarity between mentors and mentees is the most important determinant of mentorship effectiveness. Consequently, existing literature presents an ongoing debate regarding the mentor characteristics that best promote women's career development.

Several studies consistently identify mentor accessibility, professional expertise, role modelling, and shared experiences as critical attributes influencing mentorship success. Hernandez et al. (2017) found that mentors with similar professional experiences provided more relevant guidance because they better understood the challenges confronting mentees at different career stages. Likewise, Opoku et al. (2018) reported that effective mentors enhanced women's confidence and

career progression by serving as credible role models and demonstrating successful leadership pathways. House et al. (2021) similarly observed that mentors who maintained regular contact with mentees significantly improved professional competence, leadership confidence, and career satisfaction compared to mentors with limited engagement. More recently, Nduku and Hoque (2025) found that mentor accessibility, leadership visibility, and shared professional experiences positively influenced women's career confidence within African financial institutions, while Kanyuchi (2025) reported that female mentees valued mentors who demonstrated consistent engagement, relatability, and active career sponsorship. Collectively, these studies suggest that mentorship effectiveness depends not only on the existence of mentoring relationships but also on the quality of mentor-mentee interactions and the mentor's capacity to provide sustained professional guidance.

The most extensively debated mentorship attribute concerns gender matching between mentors and mentees. Several studies argue that female mentors are particularly effective because they possess firsthand experience of the gender-specific challenges confronting women in the workplace. Mcilongo and Strydom (2021) found that female protégés in South Africa preferred female mentors because they received more relevant advice on overcoming workplace discrimination and balancing career progression with gender-related expectations. Similar findings were reported by Kofoed and McGovney (2019), whose study of female cadets in the United States Army found that same-gender mentoring significantly increased women's likelihood of pursuing leadership-oriented military careers. Comparable evidence emerged from Aikens et al. (2017), who demonstrated that female mentor-female mentee pairings produced stronger scientific identity, higher scholarly productivity, and greater intentions to pursue STEM doctoral programmes than mixed-gender mentoring relationships. Lin et al. (2021) likewise found that female mentors provided greater psychosocial support and were perceived as better able to understand gender-specific workplace experiences, thereby strengthening mentees' confidence and professional identity. These studies collectively suggest that gender similarity enhances mentorship by fostering trust, relatability, psychological safety, and the transfer of experiential knowledge regarding barriers uniquely experienced by women.

In contrast, several studies challenge the assumption that mentor gender is the primary determinant of mentorship effectiveness. Farkas et al. (2019), through a systematic review of mentorship

programmes in academic medicine, found no significant differences in career outcomes between women matched with female mentors and those mentored by men. Instead, mentor expertise, professional alignment, institutional affiliation, and shared career interests were found to exert greater influence than gender similarity. Guthrie and Jones (2017) similarly reported that although female accountants expressed a preference for female mentors because of their ability to relate to gender-specific experiences, male and female mentors were equally effective in facilitating promotions, salary growth, and career advancement. Banwell et al. (2021) further demonstrated that female mentors were generally more effective in providing psychosocial encouragement, whereas male mentors often offered stronger access to influential professional networks and senior organizational decision-makers. Similarly, the Education Sub-Saharan Africa (ESSA, 2023) report revealed contradictory evidence whereby respondents qualitatively praised women mentoring women as the most empowering mentorship model, yet quantitative findings showed that 78% preferred male mentors compared to only 22% preferring female mentors. Joo and Cruz (2024) also shifted attention away from mentor gender by demonstrating that informal mentoring relationships produced stronger career outcomes than formal mentoring programmes because trust, voluntary engagement, and relationship quality developed more naturally. These findings collectively suggest that mentorship effectiveness depends on multiple relational and organizational characteristics rather than mentor gender alone.

The divergence across these studies reflects important contextual differences. Studies supporting gender matching have largely been undertaken within highly gender-segregated professions such as the military, STEM disciplines, healthcare, and public administration, where women remain substantially underrepresented and frequently experience isolation, stereotype threat, and limited access to female role models (Aikens et al., 2017; Kofoed & McGovney, 2019; Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021). In these environments, female mentors provide not only career guidance but also symbolic representation, demonstrating that leadership is attainable despite systemic gender barriers. Conversely, studies conducted within broader professional settings such as accounting, financial services, and academic medicine often report weaker gender effects because career advancement depends more heavily on technical competence, organizational reputation, sponsorship, and access to influential professional networks than on mentor gender itself (Banwell et al., 2021; Farkas et al., 2019; Guthrie & Jones, 2017). Consequently, the organizational

environment appears to determine whether gender similarity or professional expertise becomes the more influential mentorship attribute.

Methodological differences also contribute to inconsistent conclusions. Studies supporting gender matching frequently examine relatively homogeneous populations such as military officers, STEM students, or women within specific professional programmes, where gender-related experiences are relatively uniform (Aikens et al., 2017; Kofoed & McGovney, 2019). Such contexts make the benefits of shared experiences more visible. By contrast, systematic reviews and broader survey studies typically include participants from multiple organizations, occupations, and career stages, thereby capturing greater diversity in mentoring experiences and reducing the apparent influence of mentor gender (Farkas et al., 2019; Guthrie & Jones, 2017). Furthermore, researchers operationalize mentorship attributes differently. Some focus exclusively on mentor gender, while others examine accessibility, expertise, sponsorship, credibility, mentorship structure, role modelling, or shared experiences (House et al., 2021; Joo & Cruz, 2024; Nduku & Hoque, 2025). Because these studies measure different dimensions of mentorship, direct comparison becomes difficult, and contradictory findings often reflect conceptual differences rather than genuine disagreement regarding mentorship effectiveness.

Overall, the literature indicates that mentorship attributes influence women's career development, but no single attribute consistently predicts successful mentoring relationships across all organizational contexts. Rather, mentorship effectiveness appears to depend upon the interaction between mentor characteristics, organizational environment, institutional support, and the developmental needs of mentees at different career stages. Although recent African studies have begun examining mentor accessibility, sponsorship, and leadership visibility within financial institutions (Kanyuchi, 2025; Nduku & Hoque, 2025), empirical evidence remains limited regarding which mentorship attributes are most influential for women employed in Kenya's Tier 1 banking sector. Existing Kenyan studies primarily examine access to mentorship rather than the characteristics of effective mentors or mentoring relationships (Obara et al., 2021). Consequently, it remains unclear which mentorship attributes best facilitate women's career development within Kenya's banking industry, thereby justifying the present study.

2.5 Research Gaps

Although existing literature provides substantial evidence that mentorship contributes to women's career development, several important issues remain unresolved. The first unresolved issue concerns the mechanisms through which mentorship influences career advancement. Previous studies report inconsistent findings, with some concluding that mentorship significantly improves women's career progression through enhanced confidence, networking opportunities, and organizational support (Farkas et al., 2019; Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021), while others report weak or insignificant relationships between mentorship and measurable career outcomes (Francis, 2017; Hill & Wheat, 2017). These divergent findings suggest that mentorship effectiveness is not universal but is likely influenced by organizational context, mentorship structure, and the specific dimensions of mentorship examined. Consequently, the literature has not reached consensus regarding the conditions under which mentorship contributes most effectively to women's career development.

A second unresolved issue relates to the multidimensional nature of mentorship. Existing studies have generally examined mentorship from isolated perspectives by focusing on psychosocial support (Chang et al., 2022), career guidance (Okolie et al., 2020), gender-specific barriers (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021), or mentor characteristics (Kofoed & McGovney, 2019). While these studies have generated valuable insights, they provide only a partial understanding of mentorship because they examine individual dimensions independently. Consequently, there is limited empirical evidence explaining the relative contribution of psychosocial support, mentorship attributes, and the ability to overcome gender-specific barriers within a single explanatory framework. As a result, it remains unclear which mentorship dimensions are most influential in promoting women's career development.

The literature also reveals considerable variation in the organizational settings within which mentorship has been investigated. Most empirical evidence originates from healthcare, higher education, public administration, technology, military organizations, and multinational corporations (Farkas et al., 2019; Hill & Wheat, 2017; Jayachandran, 2020; Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021). These sectors differ substantially from commercial banking in terms of organizational hierarchies, leadership pipelines, promotion systems, performance evaluation, and career progression mechanisms. Consequently, findings from these settings cannot readily be generalized

to Kenya's banking sector, where formal performance management systems operate alongside informal career processes such as sponsorship, leadership visibility, and professional networking. This creates an important empirical gap regarding whether mentorship functions similarly within Kenya's Tier 1 banks.

More importantly, the literature provides limited evidence regarding mentorship within Kenya's banking industry despite the sector's strategic importance to the country's economy and its continued underrepresentation of women in senior leadership positions (Central Bank of Kenya, 2023a; Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, 2022). Existing Kenyan studies have largely examined women's career development within universities or the broader corporate sector (Kinyanjui, 2019; Liani et al., 2021; Malelu, 2017) and therefore provide limited insight into the unique organizational realities of Tier 1 banks. These institutions are characterized by highly competitive leadership structures, formalized human resource systems, stringent performance expectations, and complex organizational hierarchies that may influence both the availability and effectiveness of mentorship differently from other sectors. Consequently, it remains unclear whether mentorship influences women's career development in the same manner reported in previous studies or whether sector-specific organizational dynamics shape different outcomes.

Taken together, the literature demonstrates that the principal knowledge gap is no longer whether mentorship contributes to women's career development, but rather which mentorship mechanisms most effectively facilitate women's career advancement within Kenya's Tier 1 banking sector and how psychosocial support, mentorship attributes, and gender-specific barriers interact to influence career outcomes within this unique organizational context. Addressing this gap is important because evidence generated from other countries and sectors cannot adequately explain the career experiences of women employed within Kenya's largest commercial banks. Accordingly, this study examined the influence of mentorship psychosocial support, overcoming gender-specific barriers, and mentorship attributes on the career development of women working in Tier 1 banks in Nairobi City County. A summary of these research gaps is presented in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2:Summary of Research Gaps

Study	Focus of the Study	Key Findings	Critical Gap Identified	Contribution of the Current Study
Chang et al. (2022)	Examined the impact of mentorship on career development among women in the UK.	Career-related support enhanced job performance, while psychosocial support improved job satisfaction and organizational commitment.	Although psychosocial support was shown to be beneficial, the study treated mentorship as a single intervention and did not explain how psychosocial support interacts with mentor characteristics and workplace gender barriers. Consequently, it remains unclear which mentorship dimensions are most influential in promoting women's career development.	Examines psychosocial support, mentorship attributes, and gender-specific barriers simultaneously to determine their relative contribution to women's career development in Kenya's Tier 1 banks.
Okolie et al. (2020)	Investigated the role of mentorship in career growth among graduates in Nigeria.	Mentorship support positively influenced promotions and upward mobility.	The findings were limited to graduates and emphasized promotions, making it difficult to determine whether mentorship operates similarly among experienced women professionals working within hierarchical organizations.	Provides evidence from women employed in Kenya's Tier 1 banks and evaluates broader career development outcomes beyond promotion alone.
Mcilongo and Strydom (2021)	Examined the effect of mentorship support on career advancement among female protégés in South Africa's public sector.	Mentorship improved visibility and access to career development opportunities.	The public-sector context differs substantially from commercial banking, where promotion decisions depend heavily on organizational competition, leadership visibility, and sponsorship. The transferability of these findings therefore remains uncertain.	Establishes whether similar mentorship mechanisms operate within Kenya's highly competitive banking sector.
Farkas et al. (2019)	Examined the impact of mentorship	Mentorship programmes improved	Although positive outcomes were reported, the study did not identify	Determines the relative influence of psychosocial

	programmes on women in academic medicine.	retention, promotion, and career satisfaction.	which mentorship components were responsible for these outcomes, limiting practical guidance for organizations seeking to strengthen mentorship effectiveness.	support, mentorship attributes, and gender-specific barriers on women's career development.
Chauhan and Mishra (2021)	Examined the influence of mentorship on career resilience and adaptability.	Mentorship significantly strengthened resilience and adaptability.	The study focused primarily on psychological outcomes and therefore provides limited evidence regarding whether these benefits translate into objective career progression and leadership advancement.	Extends the analysis to broader career development outcomes including leadership opportunities, career progression, and professional growth.
Francis (2017)	Assessed the effect of mentoring on women's career advancement in Australia's construction industry.	Mentorship showed no significant influence on career advancement.	The findings challenge the widely accepted benefits of mentorship, but it is unclear whether the insignificant effect reflects the construction industry's organizational culture rather than mentorship itself.	Re-examines mentorship effectiveness within Kenya's banking sector to determine whether mentorship outcomes are context-dependent.
Hill and Wheat (2017)	Explored the influence of role models and mentorship on university women leaders in the United States.	Mentorship played a limited role in participants' career advancement.	The study focused on women who had already attained senior leadership positions, making it difficult to determine whether mentorship is more influential during earlier stages of career progression.	Examines women at different career stages within Kenya's banking sector to determine mentorship's contribution to career advancement.
Malelu (2017)	Examined barriers affecting women's access to mentorship.	Patriarchal culture, limited networking opportunities, and male-dominated leadership constrained access to mentorship.	The study identified barriers to mentorship access but did not establish whether overcoming these barriers improves women's career development outcomes.	Examines whether mentorship assists women in overcoming gender-specific barriers and whether doing so contributes to career advancement.

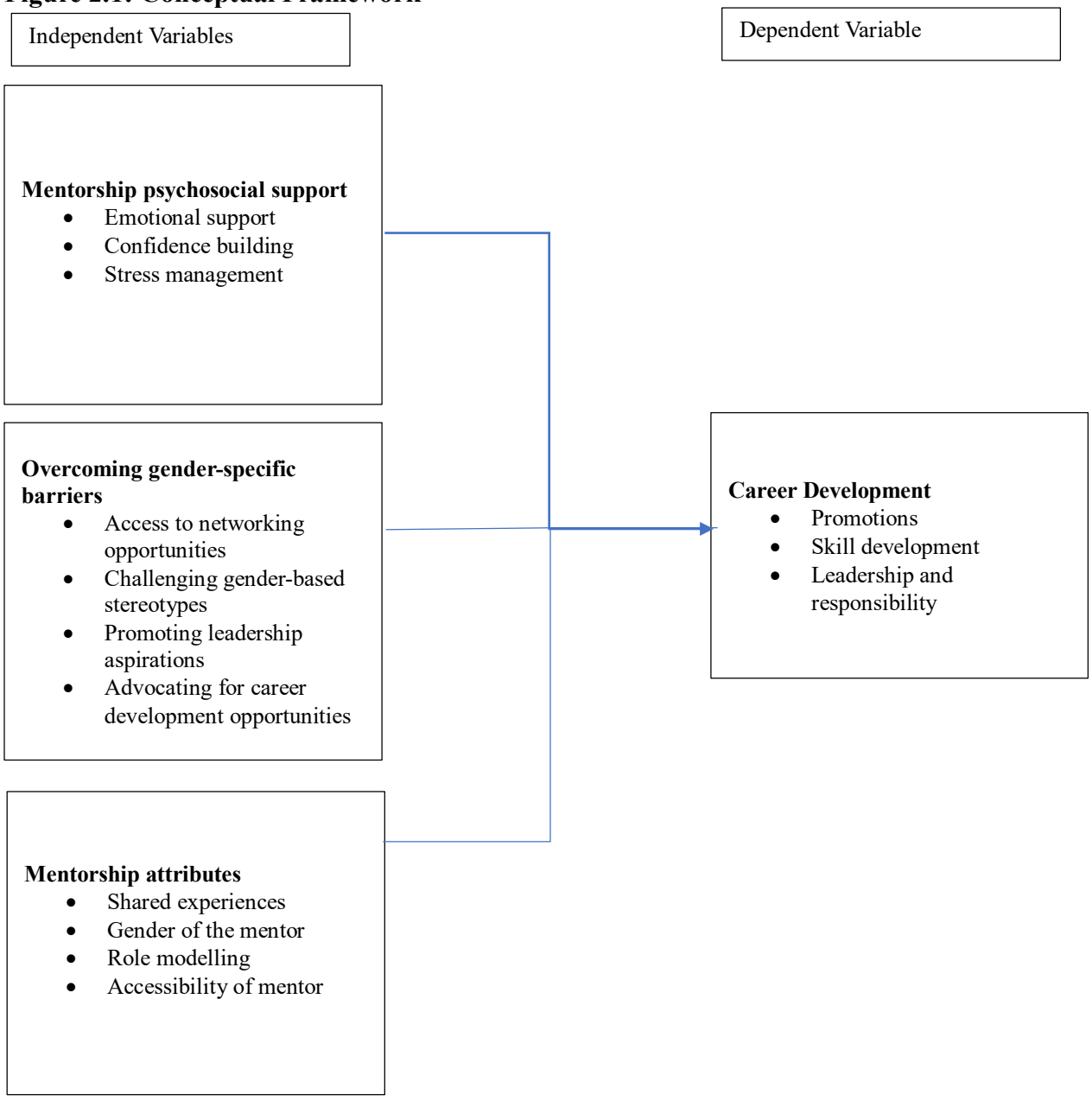
Tabassum and Nayak (2021)	Examined the relationship between gender-specific barriers and career advancement.	Women participating in mentorship programmes were more likely to overcome discrimination and achieve promotions.	The study demonstrated that mentorship reduces workplace barriers but did not establish whether psychosocial support and mentor characteristics strengthen or weaken this relationship.	Examines the combined influence of mentorship psychosocial support, mentorship attributes, and gender-specific barriers on career development.
Stewart et al. (2021)	Examined the influence of organizational policies on women's career progression.	Organizational interventions reduced gender bias and increased women's representation in leadership.	The findings suggest that organizational reforms matter, but they do not clarify the specific contribution of mentorship relative to broader institutional interventions.	Isolates mentorship-related factors to determine their independent contribution to women's career development.
Kofoed and McGovney (2019)	Investigated the influence of same-gender mentors on occupational choices among female military officers.	Female mentor matching significantly influenced occupational preferences.	The military context emphasizes gender matching, but it remains unclear whether mentor gender is more important than accessibility, experience, sponsorship, or role modelling in corporate organizations.	Examines mentorship attributes as a multidimensional construct, incorporating mentor gender, accessibility, shared experiences, and role modelling within Kenya's banking sector.

Source: Researcher (2026)

2.6 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research is presented in Figure 2.1. The dependent variable for this study was career development. The independent variables were mentorship psychosocial support, overcoming gender-specific barriers, and mentorship attributes. The conceptual framework also shows the indicators for measuring the variables.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Researcher (2026)

2.7 Operationalization of Study Variables

Table 2.3 presents the operationalization of the variables for this research.

Table 2.3: Operationalization of Study Variables

Variable	Indicators	Measurement	Literature Source	Questionnaire Items
Mentorship psychosocial support	Emotional support	5-point Likert scale	(Banwell et al., 2021; Chang et al., 2022)	Section II
	Confidence building	5-point Likert scale	(Noormahomed et al., 2018)	Section II
	Stress management	5-point Likert scale	(Banwell et al., 2021; Chang et al., 2022)	Section II
Overcoming gender-specific barriers	Access to networking opportunities	5-point Likert scale	(Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017; Dezsö & Ross, 2012)	Section II
	Challenging gender-based stereotypes	5-point Likert scale	(Liani et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2021)	Section II
	Promoting leadership aspirations	5-point Likert scale	(Stewart et al., 2021; Tabassum & Nayak, 2021)	Section II
	Advocating for career development opportunities	5-point Likert scale	(Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017; Dezsö & Ross, 2012)	Section II
Mentor attributes	Shared experiences	5-point Likert scale	(Stewart et al., 2021; Tabassum & Nayak, 2021)	Section II
	Gender of mentor	5-point Likert scale	(Ochenge, 2024; Opoku et al., 2018)	Section II
	Role modelling	5-point Likert scale	(Stewart et al., 2021; Tabassum & Nayak, 2021)	Section II
	Accessibility of mentor	5-point Likert scale	(Coleman, 2020; Shen et al., 2022)	Section II
Career Development	Promotions	5-point Likert scale	(Glass & Cook, 2016; Guthrie & Jones, 2017)	Section III

	Skill development	5-point Likert scale	(Shen et al., 2022)	Section III
	Leadership and responsibility	5-point Likert scale	(Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021; Noormahomed et al., 2018)	Section III

Source: (Researcher, 202)

2.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented a review of existing literature on the subject of mentorship. The theoretical foundation, empirical literature, research gaps, the conceptual framework, and the operationalization of study variables have been discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter details the research methodology. Its structure encompasses the research philosophy, design, population and sampling techniques, data collection and analysis processes, and ethical and quality considerations.

3.2 Research Philosophy

A research philosophy comprises the foundational beliefs about the nature of knowledge and how it can be acquired, which in turn guide the study's design, execution, and interpretation (Creswell, 2014). Common philosophical stances include positivism, interpretivism, realism, and pragmatism, each offering a distinct approach to investigating reality and constructing knowledge. This research adopted the positivist philosophy, which asserts that reality is objective and measurable through observable, empirical evidence. Positivism favors structured methodologies, quantifiable variables, and statistical techniques to test hypotheses and assess relationships between variables (Creswell, 2014). It is particularly suitable for studies aiming to examine objective relationships among measurable variables and produce generalizable findings based on empirical evidence.

The positivist orientation aligns with the quantitative design of this inquiry, which examined the connections between mentorship (as the independent variable) and women's career development (as the dependent variable) using numerical data gathered through structured surveys. This philosophical approach supports a descriptive correlational design, focused on identifying and quantifying patterns and associations rather than interpreting subjective experiences or narratives. Adopting a positivist stance enhanced the objectivity and replicability of the study, and ensured that that conclusions were grounded in empirical evidence rather than researcher bias. As a result, the findings were positioned to provide reliable insights to inform policy, practice, and theoretical discourse on mentorship and gender equity within Kenya's banking sector.

3.3 Research Design

The research design functions as the overall strategy that guides the procedures for data collection, analysis, and interpretation, ensuring the study's questions are addressed with validity and reliability (Morse, 2016). It provides the structural framework necessary to meet the research objectives effectively.

The present study employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. This approach is suitable for research that seeks to gather data at one specific point in time to both describe a population and examine relationships among variables (Creswell, 2014). The descriptive component allows for the systematic documentation and measurement of how mentorship influences women's career development. Simultaneously, the cross-sectional aspect ensures data is collected from participants at a single moment, rather than across multiple time periods.

The choice of a survey method aligned with the quantitative approach and the study's objectives, which focused on assessing the influence of mentorship dimensions, such as psychosocial support, mentorship attributes, and efforts to overcome gender-specific barriers, on career development among women working in Tier 1 banks in Nairobi. This design is efficient, cost-effective, and well-suited for obtaining data from a large sample, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the findings (Creswell, 2014).

While the cross-sectional survey design was appropriate for examining associations between mentorship and career development within a large population at a single point in time, it does not permit the establishment of causal relationships (Morse, 2016). Consequently, the findings of this study should be interpreted as evidence of statistical associations rather than definitive proof of causality between mentorship dimensions and career development outcomes.

3.4 Population of the Study

A study population refers to the entire group of individuals or entities that meet the criteria for inclusion in a research study and from which the sample is drawn for data collection (Creswell, 2014). The target population for this study comprised female employees working in Tier 1 commercial banks within Nairobi City County. Tier 1 banks are classified by the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK) as large banks with a weighted composite index of 5% or more, based on factors

such as assets, deposits, and market share (Central Bank of Kenya, 2023b). These banks were selected for the study due to their structured human resource systems, formal mentorship initiatives, and strategic influence in Kenya's banking sector.

According to annual reports, sustainability reports, and workforce disclosures published by Tier 1 commercial banks including KCB Bank Kenya PLC, Equity Bank Kenya Limited, Co-operative Bank of Kenya, NCBA Bank Kenya PLC, Absa Bank Kenya PLC, Standard Chartered Bank Kenya PLC, Stanbic Bank Kenya Limited, I&M Bank Limited, and Diamond Trust Bank Kenya Limited for the year 2025, the estimated number of women employed within Tier 1 banks operating in Nairobi City County was approximately 4,077. These figures were derived from gender-disaggregated employment statistics reported in publicly available corporate disclosures and were used to construct the study sampling frame.

3.5 Sampling Technique

Purposive (judgmental) sampling was preferred over simple random sampling because the study specifically targeted women employees in Tier 1 banks who possessed relevant knowledge and experience regarding mentorship and career development, making them more suitable for providing information aligned with the study objectives. Additionally, simple random sampling would not have guaranteed the inclusion of respondents with direct exposure to mentorship experiences relevant to the study variables.

The unit of analysis in this study was the individual female employee working in Tier 1 commercial banks in Nairobi City County. The focus was on women who are either currently involved in mentorship, formally or informally, or have previously participated in such programs during their career within the banking sector. To determine the sample size for the quantitative component of the research, the formula developed by Taro Yamane was used:

$n = N/(1+N(e)^2$.

n is the desired sample size

N is the estimated population size

e is the acceptable margin of error estimated at 0.05 (95% confidence intervals).

Using an estimated target population of 4,077 in the formula, the sample size that was required for this research is: $4,077 / (1 + 4,077 (0.05)^2 = 364$ respondents.

The resulting sample size of 364 respondents was considered adequate for multiple regression analysis because it substantially exceeded commonly recommended minimum sample sizes for models with three predictor variables. According to Green (1991), the minimum sample size required for testing individual predictors in multiple regression is 104 + m, where m represents the number of predictors. Given that the present study contained three predictors, the minimum recommended sample size would be 107 respondents. Therefore, the sample of 364 provided sufficient statistical power to detect meaningful relationships among the study variables.

In addition, Green's (1991) rule of thumb for testing sample adequacy for the overall regression model is $N \geq 50 + 8m$, where m represents the number of independent variables. Since this study examined three independent variables, the minimum recommended sample size was: $N \geq 50 + 8(3) = 74$ respondents. Therefore, the final sample size of 364 respondents substantially exceeded this minimum requirement, indicating adequate statistical power to detect meaningful relationships among the study variables while improving the precision and stability of the regression estimates (Green, 1991).

Table 3.1 presents the proportional allocation of the sample across the nine Tier 1 banks. The allocation was based on each bank's share of the total Tier 1 workforce as reported in the 2025 annual reports. These workforce figures were used solely for sample allocation purposes and not as the target population, which consisted exclusively of female employees. This approach ensured that larger banks contributed proportionately more respondents to the sample than smaller banks, thereby enhancing representativeness across the Tier 1 banking segment.

The target population comprised an estimated 4,077 women employed in Tier 1 banks within Nairobi City County. However, because individual bank-level statistics on the distribution of female employees were not publicly available, the estimated total workforce reported in the banks' 2025 annual reports (38,525 employees) was used solely to determine the proportional allocation of questionnaires across participating banks. This approach assumes that the distribution of female employees broadly reflects the distribution of the overall workforce and therefore provides a reasonable basis for proportionate sample allocation. The workforce figures were not used to

determine the study population or calculate the sample size, which were based exclusively on the estimated female population of 4,077 employees. Consequently, the estimated total workforce of each bank, as reported in the 2025 annual reports, was used as a proxy for proportional allocation of the sample across the nine Tier 1 banks. The underlying assumption was that the distribution of female employees broadly reflects the overall workforce distribution within the Tier 1 banking category. Therefore, the figures presented in Table 3.1 were not used to determine the study population but rather to allocate the calculated sample proportionately across participating banks.

Table 3.1: Proportion of the target sample

Bank	Estimated Total Number of Employees (obtained from 2025 annual reports)	Proportion of the population (%)	Number of respondents from the bank included in the sample
Absa Bank	2130	5.529%	20
Co-operative Bank of Kenya Limited	5400	14.017%	51
Diamond Trust Bank (K) Ltd.	2777	7.208%	26
Equity Bank Kenya Limited	7763	20.151%	73
I&M Bank Ltd	2827	7.338%	27
KCB Bank Kenya Limited	12,221	31.722%	115
NCBA Bank Kenya Plc	3,250	8.436%	31
Stanbic Bank Kenya Limited	1,137	2.951%	11
Standard Chartered Bank Kenya Limited	1,020	2.648%	10
Total	38,525	100%	364

Source: Researcher (2026)

Although purposive sampling was appropriate for identifying respondents with relevant mentorship experience, the researcher acknowledges that the technique may introduce selection bias because participants were selected based on predefined characteristics rather than through random selection. To minimize this limitation, respondents were drawn from multiple Tier 1 banks representing diverse organizational environments and career levels. In addition, clear eligibility criteria were applied consistently across all participating institutions. Specifically, respondents were required to be female employees working in a Tier 1 bank within Nairobi City County and to

have current or previous experience with a formal or informal mentorship relationship. These criteria enhanced comparability among respondents and reduced the likelihood of including participants with limited relevance to the study objectives.

Whereas purposive sampling was appropriate because the study specifically sought respondents with direct mentorship experience, the approach may introduce positive selection bias. Women who have participated in mentorship programmes are more likely to possess favorable perceptions of mentorship than employees without such experience. Consequently, the observed relationships between mentorship and career development may be stronger than would be expected in the broader population of women employees. Nevertheless, restricting participation to women with mentorship experience was necessary because respondents without exposure to mentorship would be unable to meaningfully evaluate the mentorship dimensions investigated in this study. To minimize selection bias, consistent eligibility criteria were applied across all participating banks, requiring respondents to be female employees working in Tier 1 banks within Nairobi and to have participated in either formal or informal mentorship relationships.

3.6 Data Collection

This research utilized primary data sources because it enabled researchers to gain first-hand information from participants. The use of primary data ensures that the collected information is relevant for the study's objectives. Secondary data sources might contain information that is not relevant to the objective of this research (Creswell, 2014). Also, secondary data might be outdated; hence, not applicable in the present times.

Structured questionnaires were used to gather primary data for this study. Structured questionnaires utilize closed-ended questions to elicit standardized responses that can be coded and analyzed quantitatively. They are also easy to administer, which makes them effective in collecting data from many respondents (Morse, 2016). However, a drawback of questionnaires is the low response rate and the difficulty ascertaining if the respondents are the ones who meet the eligibility criteria. Closed-ended items were used in the questionnaire. These questions enabled respondents to select from predetermined responses. The resulting standardized responses facilitate quantitative data analysis. They also minimize the cognitive load on respondents (Creswell, 2014). The

questionnaire items used 5-point Likert scale data. For each variable, a composite average of the Likert scale data was computed such that the variable was continuous measure.

Although mentorship and career development are multidimensional constructs, Likert-scale measures were considered appropriate because they facilitate the systematic quantification of perceptions, attitudes, and experiences that have been widely operationalized using survey instruments in prior mentorship and career development research (Chang et al., 2022; Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021).

Because the study relied on self-reported questionnaire data, several procedural measures were implemented to minimize common method bias and social desirability bias. Respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, reducing pressure to provide socially desirable responses. Questionnaire items were carefully worded using neutral language and arranged in separate sections corresponding to different study variables to reduce respondents' tendency to provide consistent responses across constructs. Furthermore, participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed that there were no right or wrong answers, encouraging honest and independent responses.

The questionnaires used in this research contained three sections. Section I collected information on the profile of respondents. Section II contained items regarding the independent variables, including mentorship psychosocial support, overcoming gender-specific barriers, and mentorship attributes, whereas Section III contained questions on career development.

Questionnaires were administered digitally via email or survey platforms (Google Forms), leveraging the widespread use of technology in the banking sector as well as physically using a fill-and-wait strategy. To maximize response rates for digital survey, a follow-up reminder schedule was implemented. In addition, trained research assistants were used to distribute the physical questionnaires. These assistants received training on ethical considerations and the objective of the research before beginning the data collection exercise. This strategy ensures comprehensive coverage and efficient data collection while minimizing disruptions to participants' schedules. The researcher liaised with human resource departments in selected banks to facilitate access to participants.

3.7 Research Quality

3.7.1 Validity

Validity denotes the extent to which an instrument measures what it purports to measure, ensuring that research findings are credible and meaningful (Morse, 2016). Several forms of validity are pertinent to this study. Content validity gauges whether the survey items sufficiently capture all facets of the construct under study. Construct validity assesses the instrument's ability to measure the theoretical concept it is designed to examine. Lastly, criterion-related validity evaluates the degree to which one measure predicts an outcome based on an established external measure (Morse, 2016).

Content validity was ensured through a questionnaire developed from a thorough review of relevant literature and aligned with the theoretical frameworks of Social Cognitive Career Theory and Social Role Theory. Survey items were evaluated by academic experts in human resource management, gender studies, and organizational behavior, including a supervisor from Strathmore University, to assess relevance, clarity, and comprehensiveness. Feedback from this review guided revisions to better align the instrument with the study's objectives and variables.

A pilot study was conducted with 30 female employees in commercial banks in Nairobi to assess the clarity, logical flow, and suitability of the questionnaire. The pilot sample of 30 respondents was considered adequate because methodological literature recommends between 10 and 30 participants for pilot testing survey instruments, particularly when the objective is to assess clarity, wording, sequencing, and reliability rather than hypothesis testing (Morse, 2016; Creswell, 2014). Accordingly, thirty respondents were considered sufficient to identify ambiguities, assess internal consistency, and refine questionnaire items prior to the main data collection exercise.

During pilot testing, minor conceptual overlap was observed between a small number of items measuring mentorship psychosocial support and mentorship attributes because both constructs involve interpersonal mentor–mentee interactions. To strengthen construct validity, the questionnaire was reviewed against the conceptual definitions developed in Chapter Two. Items intended to measure psychosocial support were refined to focus specifically on emotional encouragement, confidence building, stress management, and psychological support, whereas items measuring mentorship attributes were revised to emphasize characteristics of the mentor and

mentoring relationship, including accessibility, role modelling, shared experiences, and mentor credibility. The revised instrument was subsequently reviewed by the supervisors to confirm that each item appropriately reflected its intended construct before administration in the main study.

The pilot study also revealed a high response completion rate, with minimal missing data, indicating that the questionnaire was well-structured and user-friendly. Based on these findings, minor revisions were made, including rephrasing of ambiguous items, improving question sequencing, and enhancing clarity of instructions. These adjustments ensured that the final questionnaire was valid, reliable, and suitable for the main study.

Particular attention was given to differentiating mentorship psychosocial support from mentorship attributes. Items measuring psychosocial support were revised to focus specifically on emotional encouragement, confidence building, and stress management, while mentorship attribute items were refined to emphasize characteristics of the mentor and mentorship relationship, such as accessibility, role modelling, gender of mentor, and shared experiences. These revisions improved conceptual distinctiveness between the constructs and strengthened construct validity. Additionally, construct validity was enhanced by aligning questionnaire items with the operational definitions of key variables and drawing on validated scales from prior studies where applicable. The feedback from the pilot and expert reviews ensured that the instrument is valid and fit for the intended research purpose.

3.7.2 Reliability

Reliability denotes the consistency and stability with which a research instrument measures its intended construct under varying conditions and across time. A reliable instrument yields similar results when repeated under the same conditions, thereby ensuring that the data collected is dependable and replicable (Creswell, 2014).

The internal consistency of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, a statistical measure commonly used to evaluate the reliability of Likert-type scales. Flabbi et al. (2019) adopted a Cronbach's alpha threshold of 0.6 while Guthrie and Jones (2017) used a threshold of 0.7. In this research, a Cronbach's alpha of ≥ 0.70 was used as the threshold for acceptable internal consistency of the survey instrument. Each section of the questionnaire, measuring psychosocial support, mentorship attributes, gender-specific barriers, and career

development, was evaluated separately to ensure that each construct is measured reliably. Ensuring high reliability strengthens the validity and credibility of the study's findings and supports accurate interpretation of relationships between mentorship and women's career development. Table 3.2 shows the reliability coefficients, which confirms that all the measures were reliable.

Table 3.2: Reliability of Measures

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's alpha
Mentorship Psychosocial Support	9	0.935
Overcoming gender-specific barriers	12	0.889
Mentorship Attributes	11	0.902
Career development	8	0.914

Source: Researcher (2026)

The reliability of the research instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients to determine the internal consistency of the study constructs. As shown in Table 3.2, mentorship psychosocial support recorded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.935, overcoming gender-specific barriers recorded 0.889, mentorship attributes recorded 0.902, while career development recorded 0.914. All the constructs achieved Cronbach's Alpha values above the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating that the instrument had high internal consistency and was therefore reliable for data collection and subsequent statistical analysis.

3.8 Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected through structured questionnaires was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. The dataset comprised demographic information, ordinal responses from Likert-scale items, and computed interval-level composite scores for the key variables, including mentorship psychosocial support, mentorship attributes, and career development. Prior to analysis, all data was systematically coded to ensure consistency and accuracy in interpretation.

The analysis commenced with descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, to summarize the demographic characteristics of respondents and provide a general overview of the data. This initial step also aided in identifying any irregularities or outliers within the dataset. Subsequently, inferential statistical techniques were employed to

examine the relationships between the independent variables, which are the mentorship components, and the dependent variable of career development. Specifically, Pearson's correlation analysis was used to determine the strength and direction of associations between variables. Following this, multiple linear regression analysis assessed the extent to which the dimensions of mentorship predict career development outcomes among women in Tier 1 banks.

Before conducting the regression analysis, several statistical assumptions were tested to ensure the validity of the results. This included linearity, which requires a straight-line relationship between independent and dependent variables tested by visually inspecting scatter plots with fit line; normality, where the residuals should be normally distributed, tested using Q-Q plots; homoscedasticity, which assumes equal variance of errors; and the absence of multicollinearity among predictor variables, assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The following equation was used:

$CA = \beta_0 + \beta_1 MPS + \beta_2 GSB + \beta_3 MA + \in$, where

CA = Career Development,

MPS = Mentorship Psychosocial Support,

GSB = Overcoming gender-specific barriers,

MA = Mentorship Attributes, $\in$ = error function

The results of the inferential analyses were interpreted using p-values (with statistical significance set at $\alpha = 0.05$), standardized regression coefficients, and R-squared values to determine both statistical significance and explanatory power. The findings were presented using tables and figures for clarity and were discussed in relation to the study objectives and existing literature to draw meaningful conclusions and practical recommendations.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Prior to engaging respondents, approvals were sought from the Ethical Review Committee at Strathmore University and the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Informed consent was obtained from respondents before they are allowed to participate. The process of obtaining consent involved briefing potential respondents on the study,

its aims and objectives and nature of their participation. To ensure the confidentiality of respondents, personal data was not collected. Participant anonymity was ensured by not collecting personally identifiable information such as names, employee numbers, or specific job identifiers in the questionnaires. In addition, respondents were informed that their responses would be used strictly for academic purposes and reported in aggregate form to prevent identification of individual participants or institutions. The collected data was kept in a password-secure computer under lock-and-key and only accessible by the researcher.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the research methodology that was adopted for the proposed study. The structure of the chapter consists of the research philosophy, research design, population and sampling, data collection, data analysis, research quality and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the study on the role of female mentorship in advancing women's careers in Tier 1 banks in Nairobi. The chapter provides a systematic presentation and analysis of the data collected using structured questionnaires, in line with the study objectives and research questions outlined in earlier chapters. The chapter begins with the response rate, followed by the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Descriptive statistics are then presented to summarize the key variables of the study, including mentorship psychosocial support, overcoming gender-specific barriers, mentorship attributes, and career development. Thereafter, inferential statistics are provided, including correlation and multiple linear regression analysis, to examine the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the key findings.

4.2 Response Rate

A total of 364 questionnaires were distributed to the target respondents, out of which 341 were successfully completed and returned. This represents a response rate of 93.7%, which was computed as follows:

$$Response\ Rate = \frac{341}{364} \times 100 = 93.7\%$$

The response rate is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Response Rate

Category	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Returned Questionnaires	341	93.7%
Unreturned Questionnaires	23	6.3%
Total	**364**	**100%**

Source: Researcher (2026)

The response rate of 93.7% is considered highly adequate for statistical analysis. According to Creswell (2014), a response rate above 70% is regarded as excellent for survey research, as it

minimizes non-response bias and enhances the reliability and generalizability of the findings. Therefore, the data collected was deemed sufficient and appropriate for further analysis.

The high response rate may be attributed to the data collection strategy adopted in the study, which involved both digital and physical questionnaire administration. Questionnaires were distributed through email, Google Forms, and a fill-and-wait approach facilitated by trained research assistants. Follow-up reminders were also issued to encourage participation. These procedures enhanced accessibility and contributed to the high response rate achieved.

4.3 Respondent's Background Information

Table 4.2: Respondents' Background Information

		Count	Percent
Age	18-25 years	20	6%
	26-35 years	74	22%
	36-45 years	149	44%
	46-55 years	78	23%
	56 years and above	20	6%
	Total	341	100%
Gender	Female	341	100%
	Male	0	0%
	Total	341	100%
Highest Level of Education Completed	Secondary School	0	0%
	Diploma/Certificate	22	6%
	Undergraduate degree	209	61%
	Postgraduate degree	89	26%
	CPA	13	4%
	ACCA	8	2%
	Total	341	100%
Current Role/Position in the Bank	Entry-Level Staff (such as teller)	95	28%
	Mid-Level Staff (Such as branch managers)	127	37%
	Senior Management (such as Department Head)	119	35%
	Executive Management (such as C-Suite)	0	0%
	Total	341	100%
Years of Experience in the Banking Sector	Less than 1 year	29	9%
	1-3 years	28	8%
	4-6 years	88	26%
	7-10 years	108	32%

	More than 10 years	88	26%
	Total	341	100%

Source: Researcher (2026)

Table 4.1 details the background information of respondents in this study. The findings indicate that the majority of respondents (44%) were aged between 36–45 years, followed by those aged 46–55 years (23%) and 26–35 years (22%). Respondents aged 18–25 years and those above 56 years each accounted for only 6% of the sample. This distribution suggests that most participants were in their mid-career stage, which is appropriate for this study as individuals in this category are more likely to have experienced mentorship and career progression within the banking sector. In addition, all respondents (100%) were female, which aligns with the target population of the study that specifically focused on women working in Tier 1 banks. This ensures that the data collected is highly relevant to the study objectives concerning women's career development.

In terms of educational qualifications, the majority of respondents (61%) held an undergraduate degree, while 26% had attained postgraduate qualifications. A smaller proportion had diploma or certificate qualifications (6%), while professional certifications such as CPA (4%) and ACCA (2%) were less common. This indicates that most respondents were well-educated, suggesting a high level of professional competence and the capacity to engage effectively with mentorship and career development processes.

Regarding job position, most respondents were in mid-level positions (37%), followed closely by senior management roles (35%), while 28% were in entry-level positions. Notably, none of the respondents occupied executive management positions. This distribution implies that the study captured perspectives from employees across different career stages, although representation at the highest leadership level was absent, which may reflect the broader gender disparities in top-level management within the banking sector.

The absence of executive-level respondents should also be considered when interpreting the findings. While the result reflects the underrepresentation of women in top leadership positions within the banking sector, it means that the study primarily captures perceptions of career development among women at entry, middle, and senior management levels. Consequently, the findings may not fully reflect mentorship experiences associated with executive-level career advancement.

The absence of respondents occupying executive or C-suite positions reflects the persistent underrepresentation of women in senior leadership within Kenya's banking sector and is consistent with the problem investigated in this study. However, this also has methodological implications because the findings primarily reflect the experiences of women occupying junior, supervisory, middle, and senior management positions rather than those who have successfully attained executive leadership. Consequently, the study provides stronger insight into factors influencing career progression toward senior leadership than into mentorship experiences at executive level. Future studies may therefore benefit from incorporating executive-level perspectives to provide a more comprehensive understanding of mentorship across all leadership levels.

With respect to work experience, the largest proportion of respondents (32%) had between 7–10 years of experience, while 26% had 4–6 years and another 26% had more than 10 years of experience. Only a small proportion had less than 3 years of experience (17% combined). This suggests that the majority of respondents had substantial experience in the banking sector, making them well-positioned to provide informed insights on mentorship and career development. Overall, the demographic profile indicates that the respondents were predominantly experienced, well-educated, and positioned within mid to senior levels of management, thereby providing a reliable basis for examining the role of mentorship in advancing women's careers in Tier 1 banks.

Table 4.3: Mentorship Characteristics of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent
Participated in a mentorship program	No	0	0%
	Yes	341	100%
	Total	341	100%
Type of Mentorship Received	Formal (Structured Program)	166	49%
	Informal (Personal Initiative)	122	36%
	Both	53	16%
	Total	341	100%
Number of mentors had throughout career	1	67	20%
	2	145	43%
	3	129	38%
	Total	341	100%

Source: Researcher (2026)

The findings presented in Table 4.3 indicate that all respondents (100%) had participated in a mentorship program, with none reporting absence of mentorship. The finding that all respondents had mentorship experience should be interpreted in light of the study's sampling strategy.

Participation in a formal or informal mentorship relationship formed part of the inclusion criteria used in selecting respondents. Therefore, the result does not imply that all women employed in Tier 1 banks have access to mentorship; rather, it confirms that the study successfully targeted respondents with relevant mentorship experience who were capable of providing informed insights regarding the relationship between mentorship and career development.

The finding that all respondents reported mentorship experience should not be interpreted to mean that every woman employed within Kenya's Tier 1 banking sector has access to mentorship. Rather, this outcome reflects the study's inclusion criteria, which deliberately targeted women who had participated in either formal or informal mentorship relationships because only such respondents could meaningfully evaluate the mentorship dimensions examined in the study. Consequently, the finding confirms successful implementation of the sampling strategy rather than universal access to mentorship within the banking sector.

With regard to the type of mentorship received, the largest proportion of respondents (49%) reported participating in formal, structured mentorship programs, while 36% indicated involvement in informal mentorship initiated through personal networks. A smaller proportion (16%) reported experiencing both formal and informal mentorship. This distribution implies that although formal mentorship programs are prevalent within the banking sector, informal mentorship relationships also play a significant complementary role in supporting women's career advancement.

In terms of the number of mentors, most respondents (43%) reported having had two mentors throughout their careers, followed by those with three mentors (38%), while only 20% reported having had a single mentor. This pattern suggests that mentorship is not a one-time engagement but rather a continuous and evolving process, where individuals benefit from multiple mentorship relationships at different stages of their career.

Overall, the results in Table 4.3 demonstrate that mentorship is both widespread and multifaceted among the respondents, characterized by a mix of formal and informal structures and involvement with multiple mentors over time. This provides a strong foundation for examining how different dimensions of mentorship influence women's career development in the banking sector.

4.4 Descriptive Statistics

This section presents the descriptive analysis of the study variables, namely mentorship psychosocial support, overcoming gender-specific barriers, mentorship attributes, and career development. The analysis is based on composite mean scores derived from Likert scale items for each variable. Specifically, responses from individual items under each construct were aggregated and averaged to generate a single mean score representing respondents' overall perception of that variable.

To facilitate interpretation of the results, the composite mean scores were categorized using a five-point scale recommended by Creswell (2014). Mean values ranging from 1.00 to 1.80 were interpreted as reflecting very low levels of agreement, while scores between 1.81 and 2.60 indicated low perceptions. Mean scores falling within the range of 2.61 to 3.40 were considered moderate, whereas those between 3.41 and 4.20 represented high levels of agreement. Finally, mean values between 4.21 and 5.00 were interpreted as indicating very high perceptions of the measured items. This classification framework provides a standardized basis for evaluating the extent to which respondents agreed with statements relating to each study variable and supports meaningful interpretation of the descriptive findings.

4.4.1 Mentorship Psychosocial Support

Table 4.4: Descriptive Statistics for Mentorship Psychosocial Support

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. My mentor provides emotional encouragement when I face challenges at work.	341	3.18	1.146
2. I feel emotionally supported by my mentor during difficult situations in my career.	341	3.18	1.139
3. My mentor helps me maintain a positive outlook on my career despite challenges	341	3.14	1.112
4. My mentor has helped me develop confidence in my professional abilities.	341	3.05	1.122
5. Interactions with my mentor have improved my self-esteem in the workplace.	341	3.26	1.168
6. My mentor has increased my belief that I can handle senior roles	341	3.20	1.220
7. My mentor provides advice that helps me manage workplace stress effectively.	341	3.29	1.251

8. I feel less stressed about my career progression due to the guidance provided by my mentor.	341	3.16	1.265
9. My mentor helped become better at managing my job-related stress	341	3.06	1.084
Mentorship Psychosocial Support - Overall score	341	3.1691	1.03716

Source: Researcher (2026)

Mentorship psychosocial support was measured using three key indicators, namely emotional support, confidence building, and stress management, as presented in Table 4.4. With regard to emotional support, the results show that respondents moderately agreed that mentors provide emotional support in their career progression. Specifically, emotional encouragement when facing challenges and feeling emotionally supported during difficult situations both recorded a mean of 3.18 (SD = 1.146; SD = 1.139 respectively), while maintaining a positive outlook despite challenges had a slightly lower mean of 3.14 (SD = 1.112). These mean scores fall within the moderate range (2.61–3.40), suggesting that although mentors provide emotional support to some extent, it is not consistently strong across all respondents. The relatively high standard deviations indicate variation in experiences, implying that the level of emotional support differs among individuals.

In relation to confidence building, the findings similarly indicate moderate perceptions among respondents. Interactions with mentors improving self-esteem recorded the highest mean of 3.26 (SD = 1.168), followed by increased belief in handling senior roles with a mean of 3.20 (SD = 1.220). The statement on developing confidence in professional abilities recorded the lowest mean of 3.05 (SD = 1.122). These results suggest that mentorship contributes to confidence building to a moderate extent, particularly in enhancing self-esteem, although its influence on deeper professional confidence remains somewhat limited. The variation reflected in the standard deviations further suggests that not all respondents experience the same level of confidence enhancement from mentorship.

Regarding stress management, the results also reflect moderate agreement among respondents. The provision of advice to manage workplace stress recorded the highest mean of 3.29 (SD = 1.251), followed by reduced stress due to mentorship guidance with a mean of 3.16 (SD = 1.265), while improvement in managing job-related stress recorded the lowest mean of 3.06 (SD = 1.084). These findings fall within the moderate range, indicating that mentorship plays a role in helping

respondents manage stress, particularly through guidance and advice, although this support is not sufficiently strong to be considered high. The relatively large standard deviations suggest differing levels of effectiveness of mentorship in stress management across respondents.

Overall, the composite mean score for mentorship psychosocial support was 3.1691 (SD = 1.03716), which falls within the moderate category (2.61–3.40). This indicates that respondents generally perceived mentorship psychosocial support to be present, but not at a particularly strong level. Notably, the standard deviation of 1.03716 is relatively high for a five-point Likert scale, suggesting substantial variation in respondents' experiences. This implies that while some women received considerable emotional support, confidence building, and stress management assistance from their mentors, others experienced significantly lower levels of psychosocial support. The findings therefore suggest that mentorship psychosocial support is not uniformly experienced across Tier 1 banks and may vary depending on factors such as mentorship structure, mentor commitment, organizational culture, and the quality of mentor-mentee relationships. Consequently, although psychosocial support is present within mentorship relationships, there remains a need to improve its consistency and effectiveness across the banking sector.

4.4.2 Overcoming Gender-Specific Barriers

Table 4.5: Descriptive Statistics for Overcoming Gender-Specific Barriers

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. My mentor has facilitated access to professional networks that support my career progression.	341	2.92	1.122
2. My mentor connects me with opportunities that are typically less accessible to women in my field.	341	2.90	1.160
3. My mentor introduced me to key decision-makers who influenced my career	341	3.13	1.180
4. My mentor encourages me to challenge gender-based assumptions and situations in the workplace.	341	3.37	1.121
5. My mentor provides strategies to effectively address and counter gender stereotypes.	341	3.38	1.188
6. My mentor provided advice on managing gender-based conflict or discrimination.	341	3.39	1.172
7. My mentor overcame barriers and motivates me to aspire to leadership positions	341	3.33	1.075
8. My mentor helps me develop the confidence needed to pursue leadership roles.	341	3.12	1.206

9. My mentor proactively helped me develop a plan to reach a senior leadership position.	341	3.07	1.130
10. My mentor actively advocates for my career advancement within the organization.	341	3.05	1.194
11. My mentor supports me in seeking opportunities for promotions or professional growth.	341	3.16	1.137
12. My mentor has helped me strategically navigate the bank's promotion process	341	3.14	1.166
Overcoming gender-specific barriers - Overall score	341	3.1640	.99661

Source: Researcher (2026)

Mentorship in overcoming gender-specific barriers was measured using four key indicators, namely access to networking opportunities, challenging gender-based stereotypes, promoting leadership aspirations, and advocating for career development opportunities. In relation to access to networking opportunities, the results in Table 4.5 show that respondents moderately agreed that mentors facilitate access to networks and opportunities that support career progression. Specifically, introduction to key decision-makers recorded the highest mean of 3.13 (SD = 1.180), while facilitation of access to professional networks and connection to less accessible opportunities recorded slightly lower means of 2.92 (SD = 1.122) and 2.90 (SD = 1.160), respectively. These mean scores fall within the moderate range (2.61–3.40); thus, suggest that mentorship provides some level of networking support, although not strongly enough to indicate widespread or consistent access to influential professional networks. The standard deviations indicate variability in respondents' experiences, implying that access to networks through mentorship is not uniform.

In terms of challenging gender-based stereotypes, the findings indicate moderate but relatively stronger agreement compared to other indicators. Providing advice on managing gender-based conflict or discrimination recorded the highest mean of 3.39 (SD = 1.172), followed closely by providing strategies to counter gender stereotypes (mean = 3.38, SD = 1.188) and encouragement to challenge gender-based assumptions (mean = 3.37, SD = 1.121). These results, which are at the upper bound of the moderate range, suggest that mentors play a meaningful role in helping respondents navigate and challenge workplace gender biases, although the support is still not sufficiently strong to be classified as high. The relatively consistent standard deviations reflect moderate variation in respondents' perceptions.

Concerning promoting leadership aspirations, the results also reflect moderate agreement among respondents. Motivation to aspire to leadership positions recorded the highest mean of 3.33 (SD =

1.075), followed by development of confidence to pursue leadership roles (mean = 3.12, SD = 1.206), while proactive development of leadership plans recorded the lowest mean of 3.07 (SD = 1.130). These findings suggest that mentorship contributes to encouraging leadership ambitions among women, particularly through motivation, although structured guidance toward achieving leadership positions appears less pronounced. The variation in standard deviations indicates differing levels of mentorship effectiveness in fostering leadership aspirations.

With respect to advocating for career development opportunities, the results indicate moderate perceptions. Support in seeking promotions or professional growth recorded the highest mean of 3.16 (SD = 1.137), followed by assistance in navigating the promotion process (mean = 3.14, SD = 1.166), while active advocacy for career advancement recorded the lowest mean of 3.05 (SD = 1.194). These findings suggest that mentors provide some level of support in advancing respondents' careers; however, active advocacy on behalf of mentees is relatively limited. The observed standard deviations further indicate variability in the extent to which respondents receive such support.

Taken together, the composite mean score for overcoming gender-specific barriers was 3.1640 (SD = 0.99661), which falls within the moderate range (2.61–3.40). This implies that respondents generally perceive mentorship as playing a role in addressing gender-specific barriers, but not to a high extent. Therefore, while mentorship contributes to improving access to opportunities, challenging stereotypes, and supporting career advancement, the moderate rating suggests that there is still considerable room for strengthening mentorship practices to more effectively address gender-related challenges in the banking sector.

4.4.3 Mentorship Attributes

Table 4.6: Descriptive Statistics for Mentorship Attributes

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. My mentor shares experiences that are relevant to the challenges I face in my career.	341	3.13	1.222
2. I find my mentor relatable and understanding of my specific career needs and obstacles.	341	3.36	1.259
3. My mentor's past experience in the bank is highly relevant to my current challenges.	341	3.26	1.118

4. My mentor demonstrates behaviors and values that I aspire to emulate in my career.	341	3.22	1.058
5. I view my mentor as a role model for success in my professional field.	341	3.25	1.132
6. My mentor is readily available when I need guidance or support.	341	3.15	1.201
7. My mentor's accessibility has positively impacted the quality of our mentorship relationship	341	3.17	1.221
8. My mentor responds to my queries or requests for meetings in a timely manner.	341	3.29	1.201
9. My mentor demonstrates empathy for challenges specific to women in the workplace.	341	3.26	1.125
10. I feel that my mentor's gender fosters an environment of trust and encouragement.	341	3.11	1.155
11. My mentor's gender helps me navigate and succeed in male-dominated fields.	341	3.12	1.144
Mentorship Attributes - Overall score	341	3.2100	1.02287

Source: Researcher (2026)

Mentorship attributes were assessed using four key indicators, namely shared experiences, role modelling, accessibility of the mentor, and gender of the mentor, as presented in Table 4.6. In terms of shared experiences, the findings suggest that respondents generally expressed moderate agreement that their mentors possess relevant and relatable experience. The statement on mentors being relatable and understanding of specific career needs recorded the highest mean of 3.36 (SD = 1.259), followed by the relevance of the mentor's past experience in the bank (mean = 3.26, SD = 1.118). Sharing of experiences aligned to career challenges recorded a slightly lower mean of 3.13 (SD = 1.222). These results, which fall within the moderate range, indicate that while mentors are perceived to have experiences that resonate with mentees' challenges, this alignment is not consistently strong across all cases. The relatively high dispersion further points to varied experiences among respondents.

With regard to role modelling, respondents also demonstrated moderate perceptions of their mentors as role models. Viewing the mentor as a role model for professional success recorded a mean of 3.25 (SD = 1.132), while the extent to which mentors demonstrate behaviors and values worth emulating had a mean of 3.22 (SD = 1.058). These findings suggest that mentors provide some level of inspiration and guidance through their conduct; however, the influence is not sufficiently strong to be categorized as high. This implies that while mentors serve as reference points for professional growth, their impact as role models may not be fully maximized.

Concerning accessibility of the mentor, the results reflect moderate agreement, with some variation across the items. Timely response to queries recorded the highest mean of 3.29 (SD = 1.201), followed by the positive impact of accessibility on the mentorship relationship (mean = 3.17, SD = 1.221), while general availability of the mentor recorded a mean of 3.15 (SD = 1.201). These results indicate that mentors are reasonably accessible and responsive, which contributes to the effectiveness of the mentorship relationship. However, the moderate rating suggests that accessibility is not consistently optimal, potentially limiting the full benefits of mentorship engagement.

In relation to the gender of the mentor, respondents reported moderate perceptions regarding its role in mentorship effectiveness. Demonstration of empathy towards challenges specific to women recorded the highest mean of 3.26 (SD = 1.125), while the influence of the mentor's gender in fostering trust and encouragement had a mean of 3.11 (SD = 1.155). Similarly, the role of mentor gender in helping respondents navigate male-dominated fields recorded a mean of 3.12 (SD = 1.144). These findings imply that while gender plays a role in shaping mentorship experiences, particularly in relation to empathy and support, it is not a dominant factor influencing overall mentorship effectiveness.

Overall, the composite mean score for mentorship attributes was 3.2100 (SD = 1.02287), which falls within the moderate range (2.61–3.40). This indicates that respondents generally perceive mentorship attributes to be present to a reasonable extent, though not strongly established. The moderate overall score suggests that while mentors demonstrate relevant experience, serve as role models, and are fairly accessible, there remains room for strengthening these attributes to enhance the overall effectiveness of mentorship in supporting women's career development within Tier 1 banks.

4.4.4 Career Development

Table 4.7: Descriptive Statistics for Career Development

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Standard Deviation

1. My mentor's guidance has contributed to my career advancement and promotions.	341	3.09	1.136
2. I feel that mentorship has increased my chances of being considered for leadership roles or promotions.	341	3.15	1.149
3. I have been able to take advantage of promotions in my workplace because of mentorship	341	3.09	1.324
4. My mentor has played a key role in developing my technical and professional skills.	341	3.24	1.177
5. Mentorship has helped me acquire new competencies relevant to advancing my career.	341	3.06	1.084
6. My mentor's input has led to a demonstrable improvement in my technical skills to avoid it being too general.	341	3.05	1.122
7. My mentor has encouraged me to take on leadership roles and responsibilities in my career.	341	3.05	1.194
8. Mentorship has helped me develop the confidence to handle higher levels of responsibility.	341	3.17	1.221
Career Development - Overall score	341	3.1129	1.03854

Source: Researcher (2026)

Career development was measured using three key indicators, namely promotions, skill development, and leadership and responsibility, as presented in Table 4.7. With respect to promotions, the results indicate moderate agreement among respondents regarding the role of mentorship in advancing their careers. Specifically, increased chances of being considered for leadership roles or promotions recorded the highest mean of 3.15 (SD = 1.149), while both contribution of mentorship to career advancement and ability to take advantage of promotion opportunities recorded identical means of 3.09 (SD = 1.136; SD = 1.324 respectively). These findings fall within the moderate range (2.61–3.40), suggesting that mentorship contributes to career progression, though not to a strong extent. The relatively higher standard deviation for taking advantage of promotions indicates considerable variation in respondents' experiences, implying that not all individuals equally benefit from mentorship in accessing promotion opportunities.

In relation to skill development, respondents also expressed moderate perceptions of mentorship's influence. The role of mentors in developing technical and professional skills recorded the highest mean of 3.24 (SD = 1.177), followed by acquisition of new competencies relevant to career advancement (mean = 3.06, SD = 1.084) and improvement in technical skills (mean = 3.05, SD = 1.122). These results suggest that mentorship contributes to enhancing skills and competencies, although the impact is not sufficiently strong to be categorized as high. The dispersion across

responses indicates that the effectiveness of mentorship in skill development varies among respondents.

Regarding leadership and responsibility, the findings similarly reflect moderate agreement. Development of confidence to handle higher levels of responsibility recorded a mean of 3.17 (SD = 1.221), while encouragement to take on leadership roles recorded a slightly lower mean of 3.05 (SD = 1.194). These results imply that mentorship plays a role in preparing respondents for leadership responsibilities, particularly by enhancing confidence, although this support is not consistently strong across all respondents.

Overall, the composite mean score for career development was 3.1129 (SD = 1.03854), which falls within the moderate range (2.61–3.40). This indicates that respondents generally perceive mentorship as contributing to their career development, but not at a high level. The moderate overall score suggests that while mentorship supports promotions, skill acquisition, and leadership readiness, its overall impact remains limited, highlighting the need for more structured and effective mentorship practices to enhance women's career advancement in Tier 1 banks.

4.5 Inferential Statistics

This section presents the inferential analysis of the study, which was conducted to examine the relationships between mentorship variables and career development among women in Tier 1 banks in Nairobi. The analysis moves beyond descriptive summaries to test the strength, direction, and predictive influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable. First, Pearson's correlation analysis was employed to assess the nature and strength of the relationships between mentorship psychosocial support, overcoming gender-specific barriers, mentorship attributes, and career development. This technique helps determine whether the variables are positively or negatively related, as well as the magnitude of these associations. Subsequently, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the combined and individual effects of the independent variables on career development. This approach enables the study to determine the extent to which mentorship psychosocial support, overcoming gender-specific barriers, and mentorship attributes predict career development outcomes.

4.5.1 Correlations

Table 4.8: Correlations

Correlations					
		Mentorship Psychosocial Support	Overcoming gender-specific barriers	Mentorship Attributes	Career Development
Mentorship Psychosocial Support	r	1			
	p				
Overcoming gender-specific barriers	r	.566**	1		
	p	.000			
Mentorship Attributes	r	.449**	.560**	1	
	p	.000	.000		
Career Development -	r	.972**	.955**	.939**	1
	p	.000	.000	.000	

Source: Researcher (2026)

The results in Table 4.8 indicate strong and statistically significant positive relationships between the independent variables and career development. Specifically, mentorship psychosocial support exhibited a very strong positive correlation with career development ($r = 0.972$, $p = 0.000$), implying that higher levels of emotional support, confidence building, and stress management provided by mentors are associated with substantial improvements in women's career development outcomes. Similarly, overcoming gender-specific barriers showed a very strong positive relationship with career development ($r = 0.955$, $p = 0.000$), suggesting that mentorship efforts aimed at addressing structural and social barriers significantly enhance career progression among women.

In addition, mentorship attributes were found to have a very strong and positive correlation with career development ($r = 0.939$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that characteristics such as mentor accessibility, shared experiences, role modelling, and gender-related dynamics play a critical role in shaping career advancement. All relationships were statistically significant at the 0.01 level, confirming that the observed associations are unlikely to have occurred by chance. Overall, these findings suggest that improvements in mentorship-related factors are strongly associated with enhanced career development among women in Tier 1 banks.

The correlation coefficients observed in this study are substantially higher than those commonly reported in social science research. While they provide strong evidence of association between

mentorship dimensions and career development, they may also indicate partial conceptual overlap among the constructs or reflect the influence of common method variance arising from the use of a single self-report questionnaire. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as evidence of strong associations rather than proof that the constructs are entirely distinct or independent.

An apparent contrast exists between the descriptive and inferential findings of the study. The descriptive statistics indicate that respondents experienced only moderate levels of mentorship and career development, with mean scores ranging between 3.1 and 3.2. However, the correlation and regression analyses reveal exceptionally strong positive associations among the variables. These findings are not necessarily inconsistent because descriptive statistics measure the average level of a construct, whereas inferential statistics assess the extent to which variables move together. Thus, respondents may report moderate levels of mentorship and career development overall while still exhibiting a highly consistent pattern whereby individuals who experience relatively stronger mentorship also report relatively higher levels of career development. Nevertheless, the unusually strong relationships observed should be interpreted cautiously because they may partly reflect conceptual proximity among the constructs, common method variance associated with self-reported data, and the fact that all respondents had prior mentorship experience. Consequently, while the findings support a strong association between mentorship and career development, they should not be interpreted as implying that mentorship alone accounts for all aspects of women's career advancement.

4.5.2 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

This section presents the results of the multiple linear regression analysis conducted to examine the effect of mentorship psychosocial support, overcoming gender-specific barriers, and mentorship attributes on career development among women in Tier 1 banks in Nairobi. Multiple regression analysis was considered appropriate as it enables the assessment of the combined and individual contribution of each independent variable to the dependent variable. Prior to conducting the regression analysis, several diagnostic tests were performed to ensure that the underlying assumptions of multiple linear regression were satisfied. These included tests for normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. Confirming these assumptions ensured that the regression results are reliable, valid, and suitable for interpretation

4.5.2.1 Diagnostic Tests for Regression

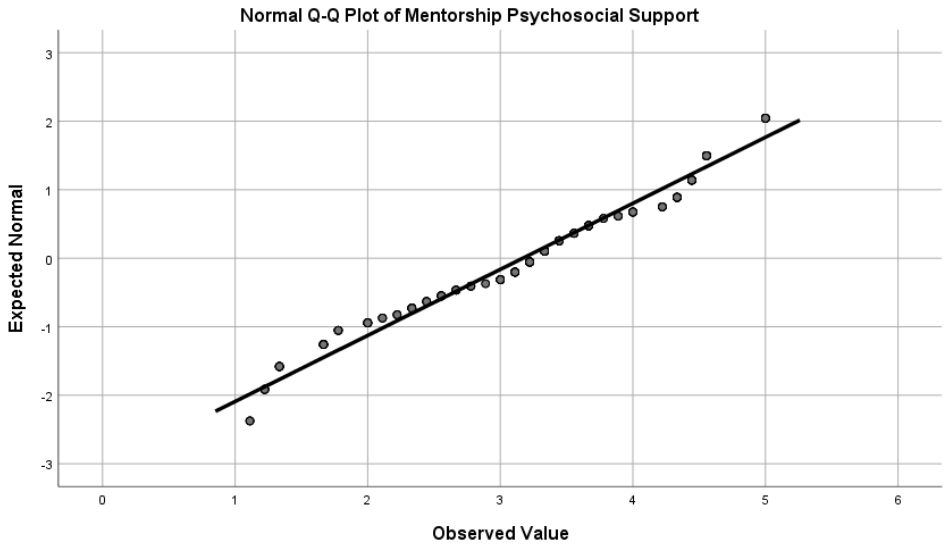


Figure 4.1: Normal Q-Q plot for Mentorship for Psychosocial Support
Source: Researcher (2026)

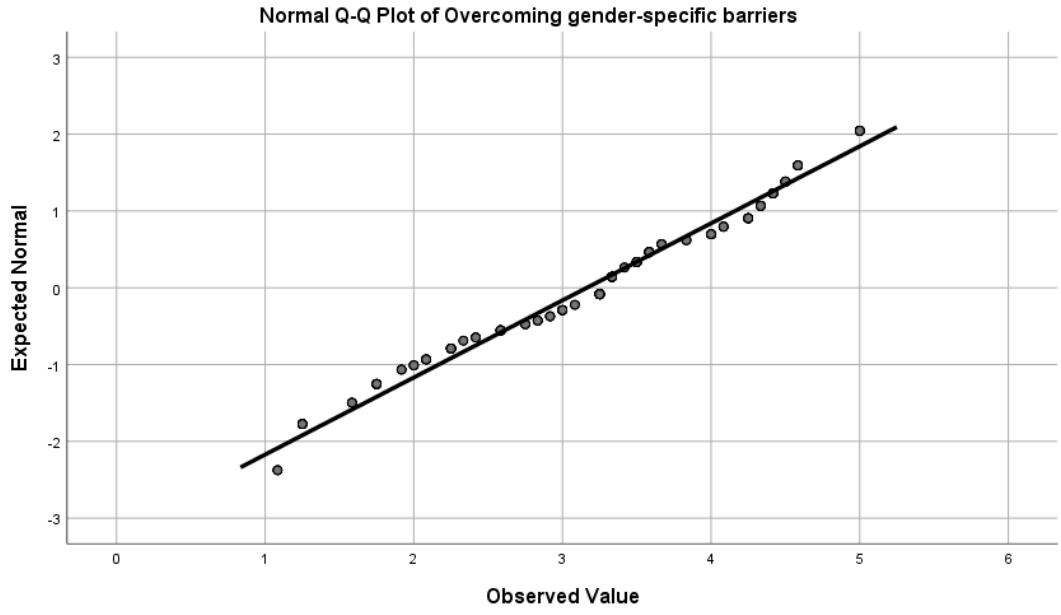


Figure 4.2: Normal Q-Q Plot for Overcoming Gender-Specific Barriers
Source: Researcher (2026)

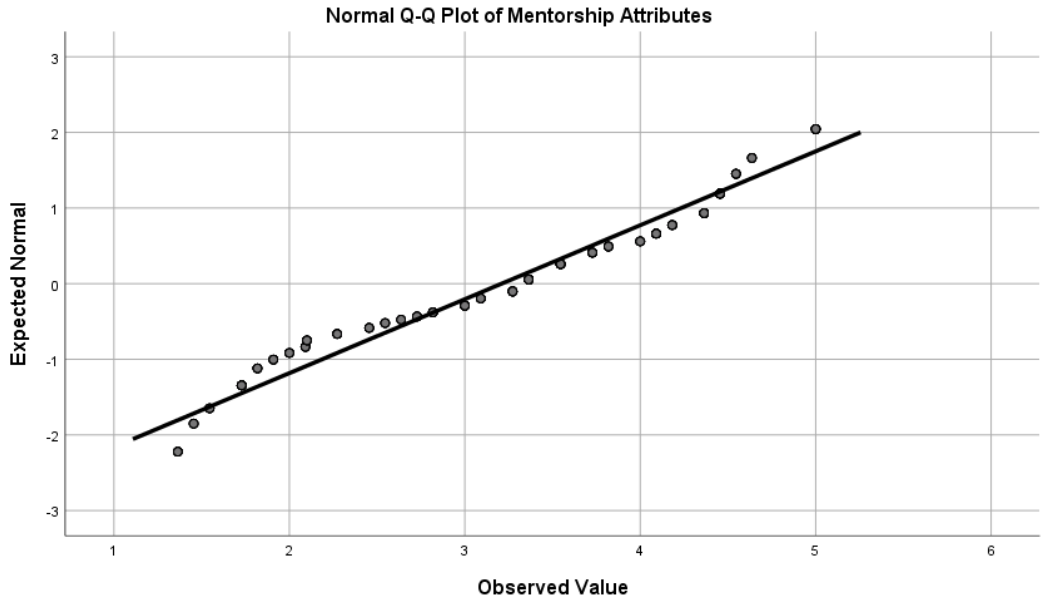


Figure 4.3: Normal Q-Q Plot for Mentorship Attributes
Source: Researcher (2026)

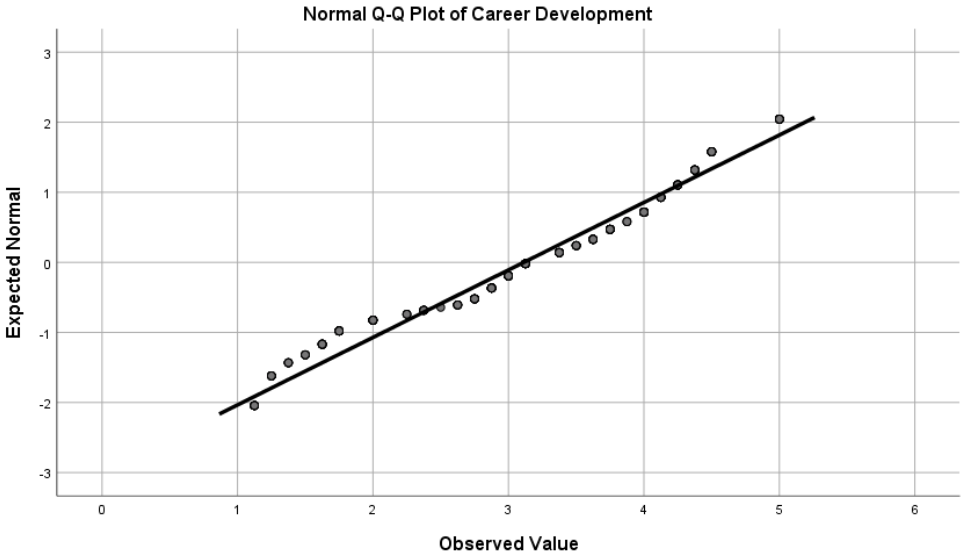


Figure 4.4: Normal Q-Q Plot for Career Development
Source: Researcher (2026)

Normality of the study variables was assessed using Normal Q-Q plots, as presented in Figures 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4. The Normal Q-Q plot evaluates whether the distribution of the data approximates a normal distribution by examining the extent to which observed values align with the expected normal distribution line. As shown in Figure 4.1 (Mentorship Psychosocial Support), the data points closely follow the diagonal reference line, with only slight deviations at the extreme ends. This pattern indicates that the distribution of mentorship psychosocial support is approximately normal, and any minor deviations are not substantial enough to violate the normality assumption. Similarly, Figure 4.2 (Overcoming Gender-Specific Barriers) demonstrates that the plotted points align well with the straight line, with minimal dispersion. This suggests that the variable is normally distributed, as the observed values correspond closely with the expected normal values. In Figure 4.3 (Mentorship Attributes), the points are also largely clustered along the diagonal line, with only slight deviations at the tails. This indicates that the data for mentorship attributes follows a near-normal distribution and satisfies the normality requirement. Likewise, Figure 4.4 (Career Development) shows that most of the data points lie on or very close to the reference line, with only minor departures at the lower and upper extremes. This pattern confirms that the distribution of career development approximates normality. Overall, the Normal Q-Q plots indicate that all study variables exhibit approximately normal distributions. Therefore, the assumption of normality required for multiple linear regression analysis is satisfied, and the data is suitable for further inferential analysis.

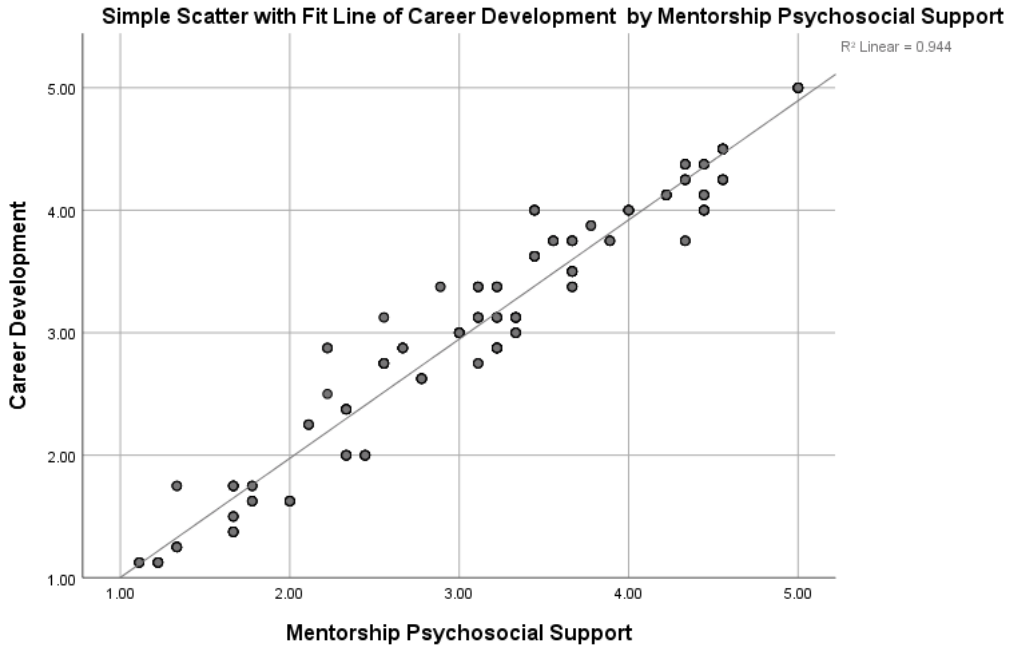


Figure 4.5: Scatter Plot – Career Development by Mentorship Psychosocial Support
Source: Researcher (2026)

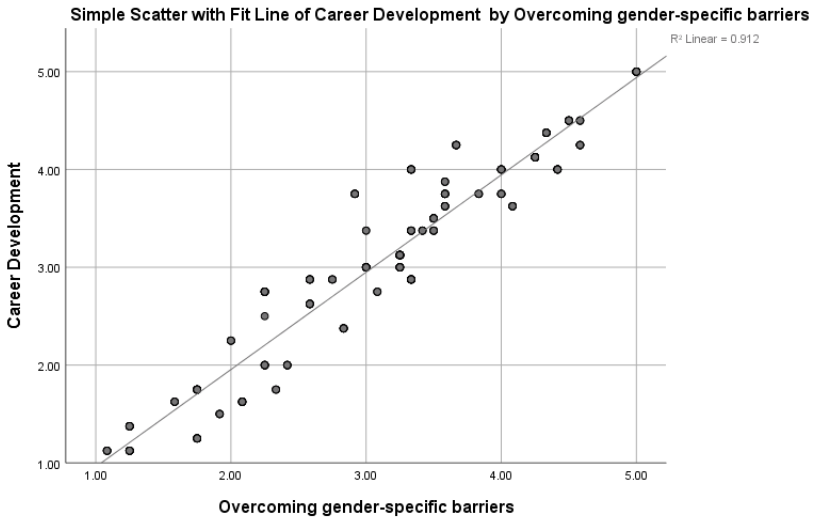


Figure 4.6: Scatter Plot – Career Development by Overcoming Gender-specific Barriers
Source: Researcher (2026)

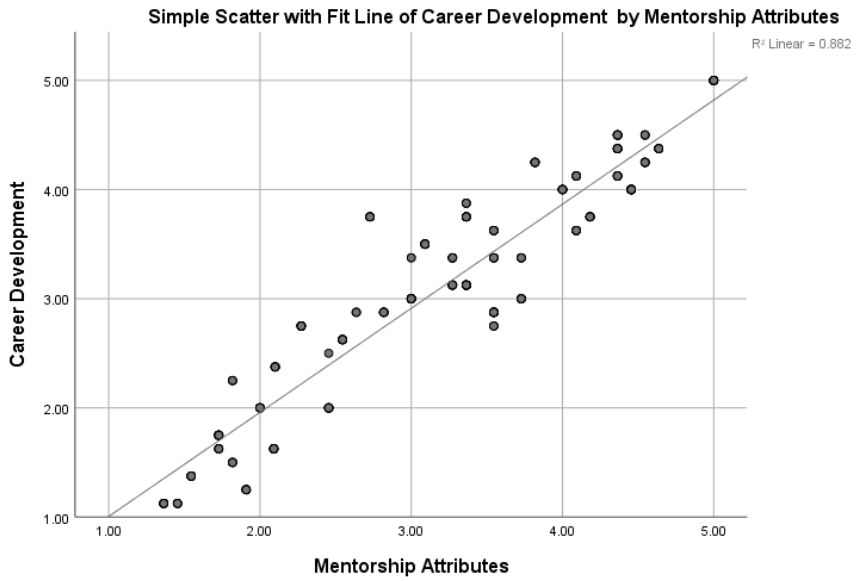


Figure 4.7: Scatter Plot – Career Development by Mentorship Attributes
Source: Researcher (2026)

Linearity was assessed using scatter plots with fitted regression lines, as presented in Figures 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7. This test examines whether there is a linear relationship between each independent variable and the dependent variable, which is a key assumption for multiple linear regression analysis. As shown in Figure 4.5 (Career Development by Mentorship Psychosocial Support), the data points are closely clustered around the fitted line, forming a clear upward trend. This indicates a strong positive linear relationship between mentorship psychosocial support and career development. Similarly, Figure 4.6 (Career Development by Overcoming Gender-Specific Barriers) displays a well-defined upward pattern, with points distributed closely along the regression line. This suggests a strong positive linear relationship between overcoming gender-specific barriers and career development. In Figure 4.7 (Career Development by Mentorship Attributes), the scatter plot also shows a positive linear trend, although with slightly more dispersion compared to the other two variables. Despite this, the points generally follow the fitted line, indicating the presence of a linear relationship between mentorship attributes and career development. Overall, all three scatter plots demonstrate clear positive linear relationships between the independent variables and career development, with no evidence of curvilinear patterns or systematic deviations. Therefore, the assumption of linearity is met, and the data is suitable for multiple linear regression analysis.

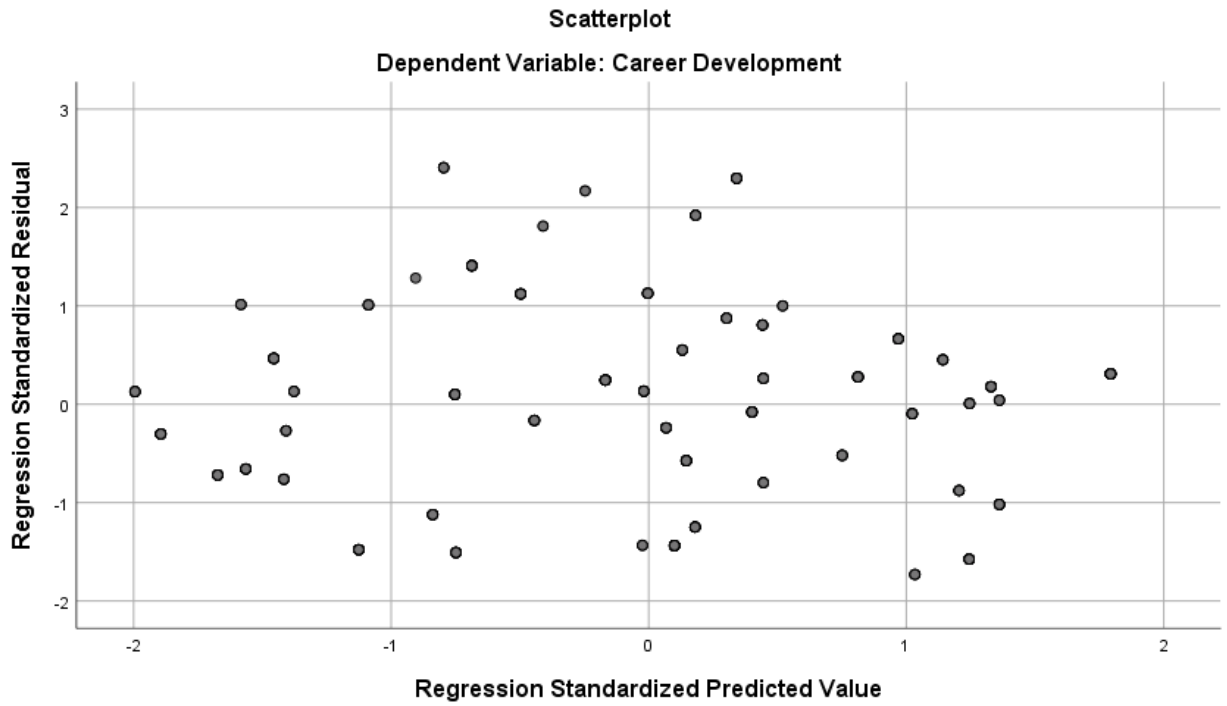


Figure 4.8: Scatterplot - Standardized Residuals by Standardized Predicted Values
Source: Researcher (2026)

Homoscedasticity was assessed by examining the scatterplot of standardized residuals against standardized predicted values, as presented in Figure 4.8. This test evaluates whether the variance of residuals remains constant across all levels of the predicted values, which is a key assumption for multiple linear regression. As observed in Figure 4.8, the residuals are randomly scattered around the horizontal axis (zero line) without forming any discernible pattern such as a funnel shape, curve, or systematic clustering. The spread of the residuals appears relatively consistent across both low and high predicted values, indicating that the variance of the errors is stable.

Although there are slight variations in dispersion, these are not pronounced or structured enough to suggest heteroscedasticity. Therefore, the absence of a clear pattern and the relatively even distribution of residuals indicate that the assumption of homoscedasticity is satisfied. In sum, the results confirm that the data meets the requirement of constant error variance, and thus is appropriate for multiple linear regression analysis.

Table 4.9: Collinearity Statistics

	Tolerance	VIF
Mentorship Psychosocial Support	.61	6.400
Overcoming gender-specific barriers	.48	2.977
Mentorship Attributes	.71	4.059

Source: Researcher (2026)

Multicollinearity was assessed using tolerance values and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), as presented in Table 4.9. These statistics indicate whether the independent variables are highly correlated with each other, which could distort regression results. As shown in Table 4.9, mentorship psychosocial support recorded a tolerance value of 0.61 and a VIF of 6.400, overcoming gender-specific barriers had a tolerance of 0.48 and a VIF of 2.977, while mentorship attributes recorded a tolerance of 0.71 and a VIF of 4.059. All tolerance values are above the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.10, and all VIF values are below the critical value of 10. These results indicate that there is no serious multicollinearity among the independent variables. Although mentorship psychosocial support has a relatively higher VIF compared to the other variables, it still falls within the acceptable range, suggesting that it does not pose a threat to the stability of the regression model. These findings suggest that the independent variables are potentially sufficiently independent of each other, and therefore, the assumption of no multicollinearity was satisfied. This implies that the regression coefficients can be reliably estimated and interpreted.

Although all VIF values fall below the conventional threshold of 10, mentorship psychosocial support recorded a VIF value of 6.400, indicating moderate multicollinearity. This suggests that some overlap exists among the independent variables, which is not unexpected given that the constructs represent related dimensions of mentorship. This is expected because psychosocial support, mentorship attributes, and overcoming gender-specific barriers represent related components of the broader mentorship construct. Consequently, improvements in one mentorship dimension are likely to occur alongside improvements in the others. However, tolerance values remained within acceptable limits, indicating that the degree of multicollinearity was insufficient to distort coefficient estimates or compromise interpretation of the regression model. The findings therefore suggest conceptual relatedness rather than statistical redundancy among the independent variables.

The independence of errors was assessed using the Durbin–Watson statistic, as presented in the model summary. The Durbin–Watson value obtained was 1.882, which falls within the acceptable range of approximately 1.5 to 2.5. A value close to 2 indicates that there is no autocorrelation among the residuals, meaning that the error terms are independent of one another. In this case, the Durbin–Watson statistic of 1.882 is sufficiently close to 2, suggesting that there is no evidence of serial correlation in the data. Therefore, the assumption of independence of errors is satisfied, and the data is appropriate for multiple linear regression analysis.

4.5.2.2 Regression Findings

Table 4.10: Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.974[a]	.949	.948	.23593
a. Predictors: (Constant), Mentorship Attributes, Mentorship Psychosocial Support, Overcoming gender-specific barriers				
b. Dependent Variable: Career Development				

Source: Researcher (2026)

The results presented in Table 4.10 indicate a strong overall fit of the regression model. The multiple correlation coefficient (R = 0.974) shows a very strong positive relationship between the independent variables, mentorship psychosocial support, overcoming gender-specific barriers, and mentorship attributes, and the dependent variable, career development. The coefficient of determination (R^2 = 0.949) implies that approximately 94.9% of the variation in career development is explained by the combined effect of the three mentorship variables included in the model.

Although the regression model explained approximately 94.9% of the variation in women's career development, this level of explanatory power is considerably higher than that typically reported in behavioral and organizational research. Similarly, the strong correlations observed between the independent variables and career development indicate that respondents who rated one mentorship dimension highly also tended to rate the others positively. Because all variables were measured using the same self-administered questionnaire at a single point in time, the possibility of common method variance and perceptual consistency cannot be completely ruled out. Respondents may

have applied similar response tendencies across conceptually related mentorship constructs, thereby strengthening the observed relationships.

Nevertheless, several factors support the credibility of the findings. First, the study measured conceptually distinct mentorship dimensions that were developed from established theoretical foundations and empirical literature. Second, multicollinearity diagnostics indicated that the predictor variables remained below commonly accepted thresholds, suggesting that each variable contributed unique explanatory information despite their interrelationships. Therefore, while the magnitude of the observed relationships should be interpreted with appropriate caution, the results still provide meaningful evidence regarding the importance of mentorship in supporting women's career development within Kenya's Tier 1 banking sector.

Table 4.11: Regression ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	347.957	3	115.986	2083.672	.000[b]
	Residual	18.759	337	.056		
	Total	366.716	340			
a. Dependent Variable: Career Development						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Mentorship Attributes, Mentorship Psychosocial Support, Overcoming gender-specific barriers						

Source: Researcher (2026)

The ANOVA results presented in Table 4.11 assess the overall significance of the regression model in predicting career development. The findings show that the model is statistically significant, as indicated by an F-statistic of 2083.672 with a corresponding p-value of 0.000, which is less than the conventional threshold of 0.05. This result implies that the combined effect of mentorship psychosocial support, overcoming gender-specific barriers, and mentorship attributes significantly predicts career development among women in Tier 1 banks. In other words, the regression model provides a better fit to the data compared to a model with no predictors. Furthermore, the regression sum of squares (347.957) is substantially higher than the residual sum of squares (18.759), indicating that a large proportion of the total variation in career development is explained by the independent variables included in the model. Overall, these findings confirm that the regression model is statistically significant and suitable for explaining the relationship between mentorship factors and career development.

Table 4.12: Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.035	.043		-.824	.410
	Mentorship Psychosocial Support	.712	.050	.711	14.260	.000
	Overcoming gender-specific barriers	.186	.059	.178	3.158	.002
	Mentorship Attributes	.094	.047	.093	2.012	.045
a. Dependent Variable: Career Development						

Source: Researcher (2026)

The results in Table 4.12 present the effect of each independent variable on career development while controlling for the influence of the other variables in the model. The constant term ($\beta_0 = -0.035$, $p = 0.410$) is not statistically significant, indicating that when all independent variables are held at zero, career development would not be meaningfully predicted. The regression constant was found to be statistically insignificant, implying that in the absence of the mentorship variables included in the model, career development among women in Tier 1 banks would not be meaningfully predicted. This suggests that the model was strongly anchored on the explanatory variables namely mentorship psychosocial support, overcoming gender-specific barriers, and mentorship attributes. Therefore, the significant prediction of career development largely depended on the contribution of these mentorship-related factors rather than on baseline conditions independent of the model. As a result, the interpretation of the model is primarily based on the coefficients of the independent variables.

Mentorship psychosocial support was found to have a positive and statistically significant effect on career development ($\beta = 0.712$, $t = 14.260$, $p = 0.000$). This implies that a one-unit increase in mentorship psychosocial support leads to a 0.712 unit increase in career development, holding other factors constant. The standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.711) further indicates that this variable has the strongest influence on career development among all predictors in the model.

Overcoming gender-specific barriers also exhibited a positive and statistically significant effect on career development ($\beta = 0.186$, $t = 3.158$, $p = 0.002$). This suggests that a one-unit increase in efforts to overcome gender-specific barriers results in a 0.186 unit increase in career development, all else being equal. Although significant, its effect is relatively smaller compared to mentorship psychosocial support, as reflected by the lower standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.178).

Similarly, mentorship attributes were found to have a positive and statistically significant influence on career development (β = 0.094, t = 2.012, p = 0.045). This indicates that a one-unit increase in mentorship attributes leads to a 0.094 unit increase in career development, holding other variables constant. While the effect is statistically significant, it is the least influential predictor in the model, as shown by the smallest standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.093).

Overall, all three independent variables have a positive and statistically significant effect on career development, with mentorship psychosocial support having the greatest influence, followed by overcoming gender-specific barriers and mentorship attributes.

The final regression model is therefore expressed as:

$CA = -0.035 + 0.712(MPS) + 0.186(GSB) + 0.094(MA)$ where:

CA = Career Development,

MPS = Mentorship Psychosocial Support,

GSB = Overcoming gender-specific barriers,

MA = Mentorship Attributes

This model indicates that higher levels of mentorship psychosocial support, overcoming gender-specific barriers, and mentorship attributes are associated with higher levels of perceived career development among women working in Tier 1 banks. These findings should be interpreted as statistical associations rather than evidence of direct causal effects.

An apparent difference exists between the descriptive and inferential findings. Whereas respondents reported only moderate levels of mentorship psychosocial support, mentorship attributes, gender-specific barriers, and career development, the inferential analysis revealed very strong statistical relationships among these variables. These findings are not necessarily contradictory. Descriptive statistics indicate the average level at which respondents perceived mentorship practices to exist within their organizations, whereas correlation and regression analyses assess the extent to which changes in mentorship are associated with changes in career development. Consequently, mentorship may currently exist at only moderate levels across Tier 1 banks, yet incremental improvements in mentorship quality may still produce substantial

improvements in women's career development outcomes. The results therefore suggest that mentorship practices are not yet fully institutionalized, but where effective mentorship exists, it has a strong positive association with career development.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the analysis of data collected on the role of mentorship in advancing women's career development in Tier 1 banks in Nairobi. It covered the response rate, respondents' demographic characteristics, and descriptive statistics of the study variables. Inferential analysis was conducted using correlation and multiple linear regression to examine relationships and predictive effects. Diagnostic tests confirmed that regression assumptions were met. The findings revealed that mentorship psychosocial support, overcoming gender-specific barriers, and mentorship attributes all have a positive and significant influence on career development.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion, conclusions, and recommendations of the study on the role of female mentorship in advancing women's career development in Tier 1 banks in Nairobi. It begins with a summary of the main findings, followed by a detailed discussion linking the results to the study objectives, theoretical framework, and existing literature. The chapter then outlines practical and policy recommendations based on the findings, highlights the key limitations of the study, and provides suggestions for future research. It concludes with a brief summary of the chapter.

5.2 Summary of Main Results

The study examined the role of female mentorship in advancing women's career development in Tier 1 banks in Nairobi. The findings revealed that mentorship psychosocial support has a positive and statistically significant influence on career development, indicating that emotional support, confidence building, and stress management enhance women's ability to progress in their careers. The results further showed that overcoming gender-specific barriers has a positive and significant effect on career development, suggesting that mentorship support in accessing opportunities, challenging workplace stereotypes, and navigating career constraints improves advancement outcomes. Additionally, mentorship attributes were found to have a positive and significant influence on career development, demonstrating that factors such as shared experiences, role modelling, accessibility, and mentor-related characteristics contribute to professional growth. Overall, the findings indicate that all dimensions of mentorship significantly contribute to enhancing women's career development, with mentorship psychosocial support emerging as the strongest predictor.

While the statistical findings demonstrated very strong positive associations between mentorship dimensions and career development, these results should be interpreted cautiously. The exceptionally high correlation coefficients and explanatory power observed in the regression model may partly reflect the use of self-reported data collected through a single questionnaire,

conceptual overlap among mentorship constructs, and the relatively homogeneous sample consisting exclusively of women with prior mentorship experience. Consequently, although the findings provide strong evidence of association, they may not fully capture the complexity of career development processes within the banking sector.

5.3 Discussion of Findings

5.3.1 Effect of Mentorship Psychosocial Support on Career Development

The first objective of the study was to examine the influence of mentorship psychosocial support on women's career development in Tier 1 banks in Nairobi. The findings indicated that mentorship psychosocial support was positively and significantly associated with women's career development. Emotional support, confidence building, and stress management recorded moderate mean scores, while regression analysis identified mentorship psychosocial support as the strongest statistical predictor among the mentorship dimensions examined. These findings suggest that respondents who perceived stronger psychosocial support from mentors also tended to report more favorable career development outcomes. However, given the cross-sectional nature of the study, the findings demonstrate statistical association rather than causation and therefore should not be interpreted as evidence that psychosocial support independently causes women's career advancement.

The findings are plausible within the context of Kenya's banking sector, where women often navigate demanding performance expectations, competitive promotion systems, and persistent gender-related workplace challenges. Under such conditions, mentors who provide encouragement, emotional reassurance, and constructive guidance are likely to strengthen women's confidence and willingness to pursue leadership opportunities. Nevertheless, respondents reported only moderate levels of both mentorship psychosocial support and career development despite the exceptionally strong statistical associations identified through the inferential analysis. This apparent inconsistency suggests that mentorship is available within Tier 1 banks but is neither sufficiently institutionalized nor consistently experienced across the organizations studied. Consequently, while improvements in psychosocial support appear to be strongly associated with improvements in career development, the overall quality, intensity, and consistency of mentorship programmes may still be inadequate to generate widespread advancement into senior leadership

positions. Organizational factors such as limited executive sponsorship, opaque promotion systems, unequal access to strategic assignments, workload pressures, organizational politics, and persistent gender stereotypes may continue to constrain career progression even when effective mentoring relationships exist.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings both support and extend Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) while simultaneously qualifying the explanatory scope of Social Role Theory. Consistent with SCCT, mentorship psychosocial support appears to strengthen women's self-efficacy, resilience, outcome expectations, and leadership aspirations through emotional encouragement and constructive feedback (Lent & Hackett, 1994; Lent & Brown, 2019). However, the moderate descriptive ratings suggest that increased self-efficacy alone does not necessarily translate into substantial career advancement. In this respect, the findings extend SCCT by demonstrating that the relationship between psychological empowerment and career outcomes is contingent upon organizational conditions rather than individual confidence alone. Similarly, the findings support Social Role Theory by confirming that structural and gender-related workplace barriers continue to influence women's career opportunities. At the same time, they qualify the theory by suggesting that these barriers are not entirely deterministic. Rather than simply reinforcing existing gender roles, mentorship appears to equip women with psychological resources that partially offset structural disadvantages. Consequently, neither SCCT nor Social Role Theory independently provides a complete explanation of women's career development. Instead, the findings indicate that career progression results from the interaction between individual agency, as explained by SCCT, and organizational structures and gender norms, as explained by Social Role Theory. This integrated interpretation provides stronger theoretical support for combining the two theories than either could offer independently.

The findings generally correspond with previous studies reporting positive relationships between mentorship psychosocial support and women's career outcomes. Chang et al. (2022) found that psychosocial support improved job satisfaction and organizational commitment among female pharmacists in the United Kingdom, while Chauhan and Mishra (2021) reported enhanced resilience and reduced burnout among women working in India's service sector. Mcilongo and Strydom (2021) similarly observed that psychosocial mentorship increased women's confidence and organizational visibility within South Africa's public sector. Okolie et al. (2020) further

demonstrated that mentorship guidance contributed to promotions and career mobility among graduates in Nigeria, whereas Farkas et al. (2019) found that mentorship programmes enhanced women's retention and advancement within academic medicine. Although these studies support the present findings, they were conducted within different institutional environments characterized by distinct leadership structures, mentorship practices, and promotion systems. Therefore, similarities should be interpreted cautiously because organizational context influences how mentorship translates into career outcomes.

Conversely, the findings differ from studies reporting weak or insignificant mentorship effects. Francis (2017) found no significant relationship between mentorship and women's career advancement within Australia's construction industry, while Hill and Wheat (2017) concluded that mentorship played only a limited role in the careers of senior women leaders in American universities. Chang et al. (2015) similarly found that psychosocial support primarily enhanced job satisfaction, whereas career-related support showed stronger relationships with objective career outcomes such as promotion and salary progression. These contrasting findings suggest that mentorship effectiveness varies according to career stage, organizational culture, leadership opportunities, and the design of mentorship programmes. The present findings therefore reinforce the argument advanced in Chapter Two that inconsistent results across previous studies may reflect methodological and contextual differences rather than contradictory evidence regarding mentorship itself.

Although the statistical analysis demonstrated exceptionally strong relationships between mentorship psychosocial support and career development, these findings should be interpreted critically rather than accepted uncritically. Because all study variables were measured using self-administered questionnaires completed by the same respondents at a single point in time, common method variance and perceptual consistency may have strengthened the observed relationships. Furthermore, the study deliberately included only women who had participated in mentorship relationships. While this sampling strategy was appropriate because only such respondents could meaningfully evaluate mentorship experiences, it may also have produced more favorable assessments of mentorship than would be expected within the broader population of women employees. In addition, the conceptual relatedness between mentorship psychosocial support and the other mentorship dimensions may have contributed to the high correlations observed. These

methodological considerations do not invalidate the findings; however, they suggest that the magnitude of the statistical relationships should be interpreted with appropriate caution and regarded as evidence of strong associations rather than definitive proof of mentorship effectiveness.

Overall, the findings suggest that mentorship psychosocial support represents an important, but not sufficient, condition for advancing women's careers within Kenya's Tier 1 banking sector. While psychosocial support strengthens women's confidence, resilience, and career aspirations, its effectiveness ultimately depends upon organizational environments that provide transparent promotion systems, executive sponsorship, equitable access to leadership opportunities, and inclusive workplace cultures. Accordingly, mentorship should be viewed as one component of a broader organizational strategy for addressing gender disparities in career advancement rather than as a standalone solution.

5.3.2 Influence of Overcoming Gender-Specific Barriers on Career Development

The second objective of the study was to examine the influence of overcoming gender-specific barriers on women's career development in Tier 1 banks in Nairobi. The findings indicated that overcoming gender-specific barriers was positively and significantly associated with women's career development. Specifically, mentorship was perceived to moderately facilitate access to professional networks, challenge workplace stereotypes, strengthen leadership aspirations, and support career advancement opportunities. Regression analysis further demonstrated that overcoming gender-specific barriers was significantly associated with career development. These findings suggest that women who perceived mentorship as helping them navigate gender-related workplace challenges also tended to report more favorable career development outcomes. However, because the study employed a cross-sectional design, these findings should be interpreted as evidence of statistical association rather than proof that mentorship directly eliminates gender-specific barriers or causes career advancement.

The findings are plausible within the Kenyan banking sector, where women continue to encounter structural, cultural, and organizational constraints despite increasing workforce participation. Although mentorship may strengthen women's ability to recognize and navigate workplace barriers, it cannot independently transform organizational systems that shape promotion

opportunities and leadership representation. This helps explain why respondents reported only moderate success in overcoming gender-specific barriers despite the exceptionally strong relationships identified through inferential analysis. The moderate descriptive findings suggest that mentorship provides valuable support, but organizational realities, including limited executive sponsorship, gendered leadership expectations, informal promotion networks, work-life balance pressures, and unequal access to strategic assignments, continue to constrain women's advancement. Consequently, mentorship appears to improve women's capacity to navigate these barriers rather than eliminate them entirely.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings both support and extend Social Role Theory while simultaneously reinforcing the complementary contribution of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). Consistent with Social Role Theory, the findings confirm that workplace stereotypes, gender norms, and organizational expectations continue to shape women's career opportunities (Eagly & Wood, 2012). However, the positive association between mentorship and career development also suggests that these structural constraints are neither fixed nor insurmountable. Mentorship appears to provide women with social support, role models, strategic guidance, and leadership exposure that weaken the influence of traditional gender expectations. In this respect, the findings extend Social Role Theory by demonstrating that organizational interventions can partially moderate the effects of socially constructed gender roles rather than merely operating within them.

The findings also reinforce SCCT by suggesting that mentorship strengthens women's confidence, outcome expectations, and persistence when confronting workplace barriers (Lent & Hackett, 1994; Lent & Brown, 2019). However, the moderate descriptive ratings indicate that increased confidence does not necessarily produce equivalent improvements in career progression when structural barriers remain unchanged. Consequently, the findings qualify the explanatory scope of SCCT by demonstrating that psychological empowerment alone is insufficient unless supported by organizational environments that provide equitable access to advancement opportunities. Collectively, the findings indicate that women's career development is more comprehensively explained through the interaction of SCCT and Social Role Theory than through either theory independently. While SCCT explains how mentorship strengthens individual agency, Social Role

Theory explains why structural barriers continue to influence whether that agency translates into career advancement.

The findings generally correspond with previous empirical studies demonstrating that mentorship assists women in overcoming workplace barriers. Tabassum and Nayak (2021) found that mentorship combined with self-advocacy significantly improved women's ability to overcome workplace discrimination and achieve promotions in the United States. Similarly, Stewart et al. (2021) reported that mentorship, when supported by inclusive organizational policies, increased women's representation in leadership positions by addressing systemic inequalities. Jayachandran (2020) likewise demonstrated that mentorship enabled women working within South Asia's technology sector to navigate cultural and professional barriers more effectively. Within the African context, Liani et al. (2021) found that mentorship strengthened women's ability to navigate organizational barriers through strategic guidance and professional support, while Malelu (2017) identified institutional barriers—including patriarchal organizational cultures and limited networking opportunities—that constrained women's access to mentorship and career advancement. Cross et al. (2019) further showed that both organizational and relational barriers influence mentorship effectiveness. Although these studies broadly support the present findings, they were conducted within different institutional and cultural environments, suggesting that mentorship effectiveness depends substantially on organizational context.

Conversely, some studies suggest that mentorship alone may be insufficient to overcome deeply embedded structural inequalities. Hill and Wheat (2017) found that the limited presence of senior female role models reduced women's leadership aspirations, indicating that mentorship opportunities themselves are influenced by organizational leadership structures. Similarly, Stewart et al. (2021) concluded that mentorship produces stronger outcomes only when accompanied by broader organizational reforms such as transparent promotion systems, inclusive workplace cultures, and supportive leadership policies. These findings reinforce the argument that mentorship should not be viewed as an isolated intervention but rather as one component of a wider institutional strategy for addressing gender inequality.

Although inferential analysis demonstrated exceptionally strong associations between overcoming gender-specific barriers and career development, these findings require careful interpretation. All variables were measured using self-administered questionnaires completed by the same

respondents at a single point in time, increasing the possibility of common method variance and perceptual consistency. Furthermore, participants were deliberately selected because they had prior mentorship experience and were therefore capable of evaluating mentorship practices. While appropriate for achieving the study objectives, this sampling approach may have resulted in more favorable perceptions of mentorship than might be observed among the broader population of women employees. In addition, respondents' perceptions of mentorship and career development may have been influenced by similar organizational experiences, thereby strengthening the observed statistical relationships. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as demonstrating strong associations between mentorship and women's ability to navigate workplace barriers rather than definitive evidence that mentorship alone resolves gender inequality within Kenya's banking sector.

Overall, the findings suggest that mentorship constitutes an important mechanism through which women develop strategies for navigating workplace barriers, but it cannot independently remove the structural inequalities embedded within organizational systems. The results therefore indicate that mentorship should be integrated with broader institutional reforms, including transparent promotion procedures, leadership succession planning, executive sponsorship programmes, gender-responsive human resource policies, accountability for diversity outcomes, and increased representation of women in senior leadership. Such complementary interventions are likely to strengthen the capacity of mentorship to translate into meaningful and sustainable career advancement for women within Kenya's banking sector.

5.3.3 Influence of Mentorship Attributes on Career Development

The third objective of the study was to examine the influence of mentorship attributes on women's career development in Tier 1 banks in Nairobi. The findings indicated that mentorship attributes were positively and significantly associated with women's career development. Specifically, shared experiences, mentor accessibility, role modelling, and gender-related mentorship dynamics recorded moderate mean scores, while regression analysis demonstrated that mentorship attributes were significantly associated with career development. These findings suggest that women who perceived higher-quality mentor-mentee relationships also tended to report more favorable career development outcomes. However, because the study employed a cross-sectional design, the findings demonstrate statistical association rather than causation and therefore should not be

interpreted as evidence that mentorship attributes independently cause women's career advancement.

The findings are plausible within the context of Kenya's banking sector, where mentors often provide career guidance, leadership exposure, and professional role modelling within highly competitive organizational environments. Accessible mentors who possess relevant experience and demonstrate effective leadership behaviors are likely to strengthen mentees' confidence, career planning, and professional identity. Nevertheless, respondents reported only moderate levels of mentorship attributes and career development despite the exceptionally strong statistical relationships identified through inferential analysis. This apparent inconsistency suggests that although positive mentorship relationships exist within Tier 1 banks, they may not be sufficiently widespread, structured, or consistently implemented to generate stronger developmental outcomes. Factors such as limited availability of experienced female mentors, heavy managerial workloads, competing organizational priorities, limited executive sponsorship, and unequal access to strategic leadership opportunities may reduce the practical effectiveness of mentorship relationships. Consequently, mentorship attributes appear to enhance women's career development, but their influence is constrained by organizational conditions that extend beyond the mentor-mentee relationship itself.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings both support and extend Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) while simultaneously qualifying key propositions of Social Role Theory. Consistent with SCCT, mentorship attributes function as important environmental supports that strengthen self-efficacy, career motivation, outcome expectations, and professional confidence through role modelling, constructive feedback, and mentor accessibility (Lent & Hackett, 1994; Lent & Brown, 2019). However, the moderate descriptive findings indicate that favorable mentorship attributes alone are insufficient to generate substantial career progression when organizational opportunities remain constrained. The findings therefore extend SCCT by demonstrating that environmental supports produce stronger career outcomes only when accompanied by organizational systems that provide equitable promotion opportunities, leadership pathways, and institutional support.

The findings also provide a more nuanced interpretation of Social Role Theory. Consistent with the theory, female role models and mentors appear to challenge traditional assumptions regarding

women's suitability for leadership by demonstrating successful career trajectories within the banking sector (Eagly & Wood, 2012). However, the moderate influence of mentor gender and shared experiences suggests that role modelling alone does not fully overcome organizational and societal constraints. Rather than implying that gender-congruent mentorship is universally superior, the findings indicate that mentorship effectiveness depends more on the quality of the mentoring relationship, professional credibility, accessibility, and organizational support than on demographic similarity alone. Consequently, the findings qualify Social Role Theory by suggesting that changing perceptions of gender roles represents only one component of women's career advancement, which also depends upon broader organizational structures and career opportunities. Collectively, the findings demonstrate that SCCT explains how mentorship attributes strengthen individual career capability, whereas Social Role Theory explains the structural environment within which those capabilities are either facilitated or constrained.

The findings generally correspond with previous empirical studies highlighting the importance of mentorship attributes for career development. Hernandez et al. (2017) found that mentors with shared experiences provide more relevant guidance that enhances women's ability to navigate professional challenges, while Opoku et al. (2018) reported that role modelling and structured mentorship strengthened confidence and career progression. Similarly, House et al. (2021) demonstrated that mentor accessibility enhanced professional competence and self-confidence. Studies by Kofoed and McGovney (2019), Aikens et al. (2017), Lin et al. (2021), and Khunou and Manyisa (2022) likewise reported that female mentors and relatable role models contribute positively to women's empowerment, resilience, and career development. Although these findings broadly support the present study, the institutional environments, mentorship structures, and organizational cultures within which these studies were conducted differ substantially from Kenya's banking sector. Consequently, similarities should be interpreted within their respective organizational contexts rather than assumed to be universally applicable.

Conversely, the findings also align with studies reporting more nuanced or contradictory evidence regarding mentorship attributes. Farkas et al. (2019) found no significant differences in career outcomes based solely on gender matching, suggesting that mentor expertise, professional credibility, and career alignment may be more influential than demographic similarity. Similarly, Guthrie and Jones (2017) reported that although female mentees expressed preferences for female

mentors, both male and female mentors were equally effective in supporting measurable career outcomes. Joo and Cruz (2024) further demonstrated that informal mentorship relationships often produce stronger outcomes than formal programmes because greater trust, flexibility, and voluntary engagement strengthen mentoring effectiveness. Collectively, these studies suggest that mentorship quality, organizational support, and relationship dynamics may be more important determinants of career advancement than individual mentor characteristics alone. The present findings reinforce this interpretation by demonstrating that mentorship attributes contribute positively to career development but operate within broader organizational systems that ultimately determine advancement opportunities.

Although inferential analysis demonstrated strong associations between mentorship attributes and career development, these findings require careful interpretation. First, the exceptionally high correlations observed may partly reflect conceptual overlap between mentorship attributes and the other mentorship dimensions measured in the study. Second, because all variables were measured using self-administered questionnaires completed by the same respondents at one point in time, common method variance and perceptual consistency may have strengthened the observed statistical relationships. Third, participants were intentionally selected because they had prior mentorship experience, making them well positioned to evaluate mentorship practices but also increasing the possibility of more favorable perceptions than would be expected within the broader population of women employees. These methodological considerations do not invalidate the findings; however, they suggest that the magnitude of the statistical relationships should be interpreted cautiously and regarded as evidence of strong associations rather than definitive proof that mentorship attributes independently determine women's career advancement.

Overall, the findings indicate that mentorship attributes constitute an important component of women's career development within Kenya's Tier 1 banking sector, but they are not sufficient in isolation to produce sustained career advancement. The results suggest that organizations should move beyond simply matching mentors and mentees and instead strengthen the quality, accessibility, and continuity of mentoring relationships while simultaneously addressing organizational factors that influence women's progression into leadership positions. Such efforts should include mentor development programmes, executive sponsorship initiatives, structured

leadership pipelines, transparent promotion systems, and inclusive organizational cultures that enable mentorship relationships to translate into meaningful career advancement outcomes.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Policy Recommendations

The findings of this study demonstrate that mentorship contributes significantly to women's career development; however, its effectiveness is moderated by broader organizational and structural conditions. Consequently, policy interventions should extend beyond establishing mentorship programmes to addressing the institutional factors that limit women's progression into senior leadership.

First, because mentorship psychosocial support emerged as the strongest predictor of career development, yet respondents reported only moderate levels of psychosocial support, Tier 1 banks should institutionalize structured mentorship policies that standardize the quality of mentoring across the organization. These policies should specify minimum mentoring standards, including regular mentor-mentee engagement, career planning sessions, psychosocial support, leadership coaching, and periodic evaluation of mentorship outcomes. Banks should also develop formal mentor accreditation and training programmes focusing on emotional intelligence, coaching skills, active listening, unconscious bias awareness, and inclusive leadership to improve the consistency and effectiveness of mentorship relationships.

Second, the findings indicate that mentorship alone cannot fully overcome gender-specific barriers because organizational structures continue to constrain women's career advancement. Consequently, mentorship policies should be integrated with broader gender equity and talent management policies. Specifically, Tier 1 banks should institutionalize transparent promotion and succession planning frameworks with clearly defined promotion criteria, establish gender-balanced promotion and recruitment panels, require annual gender equity audits covering promotions, remuneration, leadership representation, and access to high-profile assignments, and introduce accountability measures requiring senior management to report progress on gender diversity targets. Such interventions directly address the structural barriers identified by the study rather than assuming that mentorship alone will produce equitable career outcomes.

Third, the findings suggest that the quality of mentorship attributes is more important than demographic similarity between mentors and mentees. Rather than emphasizing gender matching as the primary criterion, mentorship policies should prioritize mentor competence, leadership credibility, accessibility, commitment, and demonstrated ability to support career development. Banks should therefore establish competency-based mentor selection criteria and regularly evaluate mentorship effectiveness using measurable indicators such as mentee career progression, leadership readiness, satisfaction with mentorship, and retention of high-potential female employees. This recommendation reflects the finding that meaningful mentor-mentee relationships contribute more to career development than mentor gender alone.

Fourth, the study found that respondents experienced only moderate career development despite strong associations between mentorship and career outcomes, suggesting that mentorship often lacks sufficient organizational leverage to influence promotion decisions. To address this implementation gap, Tier 1 banks should complement mentorship with structured executive sponsorship programmes. Unlike mentors, executive sponsors should be formally responsible for advocating for high-potential women during succession planning, recommending them for strategic assignments, supporting their participation in executive leadership programmes, and increasing their visibility before promotion and talent review committees. Embedding sponsorship within organizational policy would help translate mentorship into measurable leadership advancement rather than limiting it to psychosocial support.

Finally, because the findings suggest that organizational culture influences whether mentorship translates into career advancement, banks should adopt organization-wide policies that promote inclusive leadership cultures. These should include mandatory leadership accountability for diversity outcomes, periodic assessments of organizational culture and inclusion, mechanisms for reporting gender-based discrimination and bias, and initiatives that recognize and reward managers who actively develop female leadership talent. Such policies would strengthen the organizational environment within which mentorship operates and improves the likelihood that mentorship translates into sustained career advancement for women.

Collectively, these policy recommendations move beyond establishing mentorship programmes toward creating organizational systems that address both individual development and the structural inequalities identified in this study. By integrating mentorship with transparent career management

processes, inclusive organizational cultures, executive sponsorship, and leadership accountability, Tier 1 banks would be better positioned to achieve sustainable improvements in women's representation within senior leadership.

5.4.2 Managerial Recommendations

The findings of this study indicate that managerial practices play a critical role in determining whether mentorship translates into meaningful career advancement for women. Although mentorship demonstrated significant positive associations with career development, the moderate descriptive findings suggest that mentoring relationships alone are insufficient unless managers create organizational environments that actively support women's progression into leadership positions.

First, because mentorship psychosocial support emerged as the strongest predictor of career development, managers should move beyond informal mentoring arrangements and intentionally cultivate supportive supervisory and departmental cultures. Departmental heads and line managers should allocate protected time for mentoring activities, encourage regular mentor-mentee engagement, and recognize mentoring as a formal managerial responsibility within performance management systems. Managers should also be trained in coaching, emotional intelligence, inclusive leadership, constructive feedback, and career development planning so that they can reinforce psychosocial support beyond formal mentorship programmes. This recommendation is grounded in the finding that psychosocial support was the strongest predictor of career development but was only moderately experienced by respondents, suggesting inconsistency in the quality of mentoring across the participating banks.

Second, the study found that mentorship contributes to overcoming gender-specific barriers but cannot independently eliminate organizational constraints affecting women's advancement. Managers should therefore actively identify and remove workplace practices that unintentionally disadvantage women. This includes ensuring equitable allocation of high-profile assignments, client-facing roles, cross-functional projects, leadership development opportunities, international exposure, and succession planning opportunities. Managers should periodically review departmental promotion decisions, performance evaluation outcomes, and talent development processes to identify potential gender disparities and implement corrective actions where

necessary. Such managerial actions directly address the structural barriers identified in the study rather than relying solely on mentorship to improve women's career progression.

Third, the findings indicate that mentorship attributes contribute positively to career development; however, the quality of the mentoring relationship appears to be more important than demographic similarity between mentors and mentees. Consequently, managers should adopt competency-based mentor matching processes that consider professional expertise, leadership experience, career aspirations, communication style, developmental needs, and mentor availability rather than focusing primarily on mentor gender. In addition, managers should establish structured mentoring plans with clearly defined objectives, scheduled meetings, documented development goals, and periodic progress reviews to improve accountability and consistency across mentoring relationships.

Fourth, the study revealed that respondents reported only moderate career development despite the strong statistical associations observed between mentorship and career outcomes. This suggests that mentorship frequently provides guidance without sufficient organizational influence to translate that guidance into promotion and leadership opportunities. Managers should therefore complement mentoring with executive sponsorship by actively identifying high-potential female employees and advocating for their inclusion in succession planning, executive leadership programmes, strategic committees, cross-functional initiatives, and high-visibility organizational projects. Managers should also intentionally increase women's exposure to senior decision-makers, enabling them to build professional visibility and leadership credibility. Such sponsorship addresses one of the key implementation gaps identified by this study by connecting mentorship with tangible career advancement opportunities.

Fifth, because the findings suggest that organizational culture influences the effectiveness of mentorship, managers should actively foster inclusive workplace environments that challenge gender stereotypes and encourage equitable leadership development. This includes promoting collaborative leadership cultures, addressing unconscious bias during performance evaluations, encouraging diverse leadership teams, and ensuring that women participate meaningfully in strategic decision-making processes. Managers should also create psychologically safe workplaces where women feel comfortable seeking mentorship, expressing leadership aspirations, and discussing career challenges without fear of negative consequences.

Finally, managers should establish comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems to assess whether mentorship initiatives are producing measurable career development outcomes. Rather than monitoring participation alone, managers should track indicators such as promotion rates of mentees, leadership readiness, retention of high-potential women, participation in succession planning, employee perceptions of mentorship quality, and representation of women within management pipelines. Regular evaluation would enable organizations to identify implementation gaps, refine mentorship practices, and ensure that mentorship contributes to measurable improvements in women's career advancement rather than functioning as a symbolic organizational initiative.

Collectively, these managerial recommendations recognize that effective mentorship depends not only on the quality of mentor-mentee relationships but also on managerial commitment to creating organizational environments in which women are provided with equitable opportunities, leadership visibility, executive advocacy, and transparent career progression pathways. Such an integrated managerial approach is more likely to translate mentorship into sustained improvements in women's representation within senior leadership positions in Kenya's Tier 1 banking sector.

5.4.3 Theoretical Recommendations

From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this study suggest that neither Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) nor Social Role Theory independently provides a fully comprehensive explanation of women's career development within the Kenyan banking sector. The study demonstrated that mentorship psychosocial support, overcoming gender-specific barriers, and mentorship attributes all significantly influence women's career development, indicating that both individual psychological factors and broader social structures operate simultaneously in shaping career outcomes. Consequently, future theoretical development should move beyond treating SCCT and Social Role Theory as separate explanatory frameworks and instead explore their integration as complementary perspectives.

The findings extend SCCT by suggesting that increased self-efficacy, confidence, and career aspirations do not automatically translate into career advancement when organizational and structural barriers remain present. While SCCT effectively explains how mentorship strengthens women's motivation, resilience, and career-related behaviors, the moderate levels of career

development observed in this study indicate that psychological empowerment alone may be insufficient to overcome organizational constraints. Future theoretical refinement should therefore incorporate organizational factors such as promotion systems, leadership pipelines, workplace culture, and access to developmental opportunities as contextual conditions that influence the extent to which self-efficacy translates into career success.

Similarly, the findings provide a nuanced extension of Social Role Theory. While the theory explains how gender stereotypes and social expectations constrain women's career progression, the positive influence of mentorship demonstrates that these constraints can be challenged and partially mitigated through organizational interventions. The findings therefore suggest that gender roles should not be viewed as static determinants of career outcomes but rather as social influences that can be weakened through mentorship, leadership development, sponsorship, and supportive workplace practices. Future theoretical development should therefore pay greater attention to mechanisms that enable women to negotiate, resist, and overcome traditional gender expectations within organizational settings.

The study further suggests the need to contextualize both theories within the socio-cultural and organizational realities of African workplaces. Factors such as collectivist workplace relationships, societal expectations surrounding women's leadership, work-life integration demands, informal organizational power structures, and the underrepresentation of women in senior leadership positions may influence mentorship effectiveness in ways that are not fully captured by existing theoretical models. Future research should therefore explore how these contextual factors interact with psychological and social processes to shape women's career development in emerging economies and African corporate environments.

Overall, the findings support the development of a more integrated theoretical perspective that combines individual agency, mentorship processes, organizational structures, and socio-cultural influences in explaining women's career advancement. Such an approach would improve the contextual relevance and explanatory power of existing career development theories in understanding women's progression within Kenya's banking sector and similar organizational environments.

5.5 Study Limitations

Although this study provides important insights into the role of mentorship in advancing women's career development within Kenya's Tier 1 banking sector, several methodological limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings.

First, all study variables were measured using self-administered questionnaires completed by the same respondents at a single point in time. This introduces the possibility of common method variance, whereby similarities in respondents' perceptions, response styles, or social desirability tendencies may have strengthened the observed relationships among the study variables. Consequently, the exceptionally high correlation coefficients and coefficient of determination (R^2) reported in this study may partly reflect shared measurement methods rather than exclusively representing the true magnitude of the relationships between mentorship and career development. Although procedural measures such as assuring respondent anonymity, using standardized questionnaires, and conducting pilot testing were implemented to improve response quality, common method variance cannot be entirely ruled out. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as evidence of strong statistical associations rather than definitive estimates of the true strength of these relationships.

Second, the study deliberately targeted women who had current or previous mentorship experience because they were best positioned to evaluate mentorship-related practices. While this sampling strategy was appropriate for addressing the study objectives, it may have introduced selection bias by excluding women who had never participated in mentorship programmes. Women with mentorship experience may hold more favorable perceptions of mentorship than those without such exposure, potentially leading to an overestimation of mentorship's contribution to career development. Consequently, the findings primarily reflect the experiences of women who have participated in mentoring relationships and should not be interpreted as representing the experiences of all women employed within Kenya's banking sector.

Third, the study adopted a cross-sectional research design, whereby data were collected at a single point in time. Although this design was appropriate for examining relationships among variables, it limits the ability to establish temporal sequencing or causal relationships. For example, it cannot be determined with certainty whether mentorship contributed to improved career development or

whether women experiencing greater career success were more likely to seek, attract, or participate in mentorship relationships. Consequently, the study identifies statistically significant associations rather than causal effects, and the findings should therefore be interpreted accordingly.

Fourth, the independent variables examined in this study—mentorship psychosocial support, overcoming gender-specific barriers, and mentorship attributes—are conceptually related aspects of the broader mentorship construct. Although diagnostic tests indicated that multicollinearity remained within acceptable limits, the conceptual proximity of these variables may have contributed to the exceptionally strong correlations observed in the analysis. As a result, some of the reported relationships may partly reflect overlap between closely related constructs rather than entirely distinct effects. Future studies employing longitudinal designs, structural equation modelling, or multi-source data could further distinguish these relationships and provide stronger evidence regarding the unique contribution of each mentorship dimension.

Fifth, the study did not include women occupying executive or C-suite leadership positions. Consequently, the findings primarily reflect the perceptions of women working in operational, supervisory, middle-management, and senior-management positions. Women who have successfully attained executive leadership positions may experience mentorship, organizational barriers, and career progression differently. The absence of these perspectives limits the study's ability to fully explain mentorship across the entire leadership pipeline and reduces the extent to which the findings can be generalized to executive-level career advancement.

Finally, the study was confined to women employed in Tier 1 banks located in Nairobi City County. Although these institutions represent the largest and most influential segment of Kenya's banking industry, their organizational structures, leadership practices, and mentorship systems may differ from those of smaller banks, other financial institutions, or organizations operating in different sectors and geographical regions. Consequently, caution should be exercised when generalizing the findings beyond the specific organizational and contextual setting examined in this study.

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable empirical evidence regarding the relationship between mentorship and women's career development within Kenya's banking sector. The limitations identified primarily affect the interpretation and generalizability of the findings

rather than their overall contribution, and they provide important directions for strengthening future research on mentorship and women's leadership development.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

Future research should build on this study by addressing its aforementioned limitations. Longitudinal designs are recommended to better establish causal relationships and track how mentorship influences career development over time. Comparative studies across different sectors, regions, and organizational sizes would enhance the generalizability of findings and provide deeper contextual insights. Further research should also incorporate additional variables such as organizational culture, leadership styles, and institutional policies to develop a more comprehensive understanding of factors influencing women's career progression. In addition, qualitative or mixed-method approaches could provide richer insights into mentorship dynamics and lived experiences. Future studies should compare women with and without mentorship experience to provide a more balanced assessment of mentorship effectiveness. Future research should also incorporate executive-level perspectives to provide a more comprehensive Finally, future studies could explore the effectiveness of different mentorship models, including formal versus informal programs, as well as the role of digital or cross-organizational mentorship in supporting women's career advancement.

5.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the discussion, conclusions, and recommendations of the study. It began with a summary of the main findings, followed by a detailed discussion linking the results to the theoretical framework and existing literature. The chapter then outlined policy, managerial, and theoretical recommendations based on the findings. It further highlighted the key limitations of the study and provided suggestions for future research. Overall, the chapter synthesized the study findings and their implications for enhancing women's career development through mentorship.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Letter of Introduction

You are invited to participate in a research study titled, "The Role of Female Mentorship in Advancing Women's Careers in Tier 1 Banks in Nairobi." This study is being conducted by Ruth Kigoto, who can be reached via email at ruth.kigoto@strathmore.edu or by phone at +254 734 519 337.

The purpose of this research is to investigate how female mentorship influences career development among women in Kenya's banking sector. Your participation will help provide valuable insights into how mentorship support, gender-specific challenges, and the mentor's gender impact career progression. If you have any questions or would like more details about the study, please feel free to contact the researcher using the provided email address or phone number.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire, which will take approximately 10-15 minutes. The questionnaire will collect information on your demographic details (e.g., age, gender, and professional experience) and your experiences with mentorship and career development in the banking sector. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and no financial compensation will be provided.

You are free to decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

Should you have any questions or need clarification, please do not hesitate to contact Ruth Kigoto via email at ruth.kigoto@strathmore.edu or by phone at +254 734 519 337.

Thank you for considering participating in this study. Your contribution is greatly appreciated and will provide valuable insights into this important area of research.

Sincerely,

Ruth N. Kigoto

Strathmore University

Appendix II: Participant Information and Informed Consent

TITLE OF THE PROPOSED STUDY

The role of female mentorship in advancing women's careers in tier 1 banks in Nairobi.

SECTION 1: INFORMATION SHEET

Principal Investigator: Ruth Njoki Kigoto

Institutional Affiliation: Strathmore University Business School (SUBS)
Mobile: +254 724 253 967
Email: ruth.kigoto@strathmore.edu

Supervisor: Dr. Katindi Sivi
Email: tsivi@strathmore.edu
Institutional Affiliation: Strathmore University Business School (SUBS)

SECTION 2: INFORMATION SHEET – THE STUDY

2.1. Why is this study being carried out?

This study is being carried out in fulfillment of the requirement for the award of a Master of Business Administration at Strathmore University Business School.

This study aims to explore the role of mentorship in promoting career development in women in the banking sector in Kenya

2.2. Do I have to take part?

No. Taking part in this study is entirely optional, and the decision rests only with you. If you decide to take part, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire designed to gather information on the above-mentioned research topic – The role of female mentorship in advancing women's careers in tier 1 banks in Nairobi.

The questionnaire will be well-structured and simple to understand and complete. Further explanation will be provided where necessary. Please note that you are free to decline to take part in this study at any time without explanation.

2.3. Who is eligible to take part in this study?

Women working in the bank

2.4. Who is not eligible to take part in this study?

- Men working in the bank
- Bank customers
- Any person under 18 years of age (minors).
- Those incapable of consenting to participate in this study (signing this form).

2.5. What will taking part in this study involve for me?

You will be requested to take part in the study by filling out a questionnaire. Should you be satisfied that you fully understand the details of this study, you will be asked to sign the informed consent form (this form) and then taken through a questionnaire to complete.

2.6. Are there any risks or dangers in taking part in this study?

There are no risks in taking part in this study. All the information you provide will be treated as confidential and will not be used in any way without your express permission.

2.7. Are there any benefits of taking part in this study?

This study will benefit policymakers and regulators in the financial services sector, particularly those involved in advancing gender equity and inclusion by offering evidence-based insights into the barriers that limit women's career development in the banking industry and highlight potential of mentorship as a strategic intervention. It will also be instrumental for banking institutions and human resource practitioners seeking to strengthen talent management strategies.

2.8. What will happen to me if I refuse to take part in this study?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Even if you decide to take part at first but later change your mind, you are free to withdraw at any time without explanation.

2.9. Who will have access to my information during this research?

Access to all the information obtained during this research will be restricted. All research records will be stored in securely locked cabinets. That information may be transcribed into our database, but this will be sufficiently encrypted and password protected. Only the people who are closely concerned with this study will have access to your information. All your information will be treated as private and confidential.

2.10. Who can I contact in case I have further questions?

You can contact me, the Principal Investigator, Ruth Njoki Kigoto, at Strathmore University Business School by email at ruth.kigoto@strathmore.edu. or by calling +254 724 253 967, and a summary report of the findings will be shared via email.

You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Katindi Sivi, at the Strathmore University Business School, Nairobi, or by e-mail at tsivi@strathmore.edu.

If you want to ask someone independent anything about this research, please contact:

The Secretary
Strathmore University Institutional Ethics Review Board,
P. O. BOX 59857, 00200,
Nairobi.

Email: ethicsreview@strathmore.edu

Telephone: +254 (0) 703 034418

I, _____, confirm that all the issues about this study have been clarified. I further affirm that I have asked all the questions that I needed to ask, and all of them have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read and understood the questions. I have been provided with the contacts of the person and institution that I need to contact in case issues arise and I need further clarification.

Please tick the boxes that apply to you;

Participation in the research study

☐ I AGREE to take part in this research

☐ I DON'T AGREE to take part in this research

Storage of information on the completed questionnaire

☐ I AGREE to have my completed questionnaire stored for future data analysis

☐ I DON'T AGREE to have my completed questionnaire stored for future data analysis

Participant's signature: _____ Date: ____/ _____/ _____ (DD/MM/YY)

Participant's name: _____ Time: ____: _____ (HH/Mins)

(please print name)

I, Ruth Njoki Kigoto, certify that I have followed the SOP for this study, have explained the study information to the study participant named above, and that she has understood the nature and the purpose of the study and consented to the participation in the study. She has been given the opportunity to ask questions, which have been answered satisfactorily.

Investigator's signature: Date: ____/ _____/ _____

Investigator's name: Time: (HH/Mins)

Appendix III: Ethical Approval and NACOSTI License

SU-ISERC Approval

Strathmore UNIVERSITY

26th January 2026

Ms Kigoto Ruth,
ruth.kigoto@strathmore.edu

Dear Ms Kigoto,

RE: The Role of Female Mentorship in Advancing Women's Careers in Tier 1 Banks in Nairobi

This is to inform you that SU-ISERC has reviewed and **approved** your above **SU-masters** research proposal. Your application reference number is **SU-ISERC3236/25.** The approval period is from **26th January 2026 to 25th January 2027.**

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements:

i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, and MTA) will be used
ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by SU-ISERC.
iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to SU-ISERC within 72 hours of notification
iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise, that may increase the risks or affect the safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to SU-ISERC within 72 hours
v. Clearance for the export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to the expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days of completion of the study to SU-ISERC.

Before commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke/ and obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Ambrose Rachier,
Chairperson; SU-ISERC

Ole Sangale Rd, Madaraka Estate. PO Box 59857-00200, Nairobi, Kenya. Tel +254 (0)703 034000
Email admissions@strathmore.edu www.strathmore.edu

NACOSTI Research Permit

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: **152578**

Date of Issue: **02/December/2025**

RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Ms.. Ruth Kigoto of Strathmore University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Nairobi on the topic: The role of female mentorship in advancing women's careers in Tier 1 banks in Nairobi for the period ending : 02/December/2026.

License No: **NACOSTI/P/25/4182645**

152578

Applicant Identification Number

Ag. Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Verification QR Code

NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.

See overleaf for conditions

Appendix IV: Questionnaire

Section I: Demographic Data

1. Indicate your age

   18–25 years ☐

   26–35 years ☐

   36–45 years ☐

   46–55 years ☐

   56 years and above ☐

2. Indicate your Gender

   Male ☐

   Female ☐

3. Indicate the Highest Level of Education Completed

   Secondary School ☐

   Diploma/Certificate ☐

   Undergraduate Degree ☐

   Postgraduate Degree ☐

   CPA ☐

   ACCA ☐

   Other (Please specify): _____

4. **Indicate your Current Role/Position in the Bank**

   Entry-Level Staff (such as teller) ☐

   Mid-Level Staff (Such as branch managers) ☐

   Senior Management (such as Department Head) ☐

   Executive Management (such as C-Suite) ☐

5. Indicate your Years of Experience in the Banking Sector

   Less than 1 year ☐

1–3 years ☐

4–6 years ☐

7–10 years ☐

More than 10 years ☐

Section II: Mentorship

This section contains statements about mentorship.

1. **Have You Participated in a Mentorship Program in Your Career?**

   Yes ☐

   No ☐

2. **If Yes, What Type of Mentorship Have You Received?**

   Formal (Structured Program) ☐

   Informal (Personal Initiative) ☐

   Both ☐

3. Indicate the number of mentors you have had throughout your career.

   _____

For each statement, indicate the degree to which you agree with statements about your mentorship experience (SD – strongly disagree, D – Disagree, N – Neutral, A – Agree, SA – Strongly Agree).

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Mentorship Psychosocial Support	**SD**	**D**	**N**	**A**	**SA**
Emotional Support					
1. My mentor provides emotional encouragement when I face challenges at work.					
2. I feel emotionally supported by my mentor during difficult situations in my career.					
3. My mentor helps me maintain a positive outlook on my career despite challenges					

Confidence Building					
4. My mentor has helped me develop confidence in my professional abilities.					
5. Interactions with my mentor have improved my self-esteem in the workplace.					
6. My mentor has increased my belief that I can handle senior roles					
Stress Management					
7. My mentor provides advice that helps me manage workplace stress effectively.					
8. I feel less stressed about my career progression due to the guidance provided by my mentor.					
9. My mentor helped become better at managing my job-related stress					

Overcoming gender-specific barriers	**SD**	**D**	**N**	**A**	**SA**
Access to Networking Opportunities					
1. My mentor has facilitated access to professional networks that support my career progression.					
2. My mentor connects me with opportunities that are typically less accessible to women in my field.					
3. My mentor introduced me to key decision-makers who influenced my career					
Challenging Gender-Based Stereotypes					
4. My mentor encourages me to challenge gender-based assumptions and situations in the workplace.					
5. My mentor provides strategies to effectively address and counter gender stereotypes.					
6. My mentor provided advice on managing gender-based conflict or discrimination.					
Promoting Leadership Aspirations					

7. My mentor overcame barriers and motivates me to aspire to leadership positions					
8. My mentor helps me develop the confidence needed to pursue leadership roles.					
9. My mentor proactively helped me develop a plan to reach a senior leadership position.					
Advocating for Career Development Opportunities					
10. My mentor actively advocates for my career advancement within the organization.					
11. My mentor supports me in seeking opportunities for promotions or professional growth.					
12. My mentor has helped me strategically navigate the bank's promotion process					

Statements about the role of your mentor's attributes in your mentorship experience.

Mentorship Attributes	**SD**	**D**	**N**	**A**	**SA**
Shared Experiences					
1. My mentor shares experiences that are relevant to the challenges I face in my career.					
2. I find my mentor relatable and understanding of my specific career needs and obstacles.					
3. My mentor's past experience in the bank is highly relevant to my current challenges.					
Role Modelling					
4. My mentor demonstrates behaviors and values that I aspire to emulate in my career.					
5. I view my mentor as a role model for success in my professional field.					
Accessibility of Mentor					

6. My mentor is readily available when I need guidance or support.					
7. My mentor's accessibility has positively impacted the quality of our mentorship relationship					
8. My mentor responds to my queries or requests for meetings in a timely manner.					
Gender of the mentor					
9. My mentor demonstrates empathy for challenges specific to women in the workplace.					
10. I feel that my mentor's gender fosters an environment of trust and encouragement.					
11. My mentor's gender helps me navigate and succeed in male-dominated fields.					

Section III: Career Development

This section contains statements about career development. For each statement, indicate the degree to which you agree with statements (SD – strongly disagree, D – Disagree, N – Neutral, A – Agree, SA – Strongly Agree).

Career Development	**SD**	**D**	**N**	**A**	**SA**
Promotions					
1. My mentor's guidance has contributed to my career advancement and promotions.					
2. I feel that mentorship has increased my chances of being considered for leadership roles or promotions.					
3. I have been able to take advantage of promotions in my workplace because of mentorship					
Skill Development					
4. My mentor has played a key role in developing my technical and professional skills.					
5. Mentorship has helped me acquire new competencies relevant to advancing my career.					

6. My mentor's input has led to a demonstrable improvement in my technical skills to avoid it being too general.					
Leadership and Responsibility					
9. My mentor has encouraged me to take on leadership roles and responsibilities in my career.					
10. Mentorship has helped me develop the confidence to handle higher levels of responsibility.					