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## **Narratives of Strategies Used By Female Academics in South African and Zimbabwean Universities to Overcome Barriers to Career Development**

**B.B. Chitsamatanga<sup>1</sup> and S. Rembe<sup>2</sup>**

*Oliver Tambo Chair of Human Rights Centre, University of Fort Hare,  
Alice 5700, South Africa*

**KEYWORDS** Barriers. Career Development. Female Academics. Strategies. Universities

**ABSTRACT** This paper sought to compare the views of senior and junior female academics in South African and Zimbabwean universities on strategies used to overcome barriers to career development. Purposive sampling was used to select 20 participants in this qualitative inquiry through in-depth semi-structured and focus group interviews. The study established that the majority of senior and junior academics in South African and Zimbabwean universities perceived family and spousal support, self-confidence and collaboration with other academics as crucial factors in developing their careers. Moreover, formalised mentoring, gender responsive and conducive organisational culture and research outputs were identified as other strategies to be adopted. The paper recommends that career mobility of female academics be promoted through formalised mentoring; ongoing staff development programmes. Tapping on pockets of best practices from other universities on how to implement gender equality policies that recognise career growth of both genders particularly, for female academics is also recommended.