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# The perceived role of leadership coaching on the performance of a South African state-owned enterprise (SOE)

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# The perceived role of leadership coaching on the performance of a South African state-owned enterprise (SOE)

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law, and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in Business and Executive Coaching

Johannesburg, 2023

**ABSTRACT**

This research study aimed to explore the experiences of leaders in a state-owned company in South Africa who underwent executive coaching, as well as their perceptions of the impact of leadership coaching on their performance.

The rapidly changing business environment presents both demands and risks for leaders to adapt to the changing environment. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of executive coaching as an intervention for leadership development and business growth. Despite the extensive research on leadership coaching, there has been limited focus on understanding how leaders perceive the role of coaching in enhancing business performance.

For this study, a qualitative research approach was employed. Data collection involved conducting structured interviews directly with 15 members of the leadership team, with 14 of them having completed leadership coaching, and 1 participant from the Talent Management department. The collected data were then analysed and interpreted using thematic analysis techniques.

The study's findings offer valuable insights into several factors that influence the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of coaching within a state-owned company. Key factors identified include the willingness of leaders to embrace coaching, client satisfaction, leadership engagement and commitment, and the coaching process itself. These factors play a crucial role in ensuring full engagement and participation in the coaching process. Additionally, the research findings provide substantial evidence supporting the benefits of coaching at both the individual and organisational levels. This knowledge can help uncover best practices, inform organisational strategies, and provide valuable insights for coaches, organisations and researchers in the field.

**KEYWORDS:** Leadership Coaching, Executive Coaching, Leadership Readiness, Coach Referral, Leadership Engagement, Leadership Commitment, Coaching Process, Individual Performance, Business Performance

**DECLARATION**

I, Palesa Mokgatla, declare that this research report is my work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in Business and Executive Coaching at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Name: Palesa Mokgatla
Signed at Johannesburg
On the 1st day of May 2023

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this research study to my Lord and personal Saviour, Jesus for the grace that has been bestowed upon me and for providing the strength to endure this incredible journey of personal and professional growth in fulfilling my purpose.

To my incredible husband, Mohau Mokgatla, and my two amazing children, Katleho Mokgatla and Reotshepile Mokgatla, I am eternally grateful for your unwavering belief in me and your selfless support throughout this entire journey. To my husband, your support and encouragement have been my strength throughout this entire process, and I dedicate this achievement to you with all my love and appreciation. Katle and Reo, remember that your mom has set the standard for both of you - if you can believe it and commit to it, you can most certainly achieve it. Never settle for anything less than the best.

To my mother and father, Tiny and Peter Bambo, thank you for always being my pillars of strength and unwavering support.

To my late beloved sister, Eva Lethabo Seoke, your departure during this journey was a profound loss. Thank you, my darling sister, for your gift of life, your unwavering support, and your love until the very end.

To the rest of my family, thank you for your love and support.

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# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

The chapter introduces the qualitative study's aim on the perceived role of leadership coaching on business performance, along with the study's context, including trends in leadership coaching and the research background.

The research problem stems from the need to equip business leaders with the necessary skills and preparation to navigate a complex working environment. The chapter outlines the research objectives and questions to be addressed by the study.

The key terms relevant to the research are defined, and the chapter concludes with delimitations and assumptions about the study.

## 1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the perceived role of leadership coaching on the performance of a South African state-owned enterprise (SOE) in Johannesburg.

Today leadership coaching is used as an important tool and intervention to assist leaders to improve leadership capabilities, productivity and overall business performance (de Haan et al., 2013). There are however limited empirical studies that provide evidence as to whether leadership coaching does improve business performance and whether it can be deemed as an effective intervention (de Haan et al., 2013). According to Hofmans (2018) executive coaching as a profession continues to however evolve and there are emerging studies dedicated to measuring the benefits of executive coaching on both qualitative level, and quantifiable results being developed and continue to be refined.

Previously coaching was used as an intervention to address poor performance and role inadequacy to improve individual effectiveness and improve business performance (Stokes & Jolly, 2010). According to Stokes and Jolly (2010), organisations are investing in leadership coaching due to the impact it has on three levels of leadership, namely 'personal leadership, team leadership and strategic or organisational leadership.' This implies that organisations that invest in leadership coaching have a reasonable expectation for a return on investment (ROI) on the above three suggested levels.

It needs to be noted that the terms, leadership coaching and executive coaching are used interchangeably throughout the study.

### 1.2 Context of the study

There is an upward trend of organisations that have invested in leadership coaching as part of their learning and development strategy (Bower & DSL, 2012). Leadership coaching is used to support large organisations, small businesses and start-up businesses to thrive and operate in a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, competitive, and ambiguous) environment (Van der Veen, 2020).

For South Africa, parastatals, or state-owned companies play a pivotal role in enabling the Government to drive economic growth both locally and internationally, contributing to job creation initiatives and sustenance of service delivery (Fourie, 2014). According to Fourie (2014), the South African Government has focused on development and growth in the following strategic sectors, energy, transport, telecommunications, and manufacturing. Some of the major state-owned companies in South Africa include the Electricity Supply Commission, namely ESKOM, the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), South African Airways (SAA), freight and Logistics company, Transnet with the Department of Public Enterprise (DPE) having a shareholder oversight on behalf of the state-owned enterprises (Fourie, 2014).

According to the online study undertaken by MatrixGlobal, United States of America, with 26 leaders in the public sector that underwent executive coaching, approximately $414,310 was invested in executive coaching (Parker-Wilkins, 2006).
In a survey undertaken by Carnelley Rangecroft Consulting on behalf of Gordon Business Institute of Science (GIBS), the following competitive rates were charged by the 98 coaches that were surveyed and have provided coaching services to 20 African businesses: Middle management: R650 – R3000 per hour, Executive leadership: R750 – R4500 per hour whilst international rates ranged between $400 - $600 per hour (Van der Veen, 2020).

According to the findings from Van der Veen (2020), some of the barriers identified for initiating leadership coaching in organisations include the following: Budget constraints preventing the investment in leadership coaching, leadership availability and commitment to the sessions, lack of rapport from the coach, and unclear objectives making it difficult for organisations to measure coaching outcomes and potential return on investment.

Studies continue to demonstrate that executive coaching remains an important intervention for leadership development and business growth (Kombarakaran et al., 2008). According to the LinkedIn job board (https://za.linkedin.com), there were approximately 1000 coach vacancies in South Africa as established on 4 May 2021. This further demonstrated the growing prevalence of coaching in South Africa.

Although there is a significant amount of study done on leadership coaching, there remains limited focus on the perceived role of leadership coaching on business performance. The research study seeks to add value and insight regarding the perceived benefits of leadership coaching for organisations that wish to consider investing in executive coaching.

## 1.3 Research problem

Organisations are evolving and adopting new ways of working to thrive in the VUCA environment.

The changes are due to the disruptions taking place in the technological environment, changing markets due to price fluctuation, emerging businesses increasing the number of market players and competition, and the complex regulatory environment for businesses that are operating in various countries (Sinha, 2020).
This whirlwind of change exerts immense pressure on leaders, compelling them to adapt swiftly and effectively. According to Bennett and Bush (2013), change is inevitable and has the ability to impact how organisations navigate a changing environment.

The rapidly changing environment presents both demands and risks for leaders to adapt to the changing environment. Ramachandran (2021) argues that leaders find themselves ill-equipped to lead effectively due to pressure to perform and the expectation to apply decisiveness when events present ambiguity or limited and insufficient information to act on. This lack of preparedness often results in 'analysis paralysis' where leaders either act prematurely, or respond too late, risking the organisation's strategic positioning and sustainability (Ramachandran, 2021).

Bennett and Bush (2011) assert that executive coaching enables leaders to navigate organisational change and has the potential to improve performance. Coaching has the potential to make an impact at both an individual and professional level assisting leaders develop new skills, and achieve productivity and fulfilment (Bennett & Bush, 2011). Thus, there is an urgent need for empirical research to assess the impact of executive coaching on leaders' adaptive capacity, decision-making skills, and overall organisational resilience and performance in the face of rapid and complex change. Addressing this gap is essential for ensuring the long-term success and sustainability of organisation's.

## 1.4 Research objectives and questions

The objective of this study is to explore the effectiveness and benefits of leadership coaching on individual and business performance in a state-owned enterprise.

This study answered the following research questions in an attempt to satisfy the study's objectives:

1. **What factors render leadership coaching effective or ineffective for leaders in a state-owned enterprise?**

2. **How could leadership coaching benefit individual performance in a state-owned enterprise?**

3. **How could leadership coaching benefit business performance in a state-owned enterprise?**

## 1.6 Significance of the study

The increasing trend of executive coaching can be attributed to the changing requirements of the workplace. Nowadays, managers and coworkers are expected to possess emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills, prompting the rise and demand for executive coaching (Joo, 2005).

According to research, there has been a significant rise in academic publications focusing on executive coaching in recent times. The existing data on outcomes gathered so far indicate that executive coaching generally aids in enhancing the effectiveness of leaders and provides a considerable return on investment for organisations engaged with coaching initiatives (Nelson & Hogan, 2009). Joo (2005) argues that although executive coaching has gained recognition as a well-established practice, its definition remains ambiguous.

Despite being suggested as an intervention to enhance executive performance and subsequently benefit the organisation as a whole, the actual impact and effectiveness of executive coaching remain uncertain.

The lack of empirical evidence regarding its outcomes, and factors determining its efficacy or ineffectiveness contribute to this uncertainty (Joo, 2005). This is reinforced by McGovern (2006) assertion that executive coaching practitioners have first-hand evidence indicating that the process has long-term effects on the individuals involved, as well as the broader organisation they are affiliated with, and the organisation's financial performance. However, the measurement and demonstration of these effects have ventured into unchartered territory for the practitioners (McGovern, 2006).

The objective of this study will contribute to the ongoing academic conversation and debate on the perceived influence of leadership coaching on business performance. By offering valuable insights and knowledge on the benefits of leadership coaching on both individual and organisational levels, this research aims to enhance the understanding of the factors that affect the effectiveness of leadership coaching in achieving business performance.

Furthermore, the study aims to contribute to the ongoing academic debate on the factors influencing clients' willingness and readiness to engage in a coaching process, as well as flag potential barriers to goal attainment (Tee et al., 2017). When business leaders are unprepared to execute coaching plans intended to benefit both individuals and organisations, it can negatively impact the reputation of the coach, as they fail to deliver the coaching agenda (Kretzschmar, 2010a).

Additionally, this research seeks to provide valuable perspectives on the perceived benefits of leadership coaching from a South African standpoint, particularly for organisations considering investing in such initiatives.

This knowledge can uncover best practices, inform organisational strategies, and offer valuable insights for coaches, organisations and researchers in the field. As a result, the study's significance lies in its ability to provide organisations with insights into how leadership coaching can impact business performance.

### 1.7 Delimitations of the study

The focus of this qualitative research was on South African business leaders who had undergone leadership coaching with a professional coach, specifically within a state-owned company. The study excludes business leaders from other state-owned companies, private sectors, and other South African provinces outside the selected state-owned company. Additionally, leaders from other countries in Africa or internationally were not included in the research.

The sample for this study consisted of general managers, executive managers, and senior managers from the selected state-owned company. The research excluded direct reports, line managers, and coaches involved in the coaching process, as well as middle or junior management employees who may have received leadership coaching within the state-owned company. This deliberate exclusion allowed for a focused examination of the experiences of business leaders.

The study aimed to capture a diverse range of leaders and did not focus on a specific race or gender. It sought to maintain the perceived view of leaders from different backgrounds who had undergone leadership coaching within the state-owned company.

The study did not specifically investigate the various coaching approaches or methodologies applied in the one-on-one coaching sessions. The effectiveness of different coaching approaches concerning individual performance was not a primary focus. Additionally, the long-term impact of leadership coaching on the performance and personal development of business leaders was not factored into the scope of the study.

## 1.8 Definitions of terms

The definition of terms used in this research study is outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1: Definition of terms**

| | |
|---|---|
| Business performance | Walker and Brown (2004) note business performance as encompassing non-financial benefits, including customer satisfaction, retention, entrepreneur contentment, business reputation, goodwill, employee satisfaction, and a positive working or relational environment. Zulkiffli and Perera (2011), describe the indicators for measuring business performance to include profit, return on investment (ROI), customer base, qualitative assurance and product improvement. |
| Coach | 'A coach is an expert who, through a professional accompaniment process, helps another person develop and maximise their full potential, talent, strengths and skills. Using a specific methodology and techniques, the coach invites his client to reflect and introspect to discover, clarify and define what he really wants to achieve, stimulating his self-discovery, encouraging and accelerating transformation through |

| | |
|---|---|
| | awareness, responsibility and action' (Translated by ContentEngine, 2020) |
| Coachee | Coachee is defined as 'The individual with whom the coach partners with, to support the understanding and implementation of evidence-based practices' (White, 2022). |
| Coaching | 'Coaching is an interpersonal process that aims at enhancing well-being and performance in personal life and work domains' Grant & Palmer (2002); Palmer & Whybrow (2007) as cited in (Armatas, 2011). |
| Leader | 'A leader is one or more people who selects, equips, trains, and influence one or more follower(s) who have diverse gifts, abilities, and skills and focuses the follower(s) on the organisation's mission and objectives causing the follower (s) to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted coordinated effort to achieve the organisational mission and objectives' (Winston & Patterson, 2006). |
| Leadership | Leadership is defined as 'the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives' (Yukl, 2012). |

| | |
|---|---|
| Leadership/ Executive coaching | Bozer and Sarros (2012) define executive coaching as ‘a one-on-one relationship between a professional coach and an executive (coachee) with the purpose to enhance the coachees behavioural change through self-awareness and learning by contributing to the individual and organisational successes. |
| State-owned enterprise | ‘State-owned enterprise is an enterprise owned or controlled by the government that produces goods or services to the public, often potentially in competition with private enterprises’ (Trebilcock, 2020). |

### 1.9 Assumptions

The following assumptions have been made for the research:

The first assumption is that knowledge will be derived from the subjective views and experiences of the participants that have undergone leadership coaching in a state-owned enterprise.

It is assumed that the participants being studied will answer the questions in an honest and candid manner.

It is further assumed that the participants selected will provide adequate knowledge and insights to determine the perceived benefits of leadership coaching on business performance.

## 1.10 Structure of the report

The structure of the research report is as follows:

Chapter 2 of the research report provides a comprehensive literature review, summarising existing research and literature on the impact of leadership coaching on business performance. It establishes the theoretical foundation and introduces the three research questions that serve as a basis for this study.

Chapter 3, the first section of this chapter outlines the research approach adopted for the qualitative research study, including the chosen research design. It explains the process of sample selection, data collection methods, and the methodology employed for data analysis and interpretation.

Chapter 4 focuses on the data collection process and the presentation of the research findings.

In Chapter 5, the findings are thoroughly discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 6 summarises the conclusions drawn from the study's findings concerning the three research questions. It also offers recommendations for key stakeholders to effectively leverage the benefits of coaching. Finally, the chapter concludes with suggestions for future research directions, highlighting potential areas for further exploration of the study.

# CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the existing research and literature on the topic of leadership coaching's perceived impact on business performance, addressing the background discussion, the theoretical foundation and the three research questions forming the basis of this study, and closes with the conclusion of the literature review. These three questions relate to the factors that determine the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of leadership coaching and the perceived benefits of coaching on individual and business performance.

## 2.2 Background discussion

According to Bawany (2018), the current VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) global environment presents exceptional challenges for businesses. Newly appointed executives may struggle during their transition period within the first 2 years of their appointment without adequate leadership support, resulting in potential failure and a negative impact on the organisation's performance (Bawany, 2018). Terblanche et al. (2018) also state that the lack of leadership support for new executives can lead to an underperformance rate of 46%.

To mitigate potential risks and support the development of SMART (specific, meaningful, attainable, realistic, time-frame) goals for achieving business performance, Bawany (2018) suggests initiating leadership coaching within the first 90 days of executive placement.

Motivation, commitment, self-efficacy, personality traits, feedback, goal orientation, and coach-coachee relationship are concepts associated with positive outcomes of leadership coaching (Pandolfi, 2020).

The literature review has explored several of these concepts and grouped them to address the research questions, which focus on leadership coaching and business performance outlined below.

### 2.2.1 Leadership coaching

Grant (2014) describes coaching as a collaborative relationship formed between a coach and a coachee for the purpose of attaining professional or personal development outcomes. Coaching is concerned with assisting the coachee identify the desired outcomes by establishing goals (Grant, 2014) through incisive probing and enabling reflection to unlock potential and maximise performance (Skoumpopoulou, 2017).

Skoumpopoulou (2017) argues that leadership coaching has the potential to increase motivation and develop self-confidence for the coachee.

### 2.2.2. Business performance

An organisation is deemed to be performing well when it is achieving volumes or sales targets, market share, increasing profitability and has a good reputation with stakeholders (Singh, 2003). Hegazy et al. (2020) notes that a high-performing organisation is one performing well in the areas of a balanced scorecard including the 4 perspectives namely financial perspective, learning and growth, customer service and internal business processes.

According to Kretzschmar (2010a), leadership coaching has the potential to increase the business' return on investment (ROI).

## 2.3 Theoretical foundation

In the literature, Richard Kilburg's analysis of coaching practice, adapted and extracted from Blackman et al. (2016) was used to understand the role of leadership coaching in business performance.

Kilburg's conceptual framework emphasises the importance of understanding dynamics relating to the coaching relationships, the factors that influence coaching outcomes, and their impact at various levels (namely individual, organisational, and societal levels). Preconditions must be met before coaching relationships can begin, such as matching the coach with the coachee. The coach's rapport, competence, referrals, and academic background in psychology are considered critical for effective coaching intervention, while the coachee's personality, motivation, goals, and values are also critical (Boyce et al., 2010). Research further indicates that exceptional coaches are characterized as easily approachable, displaying compassion, and possessing strong interpersonal skills. These coaches are renowned for their integrity, personal honesty, and maintaining clear boundaries in their professional interactions (Kombarakaran et al., 2008). According to the findings from Bozer et al. (2014), an academic background in Psychology will enable the coach to have an understanding of human behaviour as well as insight into evidence-based coaching or methods.

de Haan et al. (2013) indicated that similarities between the coach and the coachee are deemed important factors although there had been limited empirical evidence available to how the matching can be achieved. The American Association study reported that 65% of coaching assignments that failed were a result of ineffective client-coach relationships, Thompson *et al.,* 2008 as cited in (Boyce et al., 2010). A joint effort and responsibility between the coach and the coachee is essential for the improvement of business performance as well as client satisfaction resulting in successful coaching outcomes (Boyce et al., 2010).

Various theoretical approaches, frameworks and tools can be considered to facilitate coaching goals, and a model can be used by the coach to guide the coaching discussion or suggest an activity for a specific coaching purpose (Herd & Russell, 2010). Some of the theoretical approaches include psychoanalytical, cognitive behavioural, etc. The coach can achieve this by identifying the desired goals, maximising the coachee's potential (by identifying the coachee's strengths and development areas), and identifying resources to achieve the goals including the key actions for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of progress towards the goals (Grant, 2014).

The coaching process entails the following four key aspects critical for effecting the coaching intervention, namely contracting, client assessment, coaching intervention, and coaching evaluation discussed below:

Contracting: The coaching literature emphasizes the significance of contracting as it provides direction and purpose to the engagement, aligns the perceptions of both coach and executive, fosters commitment, reduces ambiguity for the executive, clarifies involvement of third parties, and addresses concerns about confidentiality, which could otherwise hinder a relationship (Gettman et al., 2019).

Client assessments: This is the process of gathering information about the needs, strengths and developmental areas. Poelmans and Stepanova (2009) refer to this process as 'Diagnosis'. This process also includes administering assessments and obtaining relevant feedback regarding the coachee from the line manager, peers and customers for the purpose of establishing a baseline for the coachee's current state and developmental areas. (Poelmans & Stepanova, 2009)

Coaching intervention: This refers to the tailored coaching interventions necessary to help the client achieve their needs. This includes coaching approaches, techniques, ongoing support from the coach and feedback throughout the coaching journey. Some of the coaching techniques may include behaviour modification, neurolinguistic programming, psychodynamics, etc. (Bono et al., 2009).

Coaching evaluation: This refers to the process of assessing the effectiveness of the coaching intervention and includes measuring progress towards goals, gathering feedback from the line manager, subordinates, peers and customers, and assessing the impact of coaching on individual and organisational levels. Gregory et al. (2008) suggest that the effectiveness of a coaching intervention is determined by the satisfaction of all parties involved. While it is crucial for the coachee's line manager, subordinate and peers to be content with the progress, it is more significant for the coach and the coachee to feel that the intervention has been successful. Grant (2014) recommends that the following tools may be effective for measuring coaching outcomes namely, 360-degree assessment, the Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire, Goal attainment scaling, etc.

The organisation has a role to provide a conducive working environment for goal alignment and provision of support where it is required for the coachee to achieve business performance. Organisational context may refer to the culture of the organisation, the structure, policies, and processes impacting the coachee's performance.

Executive coaching has evolved into a fundamental tool used by professionals in training, performance enhancement, and leadership development. It functions as a valuable strategy for addressing both individual and organisational performance issues (Gan et al., 2021). For the individual coaching outcomes, Blackman et al. (2016) have identified improved skills, well-being and productivity. According to Kilburg, these are outcomes specific to the person being coached and are focused on helping the coachee improve their skills and abilities. For the organisation, the coaching outcomes include productivity, change and communication. In essence, the organisation's outcomes are focused on helping the organisation achieve its goals by improving the performance of its employees (Blackman et al., 2016). Societal outcomes refer to the broader impact of coaching on society through increased social responsibility, ethical decision making and assisting the coachee to be better engaged with society (Blackman et al., 2016).

In the realm of state-owned enterprises, understanding the effectiveness of leadership coaching is paramount, and Kilburg's conceptual model provides a framework to address these crucial research questions. By delving into the intricate dynamics of coaching relationships, the framework enables a nuanced exploration of the factors that influence the effectiveness of leadership coaching within state-owned enterprises. Through an in-depth analysis, this conceptual framework sheds light on the interplay of individual and organisational factors, allowing researchers to discern what renders coaching either effective or ineffective for leaders within these enterprises.

Moreover, Kilburg's framework allows for a detailed examination of how leadership coaching can directly impact individual performance within state-owned enterprises. The model shows how coaching methods improve individual skills and performance by pointing out specific interventions and strategies. Additionally, the model explains how leadership coaching benefits state-owned enterprises by enhancing overall business performance.

By considering aspects such as leadership development, decision-making skills, and team collaboration, Kilburg's conceptual model provides a structured approach for understanding the multifaceted ways in which coaching positively influences both individual and business performance, offering valuable insight for this research study.

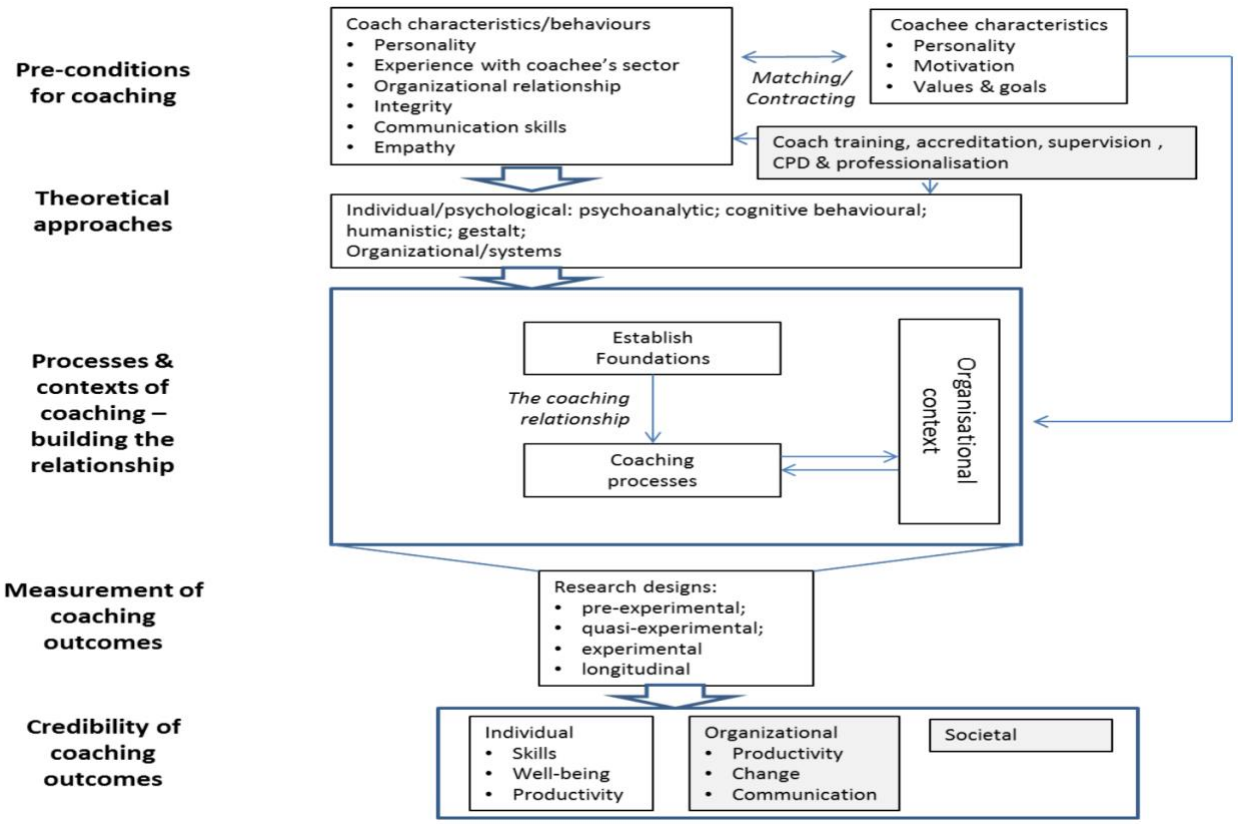


**Figure 1: Kilburg's conceptual framework**
**Source: (Blackman et al., 2016), page 475**

## 2.4 What factors render leadership coaching effective or ineffective for leaders in a state-owned enterprise?

Leadership coaching is a strategic initiative of talent management and a budget is allocated for the implementation thereof as part of leadership development. Kretzschmar (2010a) has identified that budget and valuable time are required as a commitment for leadership coaching. Based on the research survey undertaken by GIBS (Gordon Institute of Business Science) in the year 2020 with 98 South African coaches, a summary of comparative rates was provided for individual coaching. Figure 2 provides comparative rates for individual coaching ranging from life coaching, junior management, middle management and executive coaching (Van Der Veen et al., 2020). According to the comparative rates, executive coaching ranges from R750 to R4500 per hour per coaching session.

Van Der Veen et al. (2020) further argue that the South African coaching market may be undervalued compared to the United States coaching market which is currently charging approximately $400 to $600 per hour which converts to approximately R5694 to R8541 as per the South African currency.




**Figure 2: Individual coaching comparative rates for South African coaches**
**Source: (Van Der Veen et al., 2020) page 13**

Based on the above comparative rates shared, both time and money are important investments for leadership coaching as an important intervention for achieving business outcomes.

Weiss (2021) has identified behaviours and characteristics that a leader requires for an effective coaching intervention and outcome. These include the leader's proactiveness to attain feedback rather than waiting to receive it; demonstration of open-mindedness and receptiveness to constructive feedback as opposed to defensiveness and displaying tendencies to undermine the feedback. The leader needs to be committed to the effective implementation of goals, taking charge of driving development versus the non-commitment to the agreed goals. This may suggest that leaders who model the above behaviours respond positively to the coaching intervention and will likely achieve both individual and business outcomes.

Hernez-Broome and Boyce (2010) has identified behaviours from leaders that inhibit a coaching intervention rendering it ineffective.

These behaviours include the leader's lack of ownership of the challenges or problems at hand, the belief that there is a job mismatch and that they are pursuing the wrong strategy for the organisation. Hernez-Broome and Boyce (2010) have further included leaders that believe that they have been forced to coaching intervention, lack trust and open-mindedness and feel that performance management is a punitive measure.

Hernez-Broome and Boyce (2010) argues that a person displaying behaviours that inhibit coaching outcomes may also present an opportunity to be a client that can be effectively coached with a certain level of expertise from the coach. According to Peterson (2010), he believes that these are the very people that might be in need of leadership coaching.

### 2.4.1 Proposition 1

The effectiveness or ineffectiveness of leadership coaching for leaders in a state-owned enterprise is contingent upon the characteristics of both the coach and coachee, the coaching process, and the resultant coaching outcomes.

## 2.5 How could leadership coaching benefit individual performance in the state-owned enterprise?

Coaching has been described as a unique form of individualised guidance, and goal-oriented approach that aims to facilitate continuous self-directed learning and personal development for the person being coached (Greif, 2007). The individual seeking coaching is seen as independent and mature learners who possess the capacity and willingness to learn and participate in thoughtful introspection, drawing from their introspection (Greif, 2007).

Numerous research studies have indicated that coaching has a positive impact on individuals' expectations of achieving their goals, as well as their commitment and progress towards those goals (Theeboom et al., 2014).

Coaching has the potential to benefit organisations by improving employees' performance, skills, well-being, ability to cope, work attitudes, and ability to regulate their actions towards achieving goals (Theeboom et al., 2014).

Leadership effectiveness and business performance have been identified as outcomes of leadership coaching (Cerni et al., 2010). These outcomes further involve behavioural change, improved leadership skills and individual performance, including organisational effectiveness (Grant, 2014).

The expected outcomes of executive coaching involve the modification of managerial behaviours, which in turn is assumed to enhance organisational effectiveness (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). According to Feldman and Lankau (2005) the evaluation of executive coaching can be conducted at four different levels: (1) assessing participant's emotional reactions towards coaching experience, (2) measuring the extent of learning achieved, (3) evaluating changes in on-the-job behaviours exhibited by participants following coaching, and (4) examining the impact of coaching on organisational outcomes such as productivity, quality, and the attainment of organisational objectives. Affective reactions provide insights into the participant's feelings about the coaching process while learning outcomes gauge the acquisition of knowledge and improvement of skills resulting from coaching. Behaviour outcomes assess the degree to which participants alter their behaviours in the workplace after receiving coaching, and organisational results refer to the effects of coaching on the overall productivity, quality, and accomplishment of organisational goals (Feldman & Lankau, 2005).

### 2.5.1 Proposition 2

Leadership coaching benefits individual performance by enhancing skills acquisition, behaviour change, well-being, and productivity.

## 2.6 How could leadership coaching benefit business performance in the state-owned enterprise?

Based on a survey conducted by the Harvard Business School in 2009, the duration of a coaching arrangement typically ranges from 7 to 12 months (Osatuke et al., 2017). Engaging in coaching necessitates significant commitments from various parties involved, including the organisation, time dedicated by executives receiving coaching, the time and expenses required to cover their planned absences and the financial costs associated with the coaching process (Osatuke et al., 2017).

Kumara (2002) has identified 5 factors that contribute to a successful leadership coaching programme contributing to positive coaching outcomes. Figure 3 below outlines the 5 factors that contribute to an effective leadership coaching programme:

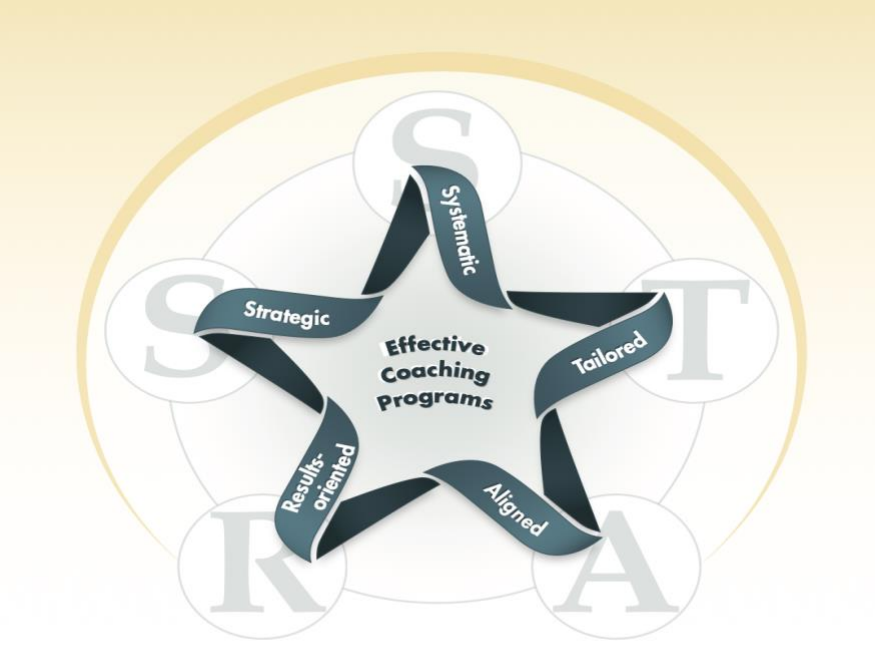


**Figure 3: Factors that make an effective leadership coaching programme, Source: Kumara (2002) page 4**

According to Kumara (2002), the leadership coaching factors include:

Systematic: Well-defined coaching contract, with actions, milestones, and timeframe.

Tailored: Customised coaching intervention to meet the needs of both the business leader and the organisation.
Aligned: Coaching intervention that can create the linkage to the organisation's talent management and leadership development programme.
Results-oriented: Coaching intervention to focus on individual goals, risk mitigation and implementation plan.
Strategic: Coaching intervention to develop strategic thinking and innovation to reinforce the organisation's strategy.

According to McGovern (2006) 'leadership coaching translates into doing. Doing translates into impacting the business. The impact can be quantified and maximised.' McGovern (2006) further suggests that the business impact should be measured by calculating the ROI (Return on Investment). This is calculated by taking the adjusted ROI less the programme costs, divided by the programme costs and times 100. According to their findings, organisations obtained 5.45 times in improved business performance in relation to the investment made for leadership coaching. McGovern (2006) has however established factors that impact effective leadership coaching as established in their findings from 12 business leaders that experienced detraction to achieving business results. According to the report, these detractors were attributed to the lack of the participant's commitment to the leadership coaching programme, lack of organisational support, ineffective communication, and the participant's unavailability.

According to the above report, leadership coaching has the potential to yield both improved individual and business results.

### 2.6.1 Proposition 3

Leadership coaching has the following benefits for business performance: productivity, operational change, operational effectiveness, and communication.

## 2.7 Conclusion of Literature Review

It can be summarised from the literature review that leadership coaching has viable benefits in the form of improved behaviours, skills, and business results for both the business leader and the organisation.

Leadership coaching is also a structured intervention that requires investment from organisations that wish to cultivate a return on investment through the achievement of tangible results (McGovern, 2006).

There are also detractors that have been identified to also inhibit the achievement of business results. The detractors have the potential to render leadership coaching ineffective with a negative return for both the individual and the organisation.

Table 2 below outlines the consistency table summarising the research questions as well as the propositions.

**Table 2. Summarised consistency table: research questions and propositions**

| RQ # | Research Question | Proposition |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | What factors render leadership coaching effective or ineffective for leaders in the state-owned enterprise? | The effectiveness or ineffectiveness of leadership coaching for leaders in a state-owned enterprise is contingent upon the characteristics of both the coach and coachee, the coaching process, and the resultant coaching outcomes. |
| 2 | How could leadership coaching benefit individual performance in the state-owned enterprise? | Leadership coaching benefits individual performance by enhancing |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | skills acquisition, behaviour change, well-being, and productivity. |
| 3 | How could leadership coaching benefit business performance in the state-owned enterprise? | Leadership coaching has the following benefits for business performance: productivity, operational change, operational effectiveness, and communication. |

# CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The first section of the chapter describes the research approach adopted for the qualitative research study including the appropriate research design. The procedure for selecting the sample and collecting the data is explained, as well as the method of analysing and interpreting the data.

The research instrument is designed to answer the research questions, and a consent form has been developed to ensure that ethical considerations related to the data collection are followed.

The limitations of the study are acknowledged, and the principles of trustworthiness in qualitative research are evaluated. The chapter concludes by outlining the ethical considerations that apply to the research study.

## 3.1 Research approach

The research adopts the Interpretivist approach as the research paradigm. According to Dean (2018), this approach views the world as socially constructed and recognises that there are multiple perspectives of the world (Dean, 2018).

The interpretivism paradigm focuses on interpreting participants' perceptions and experiences and requires the researcher to have an open mind and appreciate the differences among people (Dean, 2018). The research approach is based on meaning-oriented methodologies as it does not involve measuring various constructs.

The interpretivist paradigm acknowledges that a single phenomenon may be complex and may require multiple interpretations as stated by Thanh and Thanh (2015). This research study has adopted the interpretive paradigm as it helps us understand how people interpret and interact with their social environment.

To explore the perceived role of leadership coaching on business performance, qualitative research has been undertaken. Thanh and Thanh (2015) describes 'qualitative research as a means for exploring and understanding the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to a social human problem'. Qualitative reports are detailed and necessary for interpretivists as stated by Thanh and Thanh (2015). The qualitative method is best suited for the research study as in-depth information is required to gain insights into the beliefs and experiences of the participants (Thanh & Thanh, 2015).

### 3.2 Research design

For the research design, the researcher has chosen a case study of a state-owned enterprise based in Johannesburg, South Africa. Zainal (2007) describes a case study method is 'an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; where the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clear and multiple sources of evidence are used'.

The case study method is suitable for qualitative research as it allows the researcher to analyse information within a specific context, boundaries or environment (Starman, 2013). Zainal (2007) emphasises the importance of designing the case study relevantly to collect implicit and explicit data from the subjects while aligning with set procedures and scientific conventions.

An explanatory case study was utilised to achieve the research goals, providing background on past events and the reasons for the current phenomenon studied over a period of time (Painter, 2020). The explanatory case study can also assist the researcher in understanding the phenomenon in-depth.

Data collection was done through semi-structured interviews directly with the sources, allowing the researcher to obtain a broad understanding of the phenomenon and reduce potential biases (Hox & Boeije, 2005).

Table 3 below outlines the advantages and disadvantages of the case study method considered in relation to the research study.

**Table 3: Advantages and disadvantages of the case study method**

| Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---|---|
| Data is analysed within the context of the research study. Data collected from the case study is rich and provides greater depth not normally achieved through experiments (Painter, 2020). | The data sample is generally small and collected by one researcher which may lead to biases or potential influence of the results. This can be mitigated by deploying assistance with coding the data and requesting participants to confirm their interview reports. |
| Data collective approaches make provision for both qualitative and quantitative methods, e.g., scientific experiments can also be initiated . Zainal (2007) | It may be difficult to measure cause and effect from the case study. |
| The case study makes provision for several research methods, i.e., interviews, direct observation, and journals (Longhurst, 2003). | Reliant on participant participation and skillful researcher to probe for information. Nonparticipation may render the process inefficient (Longhurst, 2003). |
| Data can be collected remotely, or collected over the phone, and on virtual engagement platforms, e.g., Zoom, or Microsoft Teams. | Data collection may be labour-intensive. The Researcher is involved with interviews and needs to draw concepts and themes from the case study. |

## 3.3 Population and sample

### 3.3.1 Population

The study collected data from executive leaders across various functions in a state-owned enterprise located in Johannesburg, South Africa, all of whom had previously undergone executive coaching. The specific roles targeted included General managers, Executive managers, and Senior managers.

To ensure a comprehensive and diverse perspective, the sample selection criteria considered functional area, gender, occupation, and grade level spanning from levels B to D, according to the Patterson grading system stipulated by the state-owned company. This approach aimed to capture a well-rounded representation of experiences and insights within the executive leadership cohort.

### 3.3.2 Sample and sampling method

The researcher used the purposive sampling method which is a non-probability sampling method suitable for qualitative research as described by Tongco (2007). The selection of participants was based on their knowledge of the study, the research purpose, and the population (Tongco, 2007).

Mocănașu (2020) advises that there are no hard rules for sample size in qualitative research, the value thereof is determined by the richness of the information and the reliability of the data.

In this study, the sample included 15 members from the leadership team of a state-owned company, 14 of whom had completed leadership coaching, and 1 from the Talent Management department. The quality of data and the researcher's understanding of the research question are also important considerations for achieving data saturation as highlighted by Abdul Majid et al. (2018).

South Africa has 24 state-owned companies including Transnet, Eskom, South African Airways etc. (businesswire.com), and the identity of the company in this study was protected through special codes.

The participants were selected through the Talent management department's database of completed leadership coaching programmes. The provisions of the Protection of Personal Information Act No. 4 of 2013 were also taken into consideration. Table 4 provides the details of the sample.

**Table 4: Sample Details**

| Description of respondent | Number to be sampled | Purpose |
|---|---|---|
| Business leaders | 14 | For the collection of data based on their experience and completion of a leadership coaching programme. |
| Talent Manager | 1 | The department initiates and Implements leadership development programmes within an organisation. They will assist with the name list of leadership coachees based on their database of executives that have completed the leadership coaching programmes. |

### 3.4 The research instrument

The researcher used semi-structured interviews to collect data from the business leaders about their experience with leadership coaching and its impact on business performance. The interview questions were open-ended and lasted for approximately an hour.

Due to the lockdown, virtual interviews were conducted, but face-to-face interviews would be considered with safety measures in place if necessary. To help participants feel at ease, check-in questions were included at the beginning of the interviews. The researcher also collected the participant's personal information, including their name, position title, contact details, department, etc. for record purposes.

The questions for the interviews were aligned with the two research questions to explore the factors that make leadership coaching effective or ineffective, using questions adapted from the article 'Measuring the effectiveness of coaching' by Bacon (2011). Additionally, questions about business performance were asked to understand the coaching outcomes and measure both tangible and intangible results achieved.

Participants received a cover letter prior to the interviews, explaining the purpose of the study and what their involvement would entail. A consent form was also obtained from the participants before the interviews to allow for the recording of the interview for the research study.

The interview questions were open-ended and enabled detailed exploration of the research topic, and provided the researcher with the opportunity to ask for elaboration from the participants (Hove & Anda, 2005). Appendix A and B have been attached herein for a detailed research questionnaire, cover letter and participant consent form.

### 3.5 Procedure for data collection

The data collection method used for this study was semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview is an engagement between the interviewer or researcher with the interviewee or participant with the intention to elicit information regarding the research study (Longhurst, 2003). The researcher chose semi-structured interviews as they allow for engagement with participants to gather valuable information based on their experience (Longhurst, 2003).

Longhurst (2003) also suggests that good listening skills, open-mindedness, and receptiveness to information in a non-judgemental manner are necessary when conducting semi-structured interviews.

The researcher obtained clearance from Wits Business School, the Research committee and approval from the state-owned company before proceeding with data collection.

To prepare for the interviews, the researcher familiarised themselves with the interview guide and identified leaders who had undergone leadership coaching through the human resources department and talent management department from the state-owned company.

The participants were sent a cover letter (Appendix B) introducing the research study and a consent form was signed before the interview.

The interviews were conducted on a virtual platform preferred by the participants and lasted approximately an hour. The researcher asked questions according to the research instrument (Appendix A) while ensuring clarity where necessary. Keynotes were taken during the interviews and the interviewer was mindful of keeping track of time. At the end of the interview, the researcher checked if the participants required a debrief or a summary of the interview (Hove & Anda, 2005).

### 3.6 Data analysis and interpretation

The researcher analysed and interpreted data by means of thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2012), thematic analysis is a method for systematically identifying, organising and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set. This process also involves interpreting data that is achieved through the selection of codes and construction of themes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The thematic analysis is best suitable for the qualitative research study as it provides a proper analysis of how conclusions regarding the participant's experience were reached and provides a proper basis for the validity of the results (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

Braun and Clarke (2012) have identified six phases to approach the thematic analysis. The 6 phases were followed in the analysis and interpretation of the data for the research study and the phases are discussed below:

#### Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with data

In this phase, the researcher aimed to fully understand the collected data by immersing themselves in the information. As the interviews were recorded, it was necessary to transcribe all the interviews to allow the researcher to work with the information (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Notes regarding preliminary ideas for codes in relation to the research study were made.

#### Phase 2: Generating initial codes

In phase 2, a code was assigned as a brief description of what was said in the interview and a way of organising data in meaningful groups (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The phase is concerned with generating codes and not necessarily the interpretation or generating of themes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

### Phase 3: Searching for themes

In phase 3, the codes were sorted into themes which entails the interpretation of codes and data in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Codes that have a similarity and overlaps were clustered accordingly to generate the main themes and sub-themes (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

### Phase 4: Reviewing potential themes

In this phase, the themes are reviewed and refined as per the process undertaken in phase 3. The codes were validated if they support the identified themes. Where there are contradictions or overlaps identified, these themes were split into different themes, some codes discarded, or clustered with existing themes where they fit better, however with the researcher being cautious not to force any coherence (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

### Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

The essence of each theme is described and should be engaging (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The researcher attempts to draw the story from the themes concerning the research questions and at this stage, coherence of the main themes together with sub-themes should be achieved (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

### Phase 6: Producing the report

This phase includes a detailed account of the analysis and how the research was carried out including the themes that can be used as a basis for the final report (Braun & Clarke, 2012) A compelling story of the research is prepared in response to the research questions, and quotes may be utilised to describe the themes based on the participant's experience to demonstrate the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

## 3.7 Trustworthiness in qualitative research

The researcher addressed trustworthiness to ensure quality measure and rigour through principles of transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability.

### 3.7.1 Transferability

Houghton, Casey, Shaw & Murphy (2013) as cited in Daniel (2019) define transferability as the ability to apply the findings of a study to other group settings. In order to assess the integrity of the research outcomes, Daniel (2019) suggests that qualitative studies should provide evidence to support their findings.

The aim of this qualitative study is to demonstrate transferability by ensuring that the findings are credible and representative of the experiences of the participants as determined by their demographic information (Daniel, 2019). The selection of business leaders for the study was based on their knowledge and experience with leadership coaching which makes them appropriate for the research (Daniel, 2019).

A detailed report of the research study, including the key themes was provided to allow readers to transfer the findings to their situations and determine whether the results are applicable.

### 3.7.2 Credibility

According to Daniel (2019), credibility is established by ensuring that the findings from the qualitative research study are dependable, plausible and can be linked with reality to demonstrate the truth.

Patton (1999) has identified 3 distinct elements to achieve credibility namely,

1. Methods to analyse and verify sources of data to ensure validity, reliability, and triangulation.
2. The researcher is a credible source possessing the necessary training, experience, and track record.
3. Philosophical beliefs underpinning the qualitative enquiry include the qualitative method, purposeful sampling, etc.

The 3 distinct elements were adopted in the research study for the purpose of achieving credibility.

As part of the research study, record keeping was maintained for the interviews conducted and the themes were identified as per the participant's experience. Participants would be requested to validate the interview data as a reflection of their experience to eliminate researcher biases in the interpretation of data. The findings of the study made provision for verbatim quotes from the participants.

### 3.7.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the reliability and consistency of the data finding making provision for the information to be audited and the research process to be critiqued (Moon et al., 2016). This implies that if the same research study were to be conducted by a different researcher, similar results should be achievable.

As outlined in credibility, the interviews were recorded, and data were interpreted based on the experience of the participants. The data was analysed using the six phases of the thematic method. In phase 5 of the thematic method, the themes were reviewed to ensure that the information coherently addressed the research questions. The process provides quality assurance for the data, contributing to the dependability of the research findings.

### 3.7.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the research findings could be confirmed based on the participant's experience and not the researcher's biases (Moon et al., 2016). Confirmability can be enhanced by the researcher documenting a process for checking the information and quality assuring the research findings.

The researcher demonstrates confirmability by detailing the process for collecting data, the method utilised for analysing and interpreting the data, and the process applied to identifying the emerging themes.

A process of reflectivity was applied to critically reflect on the researcher's acknowledgements affecting the research process and outcome (Berger, 2015). This process entails the researcher paying close attention to their own history, beliefs, and personal experience and taking responsibility for their own biases impacting participants being studied, questions being asked, and data being collected and interpreted (Berger, 2015).

### 3.8 Limitations of the study

The researcher identified the following potential limitations of the study:

- Since the interviews with the participants took place on a virtual platform, connectivity due to network challenges may become a challenge with some respondents resulting in the interviews being rescheduled, or the interview process taking slightly longer to conclude. The provision of valuable info might be compromised due to participants' anxiousness to conclude the interviews.
- Some of the venues selected by the participants may have challenges with noise or distractions, e.g., the office environment making it difficult to suppress the noise and eliminate the distractions and thereby impacting the quality of the recording. The participants were encouraged to pick a distraction-free environment for the purpose of the interviews.

### 3.9 Ethical considerations

According to Perera and Emmerich (2018), the process of engaging with the participant based on their past experience may be distressing for some and therapeutic for some participants. It is imperative for the researcher to be aware of questions that may trigger emotional distress during the interviews and manage the situation with care.

The researcher obtained a clearance form from the Wits Business School research committee including the state-owned enterprise before commencing with the data collection to comply with ethical standards prescribed by both the university and the state-owned company.

A consent form was obtained from the participants prior to the booking of the interviews so that permission is obtained for recording the meeting. Confidentiality was achieved by applying codes in the place of the participant's name and details, state-owned enterprise names, as well as pseudonyms where verbatim quotes need to be captured and thus making it difficult to identify the participants or state-owned enterprise.

# CHAPTER 4 PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

## 4.1 Introduction

The research study focused on leadership coaching within a state-owned enterprise and aimed to explore three important questions. These questions shed light on coaching's impact on both the organisation and its leaders focusing on essential aspects of coaching effectiveness. The detailed presentation of findings follows.

Permission was obtained from the state-owned enterprise X to collect data from the sample of management employees obtained from the People Management department for the qualitative research study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the management employees to explore the findings for the following three research questions:

1) What factors render leadership coaching effective or ineffective in a state-owned enterprise.
2) How could leadership coaching benefit individual performance in the state-owned enterprise.
3) How could leadership coaching benefit business performance in the state-owned enterprise.

The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews was utilised for coding whereby specific words, phrases or concepts were identified concerning the research questions, and subsequently for deriving the themes and sub-themes which have been presented as findings in this chapter below. The details regarding the demographic profile of the management employees are also included in the discussion below.

In summary, the process that was followed to collect the data and present the research findings is outlined below:




**Figure 4 Research process**

## 4.2 Demographic profile of the participants

A total number of fifteen management employees participated in the research study. Twelve of the management employees were in the General Management category, consisting of eight females and four males. Two participants were in the Executive Management category, consisting of a male and female. Only one female participant was in the Senior management category.

The participants for the research study were diverse with a race distribution of eight African representations (consisting of six females and two males), three Coloured representations (consisting of two females and one male), two Indians (male and female), and two whites (male and female). The sample size had more female representation than males with a total of ten females and five males for the research study.

Of the 15 participants, fourteen had gone through executive coaching and one participant was from the Talent management department, representing the organisation. Various participation perspectives were considered to analyse the research questions to ensure triangulation in the research study. Triangulation in a research study reduces the impact of biases and errors and helps to increase the credibility and validity of the research study (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009). The participants that had undergone executive coaching have been referred to as 'coachees' in the research findings and the participant from the Talent management department as 'organisation representative.'

The Tables below, Table 5 provide an overview of the management categories per gender, Table 6 the race distribution per gender and Table 7 the participation category.

**Table 5: Management category per gender**

| Management Category | Male | Female |
|---|---|---|
| **General Manager** | 4 | 8 |
| **Executive Manager** | 1 | 1 |
| **Senior Manager** | 0 | 1 |
| **Total** | 5 | 10 |

**Table 6: Participants' race per gender**

| Race | Male | Female |
|---|---|---|
| **African** | 2 | 6 |
| **Coloured** | 1 | 2 |
| **Indian** | 1 | 1 |
| **White** | 1 | 1 |
| **Total** | 5 | 10 |

**Table 7: Participants' category**

| Participant's Category | Total |
|---|---|
| **Executive Coachees** | 14 |
| **Talent Management** | 1 |
| **Grand Total** | 15 |

The participants were mainly from 2 geographic regions from various business units, departments, and office locations with a large representation of 13 participants based in Gauteng and 2 participants in Kwazulu-Natal.

Table 8 below reflects the various departments that the 15 participants worked from in state-owned company X.

**Table 8 Participants Department**

| Participant Department | Total |
|---|---|
| Group Strategy and Planning | 1 |
| Corporate Services | 1 |
| People Management | 1 |
| Engineering | 1 |
| Office of the Chief Executive | 1 |
| Digital Business Ventures | 1 |
| Capital Development and Assurance | 1 |
| Risk Management | 1 |
| Group information, Communication and Technology | 1 |
| Office of the Group Chief Executive | 1 |
| Finance Support | 1 |
| **Grand Total** | 11 |

## 4.3 Findings relating to research question 1

Research question 1 states: What factors render leadership coaching effective or ineffective in the state-owned enterprise? The interview questions were addressed with both the executive coachees including the organisation representative to explore the findings of the research question. The participant's response was further analysed to derive the emerging themes and the factors that render leadership coaching effective or ineffective. The diagram entailing the emerging themes and subthemes is entailed below in Figure 8, including the discussion about the findings.

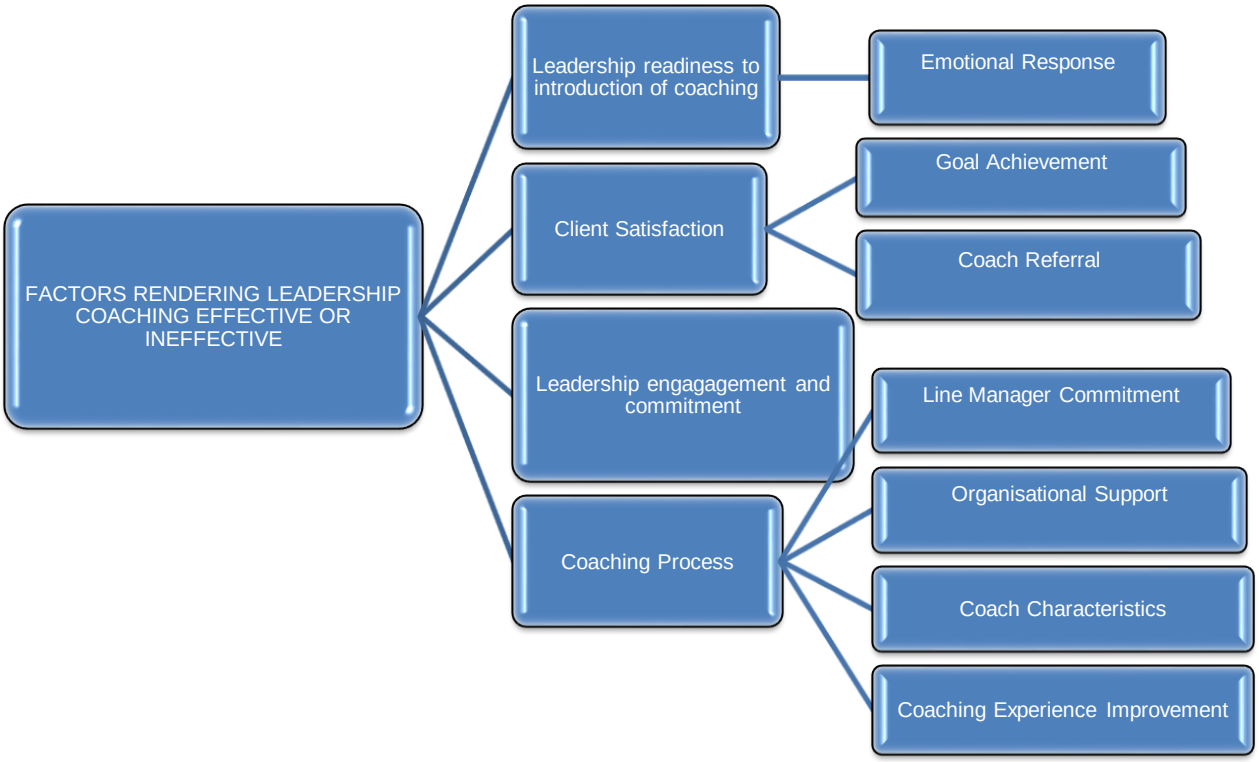


**Figure 8 Summary of the findings for research question 1**

### 4.3.1 Leadership readiness for the introduction of coaching

Executive coachees were asked about their immediate reaction at the time when executive coaching was first introduced to them in the organisation. Leadership readiness to introduction of coaching emerged as a theme. The sub-theme of emotional response was identified as there was a need to classify the emotional responses of the participants as both positive and negative in relation to the findings.

Nine out of fourteen participants' emotional responses were classified as positive as participants utilised the following descriptors for their experience of the introduction of

coaching, '*welcomed it, wanted to be a part of it, self-initiated, and evolving'*. The remaining 5 responses were classified under negative emotional response as the participants utilised the following descriptors for their experience '*surprised, apprehensive, and didn't know what to expect*'.

The table below is a summary of some of the positive and negative phrases used to describe the participants' experience with the introduction of coaching:

**Table 9 Participants' emotional responses to the introduction of coaching**

| Positive emotional responses | Negative emotional responses |
|---|---|
| Coachee 1: '*I welcomed it because one it was intended for my growth aspirations. I accepted it with open hands'*. | Coachee 2: '*I was surprised by the decision; it was not something that had been explained. We just kind of got an email invite stating that you needed to attend at a certain day because you've been selected for this and there wasn't really any background'*. |
| Coachee 3: '*I wanted to be part of it, I wanted to know what it was about and what it would mean for me*'. | *Coachee 6: 'I did not know what to expect, so I was a bit apprehensive about the process'.* |
| Coachee 4: '*I was excited to start the programme because I felt it arrived at the right time for me and my personal life. So, I participated basically without resentment because I had felt this is something that I need. I needed to talk to somebody about what is going on and where I'm going with my life'*. | Coachee 7: '*I actually didn't know what to expect, to be honest. I went in there and I wasn't sure if this was a work-related where I needed to speak about work challenges or if I needed to work on my self-mastery and the development of myself*'. |
| Coachee 9: '*So this to me was just an evolving thing'*. | Coachee 12: '*The expectations were not clear at all in the sense I didn't understand the difference between coaching and mentoring, because I think in some cases I assumed that it was going to be sort of a mentoring relationship and I struggled a bit, I was confused*'. |
| Coachee 14: '*Ah for me, it's slightly different, it wasn't about it being introduced, it was me actually, initiated from my end*'. | |

### 4.3.2 Client satisfaction

This theme captures the overall coaching experience from the clients or executive coachees on the impact of coaching on the client's lives and the perceived experience with the coaching intervention. According to the findings, two sub-themes emerged from client satisfaction, namely goal achievement in establishing the extent to which the executive coachees were satisfied with the achievement of their goals and how they felt about the progress made towards the achievement of their goals. The second sub-theme is coach referral and captures the extent to which the executive coachees were satisfied with the coaching received and whether they would recommend their coach to others. The results of the two sub-themes are discussed below:

#### 4.3.2.1 Goal achievement

The findings reveal that most of the participants felt that they had achieved their goals from the coaching program. Ten participants confirmed to have achieved their goals, while two participants felt that they had exceeded their goals and the remaining two felt that their goals were not totally achieved.

There was however, 1 participant that felt that the first time they went through coaching, their objectives were not achieved, it was only on the second round of coaching did they achieve their objectives. This suggests that there were two different experiences with coaching from two different coaches with the first experience being unsuccessful due to confusion with the coaching process including the participant's lack of commitment and the second experience being successful in terms of the goals having been achieved. The phrase describing the participant's experience is entailed below:

Coachee 12: '*So, I think with the first one it was more a case of I did not achieve the objectives because again as I mentioned, I did not take responsibility for it, and it was still an understanding in terms of the coaching versus mentoring. In the second round of coaching that I went through, definitely, the coaching outcomes benefited me*'.

The organisation representative confirmed that the executive coaching objective was aimed at supporting managers to achieve their personal and professional aspirations while ensuring that they contribute to the success of the organisation.

The Table below outlines the phrases from the participants to describe the three states of goal achievement.

**Table 10 Participants' response on client satisfaction and achievement of goals**

| Goals achieved | Goals exceeded | Goals not totally achieved |
|---|---|---|
| Coachee 1: '*Yes mainly the goal was to establish a planning function for infrastructure. It was crucial for me to be able to understand how to manage senior people in the organisation, so the executive coaching took me you know step by step in understanding the teams, in the interaction with the teams and to become a good leader in the sense of it'.* | Coachee 4: '*Actually I exceeded them, to be honest with you. This is because I opened up, right? She created an environment for me to be vulnerable, and share my deepest fears, my insecurities and together we worked through how those manifested in the kind of relationship that I had both with my family, my parents, most importantly and also how I was just reacting*'. | Coachee 10: '*Look, I would say about 80% of the goals I did achieve*'. |
| Coachee 6: '*I would suggest that we achieved a way forward. I don't think I had specific goals that say I want to achieve XY and Z. I had specific challenges, some interventions to work out those challenges, uh, that would live beyond the period of coaching. So yes, I had achieved.*' | Coachee 8: '*My expectations were different, and in fact, I achieved more than what I bargained for*'. | Coachee 13: '*I would say to some extent and again the context is important because if I had the benefit of the whole year of coaching or even longer, I think the coaching goals that we set in the beginning, I could've achieved, but because it was shorter, perhaps I would say not totally*'. |

### 4.3.2.2 Coach referral

In determining client satisfaction and whether the participants would refer their coach to someone else, the majority of participants expressed their happiness to refer their coach

based on the positive impact of coaching on the client, and the benefit for the coach to build a successful coaching practice due to client referral.

Some of the descriptions used for the referral of the coach are outlined below:

Coachee 1: '*Yes most definitely*'.
Coachee 4: '*I would definitely, she's an awesome lady that woman and she is very down to earth*'.
Coachee 9: '*Yeah definitely, especially the coach I had*'.
Coachee 11:*'Oh 100%*'.

### 4.3.3 Leadership engagement and commitment

Leadership engagement and commitment were one of the important emerging themes that explored the importance of the executive coachees' engagement and motivation to the coaching process as well as the impact of the coachee engagement on the coaching outcomes. The findings reveal that the executive coachees that were more engaged and committed to the coaching process had greater benefits and impact on coaching success.

According to the findings, 13 of the executive coachees were engaged and committed to the coaching process and the factors that contributed to the coachees' engagement and commitment to the coaching process were as a result of '*personal contribution, openness and honesty, investment, pressure from the coach, synergy in the energies*' as described by the participants. It was interesting to also note one participant took over the coaching costs after the coaching contract with the service provider had expired due to the value derived from the coaching process and the interest to continue with the coaching programme. The phrases below describe the experience that the participants had with the coaching process including the extent to which they were engaged and committed to the coaching process:

Coachee 6: '*So for me, the personal contribution is what makes the programme work, if you don't make the contribution, then you have really just two people talking. It will really help you if you are open and honest with the coach and say look, these are my areas of weakness. You need to be receptive in terms of the advice coming, so I think it was worth it, but it does require someone to invest it in'*.

Coachee 8: '*There were times when I felt pressure from the coach which was necessary. There was a time when I felt that this coaching was taking a lot of strain, it was competing with other things I had to do, but overall, if you ask me, it was worth my while*'.

Coachee 1: '*I really invested all the time to get the best outcome out of it, it also depends on the coach as well, I found the coach to be flexible and approachable, the person must have the right rapport and there should be some synergy in your energies as well'*.

Coachee 4: '*I was very committed because we met once a month, I did it for 12 months with the organisation paying, and I think the contract expired and I continued with her with my own money*'.

It was established in the findings that one participant was less engaged and committed to the coaching process compared to the other thirteen participants and this was attributed to 'chemistry with the coach'. Less engagement and commitment to the coaching process have the potential to impact the coaching outcomes. The phrase describing the participants' experience with the coaching process is entailed below:

Coachee 14: '*I found it to be a bit more of a burden, but that's because I just couldn't get the chemistry going with the coach and also being younger and not understanding it better probably, so I won't blame everything on the coach*'.

### 4.3.4 Coaching process

The coaching process was explored with all the participants including the organisation representative to gain an understanding of the factors contributing to the effectiveness of coaching. The participants seemed to have a good understanding of the interview questions relating to the coaching process. The following sub-themes, line manager commitment, organisation support, coach characteristics and coaching experience improvement were important factors in the coaching process that was necessary for the success and effectiveness of coaching in the state-owned enterprise. The findings about the sub-themes are discussed in detail below.

#### 4.3.4.1 Line manager commitment

The Researcher intended to explore the role of the line manager in the coaching process and the impact of the line manager's involvement and support on the coaching process and outcomes.

The findings reveal that 64% (9 participants) of the participants indicated that there was no commitment from the line manager on the coaching process, while 21% (3 participants) confirmed the line manager's involvement, and 7% (1 participant) indicating that they were not aware of their line manager's involvement in the coaching process. In total, about 71% of the participants confirmed the non-involvement of line managers in the coaching process suggesting a missed opportunity for the line manager to contribute meaningfully to the coaching process, the employee's performance, and coaching outcomes.

Some of the phrases regarding the participants' experiences with line management involvement are entailed below in Table 11.

**Table 11 Participants' responses to line management commitment to the coaching process**

| The line manager committed to the coaching process | Line Manager not committed to the coaching process | Don't know |
|---|---|---|
| Coachee 3: '*How the process works is that there are certain people that need to be engaged about the coaching and one of them is the direct line manager, so she was involved. I know that she sat with my coach a few times maybe two or three times to give her own feedback*'. | Coachee 2: '*Now my line manager had no interest in what I was doing, my line manager had a predetermined agenda*'. | Coachee 4: '*To be honest, I don't know, because the process was, they met with the line manager separate from myself, we never had any sessions, and I mean he never really asked me how it was going*'. |
| Coachee 12: '*The line management was committed to attending those sessions*'. | Coachee 7: '*My line manager at the time didn't have the same appreciation for the coaching because I don't think that on her strategic agenda coaching featured as importantly, so it would have fallen down to maybe the bottom of her list of priorities*'. | Coachee 6: '*I must be honest and say we never concluded the sessions with my line manager, there was a process to. Reflecting back, I don't recall those sessions taking place, so I can't really reflect on the level of commitment from my line manager*'. |

### 4.3.4.2 Organisational support

The interview questions were posed to the organisation representative to establish the structure of the executive coaching process within the organisation and how it was implemented across the different departments. The researcher gathered that coaching was delivered through external coaches to coach managers at the executive and senior levels. Coaching could be requested through the line manager or the individual however the line manager was involved in both cases. Chemistry sessions were arranged for the coachees together with the coaches, and goal setting was followed through including the contracting between the coachee and the coach wherein the coaching journey would commence. It needs to be noted that about 71% of the participants held a different view regarding the line manager's involvement and support in the coaching process.

This suggests that the intention of the organisation may have been to involve the line manager in the coaching process, however, the experience of the participants concerning the actual involvement of the line manager was not realised.

One participant felt that there was no remedial action for line managers that did not cooperate with the coaching process, the participant's comment is expressed below:

Coachee 2: '*The fact that there was no intervention in terms of the company, the company had paid for me to be on this coaching program, the supervisor was not coming to the party in terms of what needed to be done and there was no follow up with him to say that his behaviour was unacceptable*'.

The interview questions were posed to the executive coachees to determine the extent to which the organisation deemed the coaching progress important. Half the participants felt that the organisation deemed the coaching progress important, this was primarily based on the virtue that the organisation initiated the executive coaching programme, and allocated a budget towards leadership development, as a result, individual coaching progress was assumed to be important to the organisation. There was however one participant who provided a different view of the role that talent management played in the coaching process. The participant's experiences are expressed through the following phrases below:

Coachee 1: '*Coaching progress was important, the organisation believed that when a need for a coach has been identified for a leader or an executive, it would have the benefits if it well-attended to and prioritised*'.

Coachee 7: 'Coaching was a core programme; it was compulsory for everybody to be awarded a coach and to use the coaching sessions. So, from that perspective, I think there was a vested interest and there was sufficient support behind the program, the coaching programme'.

Coachee 12: '*So I think in terms of the coaching progress, there was a person from talent who looked at keeping us honest in terms of whether we were utilising it*'.

The remaining half of the participants were not aware of the extent to which the coaching progress was important to the organisation. This was expressed through the following phrases below from the participants:

Coachee 4: '*I don't know, there wasn't a structured process to actually determine whether I was gaining anything from the coaching or not, there never was any interview of that sort*'.

Coachee 5: '*I don't know if the organisation did see it as a benefit or it was just one of the programmes that they had the budget for*'.

Coachee 6: '*At an organisation level, no one has come back to me two or three years later from an organisation perspective and said how effective was that. I think getting the coaching and getting going was all fantastic, but you know the outputs and the results it's never been documented or even I've never had the session with HR or my line manager to say, okay how was that, did it work for you, what is your recommendation for others. So that part of my experience was missing*'.

In gathering information relating to the organisation's perspective on the coaching progress, it was established that the organisation solicited a report from the coaches in the form of emerging themes and the coachee satisfaction survey on the engagement with the coach. The feedback from the coaches to the organisation appears to not have been to the knowledge of the executive coachees as this did not come up in any of the participants' responses, including the client satisfaction survey based on the engagement with the coach. This suggests that the organisation followed through on the coaching progress by obtaining feedback from the coaches and the service provider, however, an alignment with the executive coachees was not maintained. The organisation's perspective regarding the coaching progress is entailed below.

Organisation representative: '*As much as we want to maintain confidentiality, we request the reports from the coaches each month where they would identify themes so that they don't report on a person-to-person basis but the overall thing that comes out from the coaching sessions. But it's not only the monthly ones that we get and then we will get the people that are involved in the coaching to rate their coaches as well, and that is all put together in the quarterly report where we will get to see how the programme has performed. Once the three years have lapsed, the service provider will have to give an overall once-off report, I don't want to call it a return on investment, but a return on engagement*'.

#### 4.3.4.3 Coach characteristics

The participants shared several positive aspects regarding the coaching process in particular the positive characteristics relating to their experience and engagement with the coach which may have contributed to the success of the individual and the organisation. According to the findings, most of the participants had a positive experience with the coach.

The descriptors that were used to describe coaches' characteristics are summarised in the below table:

**Table 12 Participants' description of the coach's characteristics**

| Coach characteristics |
|---|
| *'Coach was flexible'* |
| *'Extremely knowledgeable'* |
| *'My coach was awesome'* |
| *'It was an engagement and not a psychological thing where one is psychoanalysed'* |
| *'Positive sessions'* |
| *'The coach had good credentials and was in the same profession'* |
| *'Good listener, and provided objective feedback'* |
| *'Compatible, clicked and had the connection'* |
| *'Committed coach'* |
| *'Provided structure'* |

### 4.3.4.4 Coaching experience improvement

The researcher addressed interview questions to the participants to reflect on their coaching experience and sought the participants' opinions on how the coaching experience could be improved in respect of the coach, and the organisation coaching process to attain a more valuable coaching experience. The findings about the improvements in the above three areas are discussed below.

Suggestions received for the coach to change or improve upon were attributed to direct reports' involvement, coach accessibility, technological challenges, personalised coaching, and time consciousness to name a few. The detailed suggestions are outlined in the phrases below.

Coachee 1: '*I do think that coaches should seek to find opportunities in also maybe expanding their services to those that will be involved in the process although that was out of scope at the time*'.

Coachee 6: '*I think technology let us down, so we kind of missed a bit more fluidity because our coaching sessions were like forty minutes and very often, we spend about five to ten minutes struggling to connect, struggling to communicate. I would probably not choose a coach that is not accessible in future. If I had to do it over again, I would probably pick a coach where we can say, okay let's forget tech, let's go and have a cup of coffee and discuss this*'.

Coachee 12: '*It's about making sure they pay enough attention to the person as opposed to the employee, I know it's their mandate to drive the individual to achieving the organizational objectives, but it must not necessarily be very clinical in terms of having this standard approach with everyone. I think in order for coaches to improve it is to recognize that each individual is precisely that, different and individual. And there's the other thing, I don't know how they will ever resolve it because coaches get paid per hour right and I know this is a business, but you know one of the extremely frustrating things is when the coaches look at the time'*.

Suggestions that were provided for the improvement of the organisation's coaching process were attributed to coaching reviews, transparency with the coaching selection process, coaching programme evaluation, line management commitment, programme effectiveness, etc. A detailed description of the suggestions is entailed in the phrases below.

Coachee 1: '*It may be beneficial for employees to not just be allocated coaches but to have a follow-up in terms of their performance, there could be value-add in the very same coach who is allocated to the employee to have airtime with the employer because that will have more value to the organisation itself, to have an understanding on what the employee has been coached on and what are the expected outcomes after the coaching*'.

Coachee 2: '*I would say it is important to explain the process to employees, it is important that employees are aware of this as a service offering and when you are being selected*

*and identified that there be a discussion with you to explain how you were selected and what the purpose and objective are of you going through the programme*'.

Coachee 4: '*I don't think there was any effort to even evaluate and measure if the programme was working, if you are going to pay millions of rands for a programme, it's important that you put in KPIs to measure if this intervention is working*'.

Coachee 10: '*I think it will be very good if the coaching can be made available but with the following conditions that first your line manager really needs to be involved in the selection of people who need to get some coaching. The line manager should be committed and actively participating in the process when and where required*'.

Coachee 5: '*They could have engaged the people that were part of the programme to get feedback regarding its effectiveness. They should ensure that it's out as an option for those that want to tap on it and continue to benefit from having that arrangement whether at the expense of the company or at once expense*'.

### 4.4 Findings relating to research question 2 and 3

The research question intends to explore the coaching benefits at both the individual and business levels for Company X. The interview questions were addressed with both the executive coachees and the organisation representative. The themes and sub-themes that emanated from the semi-structured interviews and data analysis for research question 2 and 3 are summarised as findings in Figure 9. The findings for research question 2 and 3 respectively are discussed below.

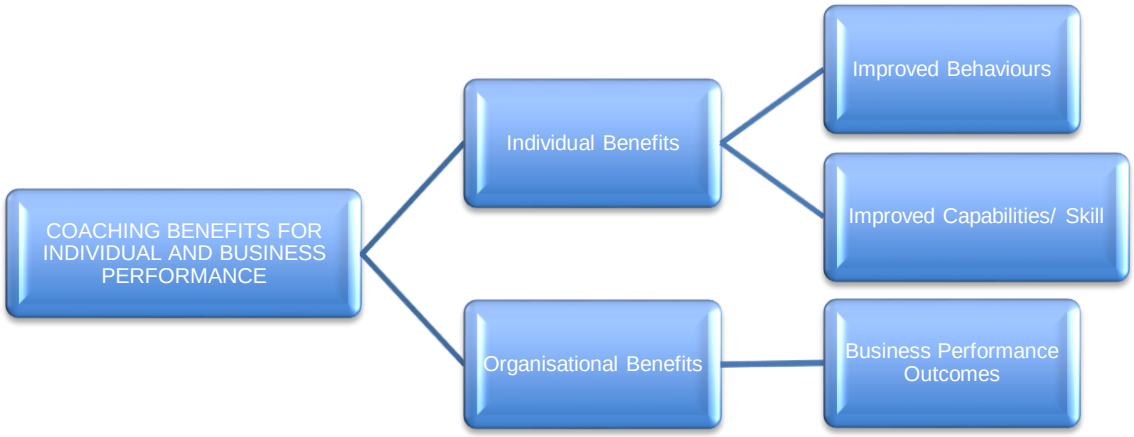


**Figure 9 Summary of the findings for research question 2 and 3**

Research question 2 states: How could leadership coaching benefit individual performance in a state-owned enterprise.

### 4.4.1 Coaching benefits for the individual

The executive coachees were requested to share the most important behaviours or skills that had improved as a result of coaching, to consider what they had learned during the coaching engagements and what new strengths have been developed from the coaching experience to establish the coaching benefits for the individual. In the findings, the researcher made a distinction between the improved behaviours to refer to changes in the way the individual behaves, thinks, and interacts with others and the improved skills or capabilities to refer to changes in the individual's abilities and competencies. Similar behaviours or skills were grouped to arrive at the top presenting behaviour or skill. The findings about improved behaviours and improved skills or capabilities are reflected in Tables 13 and 14 below.

**Table 13 Top presenting improved behaviours**

| Improved behaviours | Direct phrases from the participants |
|---|---|
| Confidence | Coachee 3: '*I was more confident as a leader in what I was doing, I think what also improved was my ability to reach out to just about anybody and sell what we were about as a department and as a function'*. |
| Listening | Coachee 7: '*Listening within meetings within scenarios of leading people, particularly tension situations, you know there's always conflict, et cetera. And I think the active listening has been the best part of my takeaways from the coaching*'.<br><br>Coachee 10: '*Perhaps the most important thing I learned was to listen better and be more open to other people's perspectives*'. |
| Self-awareness | Coachee 14: '*It's an improved consciousness of the environment that I find myself in, and then starting to marry my value set and my approach or align my approach to my values'*. |
| Assertiveness | Coachee 11: '*I'll say to you for though I've always been an assertive person, I think I am even more assertive. From a factual perspective, not just been taken by emotions. So that behaviour is changed to an extent that I engage better than before on difficult matters*'. |

**Table 14 Top presenting improved skills**

| Improved skills | Direct phrases from the participants |
|---|---|
| Communication | Coachee 8: '*I think I communicate better now, communicating not just their language, it's the way in which you put it out there, how others receive it, including your attitude as you communicate, I became more effective in my communication'*. |
| Conflict management | Coachee 6: '*So conflict management was one of those, it's just how you deal with very difficult situations and so what we often would do is, before meetings where I needed to meet with very difficult people, we would prep and say, okay, maybe this is a good way to go into the meeting, a good way to land the meeting, a good way to end the meeting for instance'*. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Leadership style | Coachee 5: '*I am focused on adherence to rules and in doing so, I might not look into the feelings of the person that is supposed to execute. I tended to take away things from people instead of having the patience to work with and wait until you get it'*.<br><br>Coachee 12: '*I think it would be leading self because that was the primary outcome, I realised that you can't lead others if you can't lead yourself. So, you need to invest time in terms of sitting and thinking about your development outcomes, so it is first of all focusing on yourself and then focusing on yourself as a leader*'. |
| Stress management | Coachee 4: '*So I think I had a problem with handling stress, there are cases where I was feeling insecure, coaching helped me to deal with this. So, one of the most important things I learned was patience to work with and wait until you get it'*. |
| Work-life balance | Coachee 13: '*Creating balance between working and looking after yourself, so I think in this regard, I definitely learned to look after myself more and take care of myself more so that I can have the energy again to put back into the organisation. I also learned to say no to the line manager in a diplomatic way, instead of just taking more and more work and killing myself*'. |

The combined summary of improved behaviours and skills reflects that self-awareness was the top presenting improved behaviour for nine participants followed by leadership style as an improved skill for 4 participants. This suggests that coaching has the potential to help individuals gain a better understanding of their behaviours, thought processes and emotions. With individuals becoming more self-aware, they can identify areas where they need to improve and set relevant goals to achieve them. The summary of improved behaviours and skills is entailed in Figure 10 below.

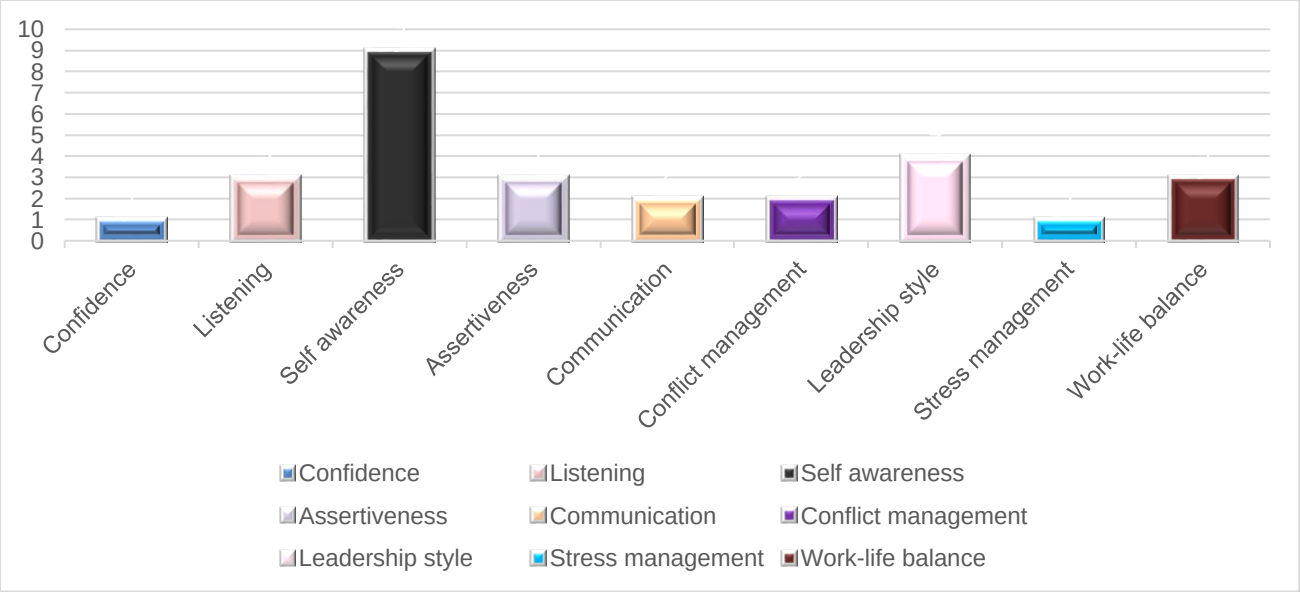


**Figure 10 Improved behaviours and skills per participants**

Research question 3 states: How could leadership coaching benefit business performance in a state-owned enterprise.

### 4.4.2 Coaching benefits for the organisation

The researcher explored with the participants how coaching had led to improvements in business performance and whether those improvements were attributed to coaching. It was established from the participants that coaching goals were not aligned with the overall organisational strategy and performance metrics. Most of the participants felt that although the coaching outcomes were attributed to personal growth, this had an indirect impact on their business performance even though the coaching goals were not tied to their individual scorecards. This is expressed through the following direct phrases from the participants:

Coachee 6: '*It led to improvements in my own performance, I don't know if that equates to business performance. So, from a personal point of view, it had absolutely improved my ability to engage, my ability to get value out of my interactions, it probably benefited my own KPIs and that's probably the business aspect, but I can't say it to you directly*'.

Coachee 12: '*Coaching helps with improved productivity because it allows the leaders to reflect on their development areas, if there's improved development there should be improved performance. So, I think that the indirect benefits come from improved productivity, inspirational leaders will ensure that people are happy and then people will drive the business performance*'.

Some of the indirect business outcomes contributing to business performance as identified by the participants were attributed to problem-solving, knowledge transfer, process improvement, and strategic thinking. The researcher uses indirect business outcomes as these outcomes were not extracted from the individual performance scorecards however, they were perceived to have an impact on the business performance and overall success of the organisation as a result of the coaching intervention. The direct phrases from the participants are outlined in Table 15 below.

**Table 15 Indirect business outcomes**

| Indirect business outcomes | Participants |
|---|---|
| Problem-solving | Coachee 1: '*That office was meant to focus on two things, it was more supply chain solutions development which we established with success and project management commissioning for fuel, and we were able to complete the project on time. In fact, the model that was developed then is the model that I use every time to initiate a project'.*<br><br>Coachee 3: '*We basically had to go into a space where we will negotiate with those people and move timelines if needed instead of us canning those initiatives and I think the impact on business was great even though I can't quantify it right now because all our projects were driven by numbers. We continued with those initiatives and all of them, I'd say 95% of those initiatives delivered what was expected and above'.* |
| Knowledge transfer | *'So for me, whatever that I was benefiting from my coaching I was then able to share with my team and use the same sort of recipe that my coach was giving, either* |

| | |
|---|---|
| | *a model that she was sharing with me or a method or tool, I would either share it or use it with my team, and so I think there was a domino effect, the lessons that I've learned and passing on and sharing with my team'.* |
| Process improvement | Coachee 3: '*So you would find that initially not everybody is aware of how to do something, but they would do it in different ways depending on who you speak to. We created that awareness, and we get everybody in the same room with all the different ways of them doing those processes and collapse it into one. If it's adhered with it tends to give a very consistent output in terms of performance, so we started measuring the level of adherence in relation to the outcome of that process and if the adherence goes up, so does the KPI improve and everywhere without fail'*. |
| Strategic thinking | Coachee 2: '*So my ability to develop strategy, plan implementation and socialisation of the programmes, that improved dramatically'*. |

It was identified that there was one participant that was unable to implement the business plans from the coaching intervention due to an unconducive working environment. This suggests a missed opportunity for the organisation to benefit from the coaching engagement. This is expressed in the phrase below:

Coachee 4: '*And so we were very clear as the IT department what needed to be done to turn around the organisation and how IT could contribute to that, but we were going against a very difficult culture because we were the ones that were seeing the light again and the manager and management didn't*'.

The organisation representative was requested to advise on the impact of executive coaching on the financial performance of the business, including the revenue, profit and return on investment and the key success factors for executive coaching initiative for maximum effectiveness. It was confirmed by the organisation that the performance metrics concerning participation in the executive coaching programme were not in place. The organisation held the view that the objective of coaching is to ensure that the organisation performs and that well-vested leaders would contribute to the performance of the organisation. This is expressed in the phrase below:

Organisation representative: '*We haven't really put in the metrics, but it really does have an impact. We are supporting leaders with coaching, and well-vested leaders, intrapersonal skills, with the teams working well with their leaders, then definitely it means that those teams and individuals would perform well in the different functions – the return on engagement'*.

According to the organisation, one of the key success factors was increased resilience. This is expressed in the phrase below:

Organisation representative: '*The key success factor that we have seen is that there's increased resilience. There have been lots of changes in recent years and we don't respond to change the same, so we need to have resilient leaders there, we have leaders that have been changed leaders'*.

Based on the findings, there was alignment with both the executive coachees and the organisation representative that performance metrics concerning the coaching intervention were not in place and that there was leadership development and growth on a personal and professional level impacting business performance.

### 4.4.3 Summary of the findings

This chapter summarised the findings concerning the three research questions intended to explore the factors rendering leadership coaching effective or ineffective for Company X, including the benefits of coaching on individual and organisational performance.

On the first research question, four core themes and 7 sub-themes emerged from the data analysis, for the second and third research questions, two core themes with three sub-themes. This came to a total of 9 core themes and 10 sub-themes intended to explore the role of leadership coaching on the performance of a South African state-owned enterprise.

The themes and the findings signified executive coaching as a value-adding experience for the fifteen participants with benefits at both the individual and business levels. Although executive coaching was welcomed by most participants, the selection process of the executives was not entirely transparent.

The non-involvement of the line managers in the coaching process signified a feedback loop and missed opportunity to review the coaching progress and measure the impact of executive coaching on business performance.

The quantifiable results for the coaching progress could not be established as performance metrics were not in place from an organisation perspective to measure the effectiveness of coaching on business outcomes.

According to the participants perspectives, it was evident that executive coaching made a positive contribution to leadership development and growth. This was achieved through enhanced self-awareness, improved leadership skills, enhanced communication, all of which collectively enhanced productivity and contributed to organisational success.

# CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

## 5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss and explain the findings of the study regarding the perceived role of leadership coaching on the business performance of a state-owned enterprise.

The chapter commences with the demographic profile of the respondents, followed by a detailed discussion of the findings in response to the three research questions, in relation to relevant literature concerning the factors contributing to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of leadership coaching, and the benefits thereof for both the individual and business performance.

The chapter concludes with a summary of the propositions outlined in the conclusion.

## 5.2 Demographic profile of respondents

The study involved fifteen management employees, with twelve in the General Management category, two in the Executive management category, and one participant in the senior management category. The participants were diverse in terms of race, with eight Africans, three Coloureds, two Indians, and two White participants. The study had a higher female representation with ten females and five males. Fourteen of the management employees completed executive coaching and one employee was from the Talent management department representing the organisation. The demographic profile of the participants in the research study is not particularly relevant to the research questions being discussed in this chapter, however, this information is being shared solely for the purpose of providing a description of the participants' demographic profiles.

## 5.3 Discussion pertaining to research question 1

The purpose of the research study was to explore how the executive employees of a South African state-owned enterprise perceived the role of leadership coaching on their performance. The analysis was conducted by gathering feedback through semi-structured interviews with executive employees who had undergone leadership coaching with the state-owned company.

Research question 1 refers: What factors render leadership coaching effective or ineffective in the state-owned company. The section below discusses the findings pertaining to research question 1.

### 5.3.1 Leadership readiness for the introduction of coaching

Based on the findings relating to the immediate reaction of coachees to the introduction of coaching, it can be concluded that there was a mix of positive and negative emotional responses among coachees in the state-owned company. While the majority of coachees welcomed the introduction of coaching and were eager to participate in it, a significant minority were apprehensive and uncertain about what to expect.

Coaching recipients who were receptive and enthusiastic with the introduction of coaching showed commitment and dedication towards the coaching process as they recognised coaching as a valuable tool for personal and professional development. However, coaching recipients who were unfamiliar with coaching or had a negative experience with coaching in the past were uncertain and apprehensive towards the introduction of coaching. This implies that such individuals may require additional support and reassurance to fully engage in coaching.

The fact that most participants had a positive emotional response to coaching indicates that there is a potential for coaching to be effective in the state-owned company provided that the leadership is ready and willing to embrace it.

Kretzschmar (2010a) argues that individuals who are prepared for coaching possess the willingness and optimistic attitude to participate in a transformative process. However, the negative emotional response of the remaining participant highlights the importance of addressing any apprehensions and concerns that coachees may have in order to ensure the success of the coaching programme.

Although Blackman et al. (2016) did not emphasise the significance of leadership readiness for leadership coaching in Kilburg's conceptual model, these findings suggest that the effectiveness of coaching in the organisation is influenced by the leadership readiness for the introduction of coaching. According to research, there is little or no literature on the topic of leadership readiness for coaching making the findings of this study crucial for future research (Kretzschmar, 2010b). This is supported by a literature report suggesting that being prepared can help individuals maximise the benefits of a coaching programme (Martin et al., 2020).

It is crucial to manage the coachees' emotional responses to ensure their full engagement and participation in the coaching process. According to Kretzschmar (2010b), organisations should be responsible for creating an environment that fosters the readiness for coaching by clarifying the purpose and process of coaching as well as the expected outcomes.

### 5.3.2 Client satisfaction

The findings suggest that leadership coaching can have a positive impact on coachee's lives as demonstrated by the high level of client satisfaction reported in this study. Most of the participants reported satisfaction with the attainment of their goals and felt that the coaching programme had a positive impact on their personal and professional aspirations. The findings of this study are consistent with prior research that suggests that most executives who had received coaching found the experience highly satisfying and beneficial (Wise & Voss, 2002). Grant (2014) describes coaching as a collaborative relationship established between the coach and the coachee to achieve personal and

professional growth, which aligns with the findings in this study that indicate that the coach helps the coachee identify their goals and attain their desired outcomes. The surveyed research highlights the coach-centric skills and traits that are commonly associated with successful coaching experiences. These include the ability to hold the coachee responsible for their progress and development and encourage them to take action and achieve tangible outcomes (Boysen-Rotelli, 2018).

There were a few instances where participants felt that their goals were not completely achieved emphasising the significance of a coaching process, the coaching relationship, and the coachee's commitment. These findings correspond to the study conducted by Boyce et al. (2010) in the American Association report, which revealed that 65% of unsuccessful coaching assignments were due to an ineffective client-coach relationship.

Additionally, coach referral was identified as a significant factor in determining the effectiveness of coaching. Most of the participants expressed their willingness to refer their coach to others, highlighting the importance of positive client experience in building a successful coaching practice. This is consistent with Behrendt et al. (2021), asserting that coaches should prioritise 'creating memorable experiences' in order to elicit change that is retained and transferred beyond the coaching session'. It can be concluded that coach referral emerges as a crucial factor of coaching effectiveness given the challenge of achieving long-lasting changes within a limited amount of time (Behrendt et al., 2021).

These findings suggest that effective leadership coaching requires a focus on goal achievement and a client-centred approach that prioritises the coachee's needs and aspirations. Literature shows that executive coaching focuses on achieving goals, encouraging leaders to delve into issues instead of resorting to immediate problem-solving Visser (MacIntyre, 2020). This further suggests that coaches need to strive to establish strong relationships with their clients to ensure a positive coaching experience and promote referrals.

According to the literature, the coaching satisfaction survey is a primary method used to evaluate the effectiveness of coaching, and the satisfaction of executives is crucial because it determines whether coaching leads to any behavioural changes (Wise & Voss, 2002).

### 5.3.3 Leadership engagement and commitment

The study sheds light on the important role of leadership engagement and commitment in achieving effective coaching outcomes. According to the findings, executive coachees who were more engaged and committed to the coaching process derived greater benefits and success. Factors such as personal contribution, openness and honesty, personal investment, pressure from the coach, and synergy in the energies were identified as contributors to the coachees' engagement and commitment. It was established that coachees that were fully engaged in the coaching process were more likely to benefit from coaching and achieve their desired outcomes. This coincides with previous literature suggesting that the coachee's motivation, willingness to be coached, openness to the process, and commitment to doing the work are important factors in the effectiveness of coaching (Boysen-Rotelli, 2018). According to Boyce et al. (2010), coachee personality, motivation, goals, and values are additional coachee characteristics that significantly influence the success of coaching, which aligns with the findings from this research study.

It was established that a lack of chemistry with the coach can negatively impact the coachees' engagement and commitment to the coaching process, which in turn may affect the coaching outcomes. Literature shows that It would be beneficial for organisations to carefully consider how they can identify individuals who are willing, ready, and able to receive coaching, as well as when they are most receptive to it (Martin et al., 2020). The literature further suggests that It is also crucial to take into account the coachee's confidence in the selected coach, their trust in the organisation's intentions, and their comfort with the communication methods utilised (Martin et al., 2020).

The findings of this research emphasise the importance of coaches in building connections and establishing rapport with the coachees, creating an environment that fosters engagement and commitment to the coaching process for maximum effectiveness. According to Bozer et al. (2013), coachee engagement is crucial for the success of coaching. On the other hand, Bozer et al. (2013) proposed that coachee traits like personality factors and motivation can predict the effectiveness of coaching aligning with the current study findings.

### 5.3.4 Coaching process

Gregory et al. (2008) suggest that Kilburg's (1996) four elements of coaching include (1) perceiving the coaching relationship as a collaborative one-on-one relationship, (2) gathering data about the executive's work behaviours, performance, personality, or potential issues, (3) goal setting guided by quantitative and/or qualitative information that has been collected, and (4) providing and using feedback are also present in other coaching models or processes. However, through the exploration of the coaching process with the participants, several additional factors critical to the success of coaching were identified. These factors include the commitment of line managers, organisational support, coach characteristics, and improvement in the coaching experience. While there's limited literature on these factors, these findings suggest that leadership coaching can be effective when these factors are present, and they highlight the importance of a collaborative approach to coaching involving multiple stakeholders. These factors are discussed in the section below.

#### 5.3.4.1 Line manager commitment

This study aimed to explore the role of line managers in the coaching process and the impact on the coaching outcomes. The findings reveal that most participants reported a lack of commitment from the line managers towards coaching, with only a small percentage confirming their involvement.

This indicates a missed opportunity for line managers to contribute meaningfully to the coaching process, employee performance, and coaching outcomes. The findings are consistent with literature suggesting that managers should use coaching behaviours and techniques such as goal setting, role-playing, scenarios, questioning, and feedback to assist the employees with the achievement of the desired results (Park et al., 2021).

These findings highlight the importance of line manager involvement and commitment in the coaching process and suggest that organisations should prioritise the engagement of line managers in coaching programmes to ensure their success. These findings align with the existing literature that emphasises the importance of manager commitment in establishing a coaching culture within an organisation, as highlighted in several studies (Mansor et al., 2012). The connection between business strategy and developmental focus is also significant in creating such a culture (Mansor et al., 2012). To achieve this, organisations should engage their management team and explore ways in which coaching can support the organisation's long-term objectives and vision (Mansor et al., 2012).

#### 5.3.4.2 Organisational support

The effectiveness of leadership coaching in the organisation is influenced by various factors including organisational support. The study revealed that coaching was delivered through external coaches in the state-owned company and that the line manager was involved in the coaching process. However, participants had varying experiences concerning the actual involvement of the line manager, which suggests that the intention of the organisation to involve the line manager in the coaching process may not have been realised.

While half of the participants believed that the organisation deemed coaching progress important, the other half were not aware of the extent to which the coaching progress was important to the organisation. The organisation obtained feedback regarding the coaching

progress from coaches and the service provider, but alignment regarding the coaching progress with the executive coachees was not maintained.

The findings indicate the need for organisations to establish clear structures for coaching processes, including coaching progress, and maintain alignment with coachees to achieve the desired results. This aligns with previous research that emphasises the organisation's responsibility to establish a conducive environment that encourages open and honest communication, thereby providing a platform for the executive's growth (Gregory et al., 2008). Top management and the human resources department should remain up to date with the executive's progress and should provide ongoing support to ensure continuous improvement (Gregory et al., 2008).

Despite extensive research on organisational commitment, coaching, and employee development, little attention has been paid to the relationship between organisational commitment, employee development, and coaching (Tansky & Cohen, 2001). Therefore, this study presents an opportunity to contribute valuable insights to the existing literature on this topic.

#### 5.3.4.3 Coach characteristics

The findings of this study suggest that the success of the coaching process is heavily influenced by the characteristics of the coach. The participants highlighted various positive coach characteristics that contributed to their engagement and positive experience during the coaching process. Flexibility, extensive knowledge, positive attitude, professionalism, good listening skills, and objective feedback were some of the key characteristics that the participants found valuable in their coaches. Furthermore, the coach's commitment, compatibility, and ability to provide structure were also considered important factors that contributed to the success of the coaching process.

These findings are consistent with the literature which highlights several benefits of utilising external coaches, including their ability to maintain confidentiality, their broad experience across multiple businesses, their expertise in navigating political nuances, their tendency to be less evaluative and judgmental, their knowledge based on extensive experience, and their capacity to provide a more objective perspective (Boysen-Rotelli, 2018).

Bozer et al. (2015) further suggests that a crucial factor in enhancing self-awareness, learning, and behavioural change is the quality of the relationships and compatibility between the coachee and coach.

The study emphasises the importance of coach selection and training, and how these factors can contribute to the effectiveness of the coaching process. These findings can also serve as a valuable resource for organisations and coach's seeking to enhance their coaching practices and maximize the benefits of leadership coaching.

#### 5.3.4.4 Coaching experience improvement

The findings of the research highlight important factors that can render coaching effective or ineffective. The participants provided valuable insights on how the coaching experience could be improved in terms of the coach and the organisation's coaching process. Suggestions for improvement in the coaching process included coaching reviews, transparency with the coaching selection process, coaching programme evaluation, line management commitment, and feedback regarding coaching programme effectiveness.

On the other hand, suggestions for coaches to change or improve upon were attributed to direct reports' involvement, coach accessibility, technological challenges, personalised coaching, and time consciousness.

It is crucial for coaches and organisations to consider these factors to ensure a valuable experience that enhances self-awareness, learning, and behavioural change.

By addressing these issues, coaches and organisations can create a conducive environment that fosters effective coaching and drive individual and organisational growth. According Cilliers (2011), the primary focus of leadership coaching is to enhance leadership abilities on the intrapersonal level and improve the relationships of leaders with their colleagues and the organisation on an interpersonal level. In order to achieve this considerable impact, it is crucial for coaches and organisations to prioritise improving the coaching experience, and while there is limited empirical evidence to support these findings, it remains significant for future studies.

### 5.3.5 Conclusion for proposition 1

Proposition 1 refers: The effectiveness or ineffectiveness of leadership coaching for leaders in a state-owned enterprise is contingent upon the characteristics of both the coach and coachee, the coaching process, and the resultant coaching outcomes.

In conclusion, this study has identified various factors that play a role in determining the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of leadership coaching for leaders in state-owned enterprises. The study highlights the importance of leadership readiness for coaching, managing the coachee's emotional responses, coach experience and training, engagement, and commitment of coachees, and establishing clear structures for the coaching process.

To improve the coaching process, organisations need to prioritise engagement with line managers, establish a transparent selection process, and provide feedback on the effectiveness of the coaching programme.

Overall, this research emphasises the need for organisations to focus on improving the coaching experience to ensure the full benefits and success of coaching for leaders in state-owned enterprises.

## 5.4 Discussion pertaining to research questions 2

Research question 2 refers: How could leadership coaching benefit individual performance in a state-owned company.

The discussion pertaining to research questions 2 is entailed below.

### 5.4.1 Coaching benefits for the individual

Based on the findings, it can be argued that coaching has a significant impact on the individual's development. The findings show that coaching leads to improvement in various behaviours such as confidence, listening, self-awareness, and assertiveness. Additionally, it enhances skills including communication, conflict management, leadership style, stress management, and work-life balance.

The findings are consistent with a study conducted by McGovern et al. (2001), which revealed that coaching not only has tangible benefits but also provides intangible benefits. These intangible benefits include improved relationships with direct reports, peers, and stakeholders, improved collaboration, higher job satisfaction, and reduced conflict (McGovern et al., 2001). This supports the current research findings and suggests that individuals considered these intangible benefits to hold more significance for themselves and their organisation (McGovern et al., 2001).

These findings demonstrate that coaching not only improves the individuals' skills and competencies but also positively impacts their attitudes and behaviours. Self-awareness emerged as the most important improved behaviour, highlighting the value of understanding one's strengths and weaknesses in achieving personal and professional growth. This aligns with the notion put forth by Sherman and Freas (2004) that executives often reach high positions without addressing their limitations, while coaching helps them to slow down, develop self-awareness, and consider alternative approaches instead of merely reacting to situations.

Wise and Voss (2002) further support this idea by emphasising that coaching plays a crucial role in helping individuals gain a deeper understanding of themselves and facilitating behavioural change.

Overall, the findings suggest that coaching is an effective tool for individuals seeking to enhance their skills, behaviours and overall performance. It is recognised in the literature that executive coaching plays a vital role in aligning individual development with the strategic vision and objectives of the organisation (MacIntyre, 2020). Through coaching, leaders can develop the necessary skills to effectively inspire, motivate and guide their stakeholders, which is crucial for achieving organisational goals (MacIntyre, 2020).

### 5.4.2 Conclusion for proposition 2

Proposition 2 refers: Leadership coaching benefits individual performance by enhancing skills acquisition, behaviour change, well-being, and productivity.

In conclusion, the findings of this research study indicate that coaching has benefits for the individual in the state-owned company. Coaching has a significant impact on the development of individuals, improving their behaviours and skills, such as confidence, communication, and leadership style.

## 5.5 Discussion pertaining to research questions 3

Research question 3 refers: How could leadership coaching benefit business performance in a state-owned company.

### 5.5.1 Coaching benefits for the organisation

The research findings suggest that coaching can indirectly improve business performance by enhancing problem-solving, knowledge transfer, process improvement, and strategic thinking. However, it was established that the coaching goals were not always aligned with the overall organisational strategy and performance metrics were not in place.

This indicates a missed opportunity for the organisation to fully leverage the benefits of coaching. Another research study identified possible tangible benefits from leadership coaching, including improvements in productivity, quality standards, organisational resilience, and customer service based on the estimated monetary value of the business outcomes (McGovern et al., 2001).

Nonetheless, the participants in the study felt that coaching had a positive impact on their personal growth, which in turn had an indirect impact on their business performance. The organisation also acknowledged that coaching might positively affect the financial performance of the business, with increased resilience being a key success factor, even though the financial impact could not be quantified. The literature argues that organisations should prioritise the growth and development of their employees to maximise their individual performance and financial return (Kilburg, 2007). It should be noted that based on the findings, leadership coaching did not yield a measurable financial return as the performance metrics were not prioritised and in place to quantify the impact of leadership coaching on business performance signifying a limitation in the return of investment for the state-owned company.

Overall, the research highlights the importance of aligning coaching goals with the organisational strategy and implementing performance metrics to fully evaluate the impact of coaching on business performance. According to the literature, Coaching Practitioners have shown concerns about the lack of information on measuring business outcomes (Feldman & Lankau, 2005) aligning with the findings from this study. In a survey conducted by Personnel Decision International, only a small percentage of organisations evaluate the impact of coaching on business performance further supporting the recommendations of this research study (Feldman & Lankau, 2005).

### 5.5.2 Conclusion for proposition 3

Proposition 3 refers: Leadership coaching has the following benefits for business performance: productivity, operational change, operational effectiveness, and communication.

In conclusion, the findings of this research study indicate that coaching has indirect improvements for the business in the state-owned company.

Coaching has indirect improvements for the business by enhancing problem-solving, knowledge transfer, process improvement and strategic thinking. The findings suggest that coaching goals should be aligned with the overall organisational strategy, and performance metrics should be in place and evaluated for tangible business results.

## 5.6 Chapter conclusion

The findings of this study have provided valuable insights into several factors that contribute to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of coaching in a state-owned company. The readiness of leadership to embrace coaching, and effectively manage the emotional responses of coachees were identified as crucial factors for ensuring full engagement and participation in the coaching process. The experience and training of the coach also play a significant role in the effectiveness of coaching.

For coaching to be effective, it is important to focus on goal achievement and create a positive experience for the clients, especially executive coachees who exhibit high levels of engagement and commitment. They tend to derive greater benefits and success compared to those who are less engaged.

The participants in the research study emphasised the importance for organisations to establish clear structures in the coaching process.

This includes involving line managers in the coaching process, prioritising their engagement, and regularly reflecting on the progress of coaching. Furthermore, improving the coaching process requires transparency in the selection of coachees, and providing feedback on the effectiveness of the coaching programme.

Coaching has the potential to be a powerful tool for improving individual and organisational performance, and organisations should prioritise the growth and development of their employees to maximise financial returns. By aligning coaching goals with the organisation's strategy, and implementing performance metrics, organisations can fully evaluate the impact of coaching on business performance and make well-informed decisions regarding their coaching investments.

# CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 6.1 Introduction

The objective of this research study was to explore the perceived role of leadership coaching on the performance of a state-owned enterprise located in Johannesburg, South Africa.

This chapter provides a summary of the conclusions drawn from the study's findings in relation to the three research questions. Additionally, it presents recommendations for key stakeholders, including the organisation, coachee, and coaches to effectively leverage the benefits of coaching.

Finally, the chapter concludes with suggestions for future research directions, highlighting areas that could benefit from further exploration in order to expand our understanding of coaching's role in organisational performance.

## 6.2 Conclusions regarding research question 1

### 6.2.1 Factors rendering leadership coaching effective or ineffective

This research study contributes valuable insights into the perceived role of leadership coaching in a South African state-owned company. The findings highlight the significance of leadership readiness, client satisfaction, leadership engagement and commitment, and the coaching process in determining the effectiveness of coaching. Based on the findings, there are several key insights that can be used to address the shortcomings and improve the effectiveness of leadership coaching. The following insights are based on the identified factors:

#### 6.2.1.1 Leadership readiness for coaching introduction

The study found that the introduction of coaching elicited both positive and negative emotional responses among coachees. Those who were receptive and enthusiastic about coaching demonstrated commitment and dedication, while those unfamiliar with coaching or with negative past experiences were uncertain and apprehensive. The study suggests that addressing apprehensions and concerns is crucial to ensure the success of coaching.

By recognising and validating the coachee's emotions, coaches can create a supportive and reassuring environment. This can be done through clear communication about the purpose, process, and expected outcomes of coaching, addressing any misconceptions or fears that coachees may have. By incorporating these findings into the practice of executive coaching, coaches can bridge the gaps in leadership readiness for coaching introduction. This approach can enhance the coachees' receptiveness, commitment, and overall experience leading to more effective and impactful executive coaching outcomes.

The lack of existing literature on the topic of leadership readiness for coaching makes the findings of this study highly significant for future research (Kretzschmar, 2010a). This is supported by a literature review suggesting the importance of leadership preparedness in enabling individuals to optimise the benefits of the coaching programme.

#### 6.2.1.2 Client satisfaction

Client satisfaction emerged as a significant factor in coaching effectiveness, with participants reporting high levels of satisfaction and positive impacts on personal and professional aspirations. The study emphasises the importance of goal achievement, a client-centred approach, and establishing a strong coach-client relationship in coaching effectiveness. The willingness to refer a coach to others also highlighted the significance of positive client experiences.

The results of this study align with previous research indicating that the majority of executives who underwent executive coaching reported levels of satisfaction and perceived significant benefits from the experience (Wise & Voss, 2002).

Coaches can enhance client satisfaction by tailoring coaching interventions to suit the individual circumstances, building trust, open communication, and rapport with the clients. By exceeding clients' expectations, delivering tangible results, and consistently demonstrating professionalism, coaches can increase the likelihood of clients referring them to others. The word-of-mouth promotion can enhance the reputation of the coach and lead to further opportunities for executive coaching.

#### 6.2.1.3 Leadership engagement and commitment

Leadership engagement and commitment were identified as crucial factors in achieving effective coaching outcomes. Coachees who were more engaged and committed derived greater benefits from coaching. Factors such as personal contribution, openness and honesty, personal investment, pressure from the coach, and synergy in energies influenced engagement and commitment. The study highlights the importance of coaches building connections, establishing rapport, and creating an environment that fosters engagement and commitment. The findings of this research study support the assertion made by Boyce et al. (2010) that coachee characteristics, including personality, motivation, goals, and values, play a significant role in determining the success of coaching.

By creating a supportive but challenging environment, coaches can inspire coachees to fully engage and commit to the coaching journey. This can be achieved by recognising the coachee's efforts, and progress, and celebrating the milestones to motivate the coachees to stay engaged and committed.

#### 6.2.1.4 The coaching process

The coaching process was found to be influenced by factors such as line manager commitment and organisational support. Line manager involvement and commitment were identified as missed opportunities in the coaching process, indicating the need for greater engagement to contribute meaningfully to coaching outcomes. Organisational support, including clear structures for coaching processes and maintaining alignment with coachees, was highlighted as essential for achieving desired coaching results. Although there is limited literature focusing on these factors, the findings of this study indicate that leadership coaching can be effective when these factors are present.

Organisations should establish clear structures and communication channels for coaching processes. This includes defining the roles and responsibilities of coaches, line managers, and coachees, as well as establishing guidelines for regular feedback and progress evaluation. Organisations should also consider providing training for line managers on coaching techniques and encouraging their active participation in supporting employee development.

By incorporating these findings into the coaching process, organisations and coaches can address the current gaps related to line manager involvement, organisational support, and alignment with coachees, leading to an impactful coaching experience and desired coaching outcomes benefiting both the coachees and the organisation as a whole.

## 6.3 Conclusions regarding research question 2

### 6.3.1 Coaching benefits for the individual

The findings of this research study provide substantial evidence for the benefits of coaching on an individual level. The results demonstrate that coaching contributes to the improvement of various behaviours, such as confidence, listening, self-awareness, and assertiveness.

It also enhances important skills including communication, conflict management, leadership style, stress management, and work-life balance. This is particularly relevant in the context of the increasing demands and pressures faced by leaders in today's fast-paced and complex business environment. These findings provide evidence that coaching can effectively address the specific needs and challenges faced by executives in their roles, directly addressing areas where executives often seek improvement.

The findings strongly suggest that coaching is an effective tool for individuals seeking to enhance their skills, behaviours, and overall performance. The literature recognizes the vital role of executive coaching in aligning individual development with the strategic vision and objectives of the organisation.

## 6.4 Conclusions regarding research question 3

### 6.4.1 Coaching benefits for the organisation

Based on the findings of this research study, it can be concluded that coaching has the potential to indirectly improve business performance by enhancing problem-solving, knowledge transfer, process improvement, and strategic thinking. However, the study also revealed a misalignment between the coaching goals and the overall organisational strategy, with a lack of performance metrics in place to evaluate the impact of coaching on business outcomes. The literature supports the notion that organisations should prioritise the growth and development of their employees to maximise individual performance and financial returns. However, the absence of performance metrics in this study hindered the ability to measure the financial return on investment for the state-owned company. These findings also resonate with concerns raised by coaching practitioners regarding the lack of information on measuring business outcomes. By addressing these concerns and establishing clear performance metrics, organisations can better understand and demonstrate the impact of coaching on business performance.

## 6.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research study, the following recommendations are proposed for the organisations, executive coachees, and executive coaches to leverage the benefits of coaching:

### 6.5.1 Recommendations for organisations

- Align coaching goals with the organisational strategy to maximise the impact of coaching on business performance.
- Establish clear and measurable performance metrics to assess the effectiveness of coaching interventions and make data-driven decisions regarding coaching investment.
- Cultivate a coaching culture throughout the organisation by emphasising the value of coaching at all levels. This creates an environment that supports learning, growth, and development.
- Provide training and support for line managers to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively support and engage in the coaching process. Line managers play a crucial role in facilitating coaching success by providing ongoing support, and feedback on the coaching progress.
- Establish accountability by holding both the coaches and coachees responsible for the coaching process and outcomes. Regularly review progress, provide feedback, and ensure that coaching goals are being actively pursued to maintain focus and drive continuous improvement.

### 6.5.2 Recommendations for the executive coachees

- Foster a growth mindset by adopting an open and receptive attitude towards coaching. Embrace the opportunity to learn, explore new perspectives, and embrace change as part of your personal and professional development.

- Take ownership of your development by recognising that coaching is a collaborative effort. Actively engage in coaching sessions, follow through on assigned tasks, and openly communicate challenges, successes, and areas of improvement with your coach. Maintain open and honest communication throughout the coaching process.
- Maintain accountability for your actions and goals. Stay committed to your personal growth journey beyond the coaching engagement by holding yourself responsible for your progress and actively working towards your goals.

### 6.5.3 Recommendations for the executive coaches

- Place a strong emphasis on coaching goals by closely collaborating with organisational stakeholders and coachees. Work together to ensure that coaching goals are aligned with the organisational strategy to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of coaching interventions.
- Work with organisations to establish clear performance metrics that can measure the impact of coaching on desired business outcomes. By having these metrics in place, coaches can help organisations assess the return on investment of their coaching initiatives and demonstrate the value of coaching.
- Prioritise your own professional development by investing in ongoing training and staying updated with the latest coaching methodologies, techniques, and research. This will help you deliver high-quality coaching interventions that address the specific needs of coachees and organisations, and ultimately enhance the overall effectiveness of your coaching practice.

Together, these recommendations will help organisations, individuals and executive coaches maximise the benefits of coaching and drive positive business outcomes.

## 6.6 Suggestions for further research

Based on this research study, the following suggestions are put forth for future studies:

To enhance the findings from the research study undertaken in the public sector, it would be valuable to replicate the study in different industries within the private sector as well as other regions of South Africa, Africa and globally, taking into account the diverse cultural contexts.

While the study focused on general managers, and executive management employees, future research could expand the scope to include other management levels such as senior managers, middle management, and junior management. This would provide a comparative perspective and offer insights into how coaching benefits vary across different management categories.

Given the limited literature on linking coaching interventions to organisational strategy and establishing performance metrics to evaluate financial impact, there is an opportunity for further research in this area. Exploring tangible coaching outcomes and investigating how the financial implication would contribute to a deeper understanding of how coaching can enhance business performance.

It would be valuable to examine the long-term impact of coaching on business performance by tracking the progress and performance of individuals who have undergone coaching over an extended period. This longitudinal approach would shed light on the sustained effects of coaching on organisational outcomes.

In addition to thematic analysis, researchers can consider employing other sophisticated research methods to complement the qualitative study. Grounded theory, phenomenology, ethnography, or narrative analysis could provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research topic, enriching the findings and contributing to the robust analysis.

By addressing these areas in research, we can deepen our understanding of the impact and effectiveness of coaching on business performance. This knowledge can uncover best practices, inform organisational strategies, and provide valuable insights for coaches, organisations and researchers in the field.

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## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR EXECUTIVE COACHEES AND TALENT MANAGEMENT

### Section 1 Participant Biographic information (for descriptive purposes)

Title: _____
Name: _____
Age: _____
Position Title: _____
Position Grade Level: _____
Department: _____
Reporting Title: _____
Business Unit: _____
State-owned Entity: _____
Length of service: _____
(Years and months)
Contact number: _____
Date: _____

Race: (mark with an X) African ☐ Coloured ☐ Indian ☐ White ☐
Asian ☐

Gender: (mark with an X) Female ☐ Male ☐

Contract of employment: Permanent ☐ Non-Permanent ☐
(mark with an X)
Exited organisation ☐

### Section 2 Organisational Demographic

Size of the Business Unit: 1-100 ☐ 101-500 ☐ 501-1500 ☐ 1501 – 5000 ☐
5001+ ☐

Sector/Industry: _____

Head Office Location: _____

Listing: (mark with an X) JSE ☐ Not Listed ☐
Listed elsewhere ☐ Specify _____

## Section 3 Qualitative Method: Interview Questions

Research Question 1

What factors render leadership coaching effective or ineffective
In the state-owned enterprise?

Interview questions for Executive Coachees

Interview Question 1

What was your immediate reaction to executive/leadership coaching?

Interview Question 2

Did you achieve the goals/results you were looking for from the coaching programme? How so or not

Interview Question 3

To what extent has coaching impacted your overall effectiveness in your role?

Interview Question 4

To what extent was the coaching programme worth your time?

Interview Question 5

To what extent were you personally committed to the coaching process?

Interview Question 6

To what extent do you think your line manager was personally committed to the coaching process?

Interview Question 7

How important was your coaching progress to your organisation?

Interview Question 8

What did you find positive about the coaching process and the coach (Provide reasons for the positive experience).
Interview Question 9

What could've been done differently to make it a better or more valuable experience?

Interview Question 10

What would you suggest that your coach change or improve upon?

Interview Question 11

Would you recommend your coach to a colleague?

Interview Question 12

Looking back on your experience with your organisation's coaching process, what suggestions do you have for ways it could be improved?

**Interview questions for Talent Management**

Interview Question 13

What is the structure of the executive coaching process within the organisation and how is it implemented across different levels and departments?

Question 14

What are the executive coaching objectives and goals within the organisation, and how are they aligned with the overall organisational strategy and performance metrics?

Interview Question 15

How is the executive coaching process communication to employees and stakeholders, and how is its impact on organisational performance measured and reported?

Research Question 2

How could leadership coaching benefit individual and business
Performance in the state-owned enterprise?

**Interview questions for Executive Coachees**

Interview Question 1

What are the most important capabilities or behaviours that you think have improved as a result of coaching?

Interview Question 2

How has coaching led to improvement in business performance/outcomes?

Interview Question 3

What improvement in business results can be attributed to coaching?

Interview Question 4

What did you learn during the coaching engagement?

Interview Question 5

What new strengths have you developed from your coaching experience?

Interview Question 6

What skills, learnings and new behaviours did you transfer in the workplace and how did you apply them?

**Interview questions for Talent Management**

Interview question 7

How has executive coaching impacted the financial performance of the business, including revenue, profit, and return on investment?

Interview question 8

What are the key success factors for executive coaching initiatives in the organisation, and how can they be optimised for maximum effectiveness?

Interview question 9

How is the executive coaching process evaluated and measured, and what feedback mechanisms are in place to ensure continuous improvement?

**APPENDIX B: PARTICIPATION COVER LETTER**
MMBEC – Master of Management in Business and Executive Coaching

Research Title: The perceived role of leadership coaching on the business performance of a South African state-owned enterprise (SOE).

Dear Sir / Madam

My name is Palesa Mokgatla, and I am a Master of Management student at the Wits Business School in Johannesburg, South Africa. As part of my studies, I am conducting research on the perceived role of leadership coaching on the business performance of a South African state-owned enterprise. My findings may be helpful for organisations that wish to consider investing in leadership coaching and determining whether leadership coaching could be cascaded to the next levels of management.

Owing to your knowledge, skills and experience having participated in leadership coaching, it would be an honour to have you take part in my research study and allow me to interview you for approximately an hour. This will involve us meeting on a virtual platform at a time convenient for you where we will not be disturbed by interruptions.

During the research study, I will need to ask for some personal information about you, including your name, organisation, and grade level. The interview will be confidential and anonymous. When I share the results of the study, I will not include your name or anything else that could identify you. I will refer to you by a code number or pseudonym in the research and any further publication.

I also request your permission to record the interview so that I don't miss anything that you tell me and to make sure that I capture the interview accurately. The data will be stored on my private laptop for a period of three years and the laptop is password protected. The data will be destroyed once my research and publications have been completed.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may decline to answer any specific questions or withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences whatsoever.

Kindly take notice that you will not receive any benefits from participating in my study and I do not anticipate that this might have any negative impact on your participation.

The records from your participation may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that the research is done properly, including my academic supervisors. All these people are required to keep your identity confidential.

This research study will be written up as a research report. The report will be available on the university library website. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor at the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone 011 717 1408, or email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Thanking you for your participation and your valuable input.

Kind Regards,

Palesa Mokgatla
Ms. Palesa Mokgatla, email palesamokgatla11@gmail.com, contact 060 571 3636
Dr Jabulile Msimango-Galawe (Supervisor), email jabulile.galawe@wits.ac.za, contact 011 717 3980

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

Research Title: The perceived role of leadership coaching on the business performance of a South African state-owned enterprise (SOE).

**Student name: Palesa Mokgatla**

I,…… hereby agree to participate in the research project as per the above research title. The study has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve.

I agree to participate in the research study as per the principles outlined below.

- I agree that my participation will remain confidential. YES NO
- I agree that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time without consequences. YES NO
- I agree that the researcher may use anonymised quotes from my interview in the research report and publications. YES NO
- I agree that the interview may be audio recorded. YES NO
- I agree that I will not be remunerated for participating in the study. YES NO

Signature: …….

Name: ……

Date: …….

# APPENDIX C: ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTFICATE

**Graduate School of Business Administration**
**University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg**

**Wits Business School Ethics Committee**
Constituted under the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical)

## Ethics Clearance Certificate

**Ethics protocol number:** WBS/BE2515635/472
*This certificate is only valid with a legitimate ethics protocol number and signed by the Researcher (below).*

This certificate is only valid if accompanied by formal permission from the relevant stakeholder(s).

| | |
|---|---|
| **Project title** | The perceived role of leadership coaching on performance of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in South Africa |
| **Investigator / Researcher** | Mrs Palesa Mokgatla |
| **Nature of Project** | MM (Business & Executive Coaching) |
| **Decision of the Committee** | Approved, provided stakeholders and participants are guaranteed confidentialty. |
| **Issue Date of Certificate** | 2022-05-27 |
| **Expiry date** | Date of submission of the project / research report |
| **Chairperson** | Prof Anthony Stacey<br>☎ +27 11 717 3587<br>+27 82 880 4531<br>anthony.stacey@wits.ac.za |

**Declaration by Researcher**

*One copy must be signed by the Researcher and returned to the Chairperson of the Wits Business School Ethics Committee.*

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Signature

28 May 2022
Date: