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Gender stereotypes in the coach-matching process: A case of male executives in Nigeria

A research report submitted by

Tshidi Anya

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

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ABSTRACT

The expected economic growth in Africa and, in particular within Nigeria, (Ogunlesi, 2014) opens doors to more global business opportunities. This growth within the African continent also contributes towards the growth of organisational developmental practices such as executive coaching. This is because executive coaching is undoubtedly one of the fastest developmental interventions used by organisations worldwide (Bartlett, 2006). For that reason, it is imperative for organisations within the Nigerian business setting, where most executives are males, to understand possible inhibitors that could affect the formation of a coaching relationship between male executives and coaches from a different gender.

Previous research on the impact of gender in a coaching relationship has found that gender plays a role when matching executives with coaches (Gray & Goregaokar, 2010). It has also been found that gender similarity of the coach and the executive increases self-awareness of the executives (Bozer, Joo & Santora, 2015). Boyce, Jackson and Neal (2010) advocate that when there is gender commonality between coaches and executives; rapport and trust are established much quicker. Therefore the main purpose of this research is to understand the role that gender and in particular, how gender stereotypes could affect the coach-matching process between female coaches and male executives in a patriarchal society like Nigeria (Nwosu, 2012).

A qualitative approach was implored to uncover trends in thoughts and opinions of the participants. The researcher sought in-depth understanding of the participants and their experiences.

A total of 17 (seventeen) participants were interviewed and 13 (thirteen) of those were males and to ensure triangulation, 4 (four) females were interviewed. The interviews were semi-structured and the probing questions allowed for a deeper understanding of the phenomena. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using the conventional content analysis method where each transcript was read from beginning to end and the data was read word for word to determine the initial codes.

The research found that coaching is in its infancy or emerging stages in Nigeria and there are male executives who would be uncomfortable working with female coaches. Both positive and negative gender stereotypes against women surfaced in the research as key contributors to the coach-matching process. The motherly nature of women, their general warmness, their meticulousness when approaching issues, their ability to be friendly and open and the fact that women are seen as having less ego are positive gender stereotypes that would encourage male executives to secure the services of female coaches. The findings also points out the gender stereotypes that could inhibit the formation of a coaching relationship and most of these stereotypes are found to be perpetuated by the applicable religion, tradition and customs within Nigeria.

DECLARATION

I, Tshidi Georgina Anya, declare that this research report is my own 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 the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Tshidi Georgina Anya

Signed at ……

On the …….. day of …… 20…..

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research report to my three adorable children, my loving husband and my inspirational mother.

To the most adorable kids in the whole wide world, this is for you. Kagiso, Cheluchi and Chetachi - you all gave Mama a million reasons to soldier on. You must always remember that, you can master your destiny by being an active participant in building the life you deserve.

To Nnate, my loving husband, thank you for the unconditional support, love and encouragement. You remain my number one cheerleader and have championed me from the beginning to the end of this journey. I will forever appreciate the words of encouragement and enormous sacrifices you made over the last two years.

To my mom, my pillar of inspiration, you said I can do it and I did it. Thank you for paving this academic path for me and I am grateful for the belief you always have of my capabilities.

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- My sisters, Tshepo, Nani, Claudia and my cousin Kgaogelo for providing me with the much needed sisterly sustenance and love during this journey.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to understand the role played by gender stereotypes during the coach-matching process; within the Nigerian business landscape where most executives are males.

1.2 Context of the study

The study took place in Nigeria which was, until 2014, the largest economy on the African continent. In 2014, the world woke up to the news that Nigeria had surpassed South Africa which, at the time was the largest economy on the African continent (Ogunlesi, 2014). This economic growth opened flood gates of business opportunities into Nigeria. Nigeria's value within Africa was emphasised by Linde, Alex, van Vrede, Havenga and Visagie (2013) when they asserted that Nigeria as a country, is a powerful force with which businesses should associate themselves with, mainly because of its population and by being amongst the top ten petroleum exporting countries in the world.

Because of this growing economic landscape, various global players that have been in Nigeria started expanding further into the country and those that were absent in Nigeria, are exploring opportunities that the growing Nigerian economy can offer. Such an economic growth further contributes towards the development of global organisational practices such as executive coaching to thrive and grow alongside the economy of the country. Therefore the justification of the study becomes even more pertinent for a better understanding of the factors that could affect formations of executive coaching relationships within a Nigerian business environment.

According to Nwosu (2012) most executive positions in Nigeria are held by men as opposed to women and this reality suggests that the majority of the clients within the context of executive coaching in Nigeria would be mostly men. Therefore the study unpacks and provides insights on the role that gender stereotypes can play when these male executives are matched with female coaches. Emihe (1996) acknowledges that Nigeria is a male dominated society where the male folks continuously and persistently relegate females to the background because society allows it. The author emphasises that in Nigeria, for example, male children are encouraged to go to school while a female child is encouraged or even given out to marry. Within the African context, common practices such as referring to a man as the head of the family and general descriptors of social status where men are considered to be superior play a major role in perpetuating gender stereotypes.

The role of diversity and stereotypes related to beliefs, values, race and gender in the coach-matching process was highlighted by Wycherley and Cox (2008) when they advised of three factors that could influence the selection and matching of executive coaches Firstly, there are surface diversity factors which include attribute that are easily detectable like race, ethnicity, gender and age. Secondly, there are deep diversity factors which include differences such as values, beliefs and attitudes. Lastly, there are experience factors that include the relevance of the coach's experience.

This study therefore offers an exploration of the actual gender stereotypes that exists within the Nigerian business landscape and how they can affect the coach-matching process between male executives and female coaches.

1.3 Problem statement

1.3.1 *Main problem*

This study explores how gender stereotypes influence the coach-matching process within the Nigerian business environment. For the purpose of this study the main problem has been divided into three sub-problems.

1.3.2 *Sub problems*

The first sub problem focuses on the understanding of the coach-matching process within a coaching relationship.

The second sub problem concentrates on understanding the role that gender can play during the coach-matching process.

The third sub problem focuses on understanding the nature of the gender stereotypes held by male executives within the Nigerian work settings.

1.4 Significance of the study

The current coaching literature tends to focus on themes such as the definition, the differences or relationship between coaching and other disciplines, the impact of coaching and improving coaching interventions (Gray & Goregaokar, 2010). This research takes the study of coaching further. Firstly by focusing and unpacking the coach-matching process. Secondly by putting coaching as a subject in the Nigeria context and thirdly by unpacking the role gender stereotypes could play in a coach-matching process.

Therefore this study primarily closes the three identified gaps in the literature on coaching and adds to the limited body of knowledge of coach-matching and most importantly within the Nigerian context. The findings from this study would provide guidance to organisations on the manner in which the coach-matching process should be done in Nigeria and other parts of the world. The findings would further be used to understand the underlying factors that might inhibit successful coaching relationships. Through the study, female coaches would understand how their gender can influence the existence of a coaching relationship with male executives in Nigeria.

1.5 Delimitations of the study

The diversity related factors such as age, ethnicity, and race were not within the scope of this study. The study did not address issues such as the differences or similarities in the values and beliefs of both the coach and coachee. The study focused only on the gender stereotypes in the coach-matching and within the Nigerian context.

1.6 Definition of terms

- Coach-matching: "*The attempt to identify a coach tailored to meet the needs of a client and occurs in organisations using a list of acceptable coaches based on certain pre-selected criteria"* (Boyce, et al., 2010, p. 195).

- Executive coaching: "*A short term interactive process between coach and manager to improve leadership effectiveness by enhancing self-*

awareness and the practice of new behaviours" (Kombarakaran, Baker, Yang & Fernandes, 2008, p. 79).

- Gender stereotypes: "*Psychological characteristics believed to be differentially associated with women and men in a particular cultural group*" (Williams, Satterwhite & Best, 1999, p. 513).

- Patriarchy: "*Held views which adopts and encourages the alienation of women"* (Tobin, 1985, p. 291).

1.7 Assumptions

The following assumptions have been made about the study:

- The researcher assumed that a qualitative study would be more suitable to provide a deepened understanding of the role that gender stereotypes could have on the formation of coaching relationships for male executives in Nigeria.

- It is assumed that the participants' responses is based on their personal experiences and perceptions on issues relating to gender stereotypes.

- Although female participants were also interviewed, the research focused on male executives and the researcher was female. Therefore considering the gender of the researcher and the sensitivity of the topic on gender stereotypes, the researcher assumed that all the respondents answered the interview questions honestly and without prejudice.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter the literature relevant to the key themes of this study is reviewed. The chapter starts with the background discussion to understand the umbrella context of executive coaching. Thereafter the section focuses on literature relevant to the three key focus areas of this study, that is, the coach-matching process, the role of gender in a coaching relationship and the gender stereotypes applicable within the Nigerian work settings. The section concludes with the key findings from the reviewed literature.

2.2 Background discussion

According to Kombarakaran, et al. (2008), executive coaching has been identified as a preferred method for leadership development because it focuses on changing the outlook and behaviour whilst ensuring that competence and self-esteem are maintained. The authors emphasise that it is a good leadership initiative because it offers the executive the environment and the opportunity to reflect and identify issues that can be barriers to performance. Baron and Morin (2010) are of the opinion that little literature exists on the variables that actually influence the effectiveness of executive coaching and that there is also insufficient direction on the factors that should be considered for the pairing process. According to Bartlett (2006) coaching is one of the fastest emerging methods used for human resources advancement and literature on coaching within the Nigerian context is non-existent.

Therefore, with this exponential growth of executive coaching (Kombarakaran et al., 2008), it becomes imperative to understand factors, such as gender, that can possibly affect the coach-matching process between female coaches and male executives within the Nigerian context. According to Nwosu (2012), African women are marginalised, under-valued and under-recognised. Women are always regarded as subordinate to the male counterparts and considered inferior.

In Africa, discriminating notions such as manager-as-a-male are still widely practiced (April, Dreyer & Blass, 2007) where modern society roles are still found to be allocated on the basis of gender. According to Obioha (2009) and Chime (1998), in Nwosu (2012), the general belief is that the role of a woman in countries such as Nigeria starts and ends with running the home and nothing more. Therefore it is not surprising that organisations such as the African Union (AU) declared 2015 the "year of women empowerment" to ensure that gender equality remains on the agenda within Africa.

2.3 The coach-matching process

Boyce, et al. (2010, p. 915) describe the coach-matching process as:

> *"the attempt to identify a coach tailored to meet the needs of a client and occurs in organisations using a list or "pool" of acceptable coaches pre-selected based on certain criteria, such as competence factors, referrals, or previous work with the organisation"*.

From the above definition, three directives are flagged regarding the coach-matching process. Firstly, the matching process is the initial element towards the existence of a coaching relationship. The coaching relationship will not exist unless a coach is identified. This first directive is supported by Gray and Goregaokar (2010) when they state that the coach-matching process is the main ingredient towards building a coaching relationship.

Joo (2005) and Wycherley and Cox (2008) also confirm that the actual matching process is of utmost importance because it ensures that the coaching relationship is effective and successful. The second directive is that the matching should be based on certain criteria and the criteria will largely depend on the needs of the executive at the time. Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson (2001) adds to the matching criteria and submit that the knowledge and awareness of the business and its politics should be included. The last directive indicates that the matching process is primarily done by the client which can either be the organisation or the executive.

Jarvis (2004) advises that the executive who is going to be coached should be responsible for the selection and matching process, to ensure that their needs are met. However as per the above-mentioned definition, the matching can also be done by other organisers and buyers of executive coaching programmes within the organisation and it is therefore important for them to master the skill of matching coaches to the executives. Hall, Otazo and Hollenbeck (1999, p. 58) support this view by highlighting that *"it is an art to match temperament and learning styles for coaches and coachees"*. Wycherley and Cox (2008, p.41) further emphasise that the matching process is *"more complex than merely an alignment of two personalities"*. According to Jarvis (2004) the matching decision should be based on the existence of some chemistry between the coach and the coachee.

It is also important for the coachee to make a decision based on the objectives and the needs of the coaching intervention and not base the choice only on the fact that they like the coach (Jarvis, 2004). In their criticism of the role of chemistry in the coach-matching process, Wycherley and Cox (2008) point out the vagueness in the definition and application of the degree of chemistry and emphasise the possible difficulty in measuring what could constitutes chemistry.

In reviewing literature on the coach-matching process, it also becomes prudent to understand the value of establishing a cordial and successful coaching relationship because the matching is done to ensure the existence of a coaching relationship. According to Feldman and Lankau (2005), establishing a relationship is the first feature towards a coaching engagement. Baron and Morin (2009), in their study of the coach-coachee relationship emphasised the necessity and importance of a coaching relationship for coaching effectiveness. The significance of a coaching relationship was also reiterated by Boyce et al. (2010) when they stated that the success of a coaching relationship is paramount to the whole coaching process.

Many authors have attributed the success of a coaching relationship to coaching ingredients such as, a good interpersonal suitability between the coach and the coachee (Joo, 2005); the art of matching the characters of both coaches and coachees (Hall et al., 1999) and an effective coach selection process (Wycherley & Cox, 2008). Boyce, et al. (2010) also identified four key processes that should exist between the coach and the coachee to ensure a successful and effective coaching relationship. These four key processes are rapport, trust, commitment and collaboration and they should all be determined earlier during the formation of a coaching relationship.

As emphasised by Wycherley and Cox (2008), Hall, et al. (1999), Joo (2005) and Jarvis (2004), the coach-matching process determines a successful coaching relationship which in turn, contributes towards the effectiveness of a coaching engagement. However, the differing views from these authors on the actual factors that should be considered during the coach-matching process is evident.

2.3.1 *Research Question 1*

Deriving from the literature review presented above, the first research question is: “What are the factors that should be considered during a coach-matching process?”

2.4 The role of gender in a coaching relationship

The role of gender in a coaching relationship was confirmed in a study conducted by Gray and Goregaokar (2010). In the study, coachees were requested to justify their reasons for choosing a particular coach. Three conclusions were deduced from the findings of the study. Firstly, gender played a role in the coach-selection process however coaches are also mainly chosen on criteria such as skills, experience and qualifications. Secondly, female coachees prefer to be coached by female coaches whilst a majority of male coachees justified choosing a female coach for the discussion of sensitive and personal challenges. Thirdly, a few male respondents in the study displayed sexist attitudes towards having female coaches.

Recently Bozer, et al. (2015) conducted a study to examine whether the gender similarity between the coach and the coachee really mattered. The study concluded that the similarity in gender had little impact on the coaching outcomes; however gender match had a significant effect on self-awareness. The study further recommends that similar studies should be conducted in other countries or cultures that are considered more patriarchal and traditional. This study fits well into that suggestion because Nigeria is regarded as a patriarchal society with deep traditional values (Nwosu, 2012).

According to Boyce et al. (2010) one of the factors that can be considered during the matching process is commonality, which they describe as an extent to which the client and coach have similar knowledge, characteristics and experience. From this discussion, commonality can thus include aspects such as race, gender, profession, and age. In reiterating their argument, Boyce, et al. (2010), explain that if commonality is high; then rapport and trust would be quickly established. Wycherley and Cox (2008) support the commonality notion by stating that cooperation could be compromised if coaches and their clients are from different backgrounds because there could be a lack of understanding of the social and psychological challenges that the client is experiencing.

On the other hand, Clutterbuck (1998) in Wycherley and Cox (2008), argue that similarity in personality and experience could limit the scope of the coaching relationship and limit developmental opportunities. Although the coach-coachee relationship could not be compared to the boss-subordinate relationship, the role of gender can be applied across various professional relationships. In the study, Adebayo and Udegbe (2004) concluded that in Nigeria the gender combination of a boss-subordinate relationship had a major effect on the effectiveness of this working relationship and the same challenges could apply in other general relationships between males and females.

For example, Muslims are likely to object to working under a female leader. Male subordinates in the private sector are considered to be more likely, although with difficulties, to accept a female leader. However in the Nigerian government departments which, according to Adebayo and Udegbe (2004), are characterised by intense patriarchal tendencies, reporting to a female manager is frowned upon by many males.

Tobin (1985, p. 291) defines patriarchy as a "*held view which adopts and encourages the alienation of women"*. The author further explains that patriarchy places the male in the centre of reality and concludes that this masculine placement as a norm. Mangoale (2004) elaborates on the patriarchy discussion by highlighting that in such societies; power relations between men and women are at play. To support this assertion the author maintains that in patriarchal societies, women are intentionally excluded from the foothold of power (Mangoale, 2004). Therefore in a patriarchal world women cannot be anything but substandard to men.

Whilst the Nigerian private sector is considered to be more accepting towards female leaders, male subordinates are still likely to resent reporting to female managers. This tendency according to Devine and Markiewicz (1990, p. 333) could be ascribed to the fact that, in general, organisations are created based on "*male experiences*" and therefore decisions and approaches to work also follow that pattern.

Ketebu-Nwokeafor (2003), cited in Para-Mallam (2006), highlight that even the Nigerian Constitution contributes to this gender disparity by allowing the practice of religious politics that could impede the advancement of women's rights. In supporting this view Abdullah (1993) reiterated that the Nigerian government perpetuate gender disparities through policies which perpetuate the stereotypical roles of women as wives or mothers and low income earners.

The findings also reveal that although such traditional roles of women and men exists in Nigeria, they could be demystified in urban areas like Lagos where there are many global companies that have global policies that push for women empowerment and advancement. The study by Ongaki, Omwoyo and Musa (2015) help us understand the possible role of gender in a coaching relationship within an African context, by stating that African women are mostly socialised early in their lives to be second-class citizens. According to Mangoale (2004, p. 50) "*socialisation takes place when people are taught at an early age to accept and perform roles as prescribed by the society"*.

This social programming forces women to internalise these roles and not aspire to leadership positions or even to work. Millard and Korotov (2014) state that coaching is considered to be a professional help that primarily focuses on conduct, attitudes and outlook of people. Therefore factors such as the coach's gender are likely to predict responsiveness to coaching. In a study conducted by Skinner (2014) where the factors involved in executive coaching for female senior managers were investigated, it was agreed that there is a need for a gender perspective when coaching senior female executives.

Although this research study is focused on male executives in Nigeria, Skinner's study is important in order to understand that different needs or factors such as gender considerations could apply when coaching senior male executives in Nigeria. Furthermore, in understanding the role that gender could play in a coaching relationship, it is prudent to borrow literature from the mentoring relationship because of the lack of empirical research on the coach-matching process. The role of gender has been widely explored in the mentoring literature (Ragins & Mc Farlin, 1990; Ragins, 1997; Allen & Eby, 2003). Most of these studies advocate for benefits associated with same gender mentoring relationships (Allen, Day & Lentz, 2005; Ensher & Murphy, 1997; Young, Cady, & Foxon, 2006).

Therefore, the findings from the mentoring literature are relevant to this study because of *"similarity-attraction"* phenomena in both mentoring and coaching relationships (Bozer, et al., 2015, p. 221). Regardless of the differences between coaching and mentoring, there is also a matching process that takes place during a mentoring process and both processes have some similarities since they both have the *"potential to influence how people manage and work"* (Garvey, Stokes & Megginson, 2009, p. 59) through the existence of a defined relationship. Bushardt, Fretwell and Holdnak (1991) expand the gender and mentoring aspect by declaring that in a mentoring relationship, regardless of their gender, mentors utilise predominantly masculine role behaviour and mentees display female sex role behaviour.

According to O'Neill and Blake-Beard (2002), while women are more likely than men to be in a cross-sex mentoring relationship, there are more male mentor and female protégé combinations than there are female mentor and male protégés. Therefore Ragins (1997) argues that gender plays a major role and makes a difference in mentoring relationships because of the stereotypes that exists in workplaces. According to Wycherley and Cox (2008), the advantages of choosing a coach who is the same gender as the coachee are that the establishment of rapport will be quicker to achieve and the understanding of relevant issues will be similar.

However, Wycherley and Cox (2008) further clarify that, in a coaching process a coach could through adequate training, learn how to develop rapport and how to understand own biases. Rosinski (2003) advises coaches who work internationally to be cognisant of and to recognise different cultures and demographics applicable to different countries and understand the impact of such variables to a coaching relationship.

Gray and Goregaokar (2011) advise organisations to procure a diversity of coaches because of the high presence of male sexism within some of the executives and because gender can definitely be an issue within some of them.

2.4.1 *Research Question 2*

As per the above literature review, it is evident that there are varying views on the role of gender in a coaching relationship. Therefore the second research question is: “What is the role of gender in a coaching relationship?”

2.5 Gender stereotypes in the Nigerian business setting

Gender stereotypes are defined as “*the psychological characteristics believed to be differentially associated with women and men in a particular cultural group*” (Williams, et al., 1999, p. 513). Mangoale (2004) adds that stereotypes are the prejudices and fears about certain social groups usually seen as inferior to the other group. In defining gender stereotypes it is always important to note that gender stereotypes are shared beliefs and norms that make a differentiation between men and women. Gender stereotypes are deemed to be generally universal in that they provide some preconceived descriptors for a typical male and female. There is also a variety of factors that generally perpetuate gender stereotypes within societies.

According to Gupta, Turban and Pareek (2013), mass media, customs and religion are the biggest contributors to gender stereotyping, for example, television advertisements could, whilst marketing a product, depicts that all men are assertive and forceful whilst women could display as warm and gentle.

Therefore societies are exposed to gender stereotypes on a daily basis and behaviours are changing every day without societies realising the change. Ongaki, et al. (2015) add that, the manner in which media portrays women worsens the situation because in some advertisements women are portrayed in line with societal stereotypes about women and men.

The assertion that gender stereotypes are the main contributors to the manner in which women and men are treated in business settings all over the world is supported by Ely & Padavic (2006) and Booysen & Nkomo (2010). Booysen and Nkomo (2010) are also of the opinion that the gender gap between women and men in leadership positions is a common feature in most organisations. Recently, there has been an observation that there are large numbers of women worldwide entering workplaces; however leadership positions in these organisations continue to be held by men (Orser, Riding & Manley, 2006).

In a study conducted by Booysen and Nkomo (2010) where the manager-as-a-male subject was explored, it was found that gender stereotypes are the main contributors to workplace inequality and discrimination against women and that the manager-as-a-male stereotype of an ideal manager is biased towards women who aspire to management roles.

All men who participated in the study by Booysen and Nkomo (2010) perceived men as having the qualities necessary for a successful manager rather than women. Nwosu (2012) states that historically, in the typical traditional African society such as Nigeria, women are perceived and treated as a lower gender or weaker sex. This assertion is supported by Glicks, Fiske and Mladinic (2001) when acknowledging the prevalence of gender related philosophies applicable in Nigeria as opposed to other countries. Ongaki, et al. (2015) observed that girls in most African countries are indoctrinated to be replicas of their mothers and are expected to be submissive, compliant and devoted to males.

As confirmed by Adebayo and Udegbe (2004), it is common in Nigeria to find men who are uncomfortable working under the supervision of a female boss and similarly, there are women who find it difficult to have men as subordinates. Nwosu (2012) after analysing the gender role perceptions in Nigeria, added that both the Bible and the Quran give subtle recognition to the superiority of men over women in society.

Therefore when looking at gender stereotypes in Nigeria it will be advisable to also understand the gender stereotypes that could play a role in the coach-matching process as a result of religion. Regardless of the controversy regarding how many Nigerians are Muslims and how many are Christians, Nigeria is still regarded as one of the most religiously inclined societies on the African continent (Odunfa, 2006). From these submissions and general observations, it becomes apparent that religion plays a significant role on how female coaches could be treated in Nigeria.

Furthermore, Nigeria is regarded as a highly patriarchal society (Nwachukwu, 1996) therefore such gender segregation in Nigeria lowers women's status in society and it reduces their access to resources and activities that could help them to develop to maximum potential. For example, women in Nigeria are taught when they are young to be subservient and reserved in social interactions whereas men are taught to be outgoing and achievement orientated (Adebayo & Udegbe, 2004). With such traditional gender stereotyping in Nigeria, it becomes imperative to understand the role that gender stereotypes could play in the formation of relationships such as executive coaching relationships. Gender is still obviously used in the Nigerian present day workplace ranking where most managerial and executive positions are held by men while women are in the lower echelon of power. It is also in Nigeria, where male subordinates are still likely to question the leadership authority from female managers because of the inherent and applicable gender stereotypes

(Adebayo & Udegbe, 2004). In Nigeria, various factors generally perpetuate gender stereotypes within communities. One of these factors is the limited number of females in top executive positions and in certain industries (Nwosu, 2012, Orser, et al., 2006) and this confirms that although there are many women worldwide entering the workplace the fact is that most leadership positions in these organisations continue to be held by men. This factor could contribute to the stereotype that women will not be good coaches since they lack the business acumen to engage with males at an executive level.

2.5.1. Research Question 3

The above literature review has provided context and framework for the third research question which is: “What are the gender stereotypes within Nigeria that can inhibit the formation of a coaching relationship between a female coach and a male executive?”

2.6 Conclusion of literature review

In conclusion, Boyce et al. (2010) emphasise that there is sufficient literature on the notion of a good combination match between a coach and a coachee for an effective coaching relationship. However there is still no guidance towards factors that should be considered for effective pairing process. Although there are studies which report that coaches are not only chosen based on diversity aspects like gender, the situation could be different in societies like Nigeria where male dominance is the order of the day. In Nigeria, factors such as religion, tradition, culture and public opinion highly influence gender role discrimination and differentiations. There is also a need to have more studies that will give female coaches the flexibility (and support) they need should situations of male sexism exist in relationships such as coaching, in Nigeria.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the research methodology and the research design used for this research.

3.1 Research methodology

The most important aspect for any research is to ensure that the method chosen guides the researcher towards achieving the intended objectives and obtaining the desired outcomes (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). The research methodology used for this study was qualitative method as opposed to quantitative method. According to Brink (1993, p. 35) "*qualitative researchers are not interested in the causal laws but in people's belief and their experiences"*. Qualitative researchers' main objective is to understand the nature of the research problem (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Qualitative researchers generally believe that social interactions which change motives and actions are generally humanly created (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

The significant aspect of qualitative research is that emphasis is placed on an individual's point of view. Therefore due to the nature of the data required; this research method was suitable for gathering and interpreting the participants' beliefs and practices. Furthermore qualitative method was relevant for this study since it afforded an opportunity to dive deeper into the problem and uncovered trends in thoughts and opinions of the participants. According to Neuman (2006), qualitative research is suited for researchers seeking in-depth understanding of people and their experiences.

3.2 Research design

The interpretive design and in particular phenomenology was used. Sokolowski (2000) describes phenomenology by explaining that phenomenological statements are similar to philosophical statements because they both state the obvious and the necessary. The author adds that these statements tell you what is already known to you and yet the information is still important and informative because it extracts the overlooked and unnoticed necessities (Sokolowski, 2000). Phenomenology contributed towards a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of the participants by revealing the assumptions that are normally taken for granted (Starks & Trinidad, 2007).

According to Babbie and Mouton (2002), phenomenology enables researchers to describe and understand the impact of a phenomenon rather than making inferences or attempting to explain it. This approach was chosen because the essence of this study is to understand the gender stereotypical experiences of male executives and how they could affect a coach-matching process. The approach also assisted in acquiring in-depth understanding of what is meaningful and relevant (Neuman, 2006) to these male executives.

3.3 Population and sample

3.3.1 *Population*

The population consisted of male executives who are either expatriates or nationals working in Lagos, Nigeria. Due to the nature of the problem statement, participants primarily included executive members and senior managers. To ensure triangulation, the researcher sought views of current or previous female Human Resources managers to validate congruency. The major aim of triangulation was to mitigate the researchers' personal prejudices (Brink, 1993).

3.3.2 *Sample and sampling method*

The sampling method used was purposive sampling where the participants where from the researcher's existing professional network because of the high level of trust required (Devers & Frankel, 2000) when conducting such gender focused studies. Devers and Frankel (2000) advise that a researcher should always be able to secure participants for a research to take place and a good relationship should be developed for the credibility of the research and for effective sampling.

3.4 The research instrument

The semi-structured interview questionnaire (**Appendix A**) and a formal letter of introduction (**Appendix B**) were used as the main research instruments. To ensure a "*systematic field study protocol"* (Lillis, 1999, p. 80), the introduction letter provided the purpose of the whole research whilst the interview questionnaire provided the format of the interviews to all participants. The interviews were semi-structured and all of them were face-to-face. During these interviews open ended questions were asked. An interview guideline was used to direct the interviews and it consisted of fourteen questions as reflected in Appendix A. The probing questions allowed for a deeper understanding of the gender stereotypes that could affect the coach-matching process.

3.5 Procedure for data collection

The data collection process was a rigorous process and included placing a lot of attention on designing the interview schedule, contacting the participants, planning the interviews and during the actual interview. The requests to participate were done through email and telephone.

All the interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants. The transcribing services were outsourced as advised by Devers and Frankel (2000) when they highlighted that methodological issues involved when transcribing audio should always be taken into cognisance for novice qualitative researchers.

3.6 Data analysis and interpretation

The data was analysed and interpreted through conventional content analysis method which, according to Hsieh and Shannon (2005) is best used with a study whose objective is to define an occurrence when there is a gap in the existing theory or where literature is not sufficient. This method was used in this study because the objective of the study is to define the occurrence of gender stereotypes and the literature to its applicability in the coach-matching process within Nigeria is limited.

The analysis was done by reading through each transcription from beginning to end and the data was read word for word to determine the initial codes. Thereafter, themes which determined the relationship between the codes and sub-codes were identified. An excel spread sheet was used as an analysis tool to help categorise themes and codes. As supported by Miles and Huberman (1994), when coding and identifying themes from the data, the actual meaning is what is really important, as opposed to the words used for coding.

3.7 Limitations of the study

The study has three limitations. Firstly the study covers only male executives in Nigeria and therefore the results cannot be inferred across all males in Africa.

The uncomfortable predicament of some male executives to answer questions on gender stereotypes when interviewed by a female researcher pose as the second limitation.

The other limitation is the lack of quantitative findings for those who would like to weigh the role of gender stereotypes in a coach-matching process using a numeric framework.

3.8 Validity and reliability

According to Le Compte and Goetz, (1982) validity in research is about the honesty and the precision of scientific findings. This study is valid and reliable in that it demonstrates the existence of the research problem and a valid research instrument measured what it was projected to measure. The argument on validity was emphasised by Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spiers (2002) when they explained that researchers should place significance on reliability and validity in all research methods to ensure research worthiness.

3.8.1 *External validity*

To ensure external validity, the researcher ensured methodological coherence as advised by Morse, et al. (2002) and ensured similarity between the research question and the research method. The sample also consisted of participants who best represented the research topic.

3.8.2 *Internal validity*

The researcher ensured that internal validity is not compromised by recording all the interviews and by standardising the wording and sequence of the interview questions for all respondents. This helped to ensure that there is similarity of the questions asked to the respondents (Barriball & While, 1994).

3.8.3 *Reliability*

As per Morse, et al. (2002), to ensure reliability of the study, the reliability mechanisms should be woven into every step of the study and possible mistakes which can be incorporated into the developing tool and sabotage the analysis rectified. To ensure the above and to reduce measurement of error in reliability, the researcher applied a consistent method in scoring the results (Brink, 1993).

3.9 Demographic profile of respondents

A total of 17 participants were interviewed during the period December 2015 to April 2016. The main objective of this study is to examine the gender stereotypes that could affect the coach-matching process, focusing on male executives in Nigeria. Therefore the first qualifying criteria for the participants were their gender and race. The second qualifying factor was that they, currently or in the past, have held an executive or senior position. To ensure triangulation, four female executives were also interviewed. From the 17 participants there were two male executive coaches and two female executive coaches who previously held executive positions in multinational companies. From the 13 male participants, five were expatriates who are working in Nigeria.

Figure 1 illustrates the number and gender of the participants and Figure 2 lists the current job titles of the participants. Figure 3 demonstrates the number of local participants versus expatriate participants.

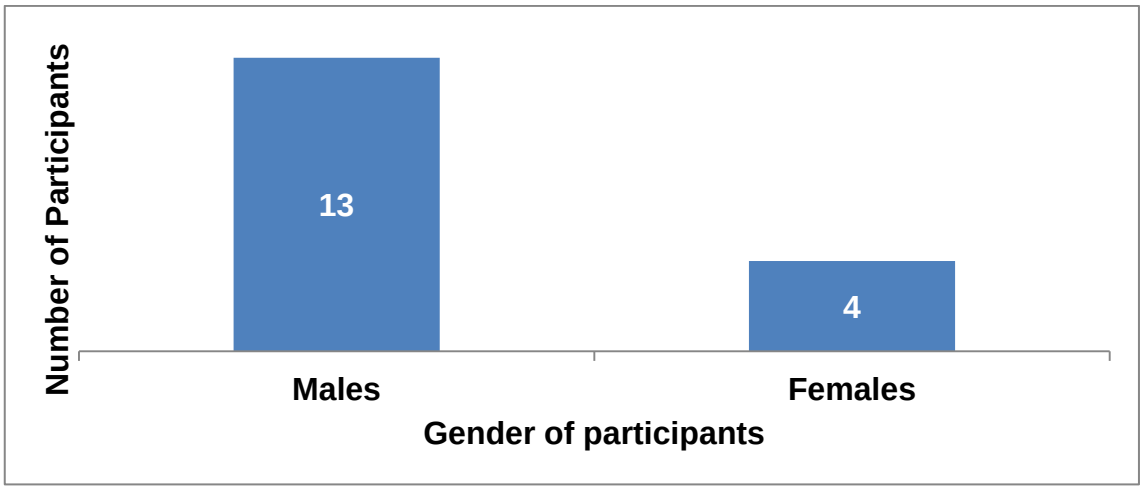


Figure 1: Gender of participants

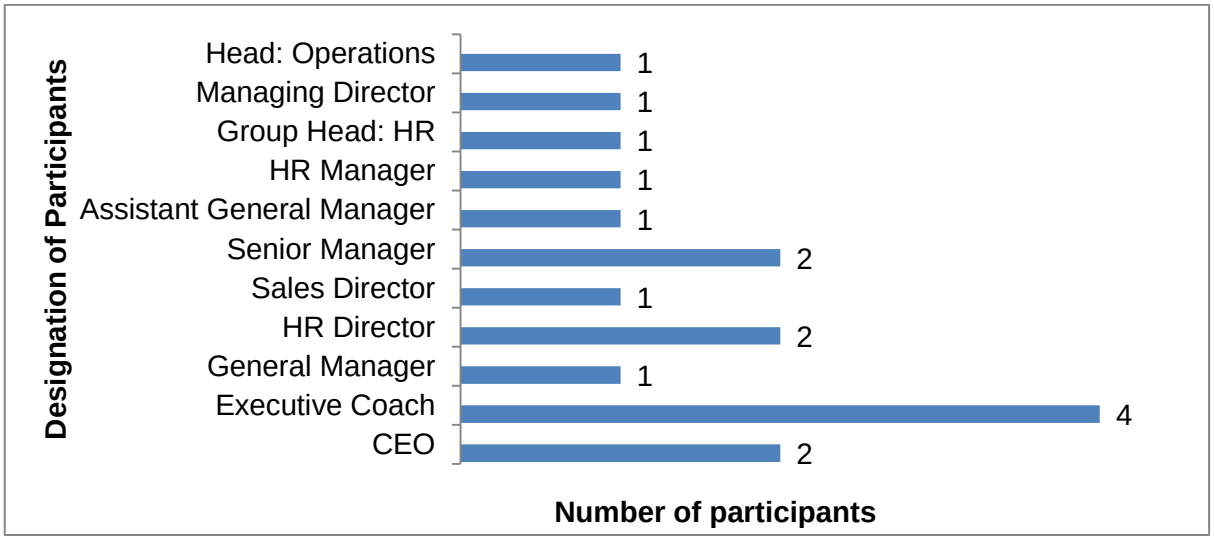


Figure 2: Current job titles of participants

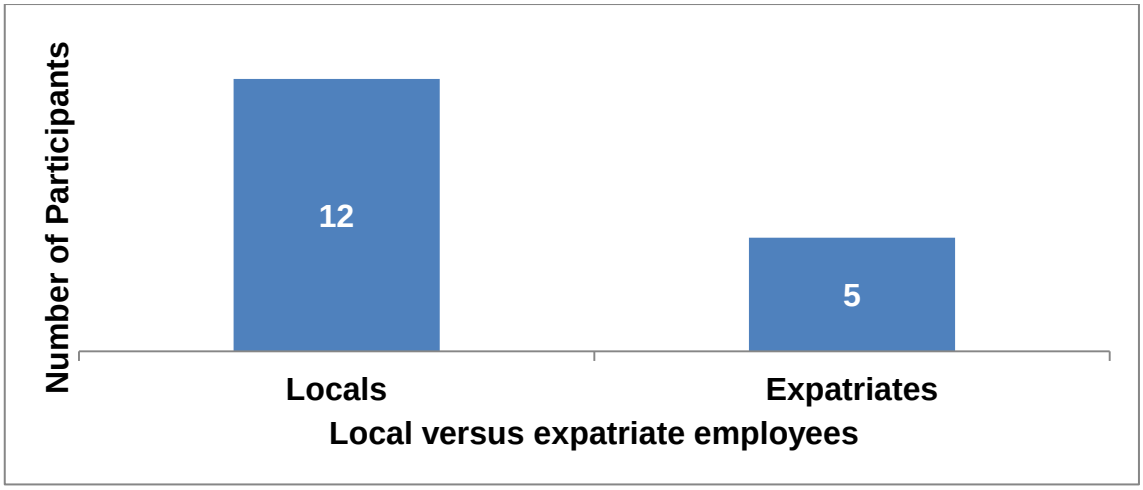


Figure 3: Local participants versus expatriate participants

The semi-structured face to face interviews took place for an average duration of approximately 40 minutes per interview. Table 1 provides a summary of the interviews.

Table 1: Interview audio information

Number of interviews	17
Total recording time of interviews	11 hours, 76 minutes
Average interview time	39 minutes, 22 seconds
Shortest interview time	23 minutes, 38 seconds
Longest interview time	01 hour, 43minutes

CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outline the results as obtained from the data and the findings are presented as follows. Firstly, the background to the participants' companies and the understanding of coaching is stated. Thereafter, the themes emanating from the three research questions are presented. The participants' names have been left out of the findings data to ensure and maintain confidentiality.

The participants are referred to using randomly selected numbers. Thus there is no correlation between the name of the participants and the randomly selected number. Direct quotations extracted from the transcriptions are included throughout the chapter explaining the selected themes. Verbatim responses are used to support the findings report and have only been adjusted for correct grammar. Tables, models and figures are used to illustrate the linkage between questions, responses, codes and themes. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main findings.

4.2 BACKGROUND TO ORGANISATION AND COACHING

4.2.1 *Existence of coaching in companies*

Fourteen of the participants confirmed the existence of coaching in their organisations. The participants indicated that most companies have acknowledged the importance of coaching and are starting to introduce the

concept of executive coaching. The participants confirmed that coaching is new in Nigeria and companies have only recently introduced the practice of coaching. The selected responses from all the four executive coaches support the notion that coaching is new to the Nigerian business environment.

> *"Coaching is new to most organisations in Nigeria."* **Participant 9**

> *"…again even in Nigeria up until now coaching is just evolving."* **Participant 7**

> *"Coaching is still developing I don't know whether coaches at this stage would say they are focusing on any industry."* **Participant 11**

> *"Coaching is extremely new to most organisations."* **Participant 17**

The practice of coaching exists in companies but as per the findings, it is mostly not formalised. The findings also confirm that coaching is supported by top management in most Nigerian companies. Furthermore there is constant reference, in the findings, to internal coaching where executives are coached by other executives and the coach-mentor shares strategies of how they succeeded in certain projects or tasks. Executives were exposed to coaching when they attended developmental programmes at business schools where coaching is part of the curriculum. As per the findings, there is a high usage of coaches based outside Nigeria, because of the shortage of executive coaches in Nigeria. There is an emphasis in the findings, that companies prefer HR professionals to also have coaching competencies.

The need to grow internal capacity by training executives to be internal coaches is further emphasised by participant 16, *"….three exec members who are doing, I have forgotten the name of the qualification through UCT but it is a coaching Masters degree with a coaching element…in spite their curriculum they have to coach people so those are the people we are currently basically using".* Some of the participants did not see the need for coaching programmes whilst others confirmed that they do not have coaching programmes in place but would be introducing them soon. This was the case with the response from participant 6 when she mentioned that, *"…at moment the highest role we have is the head of operations. Our Operations Manager at the moment, is the first person we will even try coaching…"* The existence of mentoring programmes rather than coaching programmes is also referred to as one of the reasons for the non-existence of coaching programmes. Participant 6 supported this by stating "*…but we have not introduced a formal one such as a coaching, now they are mentoring him but there is no specialised coaching…"*

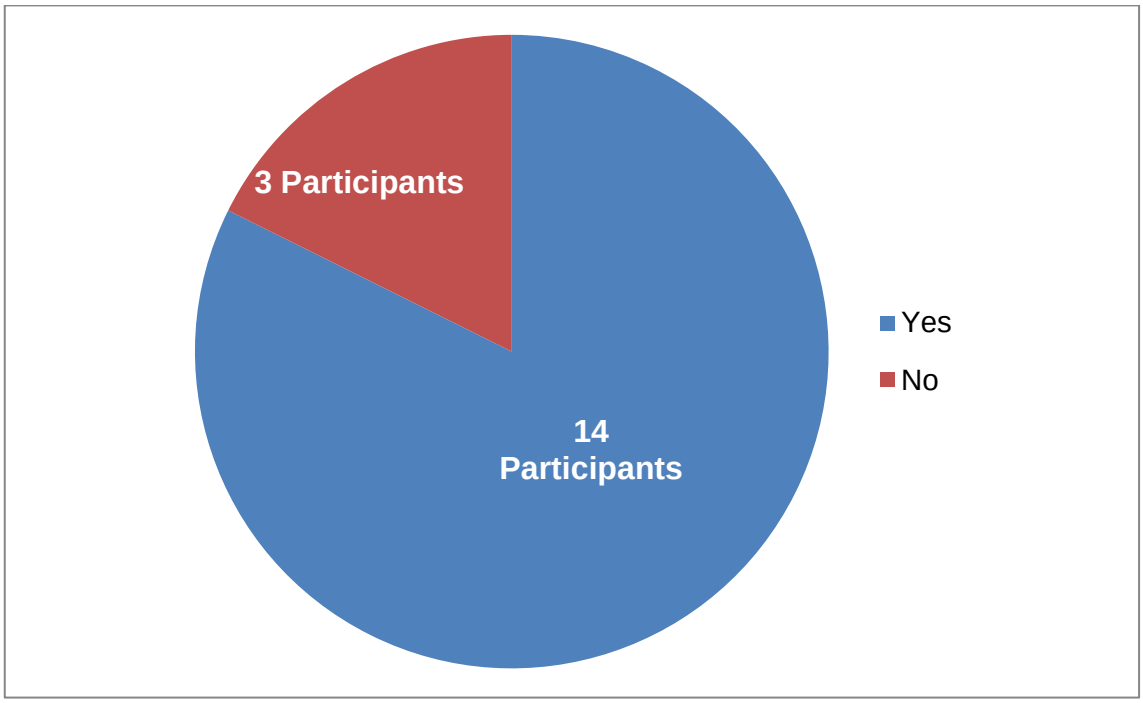


Figure 4: Existence of coaching

4.2.2 *What is coaching used for in companies*

Some of the participants were keen to discuss the evolution of coaching and gave the history of how previously, coaching was only used for performance gaps. However in this new era, coaching is also used for executives who have no performance gaps. The point was emphasised by participant 7 when she stated that "*Now it has switched, there is much more focus on, hey you are great, you need a coach. Or, all our senior execs need coaches so you need a coach. Not because it is a developmental tool…..mindset is shifting where execs now understand that… there is no more threat".* Table 2 depicts reasons on what coaching is used for in companies.

Table 2: Reasons for engaging in coaching

Reasons for Coaching	Quotes
Personal Development	*"It's for personal development trying to help you as a business leader and like you mention trying to correct gaps you may have via personal development in your career.."* ***Participant 12***
	"I initially went there thinking that his focus is on my career how to grow and everything I think he soon turned everything around.." ***Participant 16***
Career Challenges that Training Cannot Address	*"…organization use coaching to address challenges which they may find that training cannot address .."* ***Participant 11***
Leadership Development	*"…part of our development program for top talent, especially people in the succession plan for critical roles.."* ***Participant 9***
	*"So for my personal leadership challenges I am facing I go to that program and have a coach who I talk to…"****Participant 2***
	"..those who want to prepare for higher role where we think look this person has almost everything but there are still areas that are under-developed or that can be better developed and you then want to see how they can work with people…" ***Participant 15***
Internal Support	*"….In my own case it was more of support not development and who to contact if I need any clarification or just to balance up ideas we had conference call once…"* ***Participant 4***
Performance Gaps	*"Normally the essence of every coaching is to block the identified gaps, the loopholes, the identified loopholes, to block them..."* ***Participant 8***
	"We also coach and attempt to help managers who have identified competency gaps, to develop those areas." ***Participant 1***
	"...it is used to more like work with people who have some developmental challenges .." ***Participant 15***
Line Manager As Coach	*"...lot of focus on the line managers to be coaches…..showing that this coaching is embedded in the organisation.."* ***Participant 7***
	"So everyone is expected to coach especially senior manager take one or two people on board and coach, generally your line report as well, your line manager relationship is also a coaching relationship…" ***Participant 12***
Organisational Effectiveness	*"It is for customer satisfaction because if a satisfied, a fulfilled staff will turn into making a customer satisfied…"* ***Participant 8***
	*"There is a link between leadership behaviours, if you have the right leadership behaviours you can have a certain climate in the organization that climate generate the service culture that the customer can key into when customers are happy that would lead down to the bottom line there's a matrix that I used when am trying to create value for the benefit of coaching to the customer...."****Participant 15***

4.2.3 *Should companies have executive coaching*

In answering the question whether companies should have executive coaches for executives; participant 3 pointed that coaching is not the only vehicle that could be used for development. The participant reiterated that similar objectives could be achieved through other means. He further highlighted that the existence of coaching should not be a uniform practice for all companies but should depend on the company's priorities. The following are two quotes from participant 3:

> *"You can achieve the same objective through some other means, so is not only necessarily by coaching that you can get people operate at the level you expect them to operate…"*

> *"It depends on the company and its line of business and what it is into, so like you said there cannot be a straight jacket answer to that … it also depends on the priorities and basically what the company objectives are, so that would determining whether the company want go to into having executive coaches or having his executive do a coaching assignment…"*

The other 16 participants stated that companies should have coaching and the following are some of their responses.

> "*My view is, it is important for companies to engage in coaching."*
> **Participant 8**

> *"So yes I have found coaching a very useful system which every company should embed in their system."* **Participant 12**

"Definitely yes." **Participant 2**

The question on whether the company should use coaching encouraged the participants to reflect and talk about the actual reasons why companies should have coaching. Figure 5 provides some of the reasons advanced in response to the question on why companies should embark on executive coaching.



Figure 5: Reasons for companies to have executive coaching

4.2.4 *Participants' involvement in a coaching relationship*

Most of the participants indicated that they have been in coaching relationships and participant 15 added that coaching was one of the best things that happened in his life. Themes that emerged as reasons for not being in a coaching relationship were as follows; doubt in the effectiveness of coaching, held view that coaching could be a mere academic exercise, executives using external business networks for business challenges and external coaches not understanding internally related business challenges.

4.2.5 *Reasons for engaging in a coaching relationship*

For the participants who indicated that they had been in a coaching relationship, seven themes based on the reasons for engaging in the coaching relationship emerged.



Figure 6: Reasons for engaging in a coaching relationship

- ***Internal leadership programme***

Some participants indicated that they were exposed to coaching because they are regarded as key employees in their companies. Most of these participants indicated that they formed part of leadership programmes at work and coaching was part of the curriculum. For participant 1, it was when he took over as the youngest CEO and the board designed a leadership development path for him which included having an external executive coach.

- ***Internal coach-mentor***

According to the findings, the internal coach mentors are senior managers who are not direct managers and one of their functions is to assist one fit in and settle into a new company through coaching. Participant 6 compared this relationship to mentoring and in her view; there is a thin line between mentoring and coaching. This coach-mentor person is interested in the personal development and career growth of the other employee.

- ***Coach certification***

All the participants working as executive coaches stated that they have been in coaching relationships as a requirement of their certification as coaches. They further stressed that they have all been in coaching relationships as both coaches and coachees.

- ***Peer coaching amongst colleagues***

This particular coaching relationship where peers support each other was mentioned by participant 8 when he stated that, "*For example, I call on my colleagues; call on team members under the Ford Division. You consistently coach, one another."*

- ***Line managers as coaches***

Some companies recognise the value of coaching and train line managers as coaches. Participant 5 supported this view by indicating that he was involved in a coaching relationship when his team leader was coaching him. To support this view, participant 9 stated that he appreciated being coached when he was coached by someone who was his direct line manager.

- ***Personally requested for coaching***

Participant 14 explained that he approached someone to coach him when he realised that his scope of work was changing from being a business development manager to being the CEO.

- ***Expatriation assignment***

For participant 15, he was assigned an executive coach when he, as an African who never left Africa, found himself working in the Netherlands where things like hierarchy was not the order of the day. The following quote is from his transcript.

> *"Here was I, an African boy working in Netherlands…You are coming from a Nigeria where hierarchy was everything…..Just by giving an instruction it was done maybe poorly at least it was done, and then you come into an environment where you are as boss as you want to be."*

4.2.6 *Reasons for a successful coaching relationship*

Most of the participants stated that the success of a coaching relationship is largely determined by the coach as the driving force. To support this statement, the themes that emerged were the coach's competencies, skills, traits, experience and qualifications. The manner in which the coach conducts the coaching process was also highlighted.

Figure 7 reflects the factors required from a coach to ensure a successful coaching relationship.

Success Factors of a Coaching Relationship: The Coach	
Competencies and Skills • Confidentiality was respected • The facilitative role of the coach • Trust was easily established • Usage of additional coaching techniques • The coach provided a different perspective	**Previous Experiences** • Coach was professionally certified • Coach was experienced beyond coaching (business experience) • Coach had vast knowledge of the industry
Coaching Process • The process was goal orientated • The process moved to action • Right questions were asked • The coach was always prepared for the sessions	**Coach's Traits** • Good Listener • Ability to synthesise issues • Approachable • Inspirational and Admirable • Had Presence • Non-Judgemental • Easy to talk to • Good Attitude • Authentic

Figure 7: Success factors of a coaching relationship: The Coach

Some participants also stated the effectiveness of the coachee's participation as a determinant for a successful coaching relationship. Figure 8 illustrates the reasons provided regarding the coachee's role in the success of a coaching relationship. Two themes emerged from what was experienced as the coachee's role in the success of a coaching relationship. The first theme related to the conduct of the coachee during the coaching process and the second theme was based on what was viewed as return on investment (success) of coaching.

Success Factors of a Coaching Relationship: The Coachee	
Coaching Process • Coachee's presence during sessions • Coachee's openness to being vulnerable	**Return on Investment** • Personal visibility improved after being coached • Performance improved after being coached • Understood self better after coaching

Figure 8: Success factors of a coaching relationship: The Coachee

4.2.7 Reasons for a failed coaching relationship

The participants provided reasons for their failed coaching relationships. Figure 9 depicts the reasons for a failed coaching relationship.

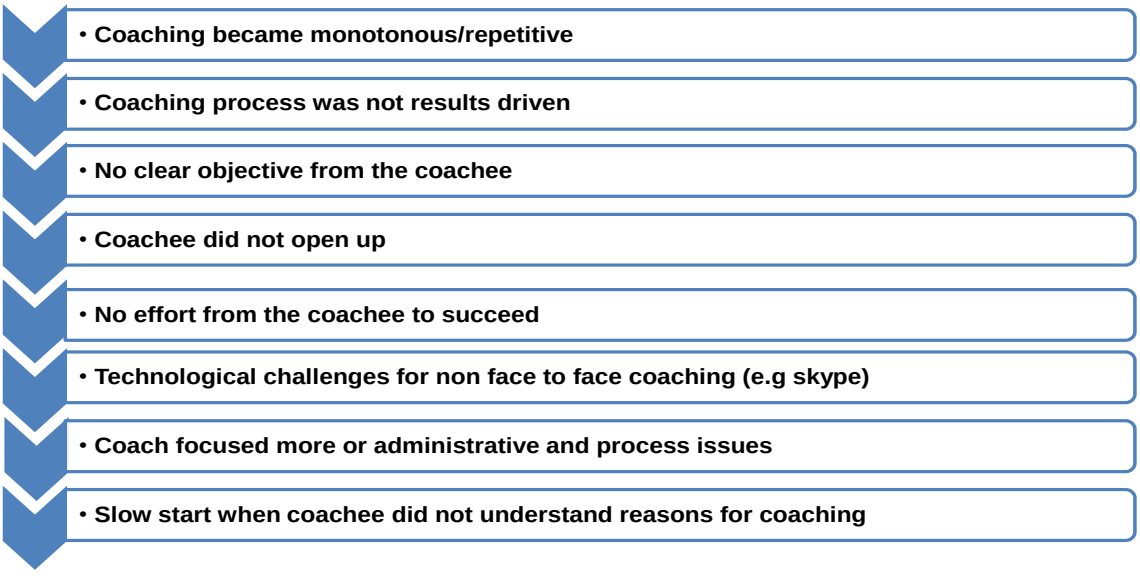


Figure 9: Reasons for failed coaching relationships

4.3 RESEARCH QUESTION 1

What are the factors that are considered during a coach-matching process?

4.3.1 *Who should choose a coach: The executive or the company*

The first question in this category focused on who should choose a coach, between the executive and the company. Before responding to this question some participants alluded, firstly, to the importance of the coach-matching process. This is reflected by participant 1 when he mentioned that, *"The quality of the matching is important…..from the first interaction I felt engaged..."*

Other participants chose to remain neutral on who should choose the coach. One of the participants stated that for him it does not matter who does the coaching. What mattered is what he would learn during the coaching process. Participant 11 also reiterated that anyone can choose a coach. However he reiterated that the person who chooses should be mindful of the company's objectives.

> *"I don't think I would say anyone is superior to the other it depends on the objectives of the organization…"* **Participant 11**

From the answers to this question on who should choose a coach; three themes were identified. Figure 10 depicts the three identified themes on who should choose a coach and it includes a generic explanation of each theme.

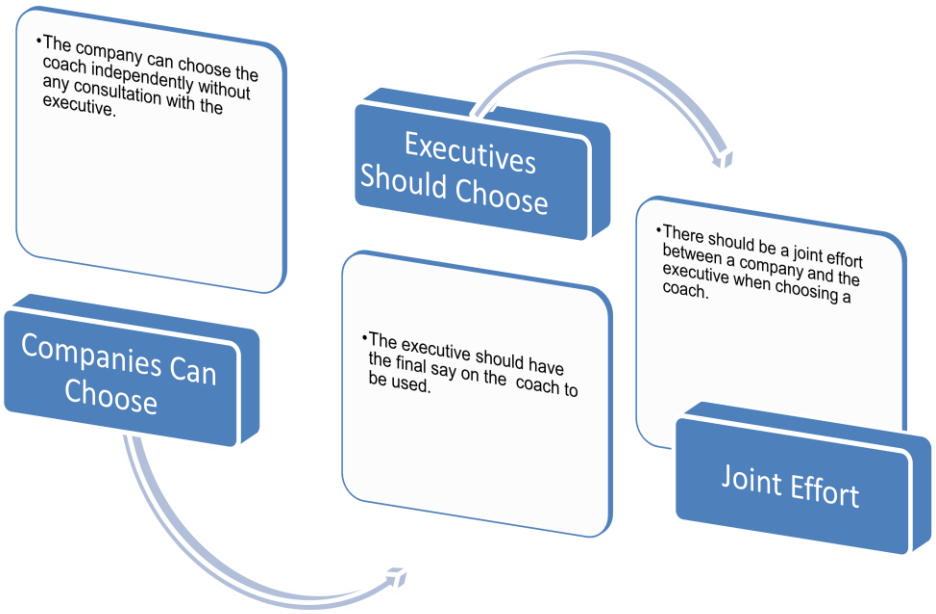


Figure 10: Identified themes: Who should choose a coach

- ***Companies could choose***

According to the findings companies could employ the services of a matching consultant to help with the matching process and for companies, it is important to use an experienced matching consultant. The findings further advice that coaches that have rendered a coaching service to the company before can be chosen on behalf of the executives. In that regard, it is stated that trust would be established quicker because these coaches would understand the company's perspective. Previous positive experience with a company chosen coach was one of the reasons advanced to why companies could choose coaches on behalf of executives. This was clearly stated by participant 1 when he mentioned that he did not have prior bad experience with a company chosen coach. Participant 13 supported this statement when he explained that his company chosen coach was not a *"bad"* coach and they connected very well.

Some participants highlighted that in some instances it is necessary to choose a coach for the executives because of the fear that sometimes the executives might choose a coach based only on a personal relationship and fail to consider the company's interests.

This was echoed by participant 10 when she said, *"…If you leave it sometimes they may select based on personal relationships…"*

Participant 12 also supported the view by highlighting that, "*Sometimes you just have to choose for people"*.

The other supporting view is that companies do not always have the flexibility or the resources to allow executives to choose coaches on their own. It is highlighted that it is cost effective to choose for the employees because the matching process could be all over the place and time could be wasted if employees are included in the coach-matching process. Therefore the findings encourage HR managers and line managers to do the matching in consideration of costs and time. The company's wisdom to follow the correct matching process is also identified as a major contributing factor in letting companies choose.

Participants 8 identified with the above statement when he said, *"Ford in their wisdom says we are picking this. I go with that. Ford picks because they have done a lot of due diligence."*

According to participant 12, it easier to choose a coach for the lower echelons of management because companies are able to "*slam down*" or force interventions down the throat of these employees. As a practicing executive coach, participant 17 stated that the company should choose because that makes her life easier. As an HR manager, participant 6 suggested that the final say should be with HR. Her view was expanded by participant 2, who stated that as the head of HR, he would be privy to the coaching context and the coach's competencies and as a result he could easily recommend a coach.

Participant 10 also supported that, as an HR Manager it is better that she chooses for the executives. Participant 4 expanded HR's involvement in the process by stating that as the head of HR, he will have a diagnostic meeting with the line manager before choosing a coach for an employee. The other view why companies should do the matching is that most companies already have a list of coaches who are deemed and screened as competent coaches. The disadvantages of giving executives a choice was also identified by Participant 12 who mentioned that in instances where a group of executives have to be coached they might choose the same coach.

- ***Executives should choose***

There are considerations in the findings supporting the notion that an executive should have the final say on the choice of the coach. It is stated that executives should choose someone aligned with their personality and goals. The advice from the findings is that executives should be provided with different coach options and the employee should make an informed decision. According to participant 9, an optimal option is to give the employees three to four coach profiles.

Commitment has been regarded as one of the advantages of employees choosing their own coaches and as per the findings, the company should ideally schedule face-to-face chemistry sessions between the employees and coaches. Alternatively the employee could be given a website or even be allowed to call the coach to ensure that ownership and rapport are created before the commencement of a coaching relationship. Executives should have the belief first that coaching would work and that choosing their own coach would yield the results.

Some of the direct quotes supporting the above theme are as follows:

> *"I believe the person being coached should have the final say because he is like the end product if I might say; he is the person who you want to make a difference for, so it is relative to him."* **Participant 5**

> *"…also like meeting my coach before a session starts."* **Participant 7**

> *"You select from three or four people who are available to provide a service and I think that might be the optimal way to go."* **Participant 9**

> *"…come back to us and say, I am going to work with this person. So first off the person feels, I picked you, I chose you, so there is that connection."* **Participant 7**

"We got this program called employee assistant program where if your employee is going through a tough time…so when you call you are given a list of psychologists and even after the first session you can say sorry I cannot continue because am not comfortable with this person. So when the organization is involved there is a sort of like a barrier between that company and the organization giving you that safety feeling I think something like this we need to have with coaching." **Participant 16**

- ***Joint effort between the company and the executive***

According to the findings the coach-matching process could also be a joint process between the coach and the company. At senior management it is encouraged that it should be an interactive negotiation process when choosing a coach. Participant 3 stated that at his level, he needs to be consulted before any decision could be taken on his personal development interventions. He further stated that this is currently the practice and there are always negotiations between him and his HR department before he attends any courses. For participant 6, the joint effort is mainly because the company, especially the HR colleagues, have a good grasp of selection and recruitment processes and they could recommend a few perfect matches.

4.3.2 *Characteristics to be considered when choosing a coach*

As per figure 11, a total of ten key characteristics were identified as critical when choosing a coach.

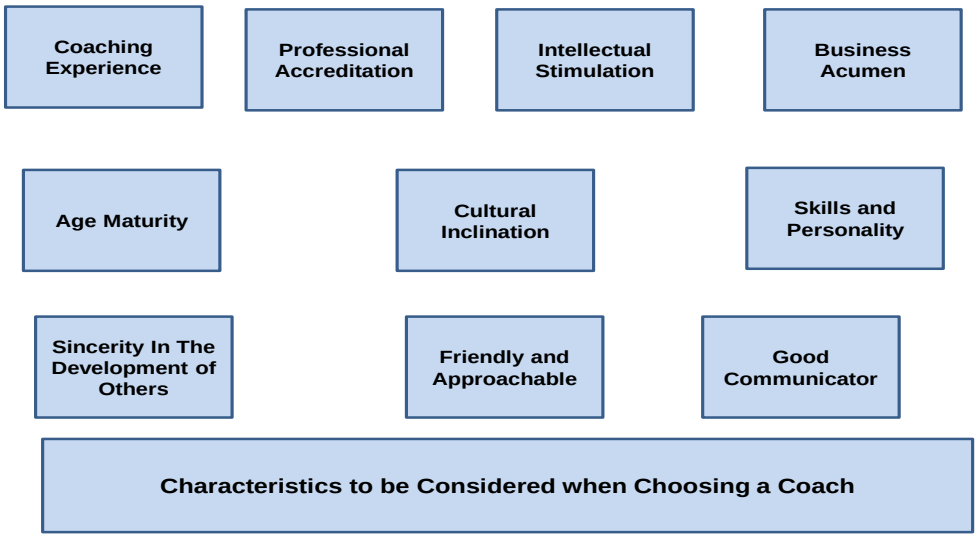


Figure 11: Characteristics to be considered when choosing a coach

- ***Experience***

The coach's past experience is regarded as one of the important characteristic to consider when choosing a coach. It was implied in the findings that the coach's previous successes should be amongst the important factors when choosing a coach. To add to the experience, a coach is also expected to have the depth of the experience that is related to the client's coaching need. Another dimension which became very clear is that a coach with a multi-national experience across a broad spectrum would be an ideal choice. Another aspect identified as relevant is the importance of industry specific experience. The reason advanced to support the industry specific argument is that it would be easy for the coach to understand simple things such as the industry specific acronyms. However other participants stated that a general coaching experience is more important than industry specific experience.

In addition to previous experience, the participants indicated that another important aspect to be considered is that the coach should not be someone who failed in their career and decided to be a coach. They further suggested that the coach's successful track record on both business and personal level should be taken into account when choosing a coach.

- ***Professional accreditation***

Participant 7 commented that as a practicing qualified coach, she knows and understands the value of being trained as a coach. Participant 17 who is also an executive coach stated that she would definitely look for coach's accreditation when choosing a coach. It was reiterated by most of the participants that professional accreditation and certification helps determine whether the person is indeed a coach. Some of the participants were specific on coach's accreditation and they cited the accreditation by the International Coaching Federation (ICF) as one such acknowledgment. To support the value of professional accreditation and certification, Participant 8 stated that, *"Ford dwells on excellence. The other woman that came here was a certified coach, a well experienced coach. They don't just pick anybody".*

- ***Intellectually stimulating***

A coach should be able to intellectually stimulate the clients and still have the ability to connect on a deeper personal level. The participants also noted that executives are looking for coaches who are able to remind them that they are normal human beings and should exercise self-care. Therefore the coach should be able to stay with the executive on both a personal and business level using an intellectual wave length to allow for integration. There is also general consensus that a coach should have the intelligence to work on different levels in an organisation.

- ***Business acumen***

On this characteristic the participants were of the view that an executive coach should have the company's interest at heart. They added that it should be someone who wants to see the company succeed through its executives. To this end, they agreed that the coach should be able to understand and comprehend challenges that the organisation is facing. Apart from being accredited and certified, the participants added that a coach should possess the ability to bring additional business related skills. Furthermore they emphasised that in order to ensure an effective coaching relationship, a coach should understand the company's strategy.

- ***Age maturity***

Age was another area that was identified as a crucial characteristic when choosing a coach. To support this view some of the participants stated that someone senior in age would be able to comprehend and understand the challenges faced by the executives. Participant 1 supported the maturity characteristic when he mentioned that, *"He was mature in age, so he was a senior person."*

- ***Cultural inclination***

According to the findings, cultural sensitivity is very important especially in an African context. The findings highlight that in Africa; the way one interacts with Nigerians is not similar to the way they would relate with South Africans. Therefore coaches should have the cultural inclination and have different coaching strategies for different African countries. If a coach is a foreigner, they should be culturally sensitive to the needs and demands of the executives in the country in which they are coaching.

The findings reveal that coaches are expected to be versatile and also understand what is happening in the global world. There is also a belief that a coach who is culturally inclined will understand the context in which the executive operates and will not provide clinical answers. As a young black executive, participant 16 indicated that he would prefer someone who have walked a similar career journey as himself or someone who would at least understand and appreciate his journey.

- ***Key skills and personality***

Table 2 illustrates the key personality traits that should be considered when either the company or the executive chooses an executive coach.

Table 2: Key skills and personality traits to be considered when choosing a coach

Personality Traits	Supporting Views and Direct Quotes
Have Humility	• A coach is expected to be experienced but should not appear to be high handed.
Be Kind	• Warmth and kindness were identified as some of the traits that a coach should have. • Participant 16 mentioned that *"someone who is warm, someone who is kind, they don't necessarily have to be kind but when I see them I must have the impression that they are kind …"*
Good Listener	• Most of the participants mentioned that good listening skills are a priority when choosing a coach. • Participant 2 confirmed that, *"…even if you may not have a solution for me but the fact that you are listening to me is important…"* • This was supported by participant 6 who stated that people work better when they believe they are being listened to.
Ability to Manage Conflict	• A coach must have the ability to manage potential conflicts that could arise from the coaching relationship.
Exercise Patience	• A coach should have the necessary patience and appreciation of their clients' circumstances.
Be Open Minded	• A coach must be open minded and allow for open communications. • Participant 4 said, *characteristics a coach should have is to have a degree of being open. I am very used to an open communication."*
Have Presence	• Participant 9 stated that *"…has to do with presence…..Even for you as a person selecting a coach, when somebody presents themselves to you who is a coach, there is a way they are, that makes you feel 'wow, this person would be great for our people*'

- ***Sincerity in the development of others***

The participants emphasised that a coach should have the heart for the job, should be someone interested in impacting others' lives, should be interested in seeing other people succeed and finally they should be genuinely passionate about coaching. They added that a sense of achievement on the side of the coach should focus on the success of others. Some of the participants mentioned that coaches should also have a high level of empathy and always put themselves in their client's shoes.

To further support the value of having passion to work with people, participant 5 highlighted that he had two team leaders; one was very kind to his sense of purpose and vision and he mentioned that he did way better with that particular leader.

- ***Friendly and approachable***

As revealed by the findings, a coach must be amiable and friendly. Participants added that there should be a bond in the coaching flow. Participant 8 gave an example that a coach should be approachable like a paediatrician who gives young chlidren sweets to create a bond. According to the findings a coach should be friendly and should not impose merely because they are sent from head office. Finally the participants advocate that a coach should have the same aura like a mother or father figure and should connect emotionally with the clients.

- ***Good communicator***

According to the findings good communication builds trust and, in a coaching relationship, trust depends on what is being put in the conversations. The findings further emphasise that a coach should be able to hold quality and meaningful conversations, talk sense and be able to diplomatically criticise the clients.

4.4 RESEARCH QUESTION 2

What is the role of gender in a coaching relationship?

This particular section in the interview questionnaire only had one question, "*What factors could encourage or discourage you from securing services of a female coach*? To ensure triangulation when analysing the data the responses are divided between male participants and female participants. The analysis started by first identifying factors that could encourage participants to participate in a coaching relationship with a female coach. Secondly the results from both genders are compared. A similar approach is employed when the factors that could discourage the participants from securing a female coach are presented.

4.4.1 *Factors that could encourage the procurement of a female coach from males perspective*

Figure 12 provides the themes that emanated from the discussion on the factors that could encourage the procurement of a female coach.

Males Responses	Females Responses
Have worked with females before and comfortable with women.	Maturity
Coach's experience and reputation	As a female, a female coach will get me
Women coaches are seen as mother figures	
Women make better coaches	
Nigerian women are vocal and speak their mind	
Women's beauty	
Nigerian men will choose females coaches for other personal interests	

Figure 12: Factors that encourages the procurement of a female coach. Males responses versus females responses

- ***Previous interaction with women***

The participants who had previously worked with female coaches affirmed that they would still secure the services of female coaches because they did not have issues with those coaches. One of the participants also mentioned that he had a fulfilling and an enjoyable professional relationship with women and he would therefore choose a female coach based on previous professional relationships. Participant 1 stated that, they have female coaches in his organisation and they *"even use them for difficult male executives"* therefore he would not have an issue choosing a female coach.

For participant 12 it is only about the previous experience,

> *"I have always had female bosses and the relationships have worked very well, so I would choose the side of having female as my mentor or coach, if I have that opportunity of choosing from same qualification because of my past relationship I have had with female bosses. I have trusted their judgment. I have enjoyed relationships working with female bosses that would probably swing me to other side of choosing the female coach or mentor".*

- ***Experience and reputation***

The participants, who supported this theme, stated that they would only procure a female coach with a track record of success and a good reputation. The track record is the tool the participants would use to determine whether the female coach would be able to handle the coaching relationship. Most of the participants stated that they would definitely check on previous experience and would not secure the services of a female coach without any coaching experience. To support this assertion, participant 3 stated that "*I will look at their performance based on what they have done".*

- ***Motherly nature***

Most of the participants indicated that they see female coaches as people who could easily take a role of a caring and a listening mother. The quotes below illustrate the motherly related qualities as stated by the participants.

> *"They are seen as mothers and they are seen as caring."* **Participant 2**

"…as supposed to upbringing I would think of my mother and my father and from what I just described to you about the person who is warmer and open. Who is got more emotional tendencies and with my parent it is my mother." **Participant 16**

"Women make better HR people and coaches because of the motherly nature of a woman." **Participant 5**

"I could also say that a woman is a mother so she sees me as a child and could give me the experience of a woman that could be another plus." **Participant 13**

- ***Women make better coaches***

It appears from the findings that women are regarded as people who could make better coaches than men because of their natural make up. According to participant 5, it could be strange for a woman to be a mentor to a man but a woman could be a good coach to a man. He went further to state that women make better HR professionals and coaches. He believes that it is something that is innate in women to perform these types of roles. Participant 8 echoed that "*I am yet to see anyone to convince me that a male is better at coaching than a woman".*

The findings further state that women are more open and truthful than men and they have a heart to be impactful. This was supported by participant 12 when he stated that, "*I would find a female more open and truthful with me than a male….They are more objective, they listen more".*

Women are also displayed as more loving and kinder than men and they are considered less commercial when compared to men. Lastly, some of the participants remain convinced that women unlike men would take someone else's growth and success and make it personal.

- ***Nigerian women are vocal and speak their mind***

According to participant 2 who is an expatriate in Nigeria; unlike other women in Africa, Nigerian women are strong and are able to challenge their male counterparts. The participant went further that it is because of this assertive nature of these women that he would not have an issue choosing a female Nigerian coach.

- ***Women's beauty***

A woman's beauty was one of the factors that appealed to some participants when choosing a coach. For participant 2, if the female coach is attractive and beautiful, he would definitely choose her. The assertion is supported by participant 13 as reflected in the below text,

> *"Opposites attracts so I might mellow down, if a lady is so much attractive."*

- ***Nigerian men will choose female coaches for personal interests***

As an expatriate to Nigeria, participant 13 had a strong view that Nigerian men would choose female coaches with the hope of taking the relationship further. He elaborated that Nigerian executives always looked for other interests when they see a woman.

"They could easily do that for their own benefit…..In the global world you heard that sex sell that's just how it is. So in their mind they have those things, that causes some issues…..And their benefit could be lunch, and they might want to do other things beyond coaching." **Participant 13**

4.4.2 *Factors that could encourage the procurement of a female coach: Female perspective*

Only two themes emanated from the female participants on the factors that could encourage them to secure the services of a female coach.

- ***Maturity***

For women participants, the maturity of a female coach plays a significant role when choosing a coach. This was supported by Participant 7 when she stated that, *"I will pick a woman who I feel is mature."*

- ***As a woman, a woman coach will get me***

Some of the female participants stated that as women they would openly and freely share issues with a woman. One of the participants mentioned that a female coach would definitely understand her, unlike her male coach. She further elaborated that currently she has a male coach and at times, she feels like her male coach does not entirely understand her.

She sincerely believes that a female coach would understand when a female client is having issues with, for example, children.

“I think also because my friend who I go to for coaching every now and again, I feel that sometimes maybe he doesn’t get me entirely. However my female coach when I want to share something about my daughter or whatever I feel like she gets it because she is a mom of two girls. Even though her daughters are older than mine.” **Participant 7**

4.4.3 *Factors that could discourage the procurement of a female coach (Male versus Female)*

Figure 13 outlines the perceptions of both male and female participants on the factors that could discourage them from securing the services of a female coach. As per figure 13, the centre part reflects common themes between male and female participants. Themes which were common between the female and male participants were; the engagement boundaries, tradition and cultural restrictions and the view that successful women do not act in a womanly manner.

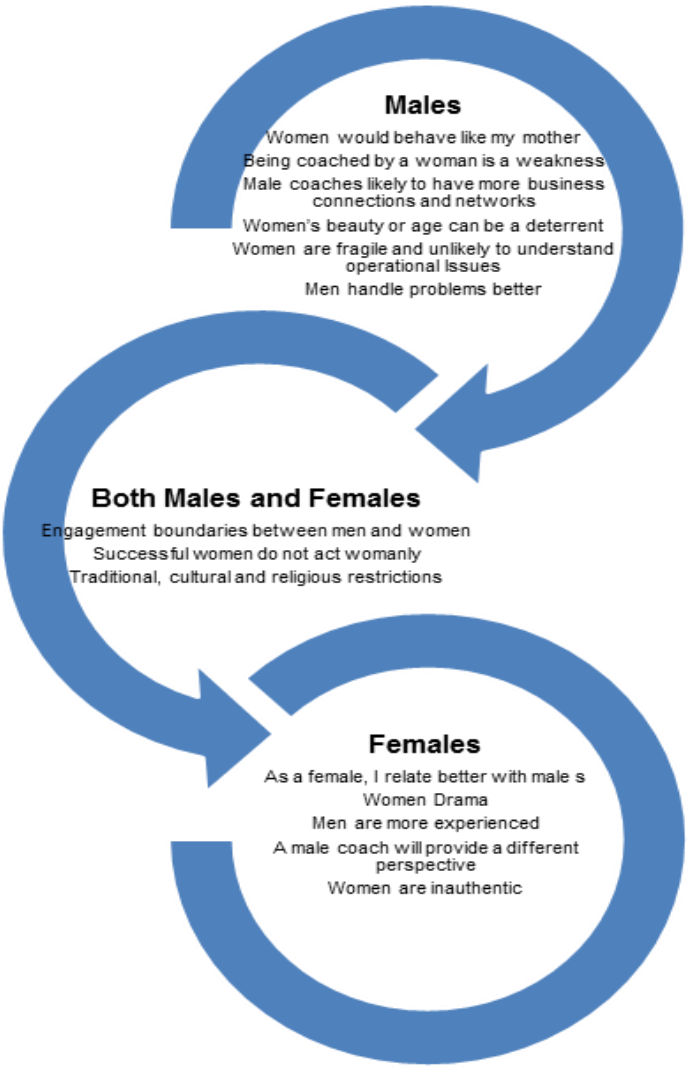


Figure 13: Themes emerging from both male and female participants on factors that could discourage the procurement of a female coach.

4.4.4 *Factors that could discourage the procurement of a female coach (Male participants)*

Table 3 represents themes and the quotes from the male participants on the factors that could discourage them for securing the services of a female coach.

Table 3: Themes from male participants on factors that could discourage them from securing the services of a female coach

Women would behave like my mother *"…it can bring some other issue, you know you behave like my mother now, you keep calling me every time…"* **Participant 2**	**Being coached by a woman is a weakness** *"…there is still this thinking that women are the weaker coach, I am a man you are a woman, how can a woman be coaching me… so the man view it as a weakness…"* **Participant 11**	**Male coaches likely to have more business connections and networks** *"…Nigeria is male dominated, and your coach will have bigger network, with bigger experience they would have been to different places more exposure than the woman counterpart…"* **Participant 16**
Women's beauty or age can be a deterrent *"So if you have a beautiful young lady as a coach, most people will likely not take it seriously…"* **Participant 2** *"…if I have to take junior coaches to work with the MD I better take a male instead of a female."* **Participant 2**	**Successful women do not act womanly** *"…most of the women who are at the top they almost even changed in terms of their composition, the way they handle their self, they are tough…"* **Participant 16**	**Women are fragile and unlikely to understand operational Issues** *"I think you automatically think she is not able to do it, she is too fragile to do this work. So you will be like taken aback, because 'you can't even do half of the work we do, so who are you trying to coach me…"* **Participant 5**
Engagement boundaries between men and women *"…coaching relationship is quite intense, and there is a tendency to kind of compare, a female coach, with the other women in your life – sisters, wife, mothers – and go 'if only my wife was like this' or 'if only my mother was like this' and then it could create problems down the line…"* **Participant 9**	**Men handle problems better** *"My perception is that men generally handle problem differently and am not saying women are not competent in corporate leaderships, but I would most likely choose a male…"* **Participant 14**	**Traditional, cultural and religious restrictions** *"…it is in the tradition, in the culture, in the religion, I think you don't share your concerns with a woman…"* **Participant 2** *"I think so…..Muslim are not that liberal so yes to that extent i would say religion can play a very big role.* **Participant 3** *"I think purely from a cultural perspective some of our sub cultures from the ethnic point of view now, have some very repressive ideas about the role of women. So if a male that is steeped in that kind of dogma, is the male executive, and is presented with a female coach, it may not go very well"* **Participant 9**
<u>Patriarchal Society</u> *"You also know we are coming from a society where it is very patriarchal…"* **Participant 5**		

4.4.5 *Factors that could discourage the procurement of a female coach (Female participants)*

The following quotations support the themes on the factors that discourage female participants from securing the services of a female coach.

> *"Because from experience I have worked mostly with men so I come from industry where it was just me and them I know it is a lot easier."* **Participant 6**

> *"Drama or attitude, I don't like those things in woman. I love them… I have girlfriends… I have very few friends and a lot of acquaintances. Everybody is always, hey how are you? Young or old… attitude, drama and disrespect…"* **Participant 7**

> *"…what people has said about having a lot of female bosses who are not their friends…"* **Participant 6**

> *"It is a perception that a man can help me to survive in this environment than the woman you know the other relationships I have with women I don't want the drama…"* **Participant 17**

> *"I would look at gender, gender because in Nigeria culture is very gender driven, so most male would like to be coached by male. For me is gender and experience.*" **Participant 10**

“Most female executives, especially I don't know about other country but, in Nigeria it happens in other countries as well they are in male job related environment and they find out that they have that character or role they play of living up to the boys club”. ***Participant 17***

4.5 RESEARCH QUESTION 3

What are the gender stereotypes within Nigeria that can inhibit the formation of a coaching relationship between a female coach and a male executive?

This section had two questions which required participants to provide the advantages or disadvantages of having a male coach and a male coachee relationship as well as advantages or disadvantages of having a female coach and a male executive relationship.

4.5.1 *Disadvantages of having a male coach and a male executive relationship*

Table 4 highlights five themes identified as disadvantages of the male coach and male executive relationship.

Table 4: Disadvantages of a male coach and a male coachee relationship

Theme	Quotations
Availability	• *"…not really available to discuss things? We met once and then we couldn't meet for a second meeting and it was postponed and that I would say is not okay. "* **Participant 2**
Tough love	• *"…you can also find men who are very bossy, who don't give you that listening ear, who just push, push, push and call it tough loving…"* **Participant 5**
Lack of openness	• *"…man to man they might not open to each other…Yes…"* **Participant 8**
Competition	• *"…the men in our organization are constantly in competition with each other…"* **Participant 9**
Male ego	• "*...females tends to be more open to learning than adult males …*" **Participant 11**

On the issue of availability, it is evident from the utterance that the coach was not easily accessible for coaching sessions. Participant 5 considers being given tough love as a disadvantage of having male coach and male coachee relationships. To him bossiness and lack of listening skills are examples of tough love given by male coaches to fellow male clients. The other compelling issue identified as a disadvantage, was that men rarely open up to each other. This behaviour could thus make the coaching relationship a difficult relationship. Participant 9 identified another disadvantage as the possible competition that could develop between the two men. Finally, it is stated that women make better students because they are always willing to learn whilst men have the ego to reject new learnings.

4.5.2 *Advantages of having a male coach and male coachee relationship*

The seven themes below are identified as advantages of having a male coach and a male executive relationship.

- ***Physical energy***

The findings concluded that generally men are more physically active and that when they are together there is always a lot of energy between them. Therefore according to the findings when having a male coach and coachee relationship the energy would be put to benefit the coaching relationship. The participants also stated that there would be some level of energy to give the coaching relationship the best shot.

- ***Man to man discussions are easier***

The findings advocates that it is much easier to find common ground when having man to man discussions because men are likely to feel comfortable taking corrections from one another. Participant 6 supported this view and stated that *"It is a lot easier to take corrections, criticism and change or turn them around that is what I would say even for both men to men and women to women."* It is also considered much easier to disclose personal issues with a fellow man. Participant 11 expanded the view and stated that, "*within* our *cultural context, men are likely to feel comfortable with other men."* He further states that it is considered easy as a male coachee to disagree with a male coach without feeling like they are offending them, unlike if it is a female coach.

- ***Bonding will be quicker***

The participants agreed that the success of a coaching relationship lies in the process of bonding between the coach and the coachee. The important aspect is how long it takes the two parties to be comfortable and bond with each other. The participants indicated that bonding with people from the same gender is faster and easier and there would be an automatic and instant connection between a male coach and a male coachee. According to participant 15, *"…because the point is you want bonding, and to what extent an external male coach which they never met for how long will it take that external male coach to get buy in from a female executive to the point where she opens the book confides in him this life story…"*

- ***Sharing of similar experiences***

The participants believe that it would be much easier for a male coach to understand the normal male bias including typical male experiences. Over and above the coaching relationship where professional discussions take place, talking about politics, sports and other things outside work will enhance the quality of the coaching relationship between a male coach and a male executive. As per the responses, a female might not be able to understand and appreciate the experiences because she would not have personally experienced them. Participant 9 referred to it as "*operating on the same wave length"* and considered it to be an added advantage when having a male to male coaching relationship.

- ***No engagement restrictions***

According to the findings same gender coaching relationships do not have restrictions of interactions. The participants went further to support the view and

stated that the coach and the coachee could even do a lot of things together. The possibility of the coaching relationship evolving into a social interaction is emphasised as an added benefit of such a coaching relationship The coaching relationship could also evolve to another level. For example participant 3 mentioned that, "…*yeah for male to male it could be lets go and play table tennis together and in the cause of throwing the balls around we can talk whatever it is*". The participant added that a male client can call a male coach anytime of the day without causing frictions or doubts in the personal life of the male coach.

- ***Confidence is automatic***

In terms of the findings it is easier to trust someone with whom you share certain characteristics. That level of trust could build an automatic confidence in the coaching relationship where the client develops instant confidence and conviction that the coaching relationship will work. The development of this trust and confidence would be as a result of the male client seeing themselves in the coach and that awareness automatically builds the confidence that the coach knows what he is doing. The following quote supports the notion that confidence will be automatic between a male coach and a male client.

> *"…if I had a male coach I would automatically know he knows what he is saying. And I am automatically inclined to listen…"* **Participant 5**

- ***Necessary toughness from the coach***

The findings recommend that when a male client needs someone to be tough, a male coach is a much better option because men are generally tough and coaching sessions also require a certain level of toughness.

Most of the participants stated that in a coaching relationship, male executives would need someone who is not only there to listen and advice; however they would want someone to also give the necessary toughness. Therefore the participants concluded that a male coach would be able to do exactly that. Participant 16's view is that a male coach is able to set the records straight and could toughen up a male executive. He went on to say that *"when you need someone to be tough with you it is easier for a man to say, for the past six sessions we have collected your tears today we have to move on".*

4.5.3 *Disadvantages of having a female coach and male coachee relationship*

- ***Business experience***

According to the findings, most women are not experienced in fields such as operations therefore they would not be able to relate with male executives on such subjects. The main stated disadvantage would be the female coach's credibility and comprehension when dealing with coaching issues that are outside their scope. One of the explicit examples in the findings is that a male executive might need coaching on business aspects such as "deal making" and a female coach would not be a perfect match for such a coaching intervention.

- ***Engagement restrictions***

Most of the participants agree that there are a lot of sensitivities and restrictions to male and female professional relationships. They stated that these restrictions are considered natural boundaries that could not be overlooked. The view from the findings is that a male executive cannot easily pick a phone up at night and call his female coach without feeling guilty.

It is stated that these restrictions could easily compromise a coaching relationship because of these “no go” areas. Some of the participants emphasised that they prefer to interact and have friendships with their coaches after the coaching relationship and it could be impossible with a female coach especially if they are married.

According to these participants a coaching relationship is an intimate, close and personal relationship. Therefore it is concluded that the male executive could have issues with his wife or female partner for having a female coach. This was confirmed by participant 7 when she stated that, *“…or his wife says, oh you have a coach. She is really a nice pretty lady… are there no guys?”*

Other participants indicated that having a female coach, especially if they are younger would invite a lot of office gossip where everyone could be wondering about what is happening behind the closed coaching doors. Participant 7 further stated that as a young executive coach, she is aware that when she shows up in a CEO’s office for a coaching session, most people are likely to believe that there is something more than coaching that is happening between her and the CEO.

- ***Superiority complex***

Some of the male participants mentioned that there are certain personal and private issues that they would never discuss with a female coach merely because they are men. They mentioned that they could only discuss deep personal problems with a male coach. They felt that it is easy to compare the female coach to a wife back home who is dependent on the husband and where the husband is the master.

They concluded by saying that such issues are identified as disadvantages that can manifest in a coaching relationship where a female is coaching a male client. Some of the quotes supporting the above theme are:

> *"…for the male it is more job nature superiority complex condescending toward the female. Rightly or wrongly I have her as a wife at home and I am the lord or the master the fact that you are a successful female means nothing to me…"* **Participant 15**

> *"…with a female coach there are things I am very likely not to discuss, no matter how comfortable you make me feel. If you are going to discuss your problems with your spiritual head it would typically be a man."* **Participant 9**

- ***General role of a woman***

Another stated disadvantage of having a female coach is that female coaches could feel guilty that they are working because the society expect them to be at home minding the children whilst their husbands are at work. It is also revealed that most men tend to accept women at very senior management levels but might not accept them at other levels of engagement such as coaching. The theme was supported by Participant 7 when she stated that:

> *"One of the women I coached worked full time and the other was a full time stay at home mom. She also had hard challenges with embracing herself and coming out because she had for nine years just been at home with her kids and all this."*

4.5.4 *Advantages of having a female coach and male coachee relationship*

Figure 14 reflects themes that emerged as advantages of having a female coach and a male coachee relationship.



Figure 14: Advantages of having a female coach and male coachee relationship

4.6 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The findings provided the background to executive coaching by highlighting the emergence and growth of coaching in Nigeria including the reasons for companies to engage in executive coaching. The experiences of male executives of being in a coaching engagement and the factors that contributed to either the success or the failure of a coaching relationship were unpacked. The findings also outlined the results and themes emanating from the three research questions.Table 5 and table 6 have clustered the summary of the three research questions.

Table 5: Research questions findings

Research Question 1	**Findings**
What are the factors that should be considered during a coach-matching process?	• The coach-matching process between a coach and an executive could be done by the company to save costs, resources and time. • To ensure trust and rapport, the executive should choose the coach. • The coach matching process should be a joint effort between the company and the executive. • Coach's experience, relevant qualifications and traits relevant to coaching should be considered during the coach matching process.

Table 6: Research questions findings

Research Question 2 and 3	Findings
What is the role of gender in a coaching relationship?	• Male executives would choose a female coach because women are generally better than men at roles such as coaching. This is mostly applicable if the male executive has previous experience of working with females, when the woman is beautiful or attractive and lastly because of the motherly nature of women. • Female participants agree that they would not choose a female coach because successful women do not act womanly. • Male executives would not choose a female coach because of the following; natural engagement restrictions between males and females; being coached by a woman is a sign of weakness, women would not understand a man's point of view and men are generally better at handling problems
What are the gender stereotypes within Nigeria that could inhibit the formation of a coaching relationship between a female coach and a male executive?	• The general role of women is one major stereotype that could inhibit the formation of a coaching relationship between a female coach and a male executive. • Traditions, customs and religious beliefs contribute towards the negative gender stereotypes affecting women in Nigeria.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 focuses on the discussion of the research findings. The findings presented in the previous chapter are analysed, reviewed and interpreted to provide high level implications and meaning. This chapter is structured on three key aspects; the participants' understanding of coaching, the participants' experience of being in a coaching relationship and the succinct findings organised according to the three research questions.

Firstly, the discussion focuses on general findings related to coaching in organisations and questions such as the existence of executive coaching; what it is used for in organisations and whether companies should have executive coaching. Secondly, the participants' experiences of being in a coaching relationship are explored. These experiences include the reasons for being in a coaching relationship and the factors that could contribute towards the success or the failure of a coaching relationship. Thirdly, the main findings from the three research questions are discussed. The discussion based on the first research question focuses on the factors that should be considered during a coach-matching process in organisations. The second research question elaborates on the role of gender in a coaching relationship. Lastly the third research question focuses on gender stereotypes that can inhibit the formation of the coaching relationship between a female coach and male executives within the Nigerian business landscape are discussed and analysed. The chapter is concluded by summarising all the discussion points.

5.2 Understanding coaching in organisations

According to the findings, coaching is in its infancy stage for most companies in Nigeria and the culture of coaching is slowly emerging. A total of seventeen participants were interviewed and fourteen confirmed the existence of coaching in most multinational companies within Nigeria. Participant 9 confirmed Bartlett's (2006) view regarding the fast growth of coaching in organisation, when he stated that most organisations in Nigeria are recognising the value and the importance of coaching employees. The findings acknowledge the prominence of coaching interventions in order to develop executives in Nigeria.

According to Fazel (2013), it is uncommon to find organisations that do not offer coaching as a personal development intervention for employees. Most of the participants indicated the emergence of coaching and participant 11 provided an in depth explanation by clarifying that coaching is still in the early stages of development in Nigeria to such an extent that even the Nigerian coaches are struggling to define their niche areas. The emergence of coaching in general is confirmed by Ives (2008) in that coaching is still an emerging field, hence it has difficulties with aspects such as the definition. Parsloe and Wray (2000) highlighted the emergence of coaching as a much needed intellectual uprising within organisations. It is clear from the findings that top management's support is imperative to the success of coaching interventions within organisations.

Stern (2004) supports the finding that top managers in most organisations regard coaching as an important organisational intervention for people development. The importance of top management support was also elaborated by Lane, Puri, Cleverly, Wylie and Rajan, (2000) who stated that employees regard personal development as primarily their own responsibility.

However they also look for organisational guidance and support in accessing and resourcing such developmental tools. The value of internal coaching where most executives indicated that they are being coached by other executives in the same organisation and an emphasis for HR professionals to have coaching competencies emerged in the findings.

The findings state that building internal capacity is important to assist in the reduction of costs and to internally manage the quality of the coaching intervention. This view is supported by McKee, Tilin and Mason (2009) in that internal capacity can be met by building coaching capacity among HR professionals and highly talented line managers who can serve as internal coaches. Although the distinction between mentoring and coaching is clear where coaching is considered to be non-directive and mentoring is considered instructional (Parsloe & Wray, 2000); some of the participants indicated that in their organisations coaching programmes are replaced by mentoring programme.

The constant comparison of both processes was evident when some of the participants continuously referred to them as similar processes. In as much as the objective of this study is not to educate the participants on the differences or similarities between coaching and mentoring, it is however imperative to clarify the differences between coaching to mentoring in the analysis of responses. For this purpose the clarification is that a mentoring relationship is between a more experienced mentor with a young and less experienced mentee and the objective is to help the mentee develop their career becomes important (Ragins & Kram, 2007). On the other hand the coach has no direct authority over the coachee in a coaching relationship (Baron & Morin, 2010). Therefore, the two processes are undoubtedly different.

The growing interest in organisations to engage in coaching is because of the positive approach that is currently associated with coaching. This is identified as different from the history of coaching where it was mainly used for problematic employees and performance gaps. To support this view participant 7 emphasised that even the greatest executives are taken for coaching to hone their skills further.

Feldman and Lankau (2005) echo similar view that in the early years of coaching, it was largely viewed as a method of correcting deficiencies, but increasingly it has also come to be viewed as a method of facilitating learning and development. In answering the question what is executive coaching commonly used for, it is clear from the findings that, in Nigeria, coaching is used for purposes of facilitating the professional and personal growth of leaders. Coaching in Nigeria is therefore primarily used for personal or leadership development. This is because coaches create an atmosphere where executives can identify and evaluate strategic business decisions, explore self-aspirations and unleash their potential to the benefit of the overall organisational effectiveness (Lewis-Duarte & Bligh, 2012; McKee, et al., 2009).

As argued by Nadler and Tushman (1995, p. 45) for organisations to succeed in the 21st century, the most important business development should be the "*pursuit of competitive advantage*" in the current unpredictable world. It is therefore important to note that interventions such as executive coaching find reasons for existence within 21st century organisations because they provide the platform where continuous learning takes place. Fillery-Travis and Lane (2006) support the view that organisations would have to be continuously innovative if they want to succeed in a current, dynamic and uncertain marketplace.

Such continuous innovation and creativity could only be attained through business leaders who constantly learn new ways of business through developing both their technical and leadership skills and that is exactly where coaching fits into this leadership developmental maze. Although most organisations in Nigeria are recognising the value of coaching leaders (McKee, et al., 2009) and although the existence of coaching programmes is considered imperative for employee development; a few participants pointed out that organisations could still attain the same objectives as coaching through other interventions such as training or mentoring.

Therefore while most of the participants stated the value for coaching, one participant stated that coaching should not be a *"fit-for-all exercise and it will not work for busy executives"* like himself (participant 3). He emphasised that if he would be expected to attend various coaching sessions he might not have the time. This argument that executives might not have time for an extended number of coaching sessions was illustrated in a study by Bright and Crockett (2012) in which the value for combining coaching and training was investigated. In this study, a coach engaged with the trained participants after the training intervention for a single one-on-one coaching session. The study concluded that in organisations where time and costs are limited there is value in combining traditional training interventions with a subsequent limited number of one-on-one coaching sessions.

The study further acknowledged the significance of coaching although only a single coaching session was included. Therefore organisations should be cognisant of executives' availability and commitments when rolling out coaching interventions to avoid a fit for all approach. In answering the question on whether companies should have executive coaching for its executives, the participants highlighted mostly the positive reasons for companies to have

executive coaching. Therefore with so many supporting reasons for companies to have executive coaching; it is not surprising that coaching is regarded amongst the top five leadership interventions in the world today (Underhill, 2005). The findings are clear that companies should have executive coaching for leaders because coaching help leaders grow by enhancing self-awareness and provides a different perspective.

Executive coaching is important as it enables executives to improve performance in more than one area of their jobs (Berglass, 2002). According to the findings coaching could also accelerate development of employees and improve employee performance. Bennett and Bush (2009) agree that coaching could be a remedial tool to improve and enhance individual performance in areas where someone is not performing to the expectation of the role. This can be done through the elimination of unhelpful behaviours or patterns that contribute to the poor performance. The findings reflect that coaching accelerates development and unleashes potential through constructive feedback. The assertion that coaching unleashes potential is further supported by Ozkan (2007) when suggesting that coaching could also be used for succession planning and development of future leaders in instances where a coach works with future leaders and help them position themselves for more senior responsibilities.

Provision of constructive feedback in a coaching relationship is supported by Huseman (2008) who posits that direct feedback from the coach and anonymous feedback facilitated by the coach contributed to leadership development of clients. Participant 15 mentioned that "*many senior executives do not like to expose their weak areas to other colleagues. They don't feel comfortable going on a training program. That is not where they want to share…*"

This private and personal approach to development is reflected in the literature where organisations are gradually moving away from the traditional training initiatives or leadership programmes which require employees to sit in one room in which modules are customised as a one size fits all (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006). To support this innovative development the findings reveal that employee development at executive level should be individual focused and should be tailored according to the unique needs of each executive.

Individual coaching satisfies this emerging need by providing a one-to-one personalised development. According to Hebenstreit and Hinzdorf (2006, p. 52) "*traditional training programs often do not initiate the quantum leap from understanding a concept to transforming deep-rooted mind-sets and behaviours*." Goldsmith (2008) states that as an executive coach, he works with successful and intelligent executives and all they want is a personalised and focused developmental attention. As per the findings, coaching is a trusted intervention because it provides a different or even a totally new perspective in ensuring that executives are competent and confident.

5.3 Experiences of being in a coaching relationship

Most of the participants indicated that they have been in coaching relationships and a few participants highlighted their reasons for not participating in a coaching relationship. One of the participants echoed his doubt in the effectiveness of coaching. This doubt is not without merit because although coaching has been identified as a key tool in building the personal and professional capacity of executives; the doubt on its effectiveness has been highlighted in previous studies. For Bozer and Sarros (2012) the argument is that there is little research that has been conducted on coaching effectiveness within the organisations in which it is practiced.

Haan and Nieb (2011) add that there are inconsistencies within literature regarding the direct link between organisational results to a coaching intervention. The findings further reveal that another reason for not being in a coaching relationship is that external coaches might not understand internal business challenges that executives go through. Two challenges of managing external coaches were identified by McKee, et al. (2009) as firstly, the challenge that organisations do not really know what happens in coaching sessions because of the huge variance in coaching approaches.

The second challenge is that executive coaches have little exposure to a company by only working with a few chosen managers and therefore could lack the necessary depth in understanding the organisation's culture, politics and goals. As per the below figure, three key themes emerged from the findings of this research as reasons why people find themselves in coaching relationships.



Figure 15: Reasons for participating in a coaching relationship

The first theme is based on the company initiated coaching intervention where executives are either part of a leadership programme or where an executive is sent on an expatriate assignment to a different country or as line managers where they are expected to coach subordinates. Some participants stated that they were in a coaching relationship as subordinates and their line managers were their coaches. For the purpose of this study, this would be classified as supervisory coaching which has its own limitations. The limitation between executive coaching and supervisory coaching is highlighted by Ellinger, Ellinger and Keller (2003). The authors state that, the power and the authority the supervisor has over the employee could restrain discussion of certain subjects and daily coaching discussions that a manager has with employees would not constitute a developmental initiative which has a start and an end date.

The second theme relates to participants who were in coaching relationships for purposes of receiving accreditation as coaches. Therefore this coaching relationship is a requirement placed upon individuals in the journey towards being accredited as coaches. The third theme is identified as being in a coaching relationship out of personal choice where an individual approaches a coach on their own accord to seek help with, for example, role transition and general business challenges. The other personal initiative could be through a personal initiated peer coaching amongst colleagues.

In terms of the factors that contribute to the success of a coaching relationship, the findings point out that a coach should have the necessary skills, previous coaching experience and relevant characteristics. It is clear from the findings that the success of a coaching relationship is largely determined by the coach who is considered to be the owner of the coaching process. Fazel (2013) advocates that the unique value proposition for coaching as compared to other personal change interventions is that the coach plays a significant role in

facilitating the coaching process. Some of the important factors in ensuring a successful coaching relationship were identified as the coach's wisdom and experience (Cox, 2003), art of facilitation by the coach (Downey, 2003) and the use of questions (Neenan, 2009). In addition and in support of the findings, Passmore (2010) adds that attributes that contributes to the success of a coaching relationship are the coach's experience, listening skills, empathy, the non-directive technique and the non-judgemental approach. However as per the findings, the coachee is also important in ensuring that the coaching relationship is successful.

In a study conducted by O'Broin, and Palmer (2010), the difficulties associated with coachees who have a closed attitude to the possibilities of change were illustrated as hindrances to the success of a coaching relationship. The reason for having a successful coaching relationship is mostly attributed to the results-orientation of the coaching relationship. The participants identified three reasons for failed coaching relationships, that is, when the coaching relationship starts to be monotonous, when the process is not results driven and when clear objectives do not exist. Although it was not explored further in this study, Fanasheh (2005) found that it is difficult for executives who have experienced a failed coaching relationship to secure services of another coach. For executives the coaching process is regarded as good when it is results-orientated and there are action plans (Hall, et al., 1999).

The coach's constant focus on the administrative and process related issues, such as time periods during sessions and attendance registers serve as contributors to failed coaching relationships. Notwithstanding the importance of the administrative gremlins in executive coaching, the coach is advised to put greater focus on the coaching goals and the flow of the process.

The view is supported by Hall, et al. (1999) in that external coaches are sometimes regarded as consultants and could be seen as only interested in the financial reward and more consulting hours than the actual coaching outcome. Although the coach is the owner and the driver of the coaching process, another reason for failed relationships is identified as the coachee's lack of commitment and presence to the coaching relationship.

5.4 Research Question 1

What are the factors that are considered during a coach-matching process?

The focus of this research question was to determine the factors that should be considered during the coach-matching process. Three apparent factors which should be considered during the coach-matching process were identified and these factors are depicted in figure 16 and expanded further in this section.

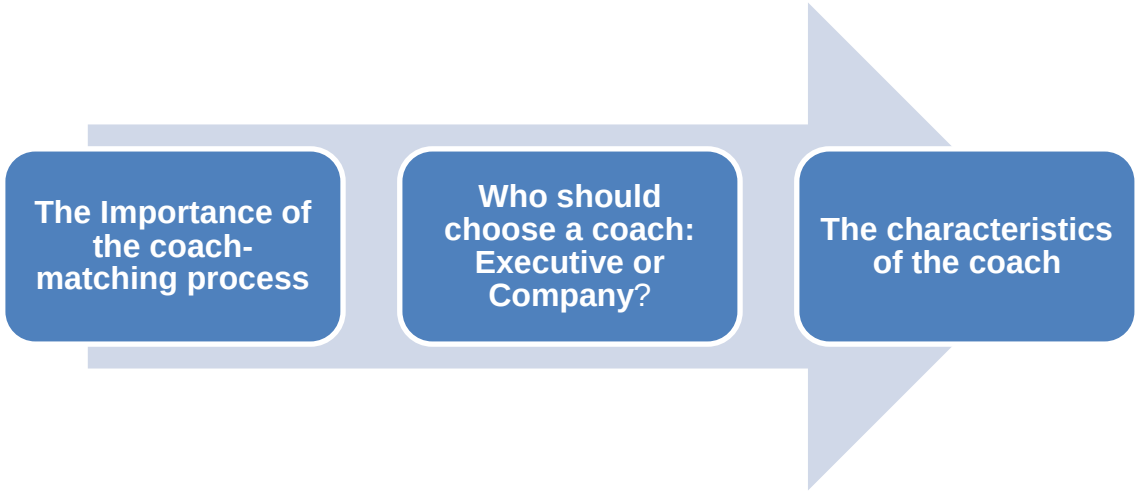


Figure 16: Three factors to be considered during the coach-matching process

5.4.1 *The importance of the coach-matching process*

It is difficult to discuss the factors surrounding the formation of a coaching relationship without dissecting the coach-matching process. This was evident in the findings when, before the participants could reflect on the actual factors to be considered during the coach-matching process, they confirmed the importance of the coach-matching process. Participant 1 highlighted that the "*quality of the matching process is important"* because if the matching is not good, then disengagement in the process is likely to be high. Therefore to ensure that executives are engaged in the coaching relationship, the matcher should have the critical skills to ensure that a quality match is done between the executive and the coach.

Various researchers have confirmed that the matching process is a significant process in a coaching relationship and it is the main ingredient needed to ensure that the coaching relationship is successful and effective (Joo, 2005; Wycherley & Cox; 2008, Gray & Goregaokar, 2010). The findings reflect and support the literature in chapter 2. This literature suggests that the coach-matching process is an important but complicated process that does not only include aligning two personalities (Wycherley & Cox, 2008). According to Boyce, et al. (2010), the existence of a coaching relationship is dependent on the coach-matching process.

This research came to a similar conclusion because all the participants who were in a coaching relationship indicated that the matching process was the initial step and for some, it provided a prediction of the success of the coaching relationship. Baron and Morin (2010) agree that the credibility of the coach is determined during the formation days and this has an impact on the level of influence the coach would have on the coachee.

5.4.2 *Choosing an executive coach: company, executive or joint process*

The definition of the coach-matching process in Chapter 2 (Boyce, et al., 2010), illustrates that the matching is done by the client meaning that it could either be done by the organisation or the executive. Therefore, the finding provides a further understanding of the definition by clarifying the question that between the organisation and the executive who should have the final say on the coach to be used. It is important to note that a few participants chose to remain neutral regarding this question on who should be responsible for choosing the coach. The few participants indicated that it does not matter who does the matching.

According to them the important aspect is the value in the learning that takes place during coaching. However three sub-themes emerged from the participants who chose to provide their views. The first sub-theme is that the company could choose a coach for the executive; the second sub-theme is that the executive should have the final say and the last sub-theme is that it should be a joint effort between the company and the executive. In terms of the first sub-theme, the company could independently choose a coach for the executive and the below listed seven reasons were provided for this choice.

- A company could employ the services of a matching consultant who could do the matching on behalf of the company. It is also highlighted that the company should use the services of an experienced matching consultant because of the importance of this process.

- Companies could use coaches they had used in the past and this could help maintain trust with the new employees or executives that have to be coached. This was evident with participant 1 who was supposedly comfortable with the coach the company chose for him because the

coach previously worked with the company and it was easy for him to trust the coach. As confirmed by Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson (2001) establishing a relationship of trust constitutes the first step in the executive coaching process. The findings also reveal that in their experience participants did not have issues with coaches that were previously chosen by the company hence their support that the company could choose a coach on behalf of the executive.

- Belief by executives in the company's wisdom to do a perfect match. Here the findings reveal that the participants believe in the existing company processes and have trust that the company chosen coach will be the right coach.

- The issue of cost and the time constraints associated with the urgency of coaching interventions was the fourth reason advanced to support that companies should choose coaches for the executives. The argument is that it would be time consuming and the process could be mismanaged if executives are included in the matching process. It was further noted that most companies do not have the resources to coordinate a matching process where the executives would also have to be part of the matching process. This reasoning confirmed the view postulated by McKee, et al., (2009, p. 59) when they stated that "*despite the obvious benefits of coaching, it can be a co-ordination nightmare to provide consistent, high-quality coaching for dozens, maybe hundreds of managers"*.
- The fifth reason is stated by one of the female executive coaches by stating that it is much easier for her as an executive coach if the company made the final say on which coach should be used because she avoids possible rejections from executives.

- The company should have the final say only on the lower echelons of management because it is easier to recommend any interventions to these lower managers. The last reason relates to the involvement of HR as the company representative to choose a coach on behalf of the executive. From the findings, all the interviewed HR Managers supported the view that the company should choose for the employees. One HR Manager provided a step-by-step initial process for an ideal coach-matching process. The step-by-step process in the findings is somewhat similar to the model recommended by Wycherley and Cox (2008). This model clarifies the selection and the matching process in accordance with the following steps. The similarities between the two process is the involvement of HR in the coach-matching process and the major difference is that in the Wycherley and Cox's model, the executive is given the final say on the coach to be used.

Table 7: HR involvement in the coach-matching process

Coach-Matching Process as per the findings		Wycherley and Cox (2008) Coach-Matching Model
First step HR manager and the line manager agree that there should be a coaching intervention for an employee or an executive.		**First step** The set up process where the organisation decides on a coaching intervention for its executives.
Second Step The HR Manager finds a coach from the company's database.		**Second step** Organisation chooses the coaching companies who send a shortlist of available coaches to the organisation.
Third Step HR Manager briefs the coach and procures the coach. In some instances the coach also meets with the line manager.		**Third Step** The organisation in the form of HR reviews the list of coaches and matches the executive with two to three coaches.
Final Step The employee is introduced to the coach.		**Final Step** Two to three coaches are given to the executive to make a final choice.

The second sub-theme states that some executives prefer to have the final say on a coach to be used. The suggestion supporting this view is that the executive should be given three to four coaches to choose from. The finding that the organisation should provide the executive with a few coaches to choose is in line with the model as proposed by Wycherley and Cox (2008).

According to the findings, the matching process should include a face to face session between the executive and the coach in order to determine the existence of chemistry between the coach and the executive. In the findings time factor is acknowledged as one of the possible challenges of face to face sessions. To circumvent this challenge it is suggested that the executive could be provided with a website with the coach's credentials. Alternatively the executive could also communicate telephonically with the coach. It is further clarified that this approach could provide an environment in which connection and rapport would be created before the commencement of a coaching relationship.

Chidiac (2006) and Hodgetts (2002) highlight the importance of this chemistry during the coach-matching process. However these additional chemistry sessions could be seen as an additional administrative process which needs to be coordinated and managed. According to McKee, et al., (2009) it can be an administrative nightmare to coordinate coaching relationships, if chemistry sessions are also included in the formation of the coaching relationship. Advantages associated with this view are identified as follows; the executives' commitment towards the coaching process would be guaranteed and the executive will be able to choose a coach who is aligned to their personality and goals.

If an executives chooses own coaches, they would have the belief that coaching would work and this belief is very important in the success of a coaching relationship. It appears that a mere existence of a perception that the coach is competent is a good enough reason for the coach to be selected. Participant 16 supports the perception element by mentioning that for him a coach should be *"someone who is warm, someone who is kind, they do not necessarily have to be kind but when I see them I must have the impression that they are kind, and that they do this job because they want to help people and they receive satisfaction…"* This view confirmed the proposal advanced by Hodgetts (2002) that one measure to be considered when selecting coaches is the availability of a perception by the executive that the coach is competent and trustworthy.

The last sub-theme states that the coach-matching process should be a joint process between the executive and the company. To support this assertion the findings emphasise that, at senior management level, the coach-matching process should be a negotiation process in which the executives have an equal voice on the coach to be used. This negotiation process between the company and the executive is crucial and it ensures the executive's commitment to the coaching process. In support of HR's involvement in the process, one of the participants echoed that he strongly believes and trusts the ability of HR to provide a perfect shortlist for him to make a final choice.

This submission is in support of Jarvis (2004) who agrees that the organisation and the executive are both responsible for the coach matching process. This joint effort view bridges the gap between the other two sub-themes discussed earlier in this chapter and it provides a harmonious solution that includes both the company and the executives as equal partners in the selection and matching process of coaches. The findings are further in line with the selection and matching model as proposed by Wycherley and Cox's (2008).

The model proposes that the organisation is expected to provide a shortlist of available and screened coaches and thereafter, the final verdict on which coach to use rests with the executive.

5.4.3 *Characteristics to be considered when choosing a coach*

This study reveal that the characteristics to be considered when choosing a coach are as follows: coach's experience, professional accreditation or certification, intellectual stimulation, business acumen, age maturity, cultural inclination, sincerity in the development of others, friendly and approachable personality and good communication skills. The identified characteristics are aligned to a proposal by Jarvis (2004) that the company should consider the coach's personality, skills and experience when putting together a shortlist for potential coaches. Hodgetts (2002) supports the business understanding requirement and provides additional requirements which include general business acumen and understanding of company politics. It emerged from the findings that three factors that should be examined regarding the coach's experience are past experience, industry experience and the depth of the experience. In terms of past experiences, the coach's previous success factors should be noted on both a personal and business level.

This proposal is confirmed by Hall, et al. (1999) through an observation that, coaches who held senior positions prior to becoming coaches appeal to most executives than those with little or no experience. However caution regarding coaches who previously held positions of power is encouraged because it is assumed that these coaches could act more as business consultants (Gray and Goregaokar, 2010) and use their influencing skills to persuade executives into certain actions and decisions (Beglass, 2002).

A few participants vouched for the relevancy of the industry experience because it would make coaching easier when industry related concepts such as industry specific acronyms are discussed. On the other hand other participants stated that industry experience is not an issue to them. This was reflected by participant 16 when he mentioned that:

> *"I think technical experience in industry is taking a very low rating in my book. What is going to be important I want to see experience in coaching or experience in just guiding others or in managing people or working with people…"*

Jarvis (2004) also argues that relevant industry experience is not necessary when coaching because the objectives for coaching are the development and learning of the client. However Wycherley and Cox (2008) advocate for industry specific experience in that when a coach-match is done based on similar professional or life experience, bonding is forged much quicker. As per the findings, the depth of the coach's experience relates to the experience on the particular challenge that the executive is facing. Wycherley and Cox (2008:48) argue against the depth of the coach's experience by maintaining that an adequately trained coach does not need any *"specific technical knowledge"* on the specific developmental related challenges.

Professional accreditation reflects as one of the common characteristic that should be considered when choosing a coach in Nigeria. Some of the participants stated that their companies only use accredited and certified executive coaches. According to Grant (2008), the coach training that the coach has gone through could determines the quality of services they would offer and this is because coaching as a field is maturing towards being professionalised.

Bennett and Bush (2009) echo similar thinking that whilst certification or accreditation is not a requirement to some companies; it is a requirement to most companies who only engage the services of certified coaches who have completed formal coaching training. As per the findings, a coach is also expected to stimulate the executives on an intellectual professional level and still be able to connect on a deeper personal level.

Kahn (2011) regards this deeper personal level as a critical factor which is often unknown to the executives and a coach should have the competency to unleash and work at this different level. Business acumen and understanding the tri-partite relationship between the executive, the company and the coach is considered to be one of the characteristics that the coach should have. As per the findings, the coach is expected to have the company's interest at heart and understand how the coaching intervention fits into the business strategy. Hall, et al. (1999) emphasise that executive coaching should not happen in isolation of the company's strategic objectives.

Executive coaching is therefore considered as a career developmental activity which is bottom line driven and should always be aligned to specific strategic organisational objectives. Passmore (2009) and Berglass (2002) highlight the need for business acumen for coaches and elaborate that it should be combined with a general understanding of human behaviour. Kahn (2011, p. 208) adds that business coaching should "*remain free from moral or clinical judgement"* because it happens within a business context and its primary aim is to improve business results. According to the findings age plays an important role within the Nigerian context and the older you are the more wisdom you are expected to have.

Therefore, it is not a surprise that the age of the coach is considered to be a characteristic that should be considered when choosing a coach. It is presumed in the findings that someone who is senior in age would easily understand the challenges faced by executives.

Cultural awareness for the coach is found to be crucial when operating within the African context. It is important to note that different African countries have different cultures and what works in South Africa in terms of culture might not necessarily work in Nigeria. Therefore coaches are expected to understand these cultural dynamics and adapt their coaching techniques accordingly. It was mentioned in the findings that a coach who is culturally inclined would understand the context in which the client operates and would not give textbook answers to the client. Participant 16 took the cultural argument further by stating that a coach should have walked a similar path with the client to comprehend and appreciate the client's background.

He mentioned that as a young black executive from South Africa, he would like to be coached by someone who would understand the segregation difficulties he experienced when he was growing up in South Africa. Wycherley and Cox (2008) compared the matching process in mentoring to coaching and argued that cultural matching is highly recognised in both processes. The observation that one should be coached by a coach who had walked a similar journey was made by Wycherley and Cox (2008). This observation state that in America, most training curricula argue that a mentor from a different racial or ethnic group will not understand and appreciate the social and mental challenges that the client is going through and trust could be compromised (Wycherley and Cox, 2008).

The argument is reinforced by Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (2004, p. 5) that cross cultural mentoring relationships could be regarded as *"affiliations that*

exist between unequals" and trust become of utmost importance. Friendliness, humility, kindness, listening, conflict management, patience and open mindedness are some of the coaches' qualities to be considered when choosing a coach.

The findings emphasised that a coach should have an unpretentious interest in coaching by having a high level of empathy. Most importantly a coach should have the heart for the job. This means that a coach should simply be someone who likes to see other people succeed and has the ability to emotionally connect with clients. The coach's communication skills in particular, the ability for the coach to communicate effectively, to give constructive feedback, and to have crucial conversation with the client are acknowledged in the findings. These findings support Hodgetts' (2002) view that when choosing a perfect coach the existence of interpersonal skills such as self-awareness, empathy, listening and the ability to give appropriate and constructive feedback are important.

De Haan (2008) also found that the ability to listen, to understand and encourage are the skills mostly appreciated by the clients. In concluding research question 1, which focused on the factors that should be considered when the coach-matching process is done, four main findings are summarised as follows:

Firstly, the matching process is the most important process of the coaching process and should be administered with extreme caution.

Secondly, some executives would not have a problem with a company chosen coach; however a general trust relationship should first exist between the

executive and the company. Letting the executives choose a coach on their own could be difficult because coaching happens within a business context and the business has to be somewhat involved.

Thirdly, a harmonious coach-matching process would be to allow both the executive and the company an opportunity to play a role in the coach-matching process. This joint process affords the company and the executive an equal opportunity in the coach-matching process. However, it should be managed properly because it can cause an administrative nightmare.

Lastly, the coach's characteristics have emerged as the most important predictors of the coach-matching process.

5.5 Research Question 2

What is the role of gender in a coaching relationship?

The findings corroborate the assumption that gender plays a major role in a coaching relationship and more specific to the study, for male executives in Nigeria. The conclusion from the study is that gender should be one of the considerations when sourcing coaches for male executives. This confirmation comes through analysing the findings on the factors that encourage or discourage male executives to secure the services of a female coach. In this analysis, the findings from both the male and the female respondents were explored.

Thereafter a comparison was done between the findings from the two groups. The views of the female participants further validate the importance of gender in a coaching relationship.

It is also interesting to the researcher to note that all the male participants echoed that gender is not an issue for them personally but it is an issue for other male executives. This conviction could be attributed to the fact that the researcher in this study is female and the male participants may have consciously distanced themselves from the gender bias to avoid being construed as insensitive to gender related issues.

5.5.1 *Factors encouraging male executives to secure the services of female coaches*

The findings reveal that previous experiences with females either as managers or coaches play an important role for executives in determining whether or not to secure the services of a female coach. Participants who previously worked with females, in coaching relationships or in a manager-subordinate relationship, stated that they would secure the services of a female coach. Harrison, Price and Bell (1998, p. 99) suggest that "*as people interact to get to know one another"*, diversity related differences such as gender and race are no longer seen as important.

The findings further confirm that in instances where there was no previous interaction, gender could affect the rapport during the initial stages of a coaching relationship (Wycherley & Cox, 2008). The majority of the male participants mentioned that although they personally do not have issues with having female coaches.

However a caution is given to companies that gender specific needs of other male executives who are mostly likely to object to being coached by a woman should be considered. Therefore it becomes imperative for organisations in Nigeria to have a diverse list of coaches for selection. Gray and Goregaokar (2010) have also observed that although coaches are generally chosen based on their skills and qualities such as experiences and qualifications, gender could still be an issue to some clients.

As per the findings, female coaches are seen as possessing motherly related qualities of caring and listening and thus would be regarded as better coaches than male coaches. Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer and King (2002) conducted a study to determine the benefits of multiple roles of women and found that the roles women play in their personal lives as mothers and caregivers provide psychological and emotional benefits to their professional roles. In supporting their reasons to choose a female coach, the male participants provided an interesting comparison that women would be better coaches than men because coaching involves constant communication and intense collaboration between the coach and the executive.

Therefore it was concluded that because of their natural make up, women would be more suited as coaches than men. Participant 8's painted his conviction that women are better at coaching and indicated that he would need a greater level of convincing from anyone who would claim that males are better at coaching than women. According to Ye, Wang, Wendt, Wu and Ewuema (2016, p. 1794) coaching is a developmental partnership that is collaborative and more aligned to "*stereotypical feminine*" qualities such as interpersonally orientated behaviour, recognition of individual's contribution and caring for the individual's needs (Carless, 1998).

This view is further supported by social psychology which suggests that women are more likely to provide emotional support than men when in professional relationships (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1991). Some of the participants were specific and highlighted that women are objective, truthful and less commercial than men. It was further stated that women have a natural heart to make a difference in the lives of others. One of the participants went further to distinguish between mentoring and coaching and clarified that it could be easy for a man to be a mentor to another man. However for coaching, a woman would be a better choice. In his view, this is because in coaching, the coach, like a mother, gently nudges the client into action. The participant is understood to mean that men can mentor each other but for coaching, a male needs a feminine gentleness.

This view is unpacked by Bushardt, et al. (1991) who elaborate that mentors, regardless of whether they are male of female mostly utilise masculine related behaviour and this can be the reason why it is stated that it would be easy for a male to mentor another male. The view is also supported by various authors who advocate for advantages associated with same gender mentor relationships versus cross gender mentor relationships (Ragins & McFarlin, 1990; Scandura & Williams, 2001). For participant 2 who is an expatriate in Nigeria, a Nigerian female coach would be his best choice because according to his observations, Nigerian women unlike other African women are vocal and are not shy to speak their mind. He further added that Nigerian women are strong and able to challenge their male counterparts.

These qualities relate to the expected masculine traits of assertive, dominant, ambitious, strong and confident as outlined by Eagly and Karau (2002). Therefore participant 2 would choose a female coach who portrays traits associated with males and this is clear in his portrayal of Nigerian women as different from other African women.

A woman's beauty is one of the fascinating and unexpected revelations that came through as one of the factors that encourage male executives to choose female coaches. According to Gray and Goregaokar's (2010) such male sexist surprises are prevalent in coaching relationships. In Gray and Goregaokar's study, male coachees stated that female coaches were chosen because they looked glamorous and a male coachee chose a male coach because the female coach was not wearing a short skirt (Gray & Goregaokar, 2010). In the same study a female coach was asked to be withdrawn from a coaching relationship because the male coachee displayed a high level of disrespect for women (Gray & Goregaokar, 2010).

According to Garvey (2004) mentoring often generates a strong emotional attraction and because of the similarities associated between coaching and mentoring where both relationships are one-to-one helping relationships, the same emotional attraction is possible in a coaching relationship. Another participant who is an expatriate in Nigeria explained that Nigerian male executives would choose a female coach for their own benefit. Participant 13 holds a strong believe that Nigerian men will choose female coaches with the hope of taking the relationship further. He explained that Nigerian executives always look for other interests when they see a woman and Nigerian businesses are aware of this. He went on to say that it is the reason women are employed in most sales and marketing roles in Nigeria to lure potential clients.

5.5.2 *Factors encouraging female executives to secure the services of female coaches*

Two themes relating to the reasons for female executives to secure the services of female coaches are found. The first theme given by the female participants is that if the female coach is mature, she would be chosen as a coach.

This finding reveals that the issue of female maturity is a contentious issue for other women and could be a hindrance in having female to female professional relationships. This is because these female participants hold a view that most fellow women are not mature enough to handle certain personal issues. Hence the maturity aspect is a key factor to determine whether a female coach would be chosen by a female executive. The only measure to determine this maturity is identified as the age or the success level of the coach. It is believed that the older the female coach is, the more mature she would be. Therefore, female executives could only choose a female coach who is deemed mature and successful. The second theme from female executives' perspective to choose a female coach is the perception that a female coach would understand their prejudices because they are also women.

One participant gave a comparison between a coaching relationship she had with a male coach and another with a female coach. She stated that she felt that her male coach did not *"entirely get her*" while she felt understood by her female coach especially on family related issues. These observations are supported by Gray and Goregaokar (2010) when stating that it is easier to attain career support and be challenged by someone who has somewhat experienced similar challenges. Wycherley and Cox (2008) further support the commonality view by highlighting that there could be a lack of cooperation between the coach and the coachee if they do not have similar understanding on social and psychological world views. However, Clutterbuck (1998) argues against such similarities because commonality could bring fewer personal developmental opportunities.

5.5.3 *Factors discouraging male executives to secure the services of female coaches*

The findings reflect that male executives advanced more reasons that discourage them from securing the services of a female coach. One of the

reasons they pointed out is that they foresee the possibility of female coaches acting more like their mothers and always following up on them. The perception of having a coach act like a mother drew the attention of the researcher that some participants did not entirely understand that a relationship between the coach and the coachee is the relationship of equals (Brock, 2008). As explained by Cavanagh, Grant and Kemp (2005) a coaching relationship is a relationship between two autonomous parties and the coach is not a dictator or an advisor in the relationship. One of the reasons discouraging male executives to secure the services of a female coach is that being coached by a woman will be construed as a sign of weakness.

This male sexism prevalence is supported in the literature by Ongaki, et al. (2015) that within an African context, women are mostly socialised early in their lives to be second-class citizens. Another interesting reason flagged as a deterrent from procuring the services of female coaches is that a female coach would not have the same wide chain of networks compared to a male coach. This perception surfaced because of the belief that a coach should open networking doors for their clients and therefore a female coach would be restricted in exposing a male executive to the required business networks. In analysing the networking agenda, it becomes clear that the participants confuse a role played by a mentor and a role that a coach should play. This is because Gray and Goregaokar (2010, p. 536) clarify that coaches unlike mentors, do not have the *"power or influence to provide career functions such as sponsorships, exposure, visibility and protection"*.

From the male executives' perspective it is also clear that the wide networks referred to in the findings are male related social networks such as playing golf, having social drinks with the boys and accessibility to career sponsorships or other business opportunities.

A female coach therefore is perceived not to have the ability to penetrate through such networks. Interestingly, the issue of women's beauty also came through in the findings as both positive and negative. The negative factor is mostly associated with younger female coaches who are discouraged from working with male executives to avoid gossip and possible attraction.

Ragins and Mc Farlin (1990) confirm the challenges of cross-gender professional relationships as a possible covert sexual theme and office gossip which could cause unnecessary problems. One of the factors that also discourage male executives from securing the services of a female coach is that, in most instances successful women do not act in a womanly manner, because they try to mirror male related behaviours. Therefore a successful female coach is likely to act like a man and display masculine related behaviours and this is viewed as a violation of their gender role as women.

As confirmed by Ye, et al. (2016), indeed females who exhibit masculine related behaviours such as competitiveness, assertive and confidence are likely to be evaluated less favourably than their male counterparts because they are perceived as violating their roles as women. The natural boundaries of engagement between males and females also discourage male executives from securing the services of a female coach. A coaching relationship is deemed to be an intimate relationship between the coach and the client where deep personal issues could be discussed. Most of the participants mentioned that they would love to have the freedom to call their coach any time and would also like, if possible, to have an added social relationship with their coaches after the coaching relationship. However the extended length of a coaching relationship is analysed by Berglass (2002) as a possible downfall of coaching.

He declares that coaching is meant to be a short term, practical and goal-focused process and it is important that companies should define the programme scope to avoid the coach becoming a life-long partner (Berglass, 2002). Zeus and Skiffington (2000) add that coaching is a short term process and that a coach who has worked with an executive for a longer period of time may only adopt a mentoring role when the coaching relationship ends. However as per the findings, such freedom would not exist with a female coach due to the stated natural boundaries. The other aspect stated relating to the natural boundaries between males and females is that, to avoid having jealousy related problems with other personal relationships, such as the wife or partner; it is better and safer to choose a male coach than a female coach.

The possibility of a connection between a female coach and a male executive is emphasised in this argument. Elsesser and Peplau (2006) expands the challenges of cross gender relationships by explaining that in general, professionals get worried that the other party in a cross-gender relationship could misinterpret their friendliness or vulnerability and sexual interest. Therefore this creates obstacles in forging cross-gender relationships and as per the findings; such possible misinterpretations could discourage a male executive from securing the services of a female coach.

Another reason for not choosing a female coach is that males are generally better at handling problems than women and a man always needs another man to help them man-up because women might be soft and sympathetic most of the times and fail to move the male executive into the reality of the action. The last aspect which came out strongly is the traditional, cultural and religious restrictions in Nigeria which could discourage male executives from securing the services of a female coach. This mentality came about because a coaching relationship is considered as a relationship where concerns and challenges are

shared in a professional helping relationship (Millard & Korotov, 2014). Therefore the reality is that there are certain traditional, cultural and even religious limitations in Nigeria that do not allow men to share their concerns and challenges with women. The argument that in Africa, deep traditional related values force women to be socialised into being second class citizens support this view (Ongaki, et al., 2015).

Similarly the inferiority level of African women is substantiated by Nwosu (2012) because African women are found to be marginalised, undervalued and under-recognised and they are regarded as inferior and subordinate to their male counterparts. The findings explained that certain religious related restrictions are common, for example, a Muslim male executive would not be able to sit in private settings with a woman and discuss personal challenges. As per the findings, Christianity and Islam are the two major religions in Nigeria and according to Para-Mallam (2006) the strict application of Sharia Law and at times, statutory law in Nigeria could be found to be particularly repressive of women's rights. There are areas within Nigeria that are not overtly governed in accordance with Sharia Law however in these areas there is a vast array of customary laws that discriminate against women (Para-Mallam, 2006) where women are not allowed to have certain discussions or question men.

It is emphasised that in the northern part of Nigeria where it is mostly Muslim, female coaches coaching male executives is almost close to impossible because of the nature of a coaching relationship and the Muslim religious constrictions. Adebayo and Udegbe (2004) argue that in Nigeria, Muslim male executives are likely to object to working under a female leader and the same resistance could be presented even if they find themselves working in global organisations within Nigeria.

Furthermore the Nigerian government sector is characterised by patriarchal tendencies (Adebayo & Udegbe, 2004) and assigning a female coach to work with these male executives, who are mostly Muslim, could be a challenge. In comparing the female and male participants' responses, both sexes agreed on three factors that could discourage securing a female coach for a male executive.

The similar compelling reasons were identified as follows:

- Natural engagement boundaries
- Successful women do not act in a womanly manner.
- Traditional, cultural and religious boundaries

5.5.4 *Factors discouraging female executives to secure the services of female coaches*

Female participants elaborated on the reasons that could discourage them from securing the services of a female coach. The first reason is that as females, they relate better with men than women. This view supports the argument that women in professional settings and more in senior management roles do not support each other (Wrigley, 2002; Mavin, 2006). The second reason on the question why females would prefer a male coach over a female coach is the possible woman drama which is always avoided by other women through associating more with men than fellow women. In a study by Afedo, Aziale and Ahiekpora (2013) to investigate the slogan that women are their own enemies within a professional setting, it was found that women often sabotage other women with severe criticism and they also fail to portray them as good managers. In the findings, this practice is referred to as woman-to-woman

drama which discourages female executives from securing the services of a female coach.

The third reason is that men are generally more experienced than women in professional settings because they hold most executive positions. As per Nwosu (2012), it is common knowledge that in Nigeria, most executive positions are held by men as opposed to women and that this practice creates a perception or maybe even the reality that men would have more business or corporate experience. Another reason advanced by the female participants and which is further supported by Wycherley and Cox (2008) is the added advantage of having a cross-gender coaching relationship where a male coach could provide a different perspective to a female executive. The last reason from the female participants is that women are not as authentic as their male counterparts. Therefore, they would rather choose a male coach where authenticity would be somewhat guaranteed.

5.6 Research Question 3

What are the gender stereotypes within Nigeria that can inhibit the formation of a coaching relationship between a female coach and a male executive?

The findings confirm that Nigeria is a typical African society where women are still perceived and treated as an inferior gender and where they are expected to be compliant and devoted to males (Nwosu, 2012; Ongaki, et al., 2015). The findings also reveal that the general perception on the role of women within society and tradition, beliefs and customs are found to be major contributors towards female related gender stereotypes by male executives.

Such perceptions perpetuate the continuous existence of stereotypes for current and future generations. In recognising that gender stereotypes are preconceived descriptors, the researcher found psychological characteristics, beliefs and norms that differentiate between males and females and are able to influence the formation of a coaching relationship between a male executive and a female coach.

The aim of the research question was to only identify gender stereotypes that could inhibit the formation of a coaching relationship between male executive and female coach. However the findings also reveal positive gender stereotypes that could encourage the formation of a coaching relationship between a male executive and a female coach. To provide a holistic view and analysis of the findings, this section discusses both positive and negative stereotypes that could affect the overall formation of a coaching relationship.

It is believed that when people are subtly presented with positive stereotypes about their group, they report being more encouraged and exhilarated, whereas subtle presentation of negative stereotypes lead people to report greater anxiety and lower motivation (Schmader, Johns & Forbes, 2008). The identified stereotypes were determined by allowing the participants to share their beliefs and opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of being in a male to male coaching relationship and the advantages and disadvantages of being in a female coach and male executive coaching relationship. The negative stereotypes prove the prevalence of male dominance in the Nigerian business landscape (Emihe, 1996) where women are relegated merely for being women. There are also stereotypes in the findings which identify how male executives negatively view male coaches. However, the pendulum of these stereotypes is tilted more against female coaches.

5.6.1 *Male executive and male coach coaching relationships: advantages and disadvantages*

The researcher observed that the question or the discussion on the disadvantages of male to male coaching relationship took longer for most of the male participants to answer. One could conclude that they had to think hard about giving the answer because the disadvantages of being in a coaching relationship with a fellow male do not come easy to them. The stated disadvantages of male to male coaching were therefore identified as non-availability of males due to their busy schedule, tough love where men generally give each other a hard time, a general lack of openness amongst men, imminent competition amongst men and lastly, the ego of not wanting to show up as weak to a fellow man.

All these disadvantages are considered as valid reasons for individual male executives to choose a male coach over a female coach. However, disadvantages such as not wanting to appear weak to a fellow man provide another contradiction in the findings, because one of the reasons for male executives not to choose female coaches is that they do not want to appear weak by sharing sensitive issues with a woman. Disadvantages such as men and their busy schedules prove gender related stereotypes which assume that females are not busy as compared to males. The challenge with stereotypes is that they are espoused to all women and they affect even those women who would not necessarily possess those qualities that are stereotypical (Heilman & Eagly, 2008).

Bozer, et al. (2015) examined gender similarity of the coach-coachee and found that the similarity in gender had little impact on the coaching outcomes. However, a gender match had a significant effect on the coachee's self-awareness.

In discussing the advantages of a male to male coaching relationship, the argument by Hodgetts (2002) that factors such as same gender match are important in ensuring an effective coaching relationship are recognised. The prevalence of physical energy between men is found to be one of the advantages of being in a male to male coaching relationship. It is further expanded that this energy could be used to benefit the coaching relationship. Bozer, et al. (2015, p. 221) cited "*more comfortableness*", as a positive effect of being in the same gender coaching relationship.

Similarly, the second advantage is the ease in which discussions would take place in man to man discussions. It is stated in the findings that it is easier to disagree with another man without feeling like you are offending them. Another advantage for having a male coaching a male executive is that bonding will be quickly established. This statement supports the suggestion advanced by Wycherley and Cox (2008) state that a benefit of having same gender coaching relationship is that rapport is established much faster.

Sharing of similar experiences is also identified as an advantage of being in the same gender coaching relationship. Byrne and Griffits, (1973), in Bozer, et al. (2015, p. 221) explain that the similarity attraction paradigm is the reasons *why human beings have a natural tendency to identify with individuals perceived to be similar to themselves in terms of physical characteristics, personality, attitude and behaviours*. Therefore having similarity of experiences and/or characteristics validates one's view and creates a sense of belonging, attraction and positive feelings.

The absence of engagement restrictions is also identified as an added advantage of having male to male coaching relationship. The other interesting advantage that is outlined in the findings is that with a male to male coaching relationship, confidence happens automatically and this lack of doubt helps to move the coaching engagement even faster. This developed confidence could be emanating from the instant belief that coaching would be effective. The last identified advantage is that men need other men to help them toughen up. This reason correspond well with the previous reason for not choosing a female coach where females are portrayed as soft and that they could fail to move the coaching relationship to an action plan.

5.6.2 *Male executive and female coach coaching relationships: advantages and disadvantages*

This study found various gender stereotypes that could inhibit the formation of a coaching relationship or even adversely affect an existing coaching relationship. The unfairness of these stereotypes is that they always affect the entire group. According to Heilman and Eagly (2008), it is important to note that bias is not necessarily created by only having the negative gender stereotype; but it is also created when one matches that stereotype with a particular role and results in negative evaluations based on the stereotypes. In this study, the gender stereotypes result in a negative performance evaluation for female coaches who are supposed to be seen as competent and capable coaches who could coach male executive. However, there are also positive gender stereotypes that are identified as advantages of having a female coach for a male executive.

Suk (2010) agrees that not all gender stereotypes are bad for women and provides an example where certain laws such as provision for maternity leave only to mothers and not fathers could be seen as paternalistic in nature but could also be positive to females, since it affords mothers an opportunity to be home with their new born babies. Positive gender stereotypes, in this study, include qualities such as warmth and gentleness which could also be used against women especially in the corporate or business world (Heilman & Eagly, 2008). Other positive gender stereotypes identified in the findings that have a positive effect on a coaching relationship between a female coach and a male executive are as follows:

- women are trustworthy
- women have less ego
- women are thorough
- absence of competition when a male executive is coached by a female
- women are dependable
- women are open, therefore the coaching relationship would be an open relationship as well

All the stated positive stereotypes could contribute to the effectiveness of a coaching relationship and most importantly, can be factors that should be considered in the formation of a coaching relationship with a female coach. The stereotypes that could adversely affect both the formation of a coaching relationship and an existing coaching relationship are discussed and analysed below.

- Women lack the business acumen when compared to males. In the findings, it was stated that women would not understand basic operations issues. These issues are brought into a coaching relationship by male clients. Such an understanding could easily translate into an ineffective coaching relationship because this assumption might lead to a situation in which a male executive who need coaching on deal making may not have confidence on a female coach because of the stereotype that regards women as incapable of such coaching interventions.

- Women coaches, especially married women, would not have the same flexibility as male coaches in terms of engaging outside the coaching relationship with a male client. It was stated in the findings that this applies mostly to married women. This stereotype further expands the criteria to differentiate between married and single women and it covers all married women with the same blanket of being unavailable due to marital related commitments.

- A coaching relationship is considered to be a close and personal relationship and therefore it is better for a male executive to avoid having a female coach because of the possibility of the spouse becoming jealous of the closeness of the relationship. This particular stereotype does not only refer to females as coaches but also made reference to females as spouses. The perception regards female spouses as jealous and would not be able to handle the professional relationship between their spouse and a female coach and this is identified by the male executives as a good enough reason not to secure the services of a female coach.

- The other finding which could affect female coaches being chosen to work with male executives is that when the executives engage with women in a relationship such as coaching, they could open themselves to possible office gossip. This conclusion is supported by Gray and Goregaokar (2010) by explaining this as a difficulty in cross-gender relationships. This view applies mostly if the female coach is young and attractive. Therefore the best option is for a male executive not to engage in such a coaching relationship. This is another gender stereotype that could deny young female coaches an opportunity to coach male executives.

- The superiority complex of male executives is found to be another inhibitor because male executives state that they could not discuss certain personal challenges with women because women are regarded as inferior. An example in the findings is that most males are breadwinners in their homes and are regarded as masters or lords by their female spouses. Therefore there are chances that they could see all women as similar to their spouses and expect only a master-subordinate relationship with all women. This stereotype is corroborated in a study conducted by Menon and Kotze (2007) in which they were investigating HR integration in the South African military. In the study, some of the traditional black male participants stated that they found it difficult to report to a female manager because they are used to being respected by their spouses at home (Menon & Kotze, 2007).

- The general role of a woman in society is also brought out as one of the gender stereotypes especially within an African context where most roles for women are confined to the kitchen rather than in the boardroom. Such roles are brought about by the traditional and statutory laws in most

African countries. These laws result in unfair social structures which give men certain privileges and they hold firm beliefs about women (Nwosu 2012; Booysen & Nkomo, 2010).

- One of the identified disadvantages of a female coach and male executive coaching relationship is that employed women always feel guilty about working. It is further stated that this aspect of guilt could affect the effectiveness of a coaching relationship. The assumption here is that all women feel guilty when they are working because they are expected to be at home with the children. Therefore a female coach could be judged or pitied by a male executive because she is not home with her children.

- The other identified disadvantage is that males tend to only accept authority from women who hold more senior positions than them. Therefore because a coaching relationship is a relationship of equals (Cavanagh, et al. 2005), it would be difficult for male executives to trust and accept challenges from a female coach. Therefore the stereotype in this regard is that for a female to exert authority over her male counterpart, she should have some sort of positional or authoritative powers which the coach would not necessarily have.

Booysen (1999) found that, in South Africa it is mostly black males who maintained a strong belief on gender role differentiations as compared to other race groups when she conducted a study on challenges facing women managers in South Africa.

Similarly to this study, all the male participants were black males in terms of race and although most of them were from Nigeria, there were four male expatriates who came from other African countries and surprisingly they all shared similar sentiments.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings from the data and within the framework of the literature review and analysed the findings. The findings provide insights, on what coaching is used for, including and its emergence in Nigeria. In conclusion, the research questions have been answered as follows:

Research Question 1

The actual factors that should be considered during the coach-matching process are identified and illustrated in the figure 17.

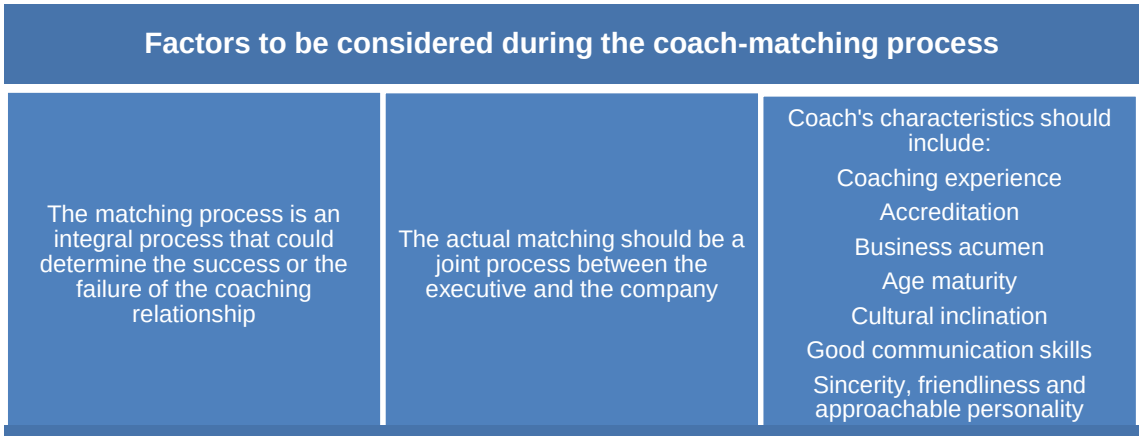


Figure 17: Factors to be considered during the coach-matching process

Research Question 2

The role of gender in a coaching relationship has been determined. Gender plays a key role when coaching relationships are formed in Nigeria. The gender of the coach is one of the factors that a male executive in Nigeria would consider when choosing a coach and organisations should be aware of this.

Therefore the answer to the research question is that gender could either positively or negatively influence male executive's decision to choose a female coach.

Research Question 3

The motherly nature of women, their general warmness, their meticulousness when approaching issues, their ability to be friendly and open and the fact that women have a less ego are identified as positive gender stereotypes that would encourage male executives to secure the services of female coaches. However, in response to research question 3, the findings pointed out the gender stereotypes that could inhibit the formation of a coaching relationship are mostly perpetuated by the applicable religion, tradition and customs within Nigeria.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the key findings from the research regarding how gender stereotypes could influence the coach-matching process within Nigeria where most executives are male. The objective of the study was to highlight the actual stereotypes that could inhibit the formation of a coaching relationship between a male executive and female coach. The study did this by firstly exploring the background to coaching as practiced in Nigeria and the unpacking of the coach-matching process followed. The factors that should be taken into account during the coach-matching process are clearly defined in the study.

Through this study, the role of gender in the coaching relationship was unpacked and understood from the perspective of the male executive. It is clear from the findings that the study managed to highlight the actual gender stereotypes that could inhibit the formation of a coaching relationship between a male executive and a female coach. Equally the gender stereotypes that could encourage the formation of a coaching relationship between a male executive and female coach are highlighted and explored. This section concludes by summarising the four pillars of this study.

- Background and understanding of coaching
- The coach matching process
- The role of gender
- The gender stereotypes

6.2 Conclusions of the study

6.2.1 *Background and understanding of coaching*

Coaching is emerging in Nigeria and the coach matching process is critical to the success of the coaching relationship. The study confirmed that coaching plays an integral part in personal and leadership development and for coaching to succeed, it must be supported by top management. There is a need to capacitate organisational functions like HR with coaching skills in order to mitigate costs associated with executive coaching. Organisations are further advised to recognise that coaching should not be a fit for all exercise. However the organisers and buyers of coaching services in organisations should be cognisant of executives' busy schedules and individual developmental preferences.

Three reasons for executives to be in a company initiated coaching relationship are identified as; when executives are part of a leadership development programme at work, when executives are trained in their roles as line managers with supervisory coaching and lastly when taking international assignments. Major contributors to failed coaching relationships are monotony and lack of action plans in a coaching relationship. These reasons are mostly attributed to how the coach facilitates and drives the coaching engagement. These major contributors highlight the importance of the coach being the main determinant of having a successful coaching relationship.

6.2.2 *The coach matching process*

This research reveals three distinct features which are the integral part of the coach-matching process.

Firstly the coach-matching process is an integral part of the coaching relationship in that it is done to ensure the existence of a coaching relationship. Therefore the coach-matching process is the main feature in determining the existence of a coaching relationship. Secondly, the executive play an important role in the choice of the coach to be used. Therefore the study corroborates that organisations cannot solely choose coaches for executives.

The matching process should also be based on certain criteria and these criteria are highly influenced by the needs, beliefs, and the traditional background of the executive. Therefore the coach has to meet the executive's requirements. Lastly, an ideal coach should have certain characteristics, skills and a particular personality. These qualities help create an ideal set of qualities for coaches in Nigeria. These qualities should be noted and acknowledged during the coach-matching process.

6.2.3 *The role of gender*

Gender plays an important role and can determine the success or the failure of coaching relationships in Nigeria. This view is informed by certain widely held male executives' ideas about women in Nigeria. These ideas were found to be both positive and negative to female coaches. For example being coached by a woman could be frowned upon by male executives because of tradition, customs and beliefs. However to the advantage of women, female coaches could also be chosen by male executives merely because of the widely held perception that women are warm, caring and nurturing and that they would utilise these traits in a coaching relationship.

6.2.4 *The gender stereotypes*

It is depicted in this research that there are male executives in Nigeria who remain uncomfortable working with female coaches. However previous experience in working with women helps overcome such stereotypical tendencies. The actual stereotypes that were found to be the inhibitors in the formation of a coaching relationship are summarised as follows:

- Women lack the business acumen as compared to males.
- Women coaches, especially married women, would not have the same flexibility as male coaches in terms of engaging outside the coaching relationship with a male client.
- Due to natural engagement restrictions between males and females, it is advisable for a male executive to avoid having a female coach because of the possibility of the spouse becoming jealous.
- When the executives engage with a young and beautiful female coach in a relationship such as coaching they open themselves to possible office gossip.
- The general role of a woman is also brought up as one of the gender stereotypes especially within an African context where women are only confined to certain roles and where most of these roles are rather in the kitchen rather than in the boardroom.
- The identified disadvantages of a female coach and male executive coaching relationship are that working women always feel guilty about working.
- Males tend to accept authority only from women who hold higher positions than themselves.

6.3 Recommendations

This section outlines the recommendations and implications directed to two stakeholders as follows:

- Organisations should be the custodians of the coach-matching process.
- Female coaches in Nigeria need to understand the underlying factors that could inhibit the success of a coaching relationship with male executives.

6.3.1 *Organisations wishing to develop their executives through coaching*

As the organisers and buyers of executive coaching, organisations should understand the following in terms of the coach-matching process.

- The executive should be part of the matching process and should have a final voice on which coach to be used.
- Organisations should ensure that a diverse list of coaches is available for male executives and this list should include both male and female coaches.
- Organisations should understand and respect male executive's traditions, customs and beliefs which could influence the success of a coach-matching process.

6.3.2 *Female Coaches*

Female coaches in Nigeria should be cognisant of different cultures and beliefs and recognise the impact that that these differences could have on a coaching relationship. They should further be culturally inclined and appreciative of the fact that in Nigeria their gender could adversely affect their coaching relationships with male executives. However they should equally understand that they stand a chance of being chosen because of their feminine characteristics. Female coaches should also understand that Nigeria is still a patriarchal society and therefore there are gender stereotypes which female coaches will have to live with.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

There is currently little literature on the coach pairing process especially within the African context. Moreover general literature on coaching and specific to Nigeria is non-existent. Therefore this research provided a base and reference for current and future researchers to expand the findings. The objective of this research was to build the body of knowledge of coaching literature specific to Nigeria. The research focused on the gender stereotypes in the coach-matching process, in particular, how the coach-matching process could be done for male executives in Nigeria, the role of gender in a coaching relationship and lastly the actual gender stereotypes that could affect the formation of a coaching relationship. The research succeeded in identifying the gender stereotypes that could affect the coach-matching process. However further research is needed.

Firstly, the study could be repeated only with female executives in Nigeria.

Secondly, an exactly similar study could be expanded to other African countries.

Thirdly, the study could be repeated and focus only on the age rather than gender of the coach.

Additional studies could be carried out only with male executives who have been coached by female coaches. The study would contribute towards establishing the contributors or inhibitors to a coaching relationship.

The distinction made in the research on applicable natural engagement restrictions between males and females deserves further understanding. Therefore further research could be carried out with female coaches' experiences when coaching male executives. The focus of the study should be on how the natural engagement restrictions affected the coaching relationship.

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APPENDIX A: ACTUAL RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Profile

1. What is your position at (company name)?
2. Are you a local employee or expatriate into Nigeria?
3. Does (company name) have a recognised executive coaching programme?
4. If yes, what is executive coaching mainly used for in (company name)?
5. If no, do you think (company name) should have an executive coaching for its executives?

Understanding of Coaching

6. Have you ever been in a coaching relationship?
7. If yes, what brought about that relationship?
8. If yes, what were the main reasons for the success or failure of that coaching relationship?
9. If no, in the future would you consider executive coaching as a personal development intervention?

Coach–Matching Process factors to be considered during a coach-matching process?

10. Between the executive and the company who should have a final say on which coach to be used and why?
11. What characteristics of a coach should an executive or the company consider when choosing a coach?

Role of Gender in a coaching relationship

12. What factors could encourage or discourage you from securing services of a female coach?

Gender Stereotypes that could inhibit the formation of a coaching rekationship in Nigeria between a female coach and a male executive?

13. What would you consider as advantages or disadvantages of having a male coach/ male coachee relationship?
14. What would you consider as advantages or disadvantages of having a female coach/male coachee relationship?

APPENDIX B: FORMAL LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

The Graduate School of Business Administration

2 St David's Place, Parktown,

Johannesburg, 2193,

South Africa

PO Box 98, WITS, 2050

Website: www.wbs.ac.za

Dear Sir or Madam

My name is Tshidi Anya and I am conducting research for the purpose of completing my Masters in Business and Executive Coaching at Wits Business School. My research is on the role of gender stereotypes during the coach-matching process. I am conducting a qualitative study to establish *factors that should be considered during the coach-matching process and the gender stereotypes that can inhibit the formation of a coaching relationship between a female coach and a male executive.*

I am asking you whether you will allow me to conduct an interview with you. If you agree, I will ask you to participate in one interview for approximately one hour. I am also asking you to give me permission to tape record the interview. I tape record interviews so that I can accurately record what is said. Please understand that **your participation is voluntary** and you are not forced to take part in this study. The choice of whether to participate or not, is yours alone. If you choose not take part, you will not be affected in any way whatsoever. If you agree to participate, you may stop participating in the research at any time and tell me that you don't want to go continue. If you do this there will also be no penalties and you will NOT be prejudiced in ANY way.

Confidentiality

Any study records that identify you will be kept confidential to the extent possible by law. The records from your participation may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including my academic supervisor/s. (All of these people are required to keep your identity confidential.) All study records will be destroyed after the completion and marking of my thesis. I will refer to you by a code number or pseudonym (another name) in the thesis and any further publication.

Risks/discomforts

At the present time, I do not see any risks in your participation. The risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life.

Benefits

There are no immediate benefits to you from participating in this study. However, this study will be extremely helpful to us in understanding and providing guidance to the manner in which the coach–matching process should be done within organisations.

If you would like to receive feedback on the study, I can send you the results of the study when it is completed sometime after November 2016.

Who to contact if you have been harmed or have any concerns

This research has been approved by the Wits Business School. If you have any complaints about ethical aspects of the research or feel that you have been harmed in any way by participating in this study, please contact the Research Office Manager at the Wits Business School, Mmabatho Leeuw. mmabatho.leeuw@wits.ac.za.

If you have concerns or questions about the research you may call my academic research supervisor Charisse Drobis (charisse.drobis@wits.ac.za).

CONSENT

I hereby agree to participate in the research. I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop participating at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively .I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally in the immediate or short term. I understand that my participation will remain confidential. I hereby agree to the tape-recording of the interview.

…….. ……

Signature of Participant **Date**