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# Leadership coaching on organisational culture change in an automotive manufacturing concern in South Africa

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# Leadership coaching on organisational culture change in an automotive manufacturing concern in South Africa

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

**Wits Business School**

**Johannesburg, March 2022**

# ABSTRACT

Organisations whose employees perceive leaders as trustworthy and empathetic to their needs and opinions, especially during times of change, have improved performance, remain competitive and even survive external economic conditions. In this respect, building internal capability through leadership coaching, so as to enable swift adaptability and agility to a changing landscape, mitigate employee resistance and garner trust from employees, becomes paramount. As an established developmental tool to enhance performance, leadership coaching has not gone beyond this developmental requirement towards being viewed as a strategic lever in shifting organisational culture.

The purpose of this participatory action research was to explore the perceived influence of leadership coaching on organisational culture and aimed to enhance leadership trust, empathy and change leadership during organisational change within an automotive manufacturing concern in South Africa. This study was conducted with the application of individual coaching sessions, with three managers within an operations department over a five month period, and pre-and post-coaching employee interviews were conducted with six participants, in order to determine shifts in perception and behaviour. Data collection took place during and after leadership coaching sessions and employee interviews, using audio recordings, transcripts and researcher notes.

The key findings from the study revealed that through the application of an integrated cognitive behavioural and solution-focused approach to coaching, shifts in leadership behaviour resulted in enhanced engagement, inclusivity, augmented self-efficacy and improved performance delivery during change. This study provides insights into the formidable influence that organisational culture has on newly promoted leaders. Although a powerful tool, the influence of leadership coaching – unaided – is not immune to the potency of an organisation's overriding culture.

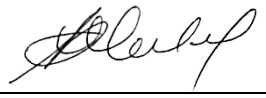


**KEYWORDS**

Leadership coaching, organisational culture, organisational change, trust, empathy, change leadership

# DECLARATION

I, Karen Morkel, 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.

Name: **Karen Morkel** Signature: 

Signed at Port Elizabeth

On the 26th day of March 2022

# DEDICATION

I'd like to dedicate this research report to the following people:

To my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, for Your ability in me, for answered prayers, for your unfailing love and for making this possible. Continue to use this work and my life for Your purpose.

To my phenomenal mother, Esther Laura Morkel, who is a confidant, a friend, my greatest supporter, and intercessor. Thank you for your consistent and unwavering faith. You have taught me to persevere through trials and still be able to rejoice. Thank you for walking this journey with me, Mama, and helping me conquer this mountain.

To my late dad, Michael Phillip Morkel, I miss you every day. You would have been so undoubtedly proud of me, and I can see your beautiful smiling face even now.

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# CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this participatory action research was to explore the perceived influence of leadership coaching on organisational culture. In so doing, it aimed to enhance leadership trust, empathy and change leadership during organisational change within an automotive manufacturing concern in South Africa.

## 1.2. Context of the study

This proposed research focused on managers who lead people within a medium-sized automotive concern in South Africa that supplies original equipment fitment to the car manufacturers' industry in South Africa. The term "original equipment fitment" refers to the tyres produced for the Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) (Tiger Wheel and Tyre, 2019). This study explored the perceived influence that leadership coaching has on organisational culture, specifically during times of change.

As the largest manufacturing industry in the country, the sustainability and continuity of the South African automotive sector is pivotal to the country's future industrial and economic landscape. The automotive cluster is an integral industrial sector in South Africa, with its augmentation being core to the government's economic development strategy (Rumney, 2020). It accounted for 6.8% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2018, and approximately 457 000 jobs in South Africa (Davies & Vincent, 2020). According to a report by The National Association of Automobile Manufacturers of South Africa (NAAMSA), being the fifth largest exporting sector in South Africa, the sector exported 64,1% of vehicles and automotive components to the value of R201,7 billion in 2019 (NAAMSA, 2020). Furthermore, the sector supports over 1 million employees by contributing to the total compensation of 3,5% estimated at approximately R78,7% billion in the sector (NAAMSA, 2020).

The progressive decline in global demand for vehicles, by approximately 14%, in 2020, coupled with a global pandemic and poor economic growth, has led to the need for extreme cost cuts, frequent restructuring, technological optimisation and, in certain cases, insolvency (Davies & Vincent, 2020). According to Daniels (2020), the Eastern Cape is the centre of South Africa's automotive manufacturing sector and, as such, has been deeply impacted by this decline. With an overall 40% reduction in key performance areas such as sales, production, imports and exports, this downward trajectory is set to continue (Daniels, 2020).

In order to withstand these adverse impacts, the automotive manufacturing concern was propelled to adopt a culture that is adaptable and agile to change. Popa (2018) stressed that, in order for an organisation to respond rapidly to these external macros and microeconomic changes, shifts within the organisational culture are required. Furthermore, research has acknowledged the relationship between organisational culture and the productivity and performance of both the employee and the organisation (Nikpour, 2017; Shahzad, 2014). Therefore, the automotive manufacturing concern under study in this research project needed to build internal capability within their organisational culture and leadership, so as to enable swift adaptability and agility to a changing landscape in order to stay relevant and keep afloat.

According to Schein (2010), managing culture is the inherent function of leadership; by implication, it is of utmost importance for a leader to fully comprehend, influence, shape or shift organisational culture. A seminal figure for organisational culture, Hofstede (1997), has posited that behaviour and thoughts are strongly influenced by culture. Therefore, understanding organisational culture is essential to influencing the behaviour or thoughts of people (as cited in Sun, 2008). In turn, leadership behaviour significantly shapes the culture of an organisation (Ertosun & Adiguzel, 2018; Kavanagh & Ashkanasy, 2006). Similarly, organisational culture strongly influences leadership and employee behaviour, and leaders within an organisation are characterised by their behavioural modification in an effort to handle the organisational culture (Stokes, 2019; Tran, 2020).

Meyer and Mills (2016) propose that “Leadership behaviour is commonly defined through perceptions of favourable outcomes” (p. 773). Organisations whose employees perceive leaders as trustworthy and empathetic to their needs and opinions, especially during times of change, have improved their performance, remain competitive, and even survive external economic conditions (Hao & Yazdanifard, 2015; Rahman & Castelli, 2013).

Leadership coaching, also known as executive coaching, is fast becoming a “critical tool” to aid leaders in attaining the business performance impact and effectively make the necessary changes (Creative Metier, 2016, p. 5). Executive coaching is defined as a short-term interactive process between the employee and the coach to improve leadership effectiveness by enhancing self-awareness and practising new behaviours (Kombarakaran, Yang, Baker, & Fernandes, 2008). What then becomes plausible is that, through the leader's coaching, the organisation's transformation becomes possible (Marson, 2019).

Leadership coaching with a cognitive behavioural and solution-focused approach is best suited hereto. The cognitive behavioural approach, as delineated by Palmer and Whybrow (2007), is an “integrative approach which combines the use of cognitive, behavioural, imaginal and problem-solving techniques and strategies within a cognitive behavioural framework to enable coachees to achieve their realistic goals” (p. 86). The coach employing a solution-focused approach aims to provide awareness for the coachee in recognising their capabilities and fundamentally viewing themselves as capable of solving their own problems and possessing the requisite resources to create the desired state (Cox, Bachkirova, & Clutterbuck, 2014). Through the application of coaching, which is fundamentally a learning process, the leader experiences a transformative process during which changes in thinking arise (Rostron, 2014).

In order for the automotive manufacturing concern to continue operating, compete within a global market, and beat the odds of the macro- and microeconomic conditions, it was necessary for the organisation to focus on its leadership in enabling a significant culture shift – with a specific focus on trust, empathy and change leadership, as demonstrated by its leaders. This would result in increased organisational productivity and performance and, in turn, lower

the economic risk to the automotive industry and South African manufacturing sector (Daniels, 2020; Shahzad, 2014).

This study aimed to explore the perceived influence of leadership coaching on contributory shifts in trust, empathy, and change leadership in enabling organisational culture change in the automotive concern.

## 1.3. Research problem

The automotive manufacturing concern has undergone a series of changes and has been on a journey to transform its organisational culture, enhance employee engagement and improve overall business performance since 2016 (Company A, 2019). Based on the 2019 annual employee feedback survey results and focus groups conducted by the Talent Manager, low demonstration of empathy shown to employees, together with a sense of non-inclusivity and scant change leadership, have contributed towards lower levels of employee engagement and an overall lack of trust in leadership (Company A, 2019)[1]. The amassing of these factors impacted overall business performance and the execution of planned change, which presented a perpetual challenge to the organisation.

Organisational culture has been cited as the impetus to either thwart or propel the implementation of change (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2015) and is the foremost source of unsuccessful organisational change implementations (Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2010). In order to garner support from employees in leading and directing them to meet organisational goals in a time of change, an effective leader should own character traits such as passion, consistency, trust, vision and conscious change leadership as the foundation to building trust and inspiring action amongst employees (Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Hao, 2015). Yet, during periods of intense change, attention to these components of organisational culture is often neglected by leadership, who are the driving forces thereof. Although leadership coaching has become an established, distinctive

[1] Anonymised to protect the identity of the organisation

developmental tool employed by many organisations in enhancing performance, and thus serving as a catalyst for change, it has not gone beyond this developmental requirement towards being viewed as a strategic lever in shifting organisational culture (Evans, 2011).

Suppose leadership is perceived negatively by the organisation (i.e., low levels of trust, lacking empathy) during uncertainty and change, the organisational culture will suffer, which contributes to laboured change implementation and negatively impacts business performance (Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Hao, 2015). The research problem that this study sought to explore was the extent to which leadership coaching could influence leadership behaviour in a manner that would inspire trust and empathy in leaders and change leadership during organisational change.

## 1.4. Research Questions

The questions this research study explored were:

1.4.1. In what way will leadership coaching influence trust and empathy in leadership?
1.4.2. To what extent does leadership coaching influence change leadership?

## 1.5. Significance of the study

According to Athanasopoulou and Dopson (2018), the literature on leadership coaching has largely focused on the impact coaching has on a micro-level, that is, the one-on-one relationship between coach and coachee. In addition, over the past few years, there has been a significant augmentation of literature for the advocacy of leadership coaching in transforming behaviours of leaders resulting in improved business performance, with considerable research focussed on coaching conducted in many organisations (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011). However, less is known about the effect of leadership coaching in contributing to shifts in perceptions of trust, empathy and change leadership within an automotive manufacturing concern in South Africa. Furthermore, according to

Athanasopoulou and Dopson (2018), limited research has been conducted on the influence that leadership coaching has on a macro-level, generating organisational impact and benefits. Grant (2014) further posits that there is a dearth in research that explores the impact of leadership coaching specifically during organisational change.

A leader's unique quality and traits are distinctively positioned to influence, craft and direct the organisation's culture (Schein, 2010). If this is true, for the South African automotive manufacturing concern to navigate change effectively, mitigate potential resistance from organisational culture, while garnering trust from their people during change, an intentional focus on transforming leaders should be taken. A leadership coaching approach with a cognitive behavioural and solution-focused approach was best suited to catalyse this type of shift in leadership. Coaching is a learning process, therefore, through coaching, the leader undergoes a transformative learning process in which shifts in thinking occur (Rostron, 2014). Cognitive behavioural coaching (CBC) is based on the principle that how one thinks substantially influences how one feels about and behaves within a given situation, which has a direct impact on one’s performance (Cox et al., 2014). Within the context of the study, it was requisite that the leaders have the capacity to pivot towards constructing solutions. This ability would therefore necessitate a shift in mindset from a diagnostic approach to solution-focused thinking, and coaching has been shown to increase such solution-focused thinking (Grant, 2014).

Research that focusses on the utilisation of coaching in creating shifts in leadership thinking is not as readily available as literature associated with leadership development coaching (Taylor, 2017).

Based on this, the study sought to make the following contributions:

- The study sought to contribute to the automotive concern’s practice by exploring the role of trust and empathy by leadership.

- The study sought to explore the role of leadership coaching during times of organisational change.

## 1.6. Delimitations of the study

The delimitations of this study are:

i. The study was only conducted with managers at one automotive manufacturing plant in South Africa.
ii. The study was only conducted in one department within the operations division.
iii. The study included organisational culture concerning perceived trust in leadership, demonstrative empathy and change leadership – while excluding any other components of organisational culture.
iv. The study was confined to coaching and its application to the leader concerning their direct team, department, and the organisational culture.
v. The study only incorporated coaching sessions and responses from the first line to senior-level managers with direct reports.

## 1.7. Definition of terms

Definitions used in this research study is represented in Table 1.1, below.

**Table 1.1:** Definition of Terms:

| Term | Definition |
|---|---|
| Change Leadership | Conscious change leadership, as a trait, is an awakening to the nuances of transformation “in how human dynamics are understood and perceived; “in the implementation of change processes which build commitment in stakeholders, the transformation of culture and the achievement of results beyond what others deem possible” (Anderson & Anderson, 2010, p. 4). |
| Coaching | Coaching is defined as “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential, which is particularly important in today’s uncertain and complex environment” (Hullinger & DiGirolamo, 2018, p. 6). |
| Cognitive Behavioural approach | The cognitive behavioural approach is an “integrative approach that combines cognitive, behavioural, imaginal and problem-solving techniques and strategies within a cognitive behavioural framework to enable coachees to achieve their realistic goals” (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007, p. 86). |
| Empathy | Rahman and Castelli (2013) cite Marques’s (2010) definition of empathy as the skill of better apprehending people’s emotions, dilemmas and trials. Mencl and May (2009) define empathy as the ability of understanding beyond observable surface behaviour by “placing oneself in another’s shoes and taking an active interest in their concerns” (p. 84). The latter definition was used for this study. |
| Leadership Behaviour | “Leadership behaviour is commonly defined and operationalized through perceptions of favourable outcomes” (Meyer & Mills, 2016, p. 773). Within the context of this study, this will be in terms of trust, empathy and change leadership. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Leadership Coaching | Leadership coaching is also referred to as executive coaching, which can be defined as a short-term interactive process between the employee and the coach to improve leadership effectiveness by enhancing self-awareness and practising new behaviours (Kombarakaran et al., 2008). |
| Organisational Culture | Culture is defined as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that a group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, 2004, p. 17).<br>“Organisational culture is something a business is, not something it has” (Kahn, 2014, p. 28). |
| Solution-focused approach | A solution-focussed approach prioritises goal attainment using existing strengths to solve challenges faced (Cox et al., 2014). |
| Trust | As cited by Ikonen and Savolainen (2011), Gillespie and Mann (2004) distinguish between two-types of trust. Relation-based trust refers to the role of emotions and the process of trust development, whilst character-based trust refers to beliefs about another's trustworthiness. The latter definition was used for this study. |
| Values | According to Ertosun and Adiguzel (2018), a value system can be considered a relatively permanent frame of perception which moulds and affects the nature of an individual’s behaviour. |

## 1.8. Assumptions

The following assumptions informed the study:

i. The participants were honest about their experiences in the organisation, as pertaining to the organisation's leaders and culture.
ii. The sampled participants were freely able to participate in leadership coaching.
iii. The interview participants may not keep the content of sessions confidential, impacting participation from leaders to be coached.
iv. Throughout the coaching sessions, leadership change in behaviour or perceived influence depends on the level of self-awareness and application made by the leader, and the receptiveness of the organisation.

## 1.9. Structure of the report

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the research problem, context and objectives of the study. Chapter 2 presents a literature review in which the key terms and concepts of leadership coaching and its perceived influence on leadership behaviour and organisational culture during change are elaborated upon. Chapter 3 outlines the proposed research methodology to be used in the study. Chapters 4 and 5 reveal the data findings and the discussion thereof, while Chapter 6 concludes the research study with further recommendations.

# CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a literature review of the key themes relating to organisational culture, specifically during times of change and leadership coaching. The chapter further explores leadership coaching as a key enabler in making contributory shifts in perceptions of trust, empathy and change leadership, with the specific intention of exploring the gap identified within the literature.

An evaluation is made of the existent literature on organisational culture and leadership coaching in terms of its definition, theories, approaches and benefits with specific reference to the context of change and change leadership. The literature review contained in this chapter also explores the literature on organisational culture in relation to leadership behaviours, trust and empathy. The chapter draws to a close with an outline of the conceptual framework employed in this study, and concluding remarks on the literature reviewed for the purpose of the study.

## 2.2. Background on Organisational Culture

Although introduced in the late 1970s, the term ‘organisational culture' is still a difficult concept for many organisations and leaders to grasp, as this phenomenon does not lend itself to measurement in its entirety (Fugate et al., 2008 as cited in Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2015). The identification and understanding of organisational culture, on the part of the organisation’s leaders, plays a significant role in changing and improving a maladjusted culture (Cacciattolo, 2014).

Seminal figures who have contributed to the classification and understanding of organisational culture, as cited by Cacciattolo (2014), range from Edgar Schein’s (1984) deep levels of culture, Geert Hofstede’s (1991) national classification, Johnson and Scholes’s (1993) interpretive approach to the culture being defined

by the organisational environment, and Charles Handy's (1993) structural approach. In the literature on organisational culture, definitions of culture vary from Ehrhart and Raver (2014), Martin (1992), Pettigrew (1979), and Schein (1985). In defining culture as the "shared values and basic assumptions that explain why organisations do what they do and focus on what they focus on; it [organisational culture] exists at a fundamental, perhaps preconscious, level of awareness, is grounded in history and tradition and is a source of collective identity and commitment" (Schneider, González-Romá, Ostroff, & West, 2017, p. 131).

In further advancing the understanding of organisational culture, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2015) review research conducted by Smircich (1983a), who categorised organisational culture into two vast arenas. One arena views organisational culture as changeable, while the other views organisational culture as part of the organisation's core identity. However, a differing view was proposed by Schein (1985) who posited that culture is comprised of the presiding assumptions that consist of beliefs that would steer the daily thoughts and actions within an organisation (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2015). In support hereto, Bate (1994) posited that culture is the organisation's collective quality, and not a constituent of the organisation. This is further addressed by Kahn (2014) who suggests that "organisational culture is something a business is, not something it has" (p. 28). Schein (2004) understands organisational culture as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that a group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration" (p. 17). These assumptions have been considered valid and, therefore, taught to new members as the correct way of perceiving, thinking, and feeling about certain problems within the organisation (Schein, 2004). As they take up their roles within the organisation, newly promoted leaders are not immune to this phenomenon.

Commensurate with this view, Schneider et al. (2017) believe that organisational culture, often used interchangeably with organisational climate, attempts to address far deeper values and assumptions than the more superficial perceptions of climate analysis. These deeper values, assumptions and beliefs, specifically around trust in leadership and empathy shown by leaders, are critical in ensuring

continued employee engagement and business performance amidst organisational change (Kock, Mayfield, Mayfield, Sexton, & De La Garza, 2019). In engendering an organisational climate wherein employees are ready to accept and embrace change, the leader's role is to mitigate employee resistance to successful implementation (Baesu, 2014). However, it is the ability to build and manage effective teams, whilst performing towards organisational goals during periods of intense organisational change or instability, which is considered a critical trait of effective leaders (Grant, 2014).

Grant (2014), argue that both leaders and their subordinates struggle to develop the psychological and behavioural skills required to manage the onset of change within the organisation, whilst attempting to balancing their attainment of job-related targets. As leaders attempt to garner employee support during organisational change, people need to feel that they can trust their leadership; that leadership is empathetic to their process of change, and that they can rely on leadership to show up as change leaders (Sharif & Scandura, 2014).

The presiding view within organisational and leadership literature sees culture as a variable within organisations. In embracing Schein's definition of organisational culture as the fundamental beliefs of a group, the question of culture change becomes an interesting one (Whelan, 2016). Three differing perspectives on managing culture and driving culture change emerged from the literature review: the first posits that intentional culture change takes place through specific interventions; the second views organisational culture change by design as extremely challenging; and the third proposes that culture is beyond control.

According to Whelan (2016), who acknowledges that with the numerous internal and external variables at play in shifting an organisation's culture, it is challenging to determine whether and to what extent change has occurred. There is a distinction between viewing organisational culture as by design, or as an emerging process that occurs over time without conscious effort or intent. The current study adopts the perspective that organisational culture change is an emergent process that occurs over time and therefore cannot be measured instantly (Whelan, 2016). The rationale for this perspective is rooted in the

understanding that transformation and real behaviour change take time, and may therefore not be immediately observable (DeSapio, 2017).

The 2019 employee feedback survey findings showed that the automotive manufacturing concern, a German holding company, is challenged by lowered trust levels in leadership and minimal displays of empathy to employees, which resulted in employees feeling powerless and uncared for (Company A, 2019). These findings were further amplified when the organisation faced large operational cost cuts, retrenchments and shifting work requirements due to the external forces imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic (Company A, 2020).

In their narrative review of the impact of the pandemic, Smith, Boniwell, and Green (2021) found that, worldwide, individuals' productivity and overall mental health was significantly affected by a lack of job security, extensive periods of isolation, and uncertainty related to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, PTSD and sleep disorders. A study conducted by Nordin, Deros, and Abd Wahab (2010), determined that a lack of leadership approach and attitude was a barrier to change implementation, thus highlighting the importance of leadership coaching during change. Through the application of leadership coaching, the current study aims to address shifts in leadership behaviour in enhancing perceived levels of trust, empathy and the demonstration of change leadership within the automotive manufacturing concern in South Africa.

## 2.3 Leadership Coaching

This section discusses coaching for leaders – its orientation, theories and approaches – and presents a review of the literature highlighting its role within and benefits to organisations. Specific focus is placed on its role within the context of organisational change.

### *2.3.1. Definition of Leadership Coaching*

Initially appearing within management literature in the 1950s, coaching aimed to enable employees, particularly those in sales, to engender business profits.

Later, in the 1990s, executive coaching emerged as an intervention aimed specifically at changing the behaviour of middle and senior managers (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). A delineation of coaching by O'Connor and Lages (2009) describes coaching as a “methodology, not an ideology. It is a methodology for change, to help people (and through them, businesses) to learn, develop and be the best they can be” (p. 3). This definition encapsulates the nature of coaching. Furthering this delineation of coaching, Peterson (2011) positions the intent of coaching as enabling the enhancement of performance, the potential of leadership, and expediting the growth and development of high performers in the workplace. Leadership coaching is further distinguished by its unique nature in addressing the specific needs of the leader and their specific organisation, with a versatile, individualised approach and process in achieving the desired results (Ladegard & Gjerde, 2014).

Leadership coaching, sometimes referred to as executive coaching, is defined as a short-term interactive process between the employee and the coach to improve leadership effectiveness; this is achieved by enhancing self-awareness and practising new behaviours (Kombarakaran, Yang, Baker, & Fernandes, 2008). According to Ladegard and Gjerde (2014), leadership coaching focuses specifically on coaching executives, leaders and managers. Although the terms ‘leadership coaching’ and ‘executive coaching’ are often used interchangeably, with the latter appearing most frequently in the literature, leadership coaching is the preferred term employed in the current study. As delineated by Grover and Furnham (2016), leadership coaching is distinct from business or executive coaching in that it pivots around enabling the coachee to become a more effective leader.

The current study explores how coaching influences organisational culture. Within the organisational context, ‘leadership’ implies certain values, expected behaviours and has a relational connotation, which is the preferred term for this study. Therefore, leadership coaching is characterised by the unique attributes it lends itself to in relation to the specific needs of the leader and their particular organisation, in order to achieve the desired results (Ladegard & Gjerde, 2014).

Coaching is a multifaceted and wide-ranging field that draws its influence from multiple fields of study such as psychology, counselling practice and psychotherapy (Kahn, 2014; Ladegard & Gjerde, 2014). Notwithstanding its vast theoretical coaching frameworks, such as psychodynamic, behavioural, cognitive and solution-focused, coaching is underpinned by a common set of principles: collaboration and accountability, enabling and raising awareness, responsibility, commitment, planning and developing specific actions for goal attainment (Grant, Curtayne, & Burton, 2009). Passmore and Lai (2020) highlight a common theme in the definitions of coaching to be its facilitative nature; in this regard, the role of the coach is not to instruct, direct or even guide, but rather to facilitate a process of discovery, insight and goal attainment for the coachee. This facilitative nature emphasises the relational aspect, which distinguishes coaching from other teaching or training interventions (Passmore & Lai, 2020).

### *2.3.2. Theories and Approaches to Leadership Coaching*

A broad range of approaches inform the theoretical frameworks of executive coaching ranging from the cognitive through to the psychodynamic and the solution-focused (Grant, 2014). Palmer and Whybrow (2007) highlight cognitive-behavioural coaching (CBC), psychodynamic, person-centred, systemic, solution-focused coaching (SFC), narrative and adult learning as the most widely used. Depending on the focus and intent of the coaching, these approaches can be applied throughout the coaching process.

The current study incorporates a multi-disciplinary coaching approach that is inclusive of a systemic, cognitive-behavioural, and solution-focused approach. The rationale for an integrated approach was to support leaders in navigating organisational change by drawing on significant elements from each approach throughout the coaching sessions. In support of an integrated and eclectic approach to coaching, Kahn (2011) indicates that the use of diverse strategies limits the restriction of theoretical differences, thus enabling the coach to utilise the most appropriate approach. Further discussion of these approaches and their application in the current study follows in the ensuring discussion.

Cox et al. (2014) outline the various coaching approaches, as presented in Table 2.1, below.

**Table 2.1. An overview of theoretical approaches to coaching (Cox et al., 2014).**

| Approach | Description / Focus |
|---|---|
| Psychodynamic | Considers the unconscious motives associated with past experiences and how this affects behaviours and feelings |
| Cognitive-behavioural | Enhances thinking through facilitating goal-setting and self-awareness for the creation of new behaviours |
| Solution-focused | Focuses on goal attainment using existing strengths to solve challenges |
| Person-centred | Focusses on positive development, given that the appropriate conditions are present |
| Narrative | Builds connections from stories viewed from different perspectives |
| Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) | Attempts to identify patterns that represent the way individuals construct their realities in order to control their inner experiences in various environmental contexts |
| Positive psychology | Features a consistent shifting of attention away from problems and weaknesses to opportunities and strengths |
| Gestalt | Awareness of the reality and experiences of the individual, how blockages need to be addressed for further growth |

Historically, cognitive therapy and coaching concepts can be traced back to first century philosopher, Epictetus, who claimed that people are not troubled by

things but by their view (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007). The manner in which one's thinking powerfully influences one's emotions and behavioural responses forms the basis of cognitive behavioural therapy (Neenan, 2017). The cognitive behavioural approach, as delineated by Palmer and Whybrow (2007), is an "integrative approach which combines the use of cognitive, behavioural, imaginal and problem-solving techniques and strategies within a cognitive behavioural framework to enable coachees to achieve their realistic goals" (p. 86). In addition, it can improve performance, wellbeing and resilience, and overcome resistance to change.

This is supported by the work of Cox et al. (2014), who posit that cognitive behavioural coaching (CBC) is based on the principal that how one thinks of an incident significantly influences how one feels about it, which then impacts one's levels of stress and performance. This critical internal dialogue impacts on our self-esteem, thus affecting our self-efficacy and self-worth (Cox et al., 2014). As new leaders are promoted into new roles, their self-efficacy becomes a key component in their endeavours to meet the new task requirements and to meet organisational expectations of performance within the new role.

Utilising a cognitive behavioural approach helps the coachee – who, in the context of this study, is the leader – to develop their problem-solving abilities, enhance their awareness of their thinking, and support them in shifting beliefs that inhibit performance, induce stress and hinder goal achievement (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007). In addition, the cognitive behavioural approach enables the coachee with effective thinking and behavioural skills that would build their internal resources of self-acceptance and stability, and finally enable the leader to self-coach (Cox et al., 2014). Within the context of organisational change, especially for newly promoted leaders who have to navigate a changing environment, garner trust and support from subordinates, manage expectations from executive leadership, building effective thinking and behavioural skills becomes pivotal to navigating these changes. It is important to note that cognitive behavioural coaching might not be effective if the coachee has a clinical disorder, or is neither accepting emotional responsibility for the issue or challenges, nor responsibility for taking action (Cox et al., 2014).

A solutions-focused approach aims to reframe a problem as solvable and provides enlightenment to the coachee's abilities and resources in defining and progressing towards a resolution (Fazel, 2013). Coaches who employ a solution-focused approach aim to stretch, clarify, support and empower clients to design and implement solutions that will work for them (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007). This requires the coach to place significant emphasis on the skills, strengths, knowledge, and experience of the coachee. The coach employing a solution-focused approach aims to provide awareness for the coachee in recognising their capabilities; this would result in the coachee fundamentally viewing themselves as capable of solving their own problems and as possessing the requisite resources to create the desired state (Cox et al., 2014). The striking difference between a solution-focussed approach and other approaches, according to (Cox et al., 2014), is in the avoidance of defining a problem state. This suggests that the very act of articulating a causal explanation may constrain both coach and coachee into a frame of reference that limits potential solutions instead of uncovering them.

Within the context of the current study, leaders need to have the capacity to pivot towards constructing solutions; therefore, a shift in mindset from a diagnostic approach to solution-focused thinking is necessitated. Coaching has been shown to increase such solution-focused thinking (Grant & Cavanagh, 2014). In applying this approach during the leadership coaching sessions, the aim was not to place emphasis on identifying a problem; however, it did not presume to avoid the exploration of the problem in the coaching dialogue with the leader.

As highlighted by Clutterbuck (2010), there are a few risks involved in employing a "one-model" coaching approach: "coaching becoming mechanistic;" vital "clues to the client context are missed or ignored;" and the client may be influenced to "suit the agenda of the coach" (p. 73). Kahn (2014) purports that an inclusive and comprehensive coaching approach positions coaching in a way that promotes the success of the individual's developmental journey and the organisation as a whole. Through the systemic integration of personal, interpersonal and organisational experiences within the coaching dialogue, it explores and enhances the propensity for greater relationship improvements (Kahn, 2018).

### *2.3.3. The role and benefits of leadership coaching*

The benefits and purpose of coaching are extensive, and they from a primary leadership developmental tool to a significant contributor to business performance improvement and cultural change (Ladegard & Gjerde, 2014). Marson (2019) postulates that, although coaching primarily focuses on the individual, its successful implementation brings greater benefits to individuals and the organisation. The fundamental intent of executive and business coaching is to inspire leaders to generate changes in their behaviour, thereby transforming themselves, which leads to business results and performance (Kahn, 2014).

The rudimentary emphasis within professional coaching is on enhancing human functioning and performance through the development of cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioural self-regulation (Fazel, 2013). It is only through learning that human development and progression is possible. As postulated by de Villiers (2013), the coach's facilitation role in undoing the coachees' current view of their reality, by encouraging deep reflection and discourse, is a distinct coaching trait. Applied effectively, coaching elevates transformational learning (Bennett & Bush, 2011). Within a coaching context, this learning occurs through reflective dialogue, thus necessitating a differing perspective (Marson, 2019). Brookfield (2012) attests that reflection is a learning process that is initiated the instant our assumptions, beliefs, and perspectives are confronted. Engaging in a coaching dialogue, wherein these moments are enabled, allows for transformational learning to unfold.

Grant (2014) enlists three key underlying cognitive and behavioural processes that make leadership coaching effective. First, the relationship of confidentiality and support to engage in reflective dialogue on personal and professional issues may relieve stress and anxiety; this provides individuals with the reflective space to review challenges from differing perspectives (Myers, 1999). Second, setting and attaining personally-valued goals enhances self-efficacy and enables solution-focused thinking (Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001). Third, building resilience and enhanced self-regulation, when facing impediments, are crucial skills in successfully managing change (Baumeister, Gailliot, DeWall, & Oaten, 2006). In the application of a cognitive behavioural approach to coaching within

this study, these key elements aimed to enable shifts in leadership thoughts and behaviour, and thus yield significant coaching benefits.

A study conducted by Ladegard and Gjerde (2014), in which leaders underwent a six-month coaching program alongside a control group, found that the coach and coaching intervention's facilitative approach positively enhanced the shift in leaders' trust in their direct subordinates as compared to the control group. In accordance with Cox et al. (2014) the task of the coach is to trust the client to find their own direction by holding a non-directive stance, and adopting reflective listening as the predominant response in the conversation. This reinforces the view that reflective listening, when skilfully exercised, within the context of an empathic, congruent and positively regarding relationship, encourages the client to verbalize further, to explore issues in more depth, to be challenged, to reach greater insights and, ultimately, to be more equipped to make new choices in life (Cox et al., 2014).

### *2.3.4. Leadership Coaching and Change*

Leadership coaching is employed to help leaders build their psychological and behavioural skills through the instability affiliated with organisational change, thereby providing them with the ability to deftly motivate and influence their employees (Hao & Yazdanifard, 2015). However, according to (Grant, 2014), the ability of leadership coaching to enable change readiness, leadership self-efficacy, resilience, or employee engagement is not well known. The current study aimed to contribute to the practice of coaching within the context of leaders having to navigate changing environments, whilst enhancing the organisational culture through strengthening levels of trust and empathy.

The rationale for aiding leaders through organisational change is varied in that it ranges from having good personal insights and awareness of one's personal thoughts, feelings, and behaviours – coaching has been shown to enhance such insights (Grant, 2014). A study conducted by Atkinson (2012) confirmed that coaching engendered a substantial return on investment, and development in

driving organisational change; the study further confirmed that coaching enabled shifts in the attitudes, behaviours, and values of those being coached.

However, the responsibility of the coaching process does not solely rest on the shoulders of the coach. As pointed out by Carter, Blackman, and Hicks (2014), five coachee behaviours are imperative for a good coaching process. These factors enable shared responsibility, between coach and coachee, in order to ensure the success of the coaching process. The five behaviours requisite of a coachee are: a willingness and desire to be coached; an ability to reflect; an openness to learning and change; a commitment to the coaching process; and the receptiveness and willingness of the coachee to act on what comes out of the coaching process. These behaviours were taken into consideration by both the coach and coachees in the current study.

## 2.4 The perceived influence of leadership coaching on organisational culture

Through the application of leadership coaching, contributory shifts in leadership behaviour towards enhanced trust and demonstrative empathy were anticipated in the study. By engaging in critical reflection and reflective dialogue through coaching, the leaders' firmly held assumptions concerning their extension of trust and empathy to employees – and showing themselves as trustworthy, empathetic in their behaviour and leading change well – were further anticipated by the study.

### *2.4.1 Organisational Culture and Leadership*

According to Popa (2018), changes within organisational culture play a critical role in an organisation's ability to swiftly adapt to external changes. This is further emphasised by Jordan, Werner, and Venter (2015), who believe that the most crucial component in an organisational change effort is culture. However, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2015) indicate that, when engaging in organisational change, many organisations do not intentionally aim to shift organisational culture, even though organisational culture can enable or impede execution

strategy. Therefore, this study aimed to determine how organisational culture can be influenced within the context of change.

As one of the most influential scholars in organisational culture, Schein (2010) equates culture within an organisation to personality in an individual. This metaphor for culture accentuates its deeply embedded nature, which permeates its influence and is therefore not easily altered (Whelan, 2016). The literature suggests a strong connectedness between organisational culture and behaviour. However, by comparing culture to personality, Schein (2010) further calls attention to this relationship in suggesting that, although we can see behaviour, we often cannot see the underlying forces that cause certain behaviours. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2015) reinforce this argument by asserting that culture refers to cognitive phenomena, as opposed to behaviour, in that it prioritises how individuals think about and value their reality. This definition lends itself to the cognitive behavioural approach to coaching applied within this study. As culture points to mainly invisible yet powerful phenomena, and their impact, it creates frames of reference within the mindsets of its members; it is thus identified as an essential covert process (Schein, 2010). This is well-aligned with the leadership coaching employed in this study, as these cognitive frames of reference need to be challenged through reflective dialogue in order to effect lasting change and transformation.

It is within this focal point that the research explored Schein's (1984) widely acknowledged framework consisting of three levels of organisational culture analysis: level one, being artefacts, as the most visible manifestations of culture; level two, consisting of beliefs and values; and level three, comprising one's assumptions (Scott, Mannion, Marshall, & Davies, 2003). Level two (comprising beliefs and values) and level three (assumptions) are the focal points for the current study. Kahn (2011) enhances this perspective by supporting a systemic view of culture as not just something an organisation has, but as a system of ideas to which all individuals contribute. These assumptions are unconscious beliefs and expectations, which remain largely unchallenged. It is these assumptions, beliefs and thoughts that leadership have regarding trust and empathy towards their subordinates, and vice versa, and how leaders show up

as change leaders, that constitute the lens through which organisational culture is viewed for this study. As maintained by Cox et al. (2014), in order to solicit self-awareness to underlying cognitive and emotional blockages, the cognitive behavioural coach would invite the client to explore the presenting problem, to assess the evidence or lack thereof, so as to confirm the coachees' existing outlook on the situation and consider alternative perspectives.

Schein (2004) argues that creating and managing culture is the most notable function of real significance for leaders. Therefore, leadership's understanding of and influence upon organisational culture is deemed critical in much of the literature on leadership, including research on organisational behaviour, change management, and strategic execution (Al-Ali, Singh, Al-Nahyan, & Sohal, 2017; Kahn, 2018; McDonald & Foster, 2013). Leaders' behaviours significantly shape an organisation's culture, including how people respond to change and innovation (Kavanagh & Ashkanasy, 2006).

According to Schein (2010), when culture is challenged during an external change, leadership determines how the group unlearns some of its limiting cultural assumptions in order to become more adaptive and effective. Therefore, a key role for leaders is to evaluate the functionality of the assumptions made by the group, and help them to deal with the anxiety resultant of those assumptions being challenged (Kahn, 2014). What becomes inherent within this perspective is that an organisation's transformation becomes possible through the coaching of the leader. The culture references for this study focused on a leader's ability to inspire trust and provide empathy, and change leadership, during times of change within an organisation.

### *2.4.2 Leadership Behaviour and Values*

In a recent study, Brown (2021) emphasised the continued exploration of the extent to which the association between leadership coaching and shifts in leadership behaviours is a priority for future research. An organisation's culture, values, and leadership behaviours are closely related concepts discussed in the existent literature (Ertosun & Adiguzel, 2018). Russell (2001) cites a seminal

figure, in social psychology specifically within the area of values and behaviours, Rokeach (1973), who delineates values as “prescriptive, enduring standards that have cognitive, affective, and behavioural components” (p. 76). Concerning the cognitive component, Ertosun and Adiguzel (2018) suggest that a value system can be considered a relatively permanent frame of perception that moulds and affects the nature of an individual’s behaviour. This delineation encompasses both the cognitive behavioural approach and Schein’s organisational culture of collective shared assumptions.

Russell (2001) postulates that values are core beliefs that direct behaviour through one’s underlying thoughts. However, Ciulla (2020) argues for the accepted assumption that values motivate action, as some may hold a value but never act on it. With this in mind, a leader may hold the value of trust yet not extend trust to their employees. It, therefore, begs the question as to what a leader does to demonstrate their values, versus what these values are. Those actions are evident in leader behaviour. As outlined by Meyer and Mills (2016), the behaviours of leaders are often defined by the observations of desired outcomes. Leadership behaviour affects employee trust and fulfilment in an organisation (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). For the purpose of this study, the favourable outcome that would enhance organisational culture is leadership behaviour that enhances follower or subordinate perceptions of trust and empathy in leadership, especially during change. Breevaart and Zacher (2019) found that leaders who inspired, supported and intellectually challenged their employees weekly enhanced employee trust in the leader, as opposed to those employees who did not engage with their leaders on a regular basis.

### *2.4.3. Trust and Empathy*

Trust is a crucial quality in developing individuals and organisations; further, empathy plays a key role in the generation of trust (Martinovski, Traum, & Marsella, 2007). Ikonen and Savolainen (2011) postulate that trust is the principal feature of contemporary organisational culture, and that it is often assumptive within organisations until it is eroded. Within the context of organisational change and extreme uncertainty, the need for employees to trust the virtue of leadership

is crucial (Sharif & Scandura, 2014). Trust is a vital element for leadership, as garnering employees' and colleagues' trust has improved general performance, commitment and adaptation to change or crises, thus decreasing operational costs (Hao, 2015; Ikonen & Savolainen, 2011).

A study conducted by Belias and Koustelios (2014) confirmed that, during an organisational change, it is vital for the leader to create an atmosphere of psychological safety for their people to engage with the requisite new behaviours and, thereby, encourage an exploration of the new culture. An essential determinant of organisational effectiveness has been attributed to employees' trust in their leadership (Chughtai, Byrne, & Flood, 2015). A further study conducted by Ladegard and Gjerde (2014), in which leaders underwent a six-month coaching program alongside a control group, increased leaders' trust in their subordinates compared to the control group; evidence of a significant relationship between trust and reduced turnover. Breevaart and Zacher (2019) examined the effect of both transformational and laissez-faire behaviours on employee trust in leaders; they found that the level of trust in the leader was influenced by resource exchanges, or the lack thereof.

A preliminary review of the literature on trust between leaders and their employees emphasises employee trust in leaders, however, there is minimal research exploring the leaders' extension of trust to employees (Ladegard & Gjerde, 2014). Therefore, this study not only aimed to explore employee trust in leadership but also to consider the influences affecting a leader's ability and propensity to extend trust to employees.

For organisations to survive, let alone remain competitive, leaders must develop empathy skills that would allow them to better tend to their people's perspectives and opinions during change, thus enhancing engagement and performance Rahman and Castelli (2013) cite Marques's (2010) understanding of empathy as the skill of apprehending people's emotions, dilemmas and trials better, while also acknowledging Goleman (2000), as well as Mencl and Mays's (2009) definition of empathy as "the ability of understanding beyond observable surface behaviour by placing oneself in another's shoes and taking an active interest in their

concerns" (p. 84). This definition encapsulates the meaning of empathy as employed in the current study.

Tzouramani (2017) shows that empathetic leaders are able to comprehend and address their client's and team's needs by engendering affective bonds, thus enabling a culture of trust, transparency and collaboration. This culture positively influences employee engagement and enhance overall organisational performance, even in the midst of change (Rahman & Castelli, 2013). For the purpose of this study, the enhancement of perceived trust was directed at both the leaders' trust in their subordinates and the employees' perceived levels of trust in leadership during a change. In this study, the demonstration of empathy was directed towards the leaders' employees.

#### *2.4.4. Proposition 1: Leadership coaching enhances perceptions of trust and empathy in leadership during change.*

The literature review indicates that leadership coaching can create opportunities for reflective dialogue and self-awareness – so as to shift underlying assumptions, beliefs, and behaviours – with a view to enhancing leadership trust and empathy during change. In respect of the review of literature on the efficacy of coaching in enhancing trust and empathy, specifically within an organisational change process, the current study proposed that leadership coaching contributes to shifts in perceptions of trust and empathy in leadership.

## 2.5. The role of leadership coaching on change leadership

### *2.5.1. Organisational Change and Change Leadership*

Internal and external conditions compel organisations to change. According to Hussain et al. (2018), reactive change occurs when internal or external forces compel the organisation to change, while proactive change occurs when the organisation concludes that change is advantageous. The context in which this study viewed the change that the automotive concern underwent applies to reactive change that has been externally imposed due to responses to the

COVID-19 pandemic, macro- and microeconomic conditions, and any concomitant internally imposed change for optimisation and organisational effectiveness. In addition, these changes were inclusive of new leaders being promoted and appointed into new roles within the organisation. A study conducted by Terblanche, Albertyn, and van Coller-Peter (2017) confirmed that coaching at key transition points, like promotion into a senior role, is a formidable tool in ensuring the leader's success within the role. A number of studies advocate for coaching interventions in managing change within organisations (Atkinson, 2012; Bennett & Bush, 2013; Bickerich, Michel, & O'Shea, 2018; Grant, 2014). As outlined by Bush and Bennett (2018), Table 2.2, below, identifies a number of examples of change on the individual, group and organisational level.

**Table 2.2. Examples of change (Bush & Bennett, 2018, p. 76).**

| Level | Type of change |
|---|---|
| Individual | New role or responsibility |
| | New process or performance expectation |
| | New location or culture |
| Group | New or changing membership or team charter |
| | Improvement of existing product or policy |
| | New process or product |
| Organisation | New product development |
| | New or adjacent market entry |
| | New leader / strategy / direction |
| | Organisation redesign / restructuring |
| | Merger / acquisition |

Organisational change is arduous and demands much from leaders (Stober, 2008). In adapting to external organisational changes, leaders' resistance to change must be eliminated, as it is the task of managers to lead employees through change (Popa, 2018). As a trait, conscious change leadership is an awakening to the nuances of transformation "in how human dynamics are understood and perceived in the implementation of change processes which build commitment in stakeholders, the transformation of culture and the achievement

of results beyond what others deem possible" (Anderson & Anderson, 2010, p. 4). Belias and Koustelios (2014) believe that the type of leadership required to shift an organisation's culture is transformational, as culture change necessitates great vigour and dedication in attaining the desired results. Hao and Yazdanifard (2015) further explain that leaders can build trust through leadership traits such as zeal, consistency, trust, and a clear vision. They can motivate employees easily and can effectively apply changes within the organisation. According to Mansaray (2019), change leadership is about conscripting people into the change process and enlisting their commitment in spite of their anxieties, fears and uncertainties.

According to Mansaray (2019), research has revealed that many organisations have built proficiency in the functional or systemic aspects of change with minimal energy expended on managing the people side of change. This finding is buttressed by Rosha and Lace (2016), who suggest that change urges organisations to augment their change management ability and, in so doing, to develop and apply new knowledge and skill. Although it may be necessary to develop the leader's ability to manage through change, regardless of its pervading employ, Grant (2014) argues that there is a paucity of research that explores the impact of executive coaching during periods of organisational change. Furthermore, Brown (2021) states that although coaching is an acknowledged vehicle for senior management and leader development, minimal research has explored the merit of coaching for young leaders.

Within the context of organisational change, Rosha and Lace (2016) have identified the benefits of coaching as increased self-awareness, an openness to and tolerance of differing views, as well as building trust and respect, specifically within supportive relationships. The focus of this study was on the assumptions and beliefs held by leaders, which influence their behaviour and leadership of change.

### *2.5.2. Change Leadership*

A review of the contemporary literature reveals a paucity in explorations of the efficacy of executive coaching throughout organisational change (Grant, 2014). Moreover, the extent to which coaching aids in developing individual change readiness is not fully known, nor is the extent to which it supports the development of leadership self-efficacy, resilience, or workplace engagement known (Grant, 2014). The current study contributes to practice by specifically exploring the extent to which leadership coaching supports the demonstration of change leadership within an automotive concern.

Anderson and Anderson (2010) describe change leadership as an awakening to the nuances of transformation in the perception and comprehension of human dynamics so as to foster commitment through the execution of change, culture transformation and goal attainment. Mansaray (2019) distinguishes between change management and change leadership: change management takes an outside-in approach that focusses on structures, systems and processes; while change leadership addresses the challenge of change from the inside-out.

The initiation and coordination of change always require well-developed leadership skills, as resistance is a natural human response to change (Baesu, 2014). Balestracci (2003) outlines the following five key skills in conscripting people to change: “1. Self-awareness, 2. Emotional maturity, 3. Self-motivation, 4. The ability to show empathy, 5. The ability to develop and maintain positive relationships” (p. 42).

For Cox (2015), to grow is to question. Therein lies the coach's work in questioning the basic assumptions and beliefs that leaders may have in relation to engendering trust and empathy, their role as change leaders and organisational change. Commensurate herewith, de Villiers (2013) posits that a supplementary coaching trait is the facilitative role of the coach in undoing the coachee’s current perspective of their reality by encouraging deep reflection and discourse. Change leadership requires leaders to discourse on beliefs and mindsets that will help people develop practices and behaviours that can support them to become accustomed to change (Mansaray, 2019). Through the coaching

process, leaders can engage in the practice of critical reflection upon their own assumptions, beliefs and feelings about the organisational changes, as well as their approach to implementing and managing change; this would force them to re-evaluate their basic assumptions about themselves and the teams they lead (Hoggan, 2016). This re-evaluation and opportunity to reflect enhances opportunities for shifts in behaviour within the leader.

According to DeSapio (2017), change and transformation is observable. In light of this, there should be observable shifts in a leader's behaviour in order for transformation to have taken place. These behavioural shifts could be in how they communicate and engage with their teams, how they enable decision-making and ownership, or how they implement and manage change. In addition, it is the ability to mobilise people in the change process that enables commitment in the face of uncertainty, fear and disruption (Mansaray, 2019). Bush and Bennett (2018) outline the specific change leader responsibilities that further enable change within an organisation, as presented in the Table 2.3, below.

**Table 2.3. Change Leader Responsibilities (Bush & Bennett, 2018, p. 80).**

| **Domain** | **Change Leader Responsibilities** |
|---|---|
| Success of the Change | • Enabling the compelling vision and charter for the change<br>• Developing and/or observing funding, key milestones, timeline, action and communication plans, metrics, and change sustainment plan |
| Stakeholder Engagement | • Regular and visible engagement with key stakeholders<br>• Accurate identification of key stakeholders and analysis of their current and desired states of support for the change |

| | |
|---|---|
| | • Ensuring two-way communication that addresses all stakeholders affected by the change.<br>• Addressing appropriate reward and recognition to support change momentum and recognise supporters |
| Self-management | • Management of personal health, fitness, diet, exercise for energy and focus<br>• Continued focus on success in current role or job<br>• Development of skills such as delegation, time management, networking, strategic thinking, leadership presence, mindfulness, facilitation, and conflict management<br>• Attention to work-life balance and (if needed) maintaining dual focus on being a change target as well as fulfilling another role in the change |

It is essential for adult learning to be observable, describable and repeatable (DeSapio, 2017). Through the employ of leadership coaching within the context of change – that is, applying critical self-reflection and critical discourse – contributory shifts in the leader's thoughts and behaviours are expected.

### *2.5.3. Proposition 2: Leadership coaching enhances shifts in the demonstration of change leadership.*

The literature review indicates that leadership coaching can create effective contributory shifts to leadership assumptions, beliefs and behaviours, thus

enhancing the display of change leadership. The conceptual framework, below, outlines the main objectives of the study and their proposition.

## 2.6. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study expounds upon the phenomenon being investigated by exploring organisational culture, leadership coaching, organisational change and change leadership. The study explores the nature of the relationships between the phenomena pertinent to the study, as shown in Figure 2.1 below. When leadership coaching, with a cognitive behavioural and solution-focused approach is administered to leaders in the context of change, the following is explored: the role of leadership coaching on organisational culture; levels of trust and empathy; the leader's change leadership ability being influenced by coaching; the influence of organisational culture on leaders during a change process.

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of leadership coaching on organisational culture within an automotive concern in South Africa.

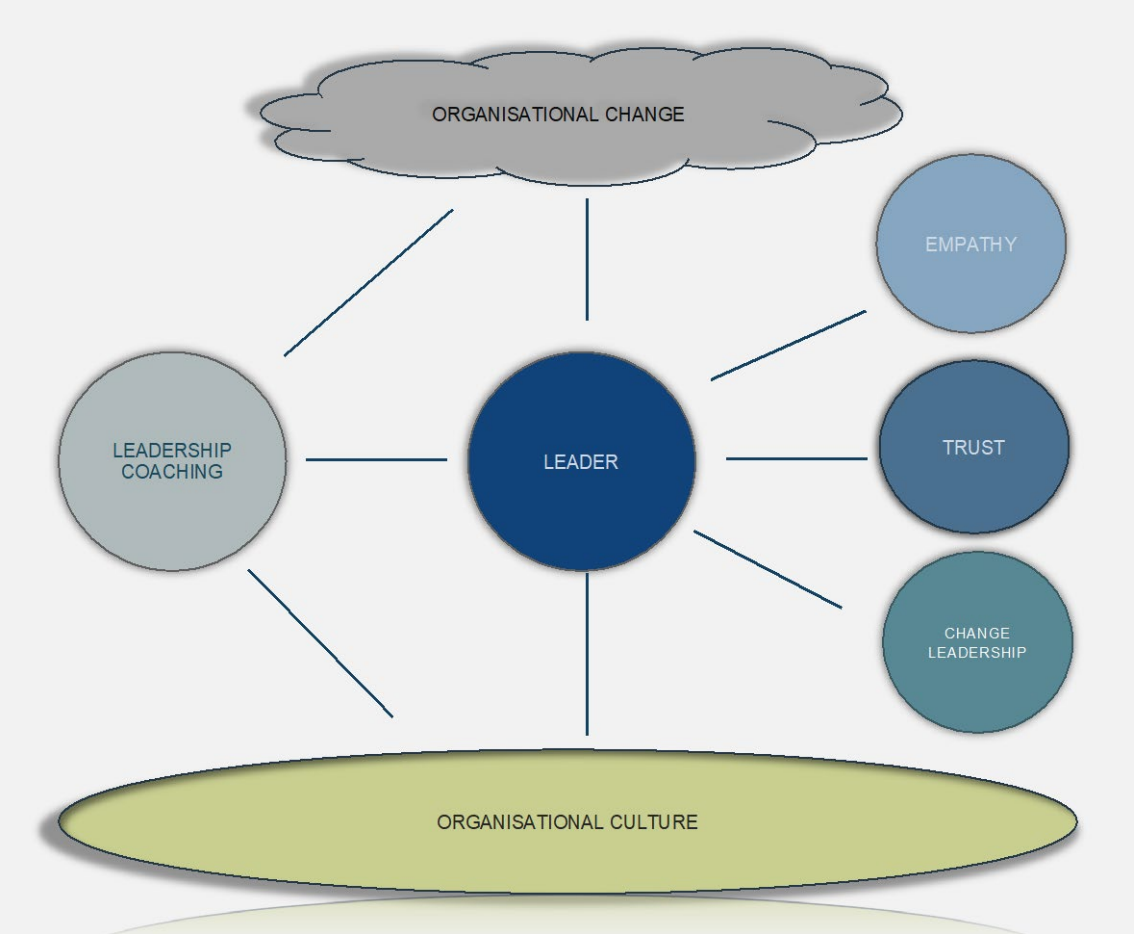


**Figure 2.1. The conceptual framework of the study (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2015; Cox et al., 2014; Ladegard & Gjerde, 2014; Schein, 2004)**

## 2.7. Conclusion

Leaders play a critical role in influencing organisational culture, thereby enabling overall organisational performance during times of change. Current research on leadership coaching supports its efficacy in enabling leaders with the necessary support in navigating through change, enhancing trust and empathy, and enhancing change leadership. The current study examines leadership coaching with a cognitive behavioural and solution-focused approach to leaders, exploring their experience through navigating change, and contributing to the practice and literature of coaching.

The consistency table presented in Table 2.4, below, offers a summary of the research objectives and propositions of the study.

**Table 2.4. Consistency table: Research objectives and propositions**

| RQ # | Research Objective | Proposition |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | To explore the perceived influence of leadership coaching on levels of trust and empathy in leaders within an automotive concern. | Leadership coaching enhances perceptions of trust and empathy in leadership. |
| 2. | To explore the role of leadership coaching on the demonstration of change leadership during change in an automotive concern in South Africa. | Leadership coaching enhances contributory shifts in the demonstration of change leadership. |

# CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a detailed description of the research methodology employed in this study. This section will outline the methodology and the paradigm guiding the study. Thereafter, the research design, data collection methods and the ethical considerations, as well as the validity, reliability, and limitations of the study are discussed.

## 3.1. Research approach

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2019), systematic research provides powerful tools that unearth potential answers and identify solutions to our fragmented collective knowledge of the world. The purpose of the research was to explore the perceived influence of leadership coaching on shifts in leadership trust, empathy and change leadership, during organisational change, within an automotive manufacturing organisation in South Africa. Therefore, a qualitative approach was employed.

Qualitative research utilises interpretive methods in describing, deciding, translating, and attempting to understand the meaning of certain phenomena (Blumberg, Cooper, & Schindler, 2014). Qualitative researchers are therefore interested in how peoples' experiences are interpreted and what meaning they ascribe thereto, thereby being exploratory (Blumberg et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Qualitative research aims to comprehensively understand the participants' frame of reference, beliefs, and thoughts, thus being more descriptive than predictive (Vanderstoep & Johnson, 2008). As this study aimed to gain insights into the assumptions, beliefs and feelings around trust, empathy and change leadership, as experienced by the participants, a qualitative approach was best suited for its purpose.

The qualitative research methodology is characterised by a flexible or unstructured approach to the enquiry, which explores various descriptions of a situation or issue; in this respect, sample sizes are smaller and fewer respondents cover many issues (Kumar, 2019). Through language use, the researcher can

ascertain the depth of the experiences, associated meanings, feelings, and perceptions of respondents, which may not be readily observable or easily identifiable, thus providing a detailed, in-depth view of the human phenomena (Morrow, 2007). Therefore, data analysis is based on narratives and observational data in order to identify themes (Kumar, 2019).

As postulated by Leedy and Ormrod (2019), research is the “systematic process of collecting, analysing, and interpreting information (data) to increase our understanding of a phenomenon about which we are interested or concerned” (p. 2). Taking a constructivist worldview, which underpins this qualitative study, the research approach views individuals as seeking meaning to their worlds – of which, meaning is varied and numerous. Thus, the researcher attempted to seek out the complexities of these views instead of constricting meaning to a few ideas (Creswell, 2012). Ponterotto (2005) adds that within the constructivist paradigm, the reality is “constructed in the mind of the individual” (p. 129). The constructivist paradigm assumes that people construct meaning as they engage with their world, through their interpretative process in assigning meaning to situations, events, gestures and social interaction with others (Leavy, 2017). In unpacking the meanings that leaders and their subordinates construct concerning leadership ability to enable trust, display empathy, and garner change leadership, the study lent itself to a constructivist paradigm. This research aimed to assess whether leadership coaching, with a cognitive behavioural and solution-focused approach, can affect change in a leader’s assumptions, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour associated with inspiring trust, enhancing empathy, and providing change leadership to their employees.

Through leadership coaching, the researcher was the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; this provided for rich descriptive data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This study, therefore, suited qualitative research as only one organisation, one department, and its leadership team were under the focus; moreover, there were only a small number of participants sampled, participant realities being varied and yet equally applicable.

## 3.2. Research design

Simply put, the research design is the “blueprint” for the research journey (Mouton, 2001, p. 55). The practical plan is taken to answer questions with validity, objectivity, and accuracy; it guides the researcher in deciding how data is to be collected, analysed, and findings communicated (Kumar, 2019). Participatory Action Research (PAR), through leadership coaching, was selected as the best-suited design for this study.

This research study lent itself to action research as a means to solving authentic problems focusing on a localised solution, for a local challenge, within the working environment (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). It is the focal point of action research to enable organisational or business improvement (Vanderstoep & Johnson, 2008). By conducting PAR, the research aimed to enable leaders to enhance trust, empathy, and change leadership through coaching. Thus, the researcher participated in their inquiries both as coach and researcher (Mills, 2000). In so doing, the agenda for change, as the basic principle of participatory action research, is that the lives of the participants, the organisations within which they work, and even the researcher’s life, may be transformed as issues of trust, empathy and change leadership begin to surface (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Hence, action research requires deep trust as the researcher and participants work very closely together over a period of time (Bennett, 2004). In order for effective coaching to occur, trust as a core competency had to be established in building a relationship with the participant in a very short space of time.

In pursuit of shifting the existent culture for effective organisational change, the researcher conducted coaching sessions with a leadership group; thereby, both the coaching sessions and the coach were the research instrument. By applying cognitive behavioural coaching and a solution-focused approach to leadership coaching sessions, thus allowing for the involvement of participants in co-creating solutions, this study was well-positioned towards an action research design.

## 3.3. Population and sample

Within this section, the population and sample for the study will be discussed.

### *3.3.1. Population*

The target research population for this study was middle to senior leaders in the operations department of an automotive manufacturing concern in Gqeberha (formerly known as Port Elizabeth), in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. These leaders have a significant influence on organisational culture as they are responsible for leading and implementing change within their specific areas. In addition, they have a wide-ranging capacity of control regarding direct reports, employees and influence within various departments. Half of the leaders who participated in the study were newly promoted and were appointed only a few months prior to the commencement of coaching.

### *3.3.2. Sample and sampling method*

Carmichael and Cunningham (2017) posit that qualitative research sampling is commonly conducted non-randomly (i.e., non-probability sampling) and often purposively, as individuals are selected with specific intent. A non-random or non-probability sample describes a subjective judgement by the researcher, in which the members of the sampling frame do not have an equal chance of being selected as a participant in the study (Vanderstoep & Johnson, 2008). According to Blumberg et al. (2014), non-probability sampling that uses specific criteria to select participants is deemed purposive. Purposive sampling is based on a strategic approach in which identifying specific cases for rich information is presumed to produce the best data (Leavy, 2017). The impact level of the leaders of the operations department is of particular interest in participant selection for this study, as these leaders have the largest scope of influence on and control over the organisational culture within the operations department. As the researcher is interested in leaders who, through implementing or managing change, influence culture within an automotive manufacturing concern, the sample criteria included those who have worked within the automotive manufacturing concern within a leadership role, for a minimum of two months, and who were currently or who would in future be part of organisational change interventions. The sample included the direct subordinates of these leaders, in order to gain additional data via pre- and post-coaching interviews. For qualitative

studies that rely on interviews for data collection, no more than 15 respondents are recommended; moreover, once no new additional insights are gained from the interviews, the point of saturation is considered to have been reached (Leavy, 2017). For this study, once saturation was attained, the collection of data was yielded.

The layered levels of the leadership sample enabled, incited and catalysed corresponding or ripple-effect experiences and activities across organisational tiers, thus enhancing organisational transformation.

**Table 3.1. Profile of participants**

| Description of participant | Number of participants | Number of coaching sessions | Number of interviews |
|---|---|---|---|
| First Line Leaders | 2 | 5 | 1 |
| Middle Managers | 1 | 5 | 1 |
| Senior Managers | 1 | 5 | 1 |
| Employees | 6 | 0 | 11 |
| TOTAL number of participants | 10 | 15 | 14 |

## 3.4. The research instrument

The study aimed to shift the assumptions, beliefs, thoughts and behaviour of leaders via leadership coaching with a cognitive behavioural and solution-focused approach; to this end, structured and unstructured interviews were utilised to collect data for this study. Unstructured interviews are most commonly applied in qualitative research as they provide freedom from structure and content (Kumar, 2019). Structured interviews, using an interview schedule, were employed in this study, as they provided a set list of questions in the same specific order.

The leadership post-coaching and employee pre and post-coaching interview guides were used as the main research instruments. These instruments were

used to measure the following: the perceptions and beliefs of leaders and their subordinates, and vice versa; the receipt and extension of trust given and received by leaders as well as their subordinates; how empathy was displayed, and how their subordinates perceived this demonstration. Finally, these instruments also measured the perceptions pertaining to the leaders' ability to inspire their employees to embrace organisational changes – and whether the employees, in turn, perceived the leader to be managing these changes well.

A sample of the coaching and interview questions can be referred to in Appendix B, at the end of this research report.

## 3.5. Procedure for data collection

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), qualitative inquiry necessitates a research instrument perceptive of underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting data such as interviewing, observing, and analysing activities. The researcher was positioned within the organisation as an external coach and organisational development consultant; in this capacity, the researcher had two coaching clients with the automotive manufacturer. The researcher contacted the Talent Manager who had approved the researcher's request to conduct the research in their organisation; this initial contact was made telephonically. An email request (see Appendix C) explaining the research objective was then sent to the leaders via the Talent Manager. This was accomplished by requesting their participation in coaching sessions in order to research contributory shifts in leadership trust, empathy and change leadership during organisational change.

For the employees, virtual interviews were conducted to determine whether noticeable or perceived shifts in leadership would influence their sense of trust in leadership, their perception of empathy, and the change leadership of their leaders. Requests from the Talent Manager were made to direct reports and their managers via virtual requests, followed by email; this included permission for the sessions to be recorded for the purpose of data collection. Data collection took place during and after the interviews; these were audio recorded. No less than five coaching sessions were conducted with leaders, and data collection took

place during and after these coaching sessions; the raw data consisted of coaching notes made by the researcher, as well as audio recordings and transcripts.

The data collection process followed for this research study is outlined in Figure 3.1, below.

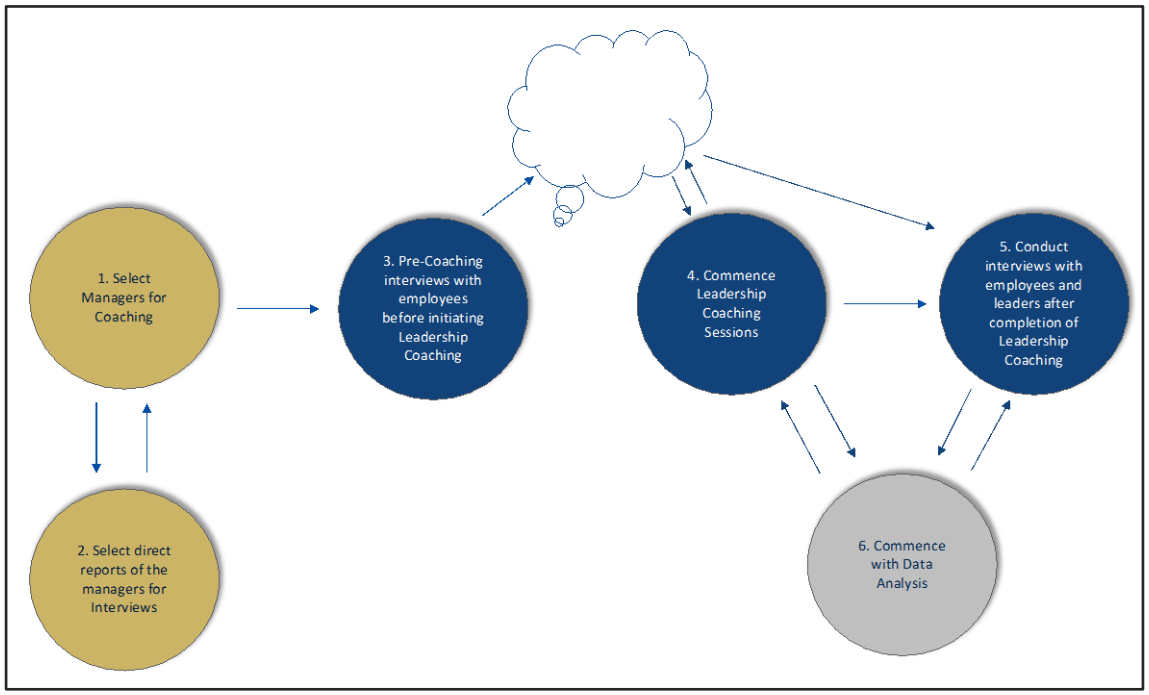


**Figure 3.1 The data collection process (Kumar, 2019; Leavy, 2017; Leedy & Ormrod, 2019)**

## 3.6. Data analysis and interpretation

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), data collection and analysis should run concurrently in qualitative research. By employing inductive reasoning through the identification and description of patterns and themes in narratives, observational data and participants' responses, qualitative research aims to understand and explain these themes and patterns (Kumar, 2019; Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). This describes the thematic analysis which was applied in this research. According to Smith and Firth (2011), thematic analysis is an interpretive process that provides weighty insights to complex phenomena through the systematic exploration of patterns. It focuses on meaning (patterns), across a

dataset, as important to the specific research topic and questions (Clarke, Braun, & Hayfield, 2015). Braun and Clarke (2006) highlight the following six-phased approach to thematic analysis:

- Phase 1: Familiarising oneself with the data
- Phase 2: Generating initial codes
- Phase 3: Searching for themes
- Phase 4: Reviewing potential themes
- Phase 5: Defining and naming themes
- Phase 6: Producing the report

These themes (patterns) would be specific to the perceptions, assumptions, beliefs, feelings, observations and experiences shared by the participants within their leadership coaching sessions or interviews. The data gathered in these sessions was captured via audio recording and notetaking by the researcher. The thematic analysis was done via the combined utilisation of data analysis software and a manual approach.

The first step in the process was to familiarise oneself with the data. The researcher immersed themselves into all the data, including listening to the recordings and reading transcripts from the pre- and post-coaching interviews with employees, as well as the post-coaching interviews with leaders. In addition, the researcher made notes throughout the five coaching sessions held with each leader; the researcher also journaled significant insights and experiences throughout the data collection process. The transcripts were imported into data analysis software, which allowed for the relevant steps for coding and searching for themes to be followed.

This study integrated both a deductive and inductive approach to coding and the analysis of data. The former is a top-down approach of concepts, ideas and topics the researcher brings to the data, whereas the content of the data drives the inductive approach, which is a bottom-up approach, in coding and interpretation (Clarke et al., 2015). Due to the number of interviews and the rich data content captured, many codes were initially identified as insightful in answering the research questions (Clarke et al., 2015).

These initial codes were then categorized into themes, which were recurrently revised in light of the two research questions, then defined and named. Clearly defined themes emerged through this iterative process, thus providing greater insights into the key concepts. These themes, and the data gathered in relation thereto, will be shared in Chapter 4 of this study.

According to Clarke et al. (2015), the main assumptions to be made for the thematic analysis are:

- the sample is appropriate
- the data collected is of good quality
- the researcher has high-level skills for the writing up of their qualitative data
- the data is collated accurately
- the researcher has detailed knowledge of literature and theory relevant to the research topic
- the researcher has capacity in relation to their qualitative method.

Although this analysis provides rich thematic data, it can lack depth and transparency, and the findings can be subjective due to the nature of the qualitative case study.

## 3.7. Limitations of the study

The researcher who conducted the leadership coaching sessions may have been subjective, creating bias in data collection and analysis. However, through reflexivity, the researcher could counter some of these limitations. Reflexivity is the researcher's awareness and acknowledgement of their active role in the research process and the potential influence on the research outcomes (Haynes, 2012).

Being external to the organisation, the researcher had to take some additional time to build trust with the participants; in this respect, the depth and amount of information that participants were willing to share with the researcher may have

been limited. The sample size was reasonably large for qualitative research conducted by one individual, thus creating a time constraint.

The coaching intervention was originally planned to take place over a five-month period. This timeframe was reduced and impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the consequent changes within the organisation. Therefore, the observation or experience of the leaders, by employees in the post-coaching interviews, may have been too short (i.e., timeframe) for sustained behavioural change to be experienced.

Another limitation is that of a semi-manual data analysis, which may create further time constraints, subjectivity, and wearisomeness.

## 3.8. Trustworthiness

According to Schwandt, Lincoln, and Guba (2007), determining credibility, trustworthiness, and legitimacy for data interpretations is one of the main challenges facing qualitative research and interpretative practices. Prolonged engagement, keen observation, and thick, rich description are the criteria for building credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the research findings (Tracy, 2010).

In enhancing the trustworthiness of this study, the researcher aimed to provide a thorough description of the research context and the assumptions that were central to the study. The researcher aimed to ensure that the sample and sample size were appropriate, and that the participants understood the purpose and nature of the study, and were willing to participate in the study. The coaching sessions were measures to enhance trustworthiness in the qualitative data interpretations.

### *3.8.1. Transferability*

According to Morse (2015), the extent to which the findings are applicable to other contexts or for another population refers to external validity, known as “transferability”, within a qualitative perspective. To achieve transferability, the

researcher made use of purposive sampling; therefore, the study population was uniquely defined in order to provide insights into the research questions. Therefore, the plan to conduct a minimum of five, one-on-one, one hour coaching sessions with the leadership sample aimed to achieve quality data collection. In order to attain saturation, a twenty percent sample size of the overall population was selected, along with a fifty percent leadership representation.

### *3.8.2. Credibility*

The use of triangulation was employed to establish credibility in this study, as the comparison of multiple data sources in search of common themes provided further credibility to the findings (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). The researcher achieved this through coaching sessions, interviews, and general observations in increasing credibility. Furthermore, the researcher's use of reflexivity, in self-reflection of their role within the study, personal background, personal experiences and biases which may influence the interpretation of the data, aimed to heighten credibility (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Reflection, which is a key coaching and transformative learning practice, suits this study. Acknowledging their own biases is good practice on the part of skilful qualitative researchers.

### *3.8.3. Dependability*

Yilmaz (2013) posits that a study has dependability when the selection, justification, and application of the research approach is clearly explicated, and its effectiveness is appraised by the researcher. This study aimed to understand the meaning perspectives of the participants; therefore, due to the nature of the research, no two responses or participants will respond in exactly the same manner, and therefore the findings may not yield the same results. However, the purposively selected leader participants aimed to increase the tool's dependability and the triangulation of the data via employee interviews and leadership coaching sessions, so as to enhance credibility. The researcher aimed to amplify their own coaching and supervisory research sessions in order to further increase the research process's dependability and findings.

### *3.8.4. Confirmability*

Confirmability is comparable to objectivity, and is concerned with ensuring that the findings represent participants' experiences and ideas – rather than the interpretation or predilections of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). Coaching lends itself to shared subjective, personal views and poses potential risks to confirmability. Triangulation of data, reflective practice through journaling, and regular interaction with the research supervisor helped to mitigate these potential risks.

## 3.9. Ethical considerations

According to Kumar (2019), ethical conduct requires careful consideration of the principles of conduct that are deemed appropriate by a specific profession. Adherence to the University of the Witwatersrand's ethical standards, which subscribes to the integrity standards for research set out in the Singapore Statement, ensured that the appropriate research ethics were maintained in this study. It was of utmost importance that all participants understood that their participation within the study was voluntary, and that no consequences would be administered should they choose not to participate. This aligns with the ethical standards under the Graduate Schools Alliance for Executive Coaches (GSAEC), and strict adherence to these standards was maintained in this study. Written informed consent was obtained from each of the study participants (see Appendices C and D, at the end of this report) after a briefing session regarding the nature and purpose of the study; in this briefing session, the researcher ensured voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity for all participants. The Talent Manager briefed the leader participants and employees individually, in an effort to inquire regarding their willingness to voluntarily participate in the study; this was followed by a briefing session once their agreement was received. The briefing session conducted by the researcher outlined the confidentiality and voluntary nature of the study, along with the required expectations and timelines for the study.

Participant pseudonyms were used throughout the study, and the organisation's name was kept confidential. Transparency of the research methods, aims, risks and benefits, and the entire research process, helped to limit unethical conduct.

# CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

## 4.1 Introduction

In addressing the research questions guiding this study, the qualitative research findings of the study are presented in this chapter. A thematic analysis was conducted based on the qualitative data collected during the pre- and post-coaching interviews with direct reports and employees in the production department. The research findings are presented according to the key themes to emerge against the research propositions discussed in Chapter 2 of this study, as outlined below.

The prevailing themes to emerge during the participant interviews and the five one-hour leadership coaching conversations will also be discussed in this chapter. Key conversation areas in the leadership coaching sessions were: organisational culture, change management, relationships within the workplace, assumptions and perceptions, as well as leadership beliefs and behaviours.

The key themes which emerged from the pre- and post-coaching interviews with employees, the coaching sessions and the post-coaching interviews with leaders are outlined in the table below:

**Table 4.1.** Key Themes for the study

| Employee interview participants | Leadership coaching interview participants | |
|---|---|---|
| Pre- and post-coaching Themes | Coaching Themes | Post-coaching Themes |
| 1. Organisational culture and its influence on leadership behaviour | 1. Self-confidence and perception of self as a leader (self-efficacy) | 1. Leaders' experience of coaching and its benefits |
| 2. Participants' experience of trust and empathy in relation to leaders | 2. Transparency and trust | 2. Leadership coaching enhancing self-reflection and shifts in behaviour |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 3. Participants' experience of organisational change and change leadership | 3. Building relationships | 3. Coaching enhanced sense of self-confidence, self-efficacy and trust |
| | 4. Newly promoted leader response to change and organisational culture | 4. Values and leadership behaviour |
| | 5. Organisational culture and new leadership behaviour | 5. Coaching and change leadership |

Initially, four leaders agreed to participate in the study. However, due to personal and work-related challenges, one of the leaders decided to opt out of the study after their second coaching session. As participation within the study was voluntary, the researcher respected the manager's decision to withdraw their participation. This withdrawal is, in itself, data that could allude to the organisational culture within the specific department and organisation.

The code classification represented in Table 4.2, below, was used to identify the coaching and interview participants by assigning descriptions, comments, and quotations to each study participant. In an effort to maintain the anonymity of the study participants, in this research report, each participant has been labelled and distinguished according to their participatory role. In this regard, leaders who participated in the coaching sessions have been allocated a 'C' label (for coaching); moreover, the interview participants, who are employees reporting to the leaders, were allocated a label beginning with an 'I' (for interview).

**Table 4.2.** Naming conventions of participants

| **Classification of participants** | **Code Classification** | |
|---|---|---|
| ***Leadership Coaching participants*** | *Coaching* | *Post-Coaching* |
| Coaching Participant 1 (senior management) | C01 | C-PC01 |
| Coaching Participant 2 (middle management) | C02 | C-PC02 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Coaching Participant 3<br>(first-line management) | C03 | C-PC03 |
| ***Employee Interview Participants*** | *Pre-Coaching* | *Post-Coaching* |
| Interview Participant 1 | I-BC01 | I-PC01 |
| Interview Participant 2 | I-BC02 | I-PC02 |
| Interview Participant 3 | I-BC03 | I-PC03 |
| Interview Participant 4 | I-BC04 | I-PC04 |
| Interview Participant 5 | I-BC05 | I-PC05 |
| Interview Participant 6 | I-BC06 | I-PC06 |

The pre-coaching and post-coaching interview participants occupied positions at middle management and on the shop-floor. It is important to note that the participants for the interviews were not all direct reports of the leaders who received coaching, as some were on rotational shifts. However, they did all fall under the management tier or supervision of the three coachees.

The six pre-coaching interviews were conducted in an effort to gather the team's perceptions of the organisational culture, and their relationship with leadership, in an effort to gauge the impact these had upon their experiences as employees. The key themes focused on in the pre-coaching interviews were: organisational culture, leadership, trust, empathy and change. These themes were discussed within the context of a production department at the individual, leader, and organisational levels. Five post-coaching interviews were conducted one month after the last coaching sessions were concluded. The same key themes were focused on for the post-coaching sessions, with a distinct focus on observations related to any behavioural changes from leaders.

**Table 4.3.** Key themes from the pre- and post-coaching employee interviews

| Pre- and post-coaching Themes | Sub-Themes |
|---|---|
| 4.2.1. Organisational culture and its influence on leadership behaviour | 4.2.1.1. Perceptions of organisational culture<br>4.2.1.2. Participants' experiences and perceptions of leader behaviour<br>4.2.1.3. Perceptions of newly promoted leaders |

| | |
|---|---|
| 4.2.2. Participants' experiences of trust and empathy in relation to leaders | 4.2.2.1. Positive effects of trust and empathy<br>4.2.2.2. Relationship with manager |
| 4.2.3. Participants' experiences of organisational change and change leadership | 4.2.3.1. Inclusivity and change leadership<br>4.2.3.2. Change leadership and relationship with leaders |

## 4.2. Pre-coaching and post-coaching interviews with employees

It is pertinent to note that the specific department being investigated in this study was undergoing two specific changes during the period in which the research was undertaken. The first was a change of leadership, and the second a change of processes and policies. Due to an increased demand for productivity and cost reduction, the leadership made some changes in the shift patterns, which disrupted the employees and some managers. This change in shift pattern resulted in employees and some leaders having to work longer hours over an extended period of time. The reduced number of managers also resulted in the rotation of managers who provide oversight to different teams on a cyclical basis. This change was implemented for a period of three to four months.

### *4.2.1 Organisational culture and its influence on leadership behaviour*

#### *4.2.1.1 Perceptions of organisational culture*

The findings suggest that the organisational culture experienced by most of the participants was one of being performance driven, and quality driven, with a strong focus on output and continuous improvement. Some participants revealed a culture with an hierarchical nature, which resulted in lowered engagement levels and poor work-life balance, with people feeling that their productivity is the only concern for the organisation. Therefore, the orientation is focussed on output and performance rather than towards the well-being of people:

*The culture now is changing slowly, to be more team- and people-orientated. However, what I don't like about this, or did not like, because… let me put it this way, the culture has always been a fast pace, always been about totals; 'Chase totals, we don't care about anything.' And then at the same time, we say, quality first: you can't get both quality and higher totals*. (I-BC02)

*Very customer driven. Very… you pushed from obviously above, you know, the upper levels. Culture is… it's also, you've got to be available all the time. I don't think work-life, home balance, is very good, in my opinion. But it's also pillar based, KPI based, driving for KPIs and lots of a customer focused as well… keep the customer happy, you know, at all costs.* (I-BC01)

*Especially since I was still new to a total different environment. Then I got the reality check and that it's not as easy-going as I thought it would be. It was, basically, every man for himself… haha.* (I-BC04)

The experience of the organisational culture as expressed by I-BC04 reveals a propensity towards a lack of leadership support and care, with the employee possibly feeling abandoned – as evidenced by their expressed need to fend for themselves.

The organisational value which seemed to take precedence for participants within the organisation was a *'passion to win.'* This is evidenced by participant I-BC04's statement below:

*The one that sticks out without a doubt is the "passion to win". Because look at the end of the day, the company wants to maximise their profitisation. So, let's just be honest, it's still a business at the end of the day, it's about shareholders' wealth maximisation.* (I-BC04)

The propensity towards an autocratic and hierarchical culture is highlighted as one participant attested to the fear in making decisions and the lack of ownership given them:

*Workers are always in fear, and you're not allowed to think outside of the box when you posed with the problem, you just want to switch off and go and*

*report so that you don't get blamed for whatever happens at the machine. Because that's the kind of atmosphere that they created.* (I-BC06)

The autocratic and hierarchical culture is quite telling when leaders implement change and require employees to take ownership and drive certain activities:

*Culture, where do I start? In terms of their decision making and communication is top down. It's top down, decisions are made from the top, then they are communicated to the workers, it's not what they do.* (I-BC06)

#### *4.2.1.2. Participants' experience and perceptions of leader behaviour*

When asked to describe the organisational culture, most of the participants responded by describing the behaviours of leaders and their leadership styles.

Under circumstances of change and pressure, leadership behaviour revealed that most managers do not display desirable leadership behaviour when under pressure. They 'change', as indicated by participant I-BC06, below:

*He can't handle pressure. Like I said, immediately he's under pressure, he comes you know. But I expect the line manager will do for his team and act as a shock absorber. Yeah, I know I might be wrong, but that is what I expect, so that the pressure, the distractions, whatever coming from wherever, they don't impact on how we perform.* (I-BC06)

In the description above, the employee expressed an expectation regarding the role of leader as one who protects their people, absorbs the pressure from the top, and manages the impact felt by staff.

However, the post-coaching interviews revealed that one of the newly promoted managers could withstand the external organisational pressures imposed upon him, and his behaviour remained composed and consistent under pressure. His demeanour and behaviour did not succumb to the demanding pressures of the organisational culture within his new leadership role. He was perceived to have remained consistent in his behaviour even after the coaching sessions:

*I think one of my fears were he would maybe become a different person with the pressures that the job he's in, but he hasn't, he's stayed, he's normal. Outwardly anyway, calm, respectful demeanour, which is very nice… The pressures that the position holds, he doesn't let it overflow sort of onto his reports, you know?* (I-PC01)

When asked to further elaborate on the specific observable behaviours referred to in their statement above, the employee responded as follows:

*…being maybe disrespectful, screaming and shouting or short tempered… But I have not seen it at all, and I know he's under pressure, I see it. We all see it. But, he's like I said... stayed. I call it level-headed, respectful, and I think true to his values, maybe?* (I-PC01)

The findings suggest that the alignment to a core set of values and beliefs would keep a leader consistent in their demonstration of leadership behaviours. It is evident that not all leadership styles and behaviours are consistent within the organisation, as made clear in the following statement:

*Attribute to management style...how they have been trained to deal with us. Not every manager operates as if they wearing blinkers... some, you can see there's training and he knows how to deal with people.* (I-BC06)

#### *4.2.1.3. Perceptions of newly promoted leaders*

In relation to employee perceptions of newly promoted leaders, there was a proclivity towards questioning leadership intent. Employee perceptions and assumptions of their leaders were that they were merely talking the talk and wanting to make a good impression on senior leadership; moreover, there seemed to be automatic distrust in their actions, behaviours and especially their words:

*I think one of my fears were he would maybe become a different person with the pressures that the job he's in, but he hasn't, he's stayed, he's normal… outwardly anyway, calm, respectful demeanour, which is very nice.* (I-PC01)

In providing their understanding of the reasons for implementing changes in shift patterns, the participant highlighted their distrust in leadership intent. Herewith, the participant indicated that the perceived motivation for change implementation was to enhance their leadership profile and image amongst senior executives:

> *The reason he told us is to train people, because there was a lot of vacancies on the shifts… So I'm not sure if the training was the main reason. My personal opinion: I think it was an image, he tried to show the bosses he can save, that's my personal opinion on these three shifts.* (I-PC03)

### *4.2.2 Participants' experiences of trust and empathy in relation to leaders*

The participants had various relationships of trust with their leaders. Some were hesitant to extend their trust to newly promoted leadership as they desired more time to pass by in order to determine the authenticity of their words, actions and intent. For others, the realisation of trust from the leader, incited their own trust towards their leader:

> *It's a two way, I would say, two ways trust. He trusts me a lot. He trusts everything I say, to a point where now, I don't want to lie to him. If I say I've done something, I produce evidence, because I don't want to break that trust. You understand?* (I-BC02)

Once trust is received, the recipient intends to hold onto it and therefore adjusts behaviour to ensure the trust is maintained. Another employee participant shared how the leader's ability to be open-minded and willingness to support were contributory factors to their extension of trust to their leader:

> *I would say his openness and his willingness to show, you know, that he is someone you can come to like, if you have a problem. Like he is very open-minded and someone that you can go to for help, you know, if you're in a tough situation.* (I-BC05)

However, other participants shared that the lack of leadership support in the daily work challenges they faced had a significant impact on their ability to deliver. Furthermore, participants conveyed a sense of not being listened to by

leadership, and only being given support and care when their (the leaders) interests were not being met; that is, a transactional and needs-based focus in relation to what the organisation or leader needs. In response to the question asking for a description of the organisational culture, participant I-BC06 linked their experience of the organisational culture to leadership behaviour specifically in relation to providing support, listening to employee needs and the challenges they face daily:

> *It is not correct when people complaining as workers, that there's no communication between the bosses and workers. The only time they will come here to listen to us, is when we are not achieving the targets that they want, and maybe they are getting pressure from above, from their superiors. It's only then they come and check what problems we are experiencing. And yet, we communicate these things every day, you know, we will tell our manager what our problems are.* (I-BC06)

In addition, certain relationships established with leaders are largely based on employee output and exchange, that is, a transactional leadership style:

> *The relationship is based on output. The only times they come and talk to me is when bosses is not happy with performance. Then he will come you know, instead of… ja, he will come and find out why we not performing, and we'll explain why we are not performing.* (I-BC06)

#### *4.2.2.1 Positive effects of trust and empathy*

Some participants expressed that, in instances in which the employee felt there was trust in their relationship with their leader, it increased their confidence in their own abilities, enhanced the realisation of their own potential and ability to challenge their own comfort zones, so as to effect personal change:

> *So he's unleashed something, I didn't know, about myself. And somehow now, I'm out of my comfort zone. But I'm enjoying this. And sometimes I'm amazed with how much potential I have. And the amount of knowledge that I*

*have that I didn't even know I had. So he's shown me another part of me I didn't know existed.* (I-BC02)

The importance of leadership displaying genuine concern for the wellbeing of employees is highlighted below:

*It's good. Not only focusing on the work aspect but on my wellbeing, on my family. Not only doing it to us as team, but on shopfloor…he calls you in, wants to know your background, your age, your kids, etc. Ask about your daughter, etc. Makes it hard cause you don't want to disappoint this person.* (I-BC02)

Once leaders displayed trust and empathy, employee participants expressed their desire not to disappoint the leader, and their desire to satisfy business and leadership requests.

#### *4.2.2.2 Relationship with manager*

When asked what was important for employees in their relationship with their manager, the common elements to emerge from the interviews were: communication, trust, care, leadership support and respect, as well as inclusivity in decision-making, problem-solving, and ownership.

*Yeah, for starters, communication: communication is key. Trust is key. Because I am an adult, I know what I'm there to do. So I expect my manager to trust me to do my best, to the best of my ability. When things go wrong, I expect him to back me, I expect him to cover my back. Not to say that I must do things knowingly wrong, but you do make mistakes, I'm human you know, you do make mistakes so, I do need someone to cover my back for me. Like I said, they always want to assign blame for things that go wrong.* (I-BC06)

*Honesty, openness, and approachability…* (I-BC02)

*Someone who wants to help you and who supports you.* (I-BC03)

*Trust! If I'm not performing, come tell me. If I'm not doing something, tell me so I can make a change.* (I-BC01)

Open, authentic, unguarded communication specifically in relation to job performance seemed to be the need for relationship with leaders.

A common thread to emerge from the data was the strong link between the employee's relationship with their manager and perceptions of trust and empathy, and the demonstration of respect.

### *4.2.3. Participants' experiences of organisational change and change leadership*

It is important to note that, by the time that the post-coaching interviews were conducted, the department had implemented a change in shift pattern. This change was experienced negatively by the shopfloor employees, as it required them to work longer hours over an extended period of time. At the time of the post-coaching interviews, the organisation was coming to the end of a three-to-four-month implementation period of this temporary shift pattern.

When asked how employees experience the implementation of change within the organisation, and specifically the production department, most of the participants associated change implementation with communication. The data revealed that employee perceptions of change being managed well relied on clear communication, in advance, and being allowed to engage in decision-making prior to implementation. Before the coaching session interviews, participants disclosed that the level of inclusivity was not a common practice within the organisational culture. Managers would normally communicate decisions expecting employees to be understanding and have the adequate knowledge to effect the necessary changes.

Participants shared the following in relation to leadership implementation of changes:

> *He is not managing people's feelings towards change. He is putting in policies and processes, so that whether you like it, or whether you hate it, you must still abide. I don't know if I'm making sense. So, you do get a.. there's a lot of mixed emotion at the moment in the organisation. There's those who are*

*happy and excited and doing more, who give up more like me. Then there's those who don't like change, they don't like this change. But, at the same day, at the same time, we all have to do what is right for the organisation.* (I-BC02)

*Not handled too badly, people are taken into account, there's communication that goes out.* (I-BC01)

Although employees seem to be communicated with regarding the changes, there seems to be a lack of enabling employees to fully understand the business rationale for the changes:

*Haven't communicated change correctly with us on machines… Don't generally communicate the benefits or rationale for change.* (I-BC05)

The following post-coaching interview response was received from participant I-PC03 when asked about whether there were any changes in the implementation of change. This response highlights the lack of effective engagement with, and understanding by, employees:

Participant: *You asking at the bad time now because the last three, four months was a bad time for mixing because with the new manager he came and switched us to new shift patterns and we were working ourselves dead. So all the guys the moral was down… Because we were all upset.*

Interviewer: *Tell me why everybody was upset?*

Participant: *Firstly, this is the new product manager and yes he wanted to save cost or something. I don't know what his plans was, I don't know was it a image for himself as a manager?* (I-PC03)

In interviewing employee participant I-BC06, it was evident that a sense of ownership and the opportunity to contribute to processes or challenges faced is critical. When asked what the impact of this was, the participant responded as follows:

*Massive production time lost, people not allowed to think. I'm like a robot. I must just switch on/off and operate...not allowed to think or come up with a solution, that could have helped. Not allowed to think*. (I-BC06)

In response to how change is generally implemented and managed in the organisation, participant I-B02C emphasised that change is implemented via instituting policies instead of the time taken to engage with people and facilitate the change process with them:

*Putting in policy and processes for the change, instead of managing the people's feelings of change.* (I-BC02)

This data reveals a lack of care for employees, as evident in the discarding of emotions and humanity. Most of the participants also identified change management with how leadership usually communicates it. The perception of how change should be implemented is linked to how well or effectively leadership engages and communicates on it.

When further explored, the data revealed that communication as inclusive of honest and constructive feedback, real engagement on issues, and managers who listen.

#### *4.2.3.1. Inclusivity and change leadership*

Inclusivity was a consistent finding in the participant interviews. Feelings of being included in decision making specifically pertaining to changes being implemented was a key factor in how employees perceived the management and leadership of change.

Inclusivity and communication were the two primary codes that came through consistently within the change leadership themes, specifically pertaining to decision making, understanding the rationale for business changes, and including employees in the process.

*They don't start at the bottom and discuss these things with the workers in terms of… there has to be something that has to change, or looking for ways*

*to improve things. Discuss with the workers and get the workers to be part of the decision making you know, so that they own the decisions that are taken*. (I-BC06)

*We need to know what's happening because if there's a layoff, we're going to be affected you know in that time. So...yeah. On this side, I would say they haven't communicated correctly also with us, because it's quite a big upgrade that's going to take place at one of the machines.* (I-BC05)

One participant described the effect and impact of not having a sense of ownership and accountability as an employee, as follows:

*Workers are always in fear, and you're not allowed to think outside of the box when you posed with the problem*. (I-BC06)

The employee's desire to feel included in sharing of ideas, when faced with the implementation of changes, is evident.

#### *4.2.3.2. Change leadership and relationship with leaders*

In response to how change is managed within the organisation, there was also a link between the implementation and management of change and the employee relationship with their manager. Change leadership is not void of relationships:

*Now as workers we become resistant obviously because the relationship, between the managers and the workers it's not there. Like I said, top down. Even our manager, the relationship… we don't see it properly you know, as how managers relationship with his workers should be. The relationship is not alright, it's us and them.* (I-BC06)

The above data reveals a resistance to change linked to the lack of relationship with the manager. Relationship implies trust. Change leadership requires trust from employees.

The post-coaching feedback on leadership from employee participant I-BC05 highlighted the shift in demonstration of care towards employees after the coaching of leaders:

*There's definitely been an impact because, you know, we were in the meeting and highlighted what the issues were maybe a month ago, and prior to that before we started this shift pattern… this guy, he says 'Are there any questions?' and then obviously whatever questions you have for him, he would answer them and give you exactly what you're looking for in terms of an answer. Yes, it's definitely helped in that sense because, getting an email, it's like basically a slap in the face. Because you get a better feel that they actually do care about you, as a people on the floor. Not just we sending out this email, and that's it.* (I-BC05)

The data revealed that the greater efforts in displaying care, through engaging fully with employees, was noticed by employees.

## 4.3. Findings from the coaching sessions with leaders

Consistent themes to have emerged during the coaching sessions with all leaders were:

- Self-confidence and perceptions of self as a leader (self-efficacy)
- Transparency and trust
- Managing relationships
- Newly promoted leader response to change and organisational culture
- Organisational culture and new leadership behaviour.

### *4.3.1. Self-confidence and perception of self as a leader (self-efficacy)*

A key theme that came through in the coaching sessions of the two more senior leaders was self-confidence and perception of self as a leader. Not only were leaders struggling with confidence and self-efficacy in performing the role, but they were also challenged by self-doubt in their ability, and they wished to work through this area of their abilities. In addition, the perceptions of executive leadership played a crucial role in their self-efficacy.

The coaching sessions revealed a strong desire for individual self-confidence and self-efficacy within the role of leader. At the onset of the coaching sessions, one

of the key focus areas for the leaders was gaining greater confidence within themselves, in their role, and gaining the confidence and trust of their own executive and senior leaders.

> *To be more confident… especially when speaking on topics*. (C02)

An interesting finding was that the perceptions of the executives and senior leaders of the coaching participants initially seemed to outweigh their employees' perceptions on their leadership efficacy. When faced with some criticism, or when their abilities were questioned, the coaching participants seemed more impacted by feedback from executives than the feedback they received from their teams. The impact of such feedback on one coaching participant is captured in the statement below:

> *I've lost internal trust within myself.* (C01)

However, by the fifth coaching session, the leader had decided to make himself completely vulnerable to his direct team and share a side of himself that he had not previously shared with his team. He shared the experience during his coaching session:

> *I feel like I'm not delivering as your leader. Like I'm failing you as your leader. And it is overwhelming for me, you know.' And I touched on how I feel like I'm failing as a father.* (C01)

In hoping to receive some similar vulnerability from his team, they provided him with critical feedback, which surprised him. However, the impact was that it affected him so much that it resulted in deep reflection on his behaviour. The perception of others influenced the leaders' level and depth of reflection on his behaviour.

One of the key goals and focus areas for the coaching sessions was to enable a mindset shift within the leaders; that is, a shift in perspective and assumptions towards their people and teams.

What also became important for the newly promoted leader was to:

> *Get rid of the image and be myself – to use my own method and what works for me.* (C02)

Being able to embrace their own identity and remain confident in themselves, despite the environment's expectations, was vital in showing up as a trustworthy and transparent leader.

### *4.3.2. Transparency and trust*

Lack of transparency from leaders contributes to a lack of trust in leadership. As a key value in their leadership role, being transparent was extremely important to one of the coaching participants throughout their coaching sessions. A central data finding in response to what would enable trust, especially in gaining the trust of senior leadership, was to:

> *…do the right thing and to be transparent.* (C02)

The data revealed an internal conflict that the leader experienced within his new role. In this regard, he was completely transparent with senior and executive leadership about historical issues within his department, which posed significant difficulties within his current role.

### 4.3.3. *Building relationships*

One of the key data findings in response to what would enable trust was the development of:

> …*deep connections and meaningful relationships.* (C-PC01)

The data revealed that a keen concern and interest amongst all the leaders was to be able to manage their relationships upwards, as opposed to focusing on enhancing relationships with their people. Building trust with executive leadership, and making an impact on them, was a key focus and seemingly

important for the leader participants, whilst managing the issues and challenges from their employees was deprioritised by the leaders.

At the start of the coaching sessions, a key driver for the leaders was a strong focus on their relationship with their direct managers and senior executive leadership. As two of the coaching participants were newly promoted into their leadership roles, their initial goal and focus was to make a good impression and to prove themselves to senior management. The third coaching participant had a new leader to whom they reported, and the participant highlighted this relationship as a key challenge. The bulk of the first few coaching sessions with these leaders concentrated on discussing and working through their relationships and dynamics with their senior leaders, and the challenges they faced. This was evident in the initial goal setting coaching conversation wherein all participants identified that one of their goals was to improve their working relationships with their superiors:

> *Improved relationship with my boss… it's a bit tense. How to manage the relationship so he doesn't feel threatened as not being effective.* (C-PC01)

> *Relationship with boss is difficult, puts lots of pressure on us. More like supporting him than him supporting me.* (C-PC03)

A key insight from these coaching conversations revealed a concern around how they were perceived. A coaching participant who reported to a newly promoted leader also expressed concern regarding the new leader's perceptions and doubts regarding their intentions:

> *He wants answers, evidence of everything.* (C-PC03)

This finding underlines a perception of lack of trust within this leader-employee relationship.

### *4.3.4. Newly promoted leader response to change and organisational culture*

Through the deep reflective practice enabled by the coaching sessions, one of the leaders who described himself and his goal in becoming a transformative leader during his first coaching session came to the stark realisation that organisational culture is a key influence to his leadership style.

In the coaching extract below, leader participant C-PC01 describes his 'first one', that is, the leadership shared in our first coaching session:

> *I would say it's, it's very intense and I would say borderline dictator and more like a coach that just wants to win the league. Instead of a coach that says, well, we win the league, or we don't win the league misses play? Well, you know. So yeah, that's, that's, that's how I would view it…Yeah, no, there's a, there's a big contrast between the two and, basically, makes me wonder like, which one am I, you know? Because in my mind, the first one is, who I am, by nature, you know. And the second one, is triggered by certain things in my environment, you know. And if I were to assess the two archetypes… I can feel when I am the second one, you know. There are certain triggers, in the environment in the team that bring out the second one. The first one, I'm not gonna say I'm, I'm this one only, because I know that the first one is triggered by certain things in my environment, and by certain team member, in my team*. (C-PC01)

Through reflective dialogue in the coaching session, the leader became aware that, due to organisational pressures and requirements, his leadership style was becoming more autocratic.

During the coaching sessions, data from leader participant C02 indicated that the difficulty they experienced in managing change, within the context of organisational culture, was that the process tended to be frustrating and lonely:

> *It gets a bit overwhelming… you feel like you on your own.* (C02)

In managing change and internal process challenges the leader participant CO2 further revealed the impact of the organisational culture of consistent work pressures, constant calls and:

*Work, work, work* (C02).

### *4.3.5. Organisational culture and new leadership behaviour*

Having to balance expectations of the external environment while meeting the expectations of senior executives, against their perceptions of self and envisaged leadership style, proved pervasive for the leader participants.

There was inner conflict experienced by the senior leader of the area who believed himself to be a people-person and a great leader; however, balancing the expectations from executives proved to be a challenge for this leader.

1. *Organisational culture and perceptions of leadership*

One of the employee participants offered the following observation regarding the newly promoted leader being people focused:

> *Yeah he is trying to, it's very problem-solving based, so he's trying to not be reactive and, when there's issues, to find root causes. Very quality-based, but he tries to take the brunt or the pressure himself and maybe not try to spread it down to everybody else. But he's like mentioned that he's people focused. Because we are meant to be resources, you know.* (I-BC01)

However, this very assumption of leadership draws attention to the influence that organisational culture has on newly promoted leaders. The leader's intent to forge a distinct path from the perceived leadership style of the organisation is emphasised in the extracts below:

> *I think he's been here since the beginning of the year. I do see he's trying to drive a different direction, he's trying to lead differently.* (I-BC01)

> *You know, not everybody is like that (screaming and shouting). But you know, when most of the leadership is that way, then sometimes the people who weren't like that before change, you know?* (I-BC01)

The suggested perception that the organisational culture influences leadership, highlights their initial will to withstand the culture; however, whether consciously or subconsciously, this eventually wanes and these leaders succumb to the prevailing organisational culture.

Further data acquired during the coaching sessions suggested that the leader recognised he was becoming autocratic in nature and, through some coaching questioning techniques and reflective dialogue, he realised that he was moving away from the 'shepherd' leadership style he desired and believed himself to be enacting. When opening himself up to receive critical feedback from his employees, he realised that he was not the leader he thought he was.

He then began to relinquish control; this saw his teams take more ownership and accountability. This had a notable impact on performance. In addition, it shifted behaviour in some of his other leaders who became more outspoken and courageous. The ripple effect of extending trust and influence of organisational culture became evident.

2. *Internal conflict of leaders and organisational culture*

The data reveals an internal conflict experienced by two of the three leaders in pleasing the organisation and their senior managers in showing up true to self. Participant C02 also shared a conflict in "*going with the flow"* by being agreeable with his senior manager, rather than honestly disclosing information regarding incremental costs incurred and reporting inaccurate figures. As he was newly promoted, the issues were historical, and he was not accountable for those losses. However, his line manager encouraged the dishonesty, which left him internally conflicted.

Having to balance the expectations of the external environment in meeting management expectations, with the leader they perceive themselves or desire to be, became stark. Quickly recognising that it requires courage and boldness on

the part of the coaching participant to stand against the forces of organisational culture.

## 4.4. Findings from the post-coaching interviews with leaders

After the completion of the coaching sessions, a final interview was held with the leaders; the findings from these interviews will be shared in this section of the chapter. Six themes emerged from the post-coaching interviews. The leaders' experiences of the coaching sessions and behavioural shifts were shared during these interviews.

Based on the findings, the main themes to have emerged from these interviews are:

1. Leaders' experiences of coaching and its benefits
2. Leadership coaching enabled self-reflection and shifts in behaviour
3. Leadership coaching enhanced sense of self-confidence and self-efficacy
4. Self-trust and extension of trust (trust begets trust)
5. Values and leadership behaviour
6. Leaders' experiences of change and leading change

### *4.4.1. Leaders' experiences of coaching and its benefits*

The leaders' experiences of their coaching journey were generally positive and provided them the opportunity to share situational challenges and time for reflection. It also provided a safe space for one of the leaders, who was not afraid to explore deeply embedded perceptions and thoughts affecting their own behaviour. The participants were provided with an opportunity to reflect and were challenged with different perspectives to consider in finding a solution for certain challenges they faced. Two of the three leaders did not want to end the coaching relationship, as saw real value in the coaching process.

The participants shared their experiences of coaching as follows:

- Personal development and growth

- Enhanced work/life balance, with lowered levels of stress and anxiety, and intentional time spent with family
- Stronger focus on building relationships with employees and teams
- Enhanced communication with employees
- Improved performance within the overall area
- Increased transparency and authenticity
- Enhanced trust from senior management
- Shifts in implementation of change
- Development of successors
- Enhanced problem-solving and planning with teams
- Team members taking ownership and being forthcoming with challenges faced, seeking advice and guidance from leaders to solve problems and develop solutions together.

Shifts in behaviour and thought patterns (i.e., thinking/cognition) occurred within the leader concerning the extension of trust to employees. This was brought on by deep self-reflection regarding their behaviour, on the part of leader. In order to extend trust, the leader had to 'let go' of control and allow people the freedom to act. Trusting his team resulted in immediate performance output, productivity, and a new sense of ownership by his employees:

> *What do I need to let go of? Something I've been thinking about a lot. And it's basically around not interrogating and attention to detail. You know, this is something that I have been struggling with in terms of letting go. But I've had to really just, you know, trust that things will get done. But things will not necessarily get done in a perfect way, and people make mistakes, and I need to be okay with the fact that people make mistakes.* (C-PC01)

> *So I've seen myself being a bit more relaxed, in terms of letting go, of relaxing certain things. And the beauty behind that is what the results have done. It's a 360. Yeah, especially from the production point of view, so just letting go and giving the guys freedom to execute. They've been delivering good, good numbers in terms of performance. So they've really managed to minimise losses. We broke a record in this month, in terms of losses, where we ended up 0.8% losses, where we came from 5% in the previous month.* (C-PC01)

When people feel trusted by leadership there is immediate self-efficacy and confidence. This allowed the leader to not be as controlling (which could be an effect of the organisational culture and a sense of having to prove your position) but to allow people the space to take ownership. Allowance for human mistakes enables engagement, which deepens relationship and enhances trust. This is also offset by the lack of leadership support and protection that employees feel. If they know that their managers trust them and allow them to make mistakes, there is a sense of protection and covering from leadership. This influences the display or perception of being cared for, and empathy; it further enhances trust in the leader.

This new sense of ownership and freedom to execute has contributed to innovative ideas and problem-solving by employees, as opposed to just being told what to do and being expected to follow instructions. Employees have now become co-owners of the solution to the challenges faced.

In light of this, it is evident that extending trust enhances team performance:

> *I intentionally decided to give them the freedom to execute. And they appreciated it, you know? So now the discussion is, is more, they're coming to me to say, 'Okay, now I'm struggling here now.' It's more specific. Whereas before, it was very broad, and how can I say this…a blanket of what must be done, but now it's more, 'Okay, can we discuss that specific point?' And I'm also seeing the ownership within the team is growing. The other thing that I've done is I've limited my interaction in the WhatsApp chat group that we have and what's happening now is that there's an interaction in between the members and I mean, I don't need to get involved much, so I'm, it's a new space for me, and unfamiliar territory actually.* (C-PC01)

The findings reveal that most employee participants extended trust to leaders who showed support, and who were willing to understand their needs. Some participants used the term 'reliable' to describe these leaders.

Similarly, the data showed that the leaders' extension of trust to employees occurred based on performance output and employee displays of reliability. Essentially, it became output based. Once they perform or show up as reliable,

only then is trust extended to employees. Trust is provisional and conditional. Providing someone with the opportunity for ownership, and an ability to be accountable, aids trust. Accountability and ownership are requisite for honesty and transparency, even in making mistakes, which builds trust.

In addition to individual ownership, the leader observed that the impact of his relinquishing of some control was that it enhanced team accountability. Individual team members now began to hold each other accountable, which ultimately impacted his own levels of stress and well-being.

In response to whether any shifts have occurred within the leaders' relationship with his team. Coaching enhanced self-reflection on how to enhance communication and engagement, which improved the relationship between the leader and his team:

> *But in a way, before I was in a stage where I need to follow-up. Now I've shifted myself to a stage where I'm getting feedback. From asking for feedback to getting feedback and then based on the feedback we can see the next step*. (C-PC02)

Leadership support enhances employee engagement, as mentioned by one participant:

> *And so I started helping him plotting this stuff down and putting actions in place and this guy's really, really opened up to me and he starts smiling and he says: 'Jinne, thanks for helping me'. He says 'other shift managers don't want to do that. And supporting me and all this while struggling here'.* (C-PC03)

Coaching enhances the sense of well-being and calm:

> *I'm a more, I don't know if I can say a more calmer person is like what you said it was stuff we can control why I'm worrying about it… I'm more relaxed where I used to stress a lot about next week, next year. I'm always worried about things ahead, and I always been through my whole life like is trying to plan ahead, put things in place, plan ahead because I'm always stressed*

*about the future. I don't know. But if it's part of anxiety or what, but lately, I'm so calm as like, I really got this don't care feeling inside of me, what happens must happen, and God will provide. (C-PC03)*

Coaching enhances physical well-being:

*There's another thing that used to affect me, I used to get a lot of heartburn in the past, I used to suffer very bad from heartburn and I went to the doctor about two/three months ago and they wanted to send me for specialist and x-rays and all that. And these last couple of weeks it's like I don't get heartburn anymore… So, I don't know if this is part of not upsetting myself and just being in a relaxed state. So, I don't get heartburn like I used to.* (C-PC03)

### *4.4.2. Leadership coaching enhancing self-reflection and shifts in behaviour*

The data showed that the leadership coaching participants found great value in coaching, specifically in the enhanced self-reflection it offered:

*And also, the coaching sessions, that the opportunities that I got. I've never had a coach before, I've been in mentorships, but not a coach where you really look at yourself, to reflect on yourself, which was for me, was something new, that you really look at yourself. You know, it was really quite profound.* (C-PC02)

In exploring the insights gained from self-refection, one of the leaders acknowledged self-reflection as a key contributor to the shift in how he would lead and implement change:

*I think the one on self-reflection, I think I've mentioned. The one situation I was in that I can reflect on a conflict between myself and the shopfloor and the shop stewards when I was implementing a new process. You know, I was forceful: 'I'm the manager, I will tell you what to do.' But when I reflected on myself, I didn't do this the right way. I didn't get the people involved. I didn't get buy-in from them.* (C-PC02)

Self-reflection saw the leader change his approach to implementing change and soliciting feedback, ideas and solutioning from team members through being more inclusive. This enhanced employee engagement. However, one of the leaders really struggled with self-reflection from the start of the coaching sessions; there was very little self-awareness and, as coach, the researcher found it very challenging. At one stage during the coaching sessions, I had even provided him with feedback, and he was not even aware that that was how he was coming across to others.

In receiving observational feedback post-coaching, from the senior leader on one of the other coaching participants, greater self-consideration and reflectivity were evident:

> *I think he's taking a lot more ownership, you know. He is a little bit less talkative than before because he was extremely erratic before and extremely defensive. But what I'm noticing lately is a lot more pauses within him, and a lot more thought that goes into his dialogue. And what I've also appreciated with him is that he has started developing a successor. And it's really, really helping.* (C-PC01)

When asking the leader participant C03 about whether he had noticed any shifts about or within himself, his response confirmed the above observation made by his senior manager, participant C01. Even though he did not articulate this as self-reflection, it is evident from his responses and the observations from his manager, that he has become more considered towards his actions and behaviour:

> *So I've been, even in my personal life. I'm much calmer. I don't know, I play more things in my mind, than I'm actually speaking about it.* (C-PC03)

At the onset of the coaching sessions, the leader who struggled with transparency acknowledged the need for complete disclosure, honesty and transparency as key building blocks to enhancing trust.

> *And then also to build trust, I will have actions to be more transparent with scrap risk in mixing going forward in the future.* (C-PC02)

### *4.4.3. Coaching enhanced sense of self-confidence, self-efficacy and trust*

The senior leader was also able to provide insights into some of the behavioural changes he observed in one of the other leaders who were also part of the study:

> *And it's been nice to see how he's coming out of the shell. You know, he's an introverted individual but now he's like, got a voice now, but hey!' haha… So it's been nice. It's been nice to see, you know? It's been nice to see him grow as well.* (C-PC01)

In response to asking how the coaching sessions have shifted, or contributed positively to the leader's experience since the start of the coaching sessions, the leader identified enhanced self-confidence as a key outcome of the leadership coaching:

> *So, I will say based on that feedback from people, based on the feel, based on the experience that I've got now, based on the way that I do things now, I will say, confidence has shifted by a lot. If I use the scale if I was a three, I'm now sitting at seven.* (C-PC02)

> *I think I've grown in the position… I have grown in the way I'm doing things. I have grown in the position.* (C-PC02)

So the confidence the leader initially set out as a coaching goal was in relation to communicating effectively. However, due to the reflective practice within the coaching sessions, he later realised that his confidence was connected to self-efficacy in his role, being knowledgeable and understanding what is best for the organisation, as well as presenting solutions and influencing senior executive decision-making. Ultimately, he considered gaining the trust of senior leadership and multiple stakeholders to be important, as well as engendering trust from his team, in procuring their assistance in executing departmental deliverables.

In response to whether they observed any shifts within or about themselves since the coaching sessions, one participant expressed the experience of an increased level of self-confidence in being authentic and truly owning their unique identity as a leader. A renewed sense of self-belief and acceptance (embracing) of who

he is resulted from the transformative growth and change the leader experienced due to coaching:

> *Since we had the coaching sessions, I think there has been a lot of changes with confidence, something that I mentioned at the start. I'd say, now, I'm confident and I'm myself, I'm not trying to be someone else, I'm just myself, I'm C02 and I say it as it is, you know, obviously in a nice way, or in a professional way. So, I've really seen a better C02 when I'm looking back and looking at C02 now and looking at C02 in July, since we had these sessions, I'm seeing a better 02C.* (C-PC02)

When responding to the question regarding what caused the leader to 'let go' of control and allow his teams to take more ownership, the participant highlighted the importance of being a recipient of trust:

> *…the trust from my leader as well, also helped. Because I think the reason why I was very, not to pass the buck, but if you are not trusted yourself, then you will not trust. But if you are managing up to build trust, then you establish trust and then you can trust as well.* (C-PC01)

Coaching also contributed to increased self-confidence and not being afraid to disagree with senior leadership. It brought a shift in observable behaviour in one of the coaching participants, as highlighted by the senior leader:

> *I think he's also grown, in how he speaks to people, how he engages problems, it's like I don't see the imposter syndrome I used to see before, you know, it's like there's been a shift in terms of trusting himself.* (C-PC01)

This behaviour was also highlighted by the individual participant himself, when asked what noticeable shifts he felt the coaching sessions had contributed towards.

Self-confidence comes from being trusted and feeling listened to:

> *So those are the things sometimes that are boosting the confidence that okay, people are now listening to me. People say I've always like to go out without*

*explaining things. But as I say now I'm confident that people are listening and trusting what I'm saying.* (C-PC02)

Transparency enhances trust, and trust overcomes challenging times:

*For me, it means... they trust me, management trusts, they trust me. They trust my decisions… So as I'm building it even more, but I feel like the level of trust is increasing, although things are not going well, what is strange enough but yeah, but it's increasing. I think this is transparency. This is the transparency side, the transparency, being transparent with things I think that's what is helping, it's driving the whole trust issue with management.* (C-PC02)

Extending trust and relinquishing control enhances a sense of well-being:

*I think what changed the most is me building trust upwards and then it allowed me to let go and to really give trust, downwards. So then it makes working very easy, less stressful, my phone rings less, I get to spend more time with my family, which is good. And I'd never knew that the answer to this was really this simple. I thought it was this complicated thing that you need to figure out. I never knew that it was just in taking a deep breath and just, you know, trusting people.* (C-PC01)

Building relationships builds trust.

In his post-coaching interview, one of the leaders, admitted that he did not initially focus on or see real value in building relationships and engaging fully with his subordinates. However, through the coaching sessions and deep self-reflection, he later realised the value of building relationships with his team:

*Because you don't only want to gain confidence or trust in management, you also want to gain trust from the shopfloor.* (C-PC02)

The participant shared that, through building relationships with people on the ground floor level, instead of focusing on upwards relationship, he began observing turnaround and shifts in employee behaviour towards him. They were

no longer resistant; instead, they extended themselves (going out of their way, working overtime, etc.) to support and help the leader:

> *I mean, the guy now is the person that come weekends to do work for me, you know, to sort out… He's really supportive, because he can see I'm also working together with him… That for me is better even than management to be honest. Because we report to management, we work every day with the people on the shop floor if I'm really honest with myself. To gain more trust on the shopfloor, for the shopfloor to be more transparent, which is things will run smoothly in our department, and that's how I'm basing it rather than having it vice versa where you have trust in management, but no trust in the shopfloor. The people on the shopfloor are the ones that are making the product...* (C-PC02)

This feedback data proved significant as building relationships vertically and horizontally was a key area in which the coach intentionally challenged the participants' thinking during coaching sessions. One participant shared that a pivotal factor in his ability to extend trust to his subordinates was building relationships with his superiors, and gaining their trust allowed him to extend it to his teams:

> *I think what changed the most is me building trust upwards and then it allowed me to let go and to really give trust, downwards.* (C-PC01)

> *So what I had to do, in seeing that there was a change in my superior (new leader), I intentionally spent time upwards, to try and establish trust, we had one on ones, what do you want to see, how do you like to do things? And understanding? I mean, it was not an easy process, we had very uncomfortable conversations, because he has a short temper, and I'm not an anger type of guy, so that relationship, once it was solidified, then I think there was less pressure for me to know every little detail.* (C-PC01)

A key contributor to building relationships was constructive, open and honest communication and feedback. Engaging in this manner allowed for greater

clarification of expectations between the leader and his superiors, which further enhanced trust:

> *It was like, I need to see you being more of what you were before because I trust you, and because you have shown commitment into the organisation. And we had a very difficult conversation I said to him, Well, you know, the way you speak sometimes it's not right. You know, it breaks, it breaks a person down, you know, you don't give recognition. So it was, there wasn't there was no audience, it was myself and him in his office and we spoke for almost three hours. And at the end, think the spirit was so high that I'm sure he wanted to hug me. Because we found our synergy point. And I think since then, our relationship has been flying. Before he even asks for something, you know, I'm like, Okay, you will get this at this time and we deliver at the time, you know. And when things were misaligned, I also have the courage now to say, 'Look, you want a lot of stuff, it's not realistic, please trust me. (C-PC01)*

### *4.4.4. Values and leadership behaviour*

In acknowledgement of not being transparent with the reporting of his product losses and being influenced by senior leaders when he joined the new role, the following reflection was made by one of the participants after the coaching sessions:

> *In the previous situations, so I didn't really put my foot down…. I tried to be a hero because I wanted to prove that I can do this job not knowing that it's going to bite me going forward*. (C-PC02)

Transparency has also been identified as a key insight gained from the coaching sessions:

> *So, one of my learnings is, even if the news are not good, just be transparent and present things as they are. I think that is number one, be transparent transparency I think that is the biggest learning.* (C-PC02)

### *4.4.5. Coaching and change leadership*

The participants shared their experiences and provided insights into the role coaching played in influencing their ability to lead and implement change.

Coaching enabled inclusivity when implementing change, as described by the leader participant himself, as well as observations by an employee participant post the coaching sessions:

> *When I was implementing a new process. You know, I was forceful, 'I'm the manager, I will tell you what to do.' But when I reflected on myself, I didn't do this the right way. I didn't get the people involved. I didn't get buy-in from them. That is one example I can use, those are the things that now, when I'm doing something, I talk to them, they even come to me now, the operators… 'We are thinking of this...' cause they know I get them involved in things.* (C-PC02)

> *Where he's got to introduce new things… I get the impression he does it pretty well, he informs he actually goes and introduces things himself; he will speak to people himself and explain why something might be changing or a new procedure. Not just like, 'Okay, here it is, go and do it.' He takes the time to explain the why's and what the benefits going to be. And, you know, that is clearer understanding. And he won't just sort of do it quickly and get it done, you know, he makes sure that it's understood and sort of done properly. And that's what I'm seeing from the outside anyway.* (I-PC01)

Coaching enhanced employee engagement and buy-in to the change process:

> *…it's not easy, but, when you know you've got the workforce working for you, it becomes easier to implement things.* (C-PC02)

Coaching influences leader communication style and approach:

> *I'm conveying the message, but in a way that is not so aggressive, but they get the message. So also another thing that I've learned in the process. (C-PC02)*

Transparency provides an opportunity to deal with real issues:

> *Transparency is saying it as it is, which is saying it or not hiding things? And because sometimes the challenge is some because some people hide things. Because when you when you're transparent about them, then because as a manager, you'll be asked, but what are you gonna do about it. So hence, some people tend not to be transparent, because they know then they will be challenged. For me, even if I'm challenge, you know, at least I'm addressing the real issues. Because now with transparency, now we have opportunity of addressing the real issues that we have on this on the shopfloor or wherever, whatever area, but you are now addressing the real issues.* (C-PC02)

## 4.5. Linking findings with the propositions

### *4.5.1. Findings pertaining to Proposition 1: Leadership coaching enhances trust and empathy in leadership during change.*

The following themes were linked to Proposition 1:

| Themes | Sub-Themes |
|---|---|
| 1. Leadership coaching enables self-reflection and behaviour change<br>2. Leadership coaching enhances sense of self-confidence and self-efficacy<br>3. Self-trust and extension of trust<br>4. Values and leadership behaviour | • The coaching process followed the cognitive behavioural approach, which aided in the opportunity to critically reflect on certain thought patterns, resulting in behaviour not conducive to enhancing the organisational culture.<br>• This reflective space provided the platform for behavioural change.<br>• Relationship precedes trust. It was evident that building and taking time to foster relationship was a key foundation to establishing trust |

| | |
|---|---|
| | between employees and their leaders. |

### *4.5.2. Findings pertaining to Proposition 2: Leadership coaching enhances shifts in the demonstration of change leadership.*

The following themes were linked to Proposition 2:

| Themes | Sub-Themes |
|---|---|
| 1. Leaders' experiences of coaching and its benefits<br>2. Coaching and change leadership | ▪ Problem-solving began to happen for both leaders and employees as they sought support from one another. This was due to relationships being formed and time spent fostering these relationships.<br>▪ Employee engagement and buy-in to the change process occurred as managers showed greater interest and care in their daily challenges.<br>▪ Ownership and accountability was handed to employees as leaders began to trust more, saw employees solutioning, and coming up with ideas to support leaders.<br>▪ Performance improvements, despite low morale, heightened workload and longer working hours.<br>▪ Inclusivity: the participants felt part of the change and decision-making as they were engaged by leaders, were committed to the business's goals, which was confirmed in the |

| | |
|---|---|
| | measurement of engagement after receiving coaching. |

## 4.6. Conclusion

The overall experience of coaching by the leaders was positive and resulted in significant findings. These findings included improved stakeholder relationships, improved performance delivery, inclusivity in change implementation, and heightened self-awareness that enabled behavioural change. The coaching participants received great value from the coaching journey by their expressing gratitude for the experience; they also indicated a desire to continue coaching sessions after the agreed upon time.

Coaching enhanced trust and, more specifically, the extension of trust to subordinates by leaders. It enabled shifts in leadership behaviour, particularly in building effective relationships with employees, displaying genuine interest and care by providing employee support where needed. Employee participants, in turn, experienced a deeper sense of care from their leaders, this enhanced positive perceptions of the leadership intent. Coaching had a positive effect on leader participants' facilitation of, and ability in, implementing change and engaging more regularly and effectively with employees.

Coaching allowed the leaders to engage in critical self-reflection with a solution-focused approach to challenges faced within departments and teams. Leaders were better able to facilitate engagements with teams, communicate and align to the rationale for the change, and garner less resistance from their teams.

# CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

## 5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the findings shared in Chapter 4 are subject to a detailed discussion in order to answer the research questions.

The research questions explored in this study are:

2.1. In what way will leadership coaching influence trust and empathy in leadership?
2.2. To what extent does leadership coaching influence change leadership?

The discussion in this chapter will cover the following:

- The participants' experience of the role and influence (benefits) of leadership coaching in perceptions of trust and empathy in leadership during change,
- The participants experience of the extent to which leadership coaches influence the demonstration of change leadership,
- Researcher positionality and reflections,
- The chapter conclusion.

## 5.2. Proposition 1: Leadership coaching enhances perceptions of trust and empathy in leadership during change.

### *5.2.1. Organisational culture and leadership behaviour*

The presiding beliefs on organisational culture revealed during the pre- and post-coaching interviews, alluded to the expressed assumptions and beliefs towards leadership within the organisation. These specific assumptions and beliefs were articulated around leader intent, level of engagement and communication, change implementation, historical evidence of past behaviour, relationship

dynamics with leaders, and organisational culture, which directly influenced their perceptions and behaviour towards leadership. These findings are supported by Alvesson and Sveningsson (2015) who propose that the overriding assumptions, inclusive of embedded beliefs, which direct the thoughts and behaviours within the organisation, encompasses its culture.

The data from the pre-coaching interviews referenced a propensity towards a hierarchical culture; Hofstede (2020) outlines this as indicative of inherent inequalities, and centralisation, with subordinates expecting to be told what to do. The current study findings suggest that the organisation lends itself towards a hierarchical and performance-driven culture. The employee interview data suggests that within this type of culture, the assumptions and behaviour patterns, specifically aimed towards leadership, have a propensity towards top-down decision making, non-inclusivity when changes occur, a process and performance orientation over a people-focused orientation, all of which leave employees feeling uncared for and exposed, leading to high levels of fear, mistrust and low engagement.

With these overriding assumptions and beliefs expressed by employees, it is difficult for the leader, new or not, to shift the deeply embedded assumptions and beliefs held by their people. A study conducted by Willcoxson and Millett (2000) corroborates this view by highlighting that although leadership may engage in new behavioural patterns, they are still enveloped by the existing core assumptions that make up the organisational culture. However, a study conducted by Wren (2018) discovered that leadership traits and behaviours considerably influence an employee's perception of leaders which, when altered, has the propensity to significantly affect workplace performance and engagement. Thus, these findings suggest that, although complex and potentially time consuming, leaders can make incremental shifts in employee perceptions through shifts in their behaviour. Although the current study suggests an indication towards this being true, the time period in which the study was conducted was not sufficient or extensive enough to make such an assertion or to see such significant behavioural shifts.

The current study findings further suggest a propensity towards historical evidence and experience of past leadership behaviour and culture bearing significant influence over current employee perceptions of leaders. Based on historical data within the organisation, the coaching sessions and pre-coaching interviews indicated assumptions of mistrust and subsequent behaviours of resistance and negativity expressed towards current leaders. These findings are corroborated by Schein (2004), who found that these assumptions and beliefs are considered valid by employees and are taught to new members as the acceptable perceptions, thoughts, and feelings regarding the organisation and its leadership. These pre-conceived assumptions and employee perceptions created distrust and incredulity towards the newly promoted leaders' intent and actions, thus making it even more challenging for the leader to gain employee trust.

These study findings denote the strong influence that organisational culture has on leaders' behaviours, particularly that of newly appointed leaders. A study conducted by Ertosun and Adiguzel (2018) supports this finding by asserting that organisational culture can control or adjust the behaviours of individuals within an organisation. A noteworthy finding was that the employee's initial perceptions and assumptions of leadership intent, behaviour and style of newly promoted leaders, eventually yielding to the pervasive organisational culture was confirmed. This further solidified the considerable influence that organisational culture has on leadership. This finding is corroborated by recent studies which reveal the powerful influence that organisational culture has on both leadership and employee behaviour, and the modification of leader behaviour to manage organisational culture (Stokes, 2019; Tran, 2020).

The presiding culture in the organisation, and the historical experience of broken trust by employees in their leader relationships, creates an even more challenging environment for developing trust. The findings further suggest that, as the organisational culture is hierarchical in nature, the new leaders (just like the employees) may adopt a frame of reference and concomitant assumptions of employees as lazy or resistant to change, without verifying the validity of these assumptions. These invalidated assumptions lead to certain judgements and

decisions being made by both parties in relation to each other and the organisation. This discovery is buttressed by a study conducted by Klein (2013), which determines that cultures within organisations emanate from decisions made by leaders from the top-down and employees from the bottom-up. The need for a shift in both leader and employee perceptions is necessitated in building a relationship of trust.

### *5.2.2. Leadership behaviour and values alignment*

Within this study, the findings suggest the strong influence that organisational culture, inclusive of subsequent assumptions and thinking, has on leader behaviour and decision making, especially in new members. Through the coaching sessions, the findings further reveal that this created an inner conflict for the leader in combating their values, and remaining transparent and integrous, with that of the requisite expectations of the organisational culture. The work of Cox et al. (2014) supports this finding, as they affirm that, through the employ of a cognitive behavioural approach, the leader engages in a critical internal dialogue that affects and influences their sense of self, thus impacting their self-efficacy and self-worth. By engaging in a reflective dialogue process within the coaching sessions, the coachee was able to make sense of their internal struggle in a meaningful manner.

The current study suggests the propensity for newly promoted leaders to adapt and modify their behaviour to the organisational context. It further suggests an initial jettisoning of firmly held personal values by one of the leaders as they navigated and adapted to the new role and environment. Studies by Klein (2013) and Ertosun and Adiguzel (2018) corroborate these findings, in that they assert that individuals within an organisation may discard old values and embrace new ones as they learn new behaviours in managing the culture within the organisation. This assertion is further supported by the findings of the current study, which reveal that a newly promoted leader acted in direct contradiction to his values by making a decision, under the influence of his new line manager, to present inaccurate production data to executive leadership. The consequences of this would be dire for this newly promoted leader.

By applying an integrated cognitive behavioural and solution-focused coaching approach, the leader was able to take ownership of his actions and rectify his behaviour. The leader thus experienced a transformative process, where shifts in his thinking were evoked through leadership coaching, which, at its core, is a learning process (Rostron, 2014). This incident had a significant transformative impact on the leader, leading to an inner resolve to be transparent and authentic, both of which are fundamental elements of building trust. In quick succession, this leader gained the respect and trust of senior executive leadership and was awarded approval for a significant proposal to rectify production losses for the organisation. He achieved a milestone that many before him were unable to; this resulted in enhanced self-trust and self-efficacy in his role, and in gaining the trust of senior leadership.

While the data from one of the other leader coaching participants revealed a tendency to perceive themselves as displaying a people-oriented leadership style, the perceptions from a few employee participants were incongruent. Meyer and Mills (2016) espoused the view that leadership behaviour is defined through perceptions of desired outcomes. The leader's self-perception was in direct contrast to the actual lived experienced by their employees.

Through the employ of the cognitive behavioural approach, and actively engaging in reflective dialogue throughout the coaching sessions, the leader became acutely aware of the shift in his own leadership style which was in stark contradiction to his self-perception as a transformative leader. In his coaching session, he alluded to his awareness of a physical manifestation of an inner conflict and unease as he behaved in this undesirable, contradictory manner. Neenan (2017) supports this finding by denoting that the fundamental aspect of cognitive behavioural therapy is the belief that one's thinking strongly influences one's emotional and behavioural responses. Therefore, it was the aim of the cognitive behavioural coach to enlighten the leader to their own thinking in relation to their own values, their employees and themselves, in order for shifts in behaviour and emotions to be realised. By the post-coaching interviews with employees, the intentional shifts in behaviour made by the leader had led to enhanced perceptions of trust by some of the employees, but not all.

The findings further suggest that the alignment to a core set of values and beliefs would keep a leader consistent in their demonstration of leadership behaviours (Burnes, Hughes, & By, 2018). The post-coaching interview findings found some of the initial employee assumptions of newly promoted leaders to be refuted when one of the leader participants maintained consistent behaviour and alignment to his values. This finding, therefore, suggests that when a leader is living in accordance with their values and has a strong internal compass, they are not easily swayed by external circumstances and are thus able to remain consistent in their behaviours. This alignment of personal values and organisational culture is corroborated by Kock et al. (2019), who posit that leader alignment of values, assumptions and beliefs are crucial in safeguarding continued employee engagement and business performance amidst organisational change (Kock et al., 2019). Hence, for leadership to remain consistent in how they show up in the organisation, they must be true to their own internal values. However, the findings also indicate that the leaders' internal values could come against the experienced values of the organisation, as opposed to the espoused values; this engenders inner conflict.

One of the significant findings, therefore, from the post-coaching interviews, is that trust in leadership is about the individual, not the title or position; it is who they are, their character, their integrity and how they show up. So, when they are not displaying honourable character traits that are aligned to the values of the individual perceiving them, the judgement is made that trust cannot be extended due to a lack of noteworthy personal leadership traits. These study findings are corroborated in part by studies conducted by Anderson and Anderson (2010) and Hao and Yazdanifard (2015) who position effective leaders as those who own character traits such as consistency, passion, trust and consciousness as foundations to building trust amongst and inspiring action from employees.

The findings suggest that when a leader is truly aligned to their own internal values, they tend to show up consistently in their behaviour towards others and do not succumb to the presiding organisational culture, which further enables and enhances perceptions of trust from employees. These findings were further supported and aligned with both the leader coaching sessions; they were also

corroborated by the employee participant interviews, in relation to the leader's resolute stance to remain transparent and honest even in the face of retribution. This finding is supported by studies in which identifying trust in organisations is symbolic of circumstances within which enhanced favourable attitudes, perceptions, increased performance and collaboration become increasingly possible (Alfes, Shantz, & Truss, 2012; Brown, Crossley, & Robinson, 2014; Ozyilmaz, 2018).

### *5.2.3. Leadership coaching benefits*

According to the literature reviewed, coaching is facilitative in nature. Therefore, the facilitative coaching process enables opportunities for discovery, enhanced perception and insight, and the realisation of goals for the coachee: in this case, the leader participant (Passmore & Lai, 2020). The study findings support this view of personal and self-discovery through greater awareness, enhanced perception and insights through reflective questioning, as well as being challenged in their assumptions and beliefs through the application of a cognitive behavioural approach. In addition, the leader participants' attainment of goals as set out at the start of their coaching journey, were largely met through enhanced self-confidence and self-belief, the gaining of trust from their senior executive leadership and a greater sense of well-being and work-life balance (Grant et al., 2009). These findings are further validated by Palmer and Whybrow (2007) who postulate that a cognitive behavioural approach, when applied to coaching, augments individual performance, wellbeing, resilience and a propensity to overcome resistance to change.

Within the current context of the study, the shift in the leader's behaviour from a people-oriented leadership style to becoming more indicative of an autocratic style of leadership, which was analogous to the presiding organisational culture. The impact thereof on the employee participant, as outlined at the post-coaching interview, was broken trust, disappointment, and low morale, which led to the employee wanting to exit the company. However, at the pre-coaching interviews they were extremely engaged and loyal to the leader and the organisation.

This stark finding suggests that even though leadership coaching is recognised as a key developmental tool in enabling leaders to shift assumptions and consequent behaviour, other organisational factors play a pivotal role in affecting leadership behaviour. These factors include tremendous internal and external pressure, expectations from senior leadership, and constant change – all of which seem to impact upon the effects of coaching. During his coaching sessions, the senior leader highlighted the tremendous pressure he was under. The findings suggest that coaching is necessary but insufficient when there is fundamental distrust due to historical culture, a continuously challenging working environment, and a prevailing hierarchical culture that newly promoted leaders cannot penetrate.

*Deeper self-reflection*

A distinguishable trait of coaching is the facilitative process of challenging the coachee's current view of their reality by engaging in deep reflection and discourse, thus enabling transformational learning (Bennett & Bush, 2011; de Villiers, 2013). According to Brookfield (2012) reflection is a process of learning which commences when assumptions, beliefs and perspectives are challenged. In the current study, the leader participants found great value in the opportunity to engage in reflection, and appreciated the time afforded them to think and reflect during their coaching journey. During his post-coaching interview, the one leader attributed his shift and change in perspective towards his employees to the practice of self-reflection. The post-coaching interview findings revealed that he shifted his focus and energy toward building relationships with his employees instead of focusing all his attention on building upward relationships. These findings are corroborated by Neenan (2017) and Palmer and Whybrow (2007) who postulate that Cognitive Behavioural Coaching (CBC) enables the coachee (the leader) to augment their awareness of their thinking, while also encouraging shifts in perspectives and beliefs, thereby influencing behavioural responses. This change in mindset and perspective influenced his feelings and behaviours towards his employees; this enabled him to recognise their value add. Moreover,

this, in turn, saw the leader spending more time engaging with his employees, listening to their needs and providing them with greater support.

*Enhanced employee engagement and support*

These perspective and behavioural shifts enabled empathy towards the needs of his employees, which they felt. Consequently, during the post-coaching interview, the leader reported observing significant behavioural responses by his employees, towards him. They became more eager to support him: he no longer had to ask for updates, but they willingly shared information, and volunteered their help with various initiatives. There was a complete shift in the energy and engagement within the department. Jha and Kumar (2018) corroborated these findings in their own study which found that employee engagement is a key lever for feelings of empowerment, and for enabling performance improvements.

*Leadership shifts to people-centred (transformative) leadership*

These findings align with the work of Marson (2019), who asserts that learning occurs through reflective dialogue within a coaching context, which warrants a divergent perspective. When the leader began to see evidence that their support and genuine care for others yielded greater engagement, active problem solving, and employees extending themselves to help and support them, they perceived the benefits of coaching, self-reflection, and subsequent shifts in behaviour in relation to paying attention to and seeking to meet the needs of their own employees. This shift in leadership behaviour is aligned with a participative and people-centred leadership style. This, in turn, enhanced perceived levels of trust by employees, as well as signs of care and empathy from leaders.

*Extension of trust and ownership*

The findings further indicated that leaders began to be more considered in their approach to and support of employees within the study context. Through self-reflection, one of the leader participants acknowledged their need for significant shifts in their behaviour. Upon understanding what the impact their need for control had on employees, the leader intentionally shifted their behaviour to assign ownership and in so doing, extended trust to their employees. A study conducted by Anthony (2017) corroborates the findings that leadership coaching enhances personalised consideration towards their employees, thus enabling leaders to engage in effective behaviours when leading their employees. A few of these constructive leadership behaviours include entrusting employees with tasks, practising less micromanagement and close supervision. This shift in the participant leader's behaviour saw a tremendous increase in his departmental performance for the first time in months. These findings are further buttressed by a recent study, conducted by Bond (2021), in which it was found that employees functioned with greater self-assurance and performed more effectively with the validation and trust of leadership.

The post-coaching findings imply that shifts in leader thinking and perception led to shifts in behaviour, such taking time to listen to and care about employee challenges; in turn, the employee's sense of relationship with and trust of the leader was enhanced. This finding is supported by a study conducted by Breevaart and Zacher (2019) who reviewed the effects of leader styles on employee trust and found that trust levels in leaders were influenced by the exchange of resources, or the lack thereof. Furthermore, trust was extended and enhanced once the leaders made themselves available to support their teams with the aid they required to perform their work tasks.

*Enhanced engagement and relationships*

The coaching sessions provided the opportunity for leaders to reflect on their assumptions and behaviour towards employees, and through the Cognitive

Behavioural Coaching (CBC) style of questioning, in order to challenge these assumptions (i.e., that they are always complaining, or that they are being resistant to change). Further findings from the current study reveal that regular engagement with employees enhance relationship building with leaders, thus creating a foundation for shifts in trust. The work of Breevaart and Zacher (2019) corroborate these findings in that they reveal that employee trust in leaders was enhanced through regular support, interaction, and engagement by leaders with employees.

The study findings also suggest that, after the conclusion of the coaching programme, leader participants were more authentic and vulnerable in their interactions with their employees.

*Communication*

Coaching enhances leadership communication with employees and teams by more frequent engagements with employees, sharing information, and taking the time to share the business rationale for changes (Grant et al., 2009). This ensures conscription by employees through enhanced understanding.

### *5.2.4. Participants' experience of Trust and Empathy*

Empathy plays a vital role in enhancing and building trust in leader-employee relationships (Rahman & Castelli, 2013). The current research findings show that, when the leader made the decision to release control and extend trust to their team, it was through the lens of empathy. In cognitively realising and understanding that 'people make mistakes' the leader was able to embrace a humanistic and empathetic view and assumption of employees – as opposed to an output, performance perspective. Through this revised view and perspective, the leader participant could extend trust to their team and allow them to take ownership and accountability.

Empathetic thoughts towards others influence our responding behaviour in aiding the release of trust, by letting go of our own assumptions and expectations.

Conversely, the employee participant who initially trusted their leader and waxed lyrical about them, was unable to extend empathy to the leader's approach and decision-making process regarding their promotion, and immediately altered their initial perceptions of the leader. This caused a complete fracturing of trust, which led the employee desiring to exit the department and even the organisation. These findings are aligned to the results of a study by Choi and Resick (2016), which revealed that behavioural outcomes such as employee engagement and commitment to the organisation, and intention to leave, are firmly associated with trust.

Simultaneously, in the post-coaching interview with the leader, the leader mentioned that their rationale and perspective were due to poor performance. However, employee expectations of receiving a promotion were raised, and consequently the promotion was never awarded.

Upon the leader's reflection within the post-coaching interview, the leader participant acknowledged that they should have been more honest and transparent regarding the participant's capability and the level of accountability granted her/him. This was a learning moment for the leader. These findings suggest that the absence of open, honest, and transparent communication fosters a distrust of assumptions. A study conducted by Wren (2018) supports these findings, in that it highlights the vital role of effective and transparent leader communication, which enables employee performance and engagement.

## 5.3. Proposition 2: Leadership coaching enhances shifts in the demonstration of change leadership.

### *5.3.1. Participants experience of change*

In generating an environment wherein employees are open to and accepting of change, it is within the capacity of the leader to enable employee receptivity to successful change implementation (Baesu, 2014). The pre-coaching employee interviews revealed perceptions of change implementation as a lack of adequate

leadership conscription towards required changes. The data revealed feelings of non-inclusivity, lack of decision-making, as well as inadequate communication and information pertaining to the rationale for changes. Furthermore, not being part of the change implementation in providing inputs, thinking or recommendations was completely discouraging; this led to employees disengaging from the change process. Interestingly, the leader participants' perceptions of employee disengagement were deemed 'change resistant' and 'stubborn' during coaching sessions. The application of a cognitive behavioural approach, within the coaching process, aimed to shift and challenge leader assumptions and perceptions in this regard.

The post-coaching interviews with both leader and employee participants suggested slight shifts towards ensuring that employees are included in decision-making and are timeously engaged. A study conducted by Nordin et al. (2010), found that leadership approach and attitude are key barriers to change implementation; this highlights the importance of leadership behaviour and strong change leadership during times of change.

### *5.3.2. Coaching and Change Leadership*

Leaders, through the coaching process, were able to participate in critical reflections upon their own assumptions, beliefs and feelings regarding changes within the organisation, as well as their approach to implementing and managing these changes, therefore compelling them to re-assess their own assumptions of themselves and their relationship with employees (Hoggan, 2016). The findings from the coaching sessions and post-coaching interviews show a proclivity towards this view, in that all three leader participants were able to re-evaluate their assumptions on implementing change. They realised that they needed to engage more meaningfully with their teams, while providing practical and tangible support on the floor – thereafter, these leaders began to see the benefits of this renewed perspective.

Despite having participated in the leadership coaching exercise, the findings pertaining to one leader participant, who had implemented a temporary new shift pattern, revealed employee dissatisfaction. Although it was communicated with the relevant teams, employees felt that they had no say and that his decision was already made. The coaching intervention was unable to make a shift in this regard, as this senior leader was under tremendous time pressure to optimise operations and minimise expenditure of this area; he thus saw no alternative to implementing the change. This decision had a negative impact on the culture and perceptions of his leadership style, which lends itself to the perception of said leader as an autocrat. Furthermore, this affected the morale and overall engagement amongst the employee participants, as they felt neither valued nor supported. Employee engagement and morale are strongly influenced by the behaviours of leaders (Shuck & Herd, 2012).

According to Kahn (2014), the rudimentary purpose of leadership coaching is to stimulate a desire within leaders to shift their behaviour in a manner that would result in organisational performance and enhanced results. The current research study supports this assertion in that, through the application of integrated cognitive behaviour coaching and a solution-focused approach, the leaders were able to extend greater ownership and accountability to their team, thus enabling a significant improvement in overall performance, as revealed in the findings of the post-coaching interviews. The department made a significant shift in performance, which even surprised the senior leader of the area.

Change leadership is not void of relationships. Change leadership is relational. Resistance is managed through relationship, rather than policy or procedure. The study findings during the post-coaching interviews revealed evidence of this view. When the leaders began re-directing their energy and attention to building stronger relationships and connections with their subordinates, the employees in turn became more willing to assist and support the leader in their change endeavours.

The findings from the coaching sessions displayed a strong focus, amongst leaders, in building self-efficacy and trust within their role, specifically with their senior executive leaders. At the start of the coaching sessions, it was evident that

all the leader participants focussed primarily on building upward trust, that is, with their senior leadership relationships. However, the post-coaching interview findings reveal a redirection of focus towards building better trust relationships with their subordinates and teams. The findings suggest a proclivity towards understanding the value and importance of building relationships with their people, as well as the importance of being intentional and caring when engaging with their teams. This was not the default posture within the current context of the organisational culture. As highlighted in the pre-coaching interviews, the organisational culture was transactional in nature, and managers were perceived as only engaging with employees when needing output or performance. It became evident that, through a cognitive behavioural approach to coaching, their realisation of the need to, and importance of, shifting assumptions and consequent behaviours in building relationships downstream began to bear fruit through the shifts observed in their team members' responses to them. These findings are aligned with the work of DeSapio (2017), who found that change and transformation is observable. Hence, there would be observable shifts in behaviour for both the leader and employees for transformation to have taken place.

An interesting observation is that one leader really seemed to struggle with self-reflection and expressing their thoughts or emotions within the coaching sessions. However, during the post-coaching interview, whilst talking about the behavioural shifts he has made and realising that he has become calmer, cognitively thinking about things (outside of his control) differently, it was so foreign to him that he could not determine if this was a good thing or not. However, embracing the unfamiliar is disconcerting. The leader at first, seemed to be a bit cautious about his new sense of ease and the calm he began to experience as a result of this shift in perspective and mindset. What was particularly interesting is that shifting his mindset was one of the key goals he had identified at the onset of the coaching sessions.

Engagement in reflective dialogue positively influenced the leaders' self-esteem, which in turn affected their self-efficacy and self-worth within their roles (Cox et al., 2014). As new leaders are promoted into new roles, their self-efficacy becomes a key component as they endeavour to meet the new task requirements and meet organisational expectations of performance within their new roles. Self-efficacy and self-worth contribute to building and enhancing trust (Ladegard & Gjerde, 2014). A noteworthy finding from the post-coaching interviews suggests that once the leader was able to gain more self-confidence and self-efficacy within their role, they were better placed to extend trust to their employees.

A study conducted by Ladegard and Gjerde (2014) revealed a direct link between leaders' extension of trust to employees and enhanced employee satisfaction. Furthermore, a strong relationship has been established between the trust extended to employees and leaders, and job performance (Breevaart & Zacher, 2019). By the end of the coaching programme, the overall performance of the department participating within the study revealed significant performance improvement.

Grant (2014) enlists three key underlying cognitive and behavioural processes that make leadership coaching effective. Firstly, the relationship of confidentiality and support to engage in reflective dialogue on personal and professional issues may relieve stress and anxiety, thus providing individuals the reflective space to review challenges from differing perspectives. The post-coaching findings from the leader participants suggest that the coaching sessions provided leaders with some reprieve and relief of stress and anxiety when they spent more time with family, engaged in stress relieving activities such as walks on the beach, and exercised.

Leading from a place of less anxiety and stress allowed the leaders to show up as more caring, supportive, and empathetic to their teams. It also allowed them to remain calm in the face of change, which induces anxiety and pressure in the organisation. The post-coaching interviews support this finding, as leaders expressed their ability to spend more time in engaging with staff, discussing the challenges they faced, and seeking solutions. This shift in leadership behaviour

toward being more people-oriented (transformational leadership style) has the propensity to enhance trust.

## 5.4. Researcher reflections and positionality on coaching sessions

The research reflected on her role as both coach and research student throughout the research process. As the coaching sessions embarked with the four leaders, I built good rapport with three of the leaders almost immediately. From the first coaching session, there was a sense of appreciation for the opportunity to be unguarded, to discuss certain work challenges, especially with two of the leaders being newly promoted in their role. A sense of rapport was quickly built, and leaders were able to be vulnerable from the start.

As the coaching sessions progressed, being a junior researcher, I experienced self-doubt and feelings of anxiety as to whether any real impact would be made, and whether my research was heading in the right direction. Through a cognitive behavioural approach and valuing a person-centred style, I took comfort in knowing that the process would unfold.

I made reflective notes throughout the coaching sessions, so as to ensure that the coachees' thoughts, feelings, and actions were captured; this provided me with an enhanced and deeper appreciation and cognisance for their situations. This further enhanced the coaching relationships that were forged. Preparation prior to each session, with a review of the notes, highlighting possible questions to ask and further exploring certain cognitive assumptions, was key to enabling depth and progress within the coaching journey.

The two newly promoted leaders, who were more senior than the other leader participants, explored their emotions and thoughts, and were open to meaningful consideration of their behaviour. However, I struggled in my role as coach with the third participant. When this participant was invited to engage in reflective dialogue, they really battled to answer the question, and would either deflect or

blame, and tended to utilise collective pronouns when answering a question focussed specifically on his own feelings and thoughts. He struggled to get in touch with his emotions. It felt as though change, however slight, may be impossible. I found myself at times becoming annoyed, and was aware that I needed to practice mindfulness. However, by the third or fourth session I decided to provide this participant with feedback on how I experienced our engagements; in response, the participant was unable to recognise or understand what I was referring to. This gave me the impression that he was merely ticking off the coaching sessions from his to-do list. This is a reflective note I made after my fourth coaching session with this participant:

> *'Takes no accountability. Completely blames organisation and leadership. Doesn't answer the questions – so doesn't seem to do much reflection. He defers to others and refers to himself in the third person often when I am expecting to hear a personal response. Deflects and blames. He completely diverts. I talk about one thing, and he goes to another.'*

The leader participant who opted to withdraw from the coaching sessions and subsequent research study, is a key finding in itself. The coaching sessions held with the leader participant found that the coach struggled to go beyond a surface-level conversation, to really create reflective dialogue. When posed with questions specifically pertaining to reflecting upon her own behaviour cognitively, she deflected and avoided answering the question.

Leaders, who are willing to do deep self-reflective work, and get to a point of unease and discomfort, are able to reap the benefits of behavioural change through a cognitive behavioural approach. This finding highlights the significance of the voluntary nature, conscious acknowledgement, and willingness to the process of coaching by the leader. Coaching effectiveness is only enabled if the coachee is willing to engage in the process.

## 5.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings and experience shared by leaders reinforce the influence and benefits of leadership coaching, specifically in aiding the navigation

of change and culture for leaders. The current study findings uncovered the need for effective change implementation; in this respect, management and change leadership requires pervading trust and transparency in leader–employee relationships. Schein (2019) corroborates this finding by affirming that openness and trust are abstract adhesive ingredients to tethering organisational culture, change, and leadership.

Leadership behaviour has been known to have an impact and influence on organisational culture. However, the study makes it evident that organisational culture has an influence, whether good or bad, on leadership and leadership behaviour.

Levels of trust were enhanced both from and toward leadership. The findings showed enhanced levels of empathy expressed by leaders towards employees, specifically within the context of change. Trust enhances performance, commitment and adaptation to change (Hao, 2015; Ikonen & Savolainen, 2011). The findings of the current study are aligned with this view, as one of the leader participants was able to extend trust to his teams by providing them with opportunities for greater ownership. This resulted in improvements in production performance as well as a decrease in operational losses and costs. The leader participant expressed his surprise at the turnaround in results and noted that it has been months since they have seen such performance numbers. In the post-coaching interview, he was able to identify and attribute these outcomes as strongly linked to the impact of trusting his team.

Gillespie and Mann (2004) distinguish between two-types of trust: relation-based trust and character-based trust. Relation-based trust refers to the role of emotions and the process of trust development, whilst character-based trust refers to beliefs about another's trustworthiness. The findings suggest that both these types of trust are evident in the data. The participants' fear of extending trust after trust had been broken, or the participant who was initially very trusting of their leader but after being disappointed was extremely hurt, all speak to a relation-based trust, as it is their emotions which have affected the development of trust. However, findings related to character-based trust are more widely represented in the study. In reference to building and extending trust, the findings suggest a

strong relatedness to the beliefs and assumptions of the other individual. These beliefs of the leaders' trustworthiness of the employee, and vice versa, was evident in the findings.

Trust is relational. Building levels of understanding, showing empathy and care, and making people feel supported and heard are key factors in enhancing trust levels. It also requires greater transparency and vulnerability on the part of the leader. Once leaders made themselves vulnerable to their teams, and engaged in transparency, it enhanced employee and team empathy and understanding towards the leader; this, in turn, enhanced trust.

The research findings support leadership coaching in contributing to marginal shifts in the demonstration of change leadership. The leaders were able to shift their approach to change implementation by being more inclusive in their decision making, as well as engaging and communicating more effectively, timeously and regularly. The resultant response from employees was enhanced engagement, by making suggestions for improvement, high levels of energy towards changes, and greater support of the leader. In this regard, employees tended towards partnering with the leader, as opposed to resisting changes.

The findings of a study conducted by Bickerich et al. (2018), on change leadership, revealed that leaders acknowledged the immense challenge in dealing with employee resistance and emotive reactions to change. Leaders are not adequately trained to deal with change, however, they still lead people through change while navigating changes themselves. The coaching sessions provided an opportunity for leaders to reflect on, discuss and development solution towards shifting approaches to certain employee challenges in relation to change implementation and leadership.

Organisational culture change takes time; this implies that real, observable behavioural change is not immediate and therefore cannot be measured instantly (DeSapio, 2017; Farrell, 2018; Whelan, 2016). The current study supports these findings: having employed the cognitive behavioural approach within the coaching sessions, the coach stimulated reflection for the leader, which, in some cases, would take some time before observable behavioural changes were

evident. However, the current study stands in contrast to the previous studies mentioned here, as the findings of the current study also suggest that leaders made certain immediate behavioural changes after the completion of the coaching sessions. These changes were evident in how they began to implement a more regular practise of self-reflection, engage more meaningfully with their teams, and delegate or confer team members with greater ownership of tasks.

The below table, summarises the study findings in relation to the research questions:

| Research Questions | Summary from the findings |
|---|---|
| 1. In what way will leadership coaching influence trust and empathy in leadership? | Leadership coaching enables self-reflection and behaviour change.<br><br>Leadership coaching enhanced a sense of self-confidence and self-efficacy.<br><br>Self-trust and extension of trust.<br><br>Trust begets confidence<br><br>Values and leadership behaviour. |
| 2. To what extent does leadership coaching influence change leadership? | Coaching for change leadership resulted in improved performance.<br><br>Ownership and accountability extended to employees.<br><br>Inclusivity: the participants felt part of the change and decision making. |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Increased and effective communication and an overall sense of well-being. |

# CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

## 6.1. Introduction

The study findings are integrated and concluded within this chapter. The chapter further provides a summary of the findings in relation to the research objectives of this study. This concluding chapter highlights the principal contributions to the research problem amidst the literature review within the fields of change, culture, and leadership. The chapter further explores recommendations for relevant stakeholders, outlines the study's limitations, and generates suggestions for further research.

## 6.2. Overview of the study and objectives

This study aimed to explore the perceived influence of leadership coaching on organisational culture. The problem this study explored was the extent to which leadership coaching could influence the behaviour of leadership in such a way as to inspire trust, empathy and change leadership in leaders during organisational change.

The research objectives of the study were outlined as follows:

6.2.1. To examine the influence of leadership coaching on perceived levels of trust and empathy in leaders in an automotive concern.

6.2.2. To explore the role of leadership coaching in the demonstration of change leadership during change in an automotive concern in South Africa.

In seeking to answer the research questions, the study employed a participatory action research approach and coached three leaders over a period of five months, along with interviewing employee participants both before and after the conclusion of the leadership coaching sessions.

## 6.3. Conclusions for each proposition

### *6.3.1. Conclusion pertaining to Proposition 1: Leadership coaching influences perceptions of trust and empathy*

In enabling leaders in the automotive manufacturing concern to withstand the tremendous speed and impact of change, leadership coaching has become a significant tool for development and support, and has become a strategic lever in shifting organisational cultures.

The study found that historical data and the experience of the organisational culture greatly influences perceptions of leadership. Newly promoted leaders, who need to gain the trust of employees quickly, unknowingly come against these firmly held assumptions until proven irrelevant or until shifts in leadership behaviour refute current perceptions.

The research findings indicate that leadership coaching played a significant role in contributory shifts in leadership behaviour, thus influencing perceptions of trust and empathy by employees. The study found that coaching has influenced leaders' alignment to values, which facilitated consistency in their behaviour. It further revealed enhanced engagement and time spent with employees; this, in turn, enhanced the building of relationships, which is a fundamental cornerstone to trust.

Furthermore, leaders' shifted assumptions and perspectives of themselves and employees through reflective dialogue, and the cognitive behavioural approach, thus persuaded leaders to reconsider certain decision-making processes, methods of engagement with employees, leadership style and conscription of employees during change processes.

Further findings indicate that leadership coaching enhanced the self-confidence and self-efficacy of leaders. Once leaders received the trust of senior executives, they were better positioned to extend trust to their people. Trust begets trust, in this case. When employees began perceiving leadership behaviour shifts, a greater sense of ownership, inclusivity, problem-solving, and enhanced

communication ensued. Although these were not directly attributed to whether employees' trust in leaders increased, the findings suggest that there were contributory shifts towards such an influence.

Coaching has many great benefits, but it is not solely sufficient to enable contributory shifts in leadership development and behaviour. The study findings indicate the need for varying elements within the organisational context and environment to be in place in order for learning, growth, and transformation to be realised. The organisational pressure to perform and the intense pace of execution, together with a lack of work-life balance, make it difficult for the new leader to combat these forces and show up as the leader they desire to be. The study findings emphasise that organisational culture is a powerful force and is hard to shift (Wren, 2018).

### *6.3.2. Conclusion pertaining to Proposition 2: Leadership coaching enhances shifts in the demonstration of change leadership*

Change leadership obliges trust. The ability for leaders to show up as change leaders who inspire and motivate their teams to change is difficult to achieve and establish without trust. The findings indicate that relationship is fundamental in change leadership. Once employees felt their leaders were interested in their challenges faced at work, provided them with support, engaged them in change processes and collective problem solving, and unselfishly cared about their wellbeing, resistance waned, and a collective accountability supervened.

The literature review uncovers the power and influence change leadership has on the successful implementation of change within organisations. However, the current study's findings indicate that change leadership and implementing change well is less about the leader being inspirational or visionary, but rather about the leader being trusting and empathetic to the needs of their employees. Employees within the study responded positively to shifts in leadership behaviour, which provided opportunities for inclusivity in the change process, and problem solving, as well as taking ownership. This enhanced employee engagement, and minimised resistance, thus resulting in enhanced performance delivery.

## 6.4. Limitations

It is noteworthy to highlight the limitations of the study:

- Employee participants who have good working relationships with their leader may present favourable information regarding the leader. The employee participants were not equally exposed to each of the leader participants; they therefore had minimal exposure to the leader participants and could have been biased in their perceptions towards them.

- The sample used in the study was taken from one specific department within the production department of the South African automotive manufacturing concern being investigated herein. The levels of employees and leaders varied, with some leader participants reporting to senior leader coaching participants.

- The coaching participant sample was also reduced from four leaders to three; in this regard, the study may have benefited from a larger coaching sample.

## 6.5. Recommendations

### *6.5.1. Recommendations for organisations*

Should organisations utilise coaching as learning tools and levers for behavioural change and, ultimately, to shift culture in the organisation, they should remain mindful of the other elements of organisational culture that may impede or enhance leaders' growth and learning.

A strong case for building trust within organisations is to be made. As part of leadership development and organisational culture change, if organisations are to see tangible shifts in the behaviours of both leaders and employees, it is imperative that organisations begin to unpack and integrate the components of trust within the daily lived experiences of its people.

The findings suggest that creating opportunities for leaders to participate and engage in self-reflective practice through reflective dialogue enables deep consideration of action and resultant shifts in behaviour.

When appointing and promoting leadership within the organisation, it would be good practise to ensure that leaders are provided with the support required to manage and navigate their new role and team effectively.

Becoming more cognisant of and implementing strategies to navigate and curtail the weighty influence of organisational culture, and to steer organisational culture, has become paramount for organisations wanting to evolve and survive the current macro-economic conditions.

### *6.5.2. Recommendations for leaders*

Leadership coaching requires an active response from leaders/participants in bringing themselves wholly to the process, while being mindful and engaging fully in the coaching process. The one leader participant really struggled with self-reflection and vulnerability in the coaching process.

Leadership coaching should not be a stand-alone learning or developmental tool for leaders; instead, it should be supported by additional available organisational resources and support.

Building relationships with teams, being authentic, transparent, vulnerable, and engaging are all crucial components that enable the swift uptake and adoption of changes. These attributes also enhance problem-solving, innovative thinking, and performance delivery. These ‘softer’ relational components are often not encouraged or focused on in a strong masculine culture existent within the automotive manufacturing industry.

Leaders who are offered coaching should immerse themselves fully in the process, allow for vulnerability and reflection, and should display an openness towards the skilful challenging questions of the coach, in order to benefit significantly from the process.

### *6.5.3. Recommendations for coaches*

The opportunity coaching provides for middle management leaders who have to operate in a volatile, changing environment is invaluable. The findings from all leader participants indicated the benefits of having an objective thinking partner, a safe space to be vulnerable, and an opportunity to engage in reflective dialogue and thinking. The coach-coachee relationship was indicative of the rapport built with leaders, who all expressed sadness that the coaching sessions had to come to an end. Creating a safe space for these leaders (who often feel like they are alone) also contributed to the tremendous self-reflection, behavioural shifts and, as in the case of one leader, actual physical benefits gained.

The coaching principle of allowing the coachee to take the lead, within the framework of a cognitive behavioural and solution-focused approach, enabled a more organic approach, without overtly imposing and leading the process.

## 6.6. Suggestions for further studies

The study findings buttressed the multiplicity of literature on the influence of organisational culture on leadership. However, the findings also indicate the significant influence that organisational culture can have on the individual leader. Although there are numerous studies on the influence that leadership behaviour has on shifting organisational culture, there is not as much research available on its influence on leadership, specifically on newly promoted leaders.

Further research into the area of how newly promoted leaders, could better sustain the fresh vision, energy and passion to lead their people well, within the context of change and the presiding assumptions and beliefs already well-established in an organisation's culture.

Future studies will benefit from the expansion of the leader participant to be inclusive of a broader representation of the organisation. In addition, data collected from a broader number of employees, who directly report to these leaders, would be beneficial.

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## APPENDIX A - Consistency Matrix

| TITLE: **Leadership coaching on organisational culture change within an automotive manufacturing concern in South Africa** | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Main Objective: To explore the perceived influence of leadership coaching on organisational culture change within an automotive manufacturing concern in South Africa** | | | | | | | |
| **Sub-Aims/Objectives** | **Literature Review** | **Propositions** | **Research questions** | **Constructs** | **Source of data** | **Type of data** | **Analysis** |
| To examine leadership coaching's perceived influence on levels of trust and empathy in leaders in an automotive concern. | Edgar Schein (2010)<br>Kahn (2018)<br>Hofstede (2020) | Leadership coaching enhances perceptions of trust and empathy in leadership during change | In what way will leadership coaching influence trust and empathy in leadership? | Leadership Coaching<br><br>Trust and Empathy<br><br>Organisational Culture | Coaching sessions<br><br>Interviews | Qualitative | Thematic analysis |
| To explore the role of leadership coaching on the demonstration of change leadership during change in an automotive concern in SA. | Anderson & Anderson (2010)<br>Kombarakaran, Yang, Baker, & Fernandes (2008) | Leadership coaching enhances shifts in the demonstration of change leadership | To what extent does leadership coaching influence change leadership? | Leadership Coaching<br><br>Change Leadership | Coaching Sessions<br><br>Interviews | Qualitative | Thematic analysis |

## APPENDIX B – Research Instrument

1. *Overview of research:* Coaching dialogue protocol for leadership coaching for organisational culture change
    - Introduce yourself, explain the research and its objective.
    - Describe the eventual outcome of the research: a research report that provides insights on whether leadership coaching, underpinned by transformative learning theory can create shifts in organisational culture change in an automotive manufacturing organisation in South Africa.
2. *Describe ultimate benefits:*

    The benefit of the study may extend to overall organisational performance during a change initiative by enhancing leadership behaviour in inspiring trust, demonstrating empathy and change leadership. Benefits for leaders and employees could be an increase in engagement and productivity during a change, as trust is increased, employees feel cared for, and leaders champion the change.
3. *Consent form:* Explain consent form and participants sign

    Coaching sessions and interviews will be recorded for the purposes of data collection and thematic analysis.
4. *Employee Interview Questions:*

4.1. Before leadership coaching sessions commence

After thanking and welcoming the participant, below is a representation of the type of questions that can be asked in the interview prior to the commencement of leadership coaching sessions:

- Tell me a little about yourself and your role within the organisation.
- How would you describe the culture of the organisation?
- What do you believe is the main contributor to this?
- How is change generally handled/managed in the workplace?
- Describe the relationship you have with your leader?
- Why do you believe the relationship is like this?
- What is important for you in your relationship with your leader?
- Would you consider your relationship with your leader to be one of trust?
    - Tell me more / Explain your response

- How does this impact your work?
- How does your leader show he/she cares?
- Is this demonstration of care impacted at all during times of change?

4.2. After leadership coaching sessions have concluded

After thanking and welcoming the participant, below is a representation of the type of questions that can be asked in the interview that takes place after the conclusion of the coaching sessions:

- Since our last discussion, describe whether there has been any shift in the relationship you have with your leader?
- What do you believe has contributed to this?
- What are some key observations you have made in your leader's behaviour?
- Has anything shifted in how change is implemented or led?
- Have you learnt or become more aware of anything from our last conversation? If so, can you tell me more?
- What have you done to shift your relationship with your leader?

*5. Leader Interview Questions:*

*5.1* After leadership coaching sessions

After thanking and welcoming the participant, below is a representation of the type of questions that can be asked in the interview that takes place after the conclusion of the coaching sessions.

- Since our last coaching session, describe whether there has been any shift in the relationship you have with your employees?
- What do you believe has contributed to this?
- What are some key observations you have made in your own behaviour?
- What are some observations you have made in your own thinking in relation to trust with your employees?
- Has anything shifted in how you lead change?

- Have you learnt or become more aware of anything from our last conversation? If so, can you tell me more?

## APPENDIX C - Example of Consent form to Leaders

Dear Person A,

I, Karen Morkel, am a student at Wits Business School studying a Masters in Management in the field of Business and Executive Coaching. My research topic explores whether organisational culture change is possible through leadership coaching. The purpose of the research is to ascertain whether a leadership coaching process can shift perceptions of trust and empathy during change, so as to improve workplace engagement and ultimately improve business performance.

I would like to invite you to participate in the research by volunteering for coaching sessions. You have been selected for participation in this study as you hold a leadership position within the organisation, and your scope of control has influence across all tiers in the business. The timing of the research project will be approximately six months, however, your personal time over the period will be no more than 10 hours spread over the six-month coaching period. The parties involved in this process will be myself and willing leader participants, and sessions will take place in the workplace, or via an online platform (Covid-19 dependent).

As part of the research, I would like to record the coaching sessions in order to refer to your responses during the analysis phase of the study; however, confidentiality will be safeguarded, and the recordings will not be shared internally. I would appreciate that you extend permission to record the coaching sessions using a digital device. I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation in this study in my final research report.

You will not receive payment or benefits from participating in this research, and there are no disadvantages or penalties for non-participation. Should you so wish, you can withdraw your participation from the coaching sessions at any time. Should you, at any stage, experience distress or discomfort, you are welcome to remove yourself from the process. You are required to maintain the confidentiality of the coaching conversations at all times.

I am available to answer any questions you may have regarding the research, and you are welcome to make contact with me via the details provided below. This research

will be documented in the form of a written report, which will be submitted to the Wits Graduate School of Business. Should you wish to receive a summary of the report, I will make one available to you.

Concerns or complaints regarding this study's ethical procedures can be directed to the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0)11 717 1408, email Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,

**Student:** Karen Morkel

Email: karenmor222@gmail.com

**Supervisor:** Ayanda Magida

Email: ayanda.magida@wits.ac.za

_____

**Declaration and signature of Research Participant**

The information contained in this document was explained to me by Karen Morkel. I was given the opportunity to ask questions of clarification, and they were answered to my satisfaction. I understand that the sessions will be audio recorded, and I hereby consent to participate in this research voluntarily. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of participant:

Signature: Date:

## APPENDIX D – Example of Consent form for Interview Participant

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Karen Morkel, and I am a student at Wits Business School, studying a Masters in Management in the field of Business and Executive Coaching. My research topic explores whether organisational culture change is possible through leadership coaching. The purpose of this research is to ascertain whether the leadership coaching process can shift perceptions of trust and empathy during change, so as to improve workplace engagement and ultimately improve business performance.

I would like to invite you to take part in an interview. The purpose of the interview is to obtain your feedback on workplace engagement, how change is lead and implemented, and the relationship between you and your leader. It will involve answering a series of questions and should not take more than one hour of your time for each session. Two interview sessions will be held approximately six months apart. As part of the research, I would like to record the interviews in order to refer to your responses during the analysis phase of this study, however, confidentiality is safeguarded, and the recordings will not be shared internally. I would appreciate that you extend permission to record the interviews using a digital device.

You will not receive payment or benefits from participating in this research, and there are no disadvantages or penalties for non-participation. Should you so wish, you can withdraw your participation from the interviews at any time. Should you experience distress or discomfort at any stage, you are welcome to remove yourself from the process. You must maintain confidentiality regarding the conversations within the focus groups at all times, and you are requested to not disclose sensitive information to any person outside of the focus group audience.

I am available to answer any questions you may have regarding the research, and you are welcome to make contact with me via the details provided below. This research will be documented in the form of a written report which will be submitted to the Wits Graduate School of Business. Should you wish to receive a summary of the report, I will make one available to you.

Concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study can be directed to the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0)11 717 1408, email Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,

**Student:** Karen Morkel

Email: karenmor222@gmail.com

**Supervisor:** Ayanda Magida

Email: ayanda.magida@wits.ac.za

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**Declaration and signature of Research Participant**

The information contained in this document was explained to me by Karen Morkel. I was given the opportunity to ask questions of clarification, and they were answered to my satisfaction. I understand that the interviews will be audio recorded. I hereby consent to participate in this research voluntarily, and I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of participant:

Signature: Date:

## APPENDIX E – Organisation Consent Form

### Organisation Consent

The Graduate School of Business

2 St David's Place, Parktown

Johannesburg, 2193, South Africa

PO Box 98, WITS, 2050

Website: www.wbs.ac.za

**RE: PERMISSION FOR ORGANISATIONAL CONSENT TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY**

Dear Sir / Madam

I would like to request permission to conduct my research study within your organisation. My name is Karen Morkel, and I am a student at the Wits Business School, studying a Masters in Management, in the field of Business and Executive Coaching. My research topic explores whether organisational culture change is possible through leadership coaching. The purpose of the research is to ascertain whether leadership coaching can shift perceptions of trust and empathy during change, so as to improve workplace engagement and, ultimately, improve business performance.

| | |
|---|---|
| Research Title: | **Leadership coaching on organisational culture during change in an automotive manufacturing concern in South Africa** |
| Research Supervisor: | **Ayanda Magida** |
| Faculty: | **Commerce, Law and Management** |

The data collection process includes hosting five coaching sessions with four managers within the organisation, one manager on each leadership level, that is, the

senior, middle, and first-line manager levels. Two interviews will be hosted with the managers' direct reports: one before the coaching commences and another after coaching is complete. Coaching sessions and the interviews will be recorded on a digital device that will not be shared internally with the organisation in an effort to safeguard the identities of the participants and the information disclosed during the conversations. Participants are required to sign a consent form extending their permission for the sessions to be recorded. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, confidentiality is a strict requirement of the research project. The recordings will be stored on my personal hard drive and will be destroyed after I have graduated from the Masters' programme. In addition, the organisation will remain confidential in my research report.

Participants and the organisation will not receive payment or benefits from participating in this research, and there are no disadvantages or penalties for non-participation. Should participants experience distress or discomfort at any stage, you may withdraw the organisation’s participation.

I am available to answer any questions you may have regarding the research, and you are welcome to make contact with me via the details provided below. This research will be documented in the form of a written report, which will be submitted to the Wits Graduate School of Business. Should you wish to receive a summary of the report, I will make one available to you.

Concerns or complaints regarding this study's ethical procedures can be directed to the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0)11 717 1408, email Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,

**Student:** Karen Morkel

Email: karenmor222@gmail.com

**Supervisor:** Ayanda Magida

Email: ayanda.magida@wits.ac.za

**Declaration and signature of Organisation Consent**

The information contained in this document was explained to me by Karen Morkel. I was given the opportunity to ask questions of clarification, and they were answered to my satisfaction. I hereby grant consent for the organisation to participate in this research, and I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Company:

Name of Company Representative:

Title of Company Representative:

Signature: Date: 26 March 2021