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The executive's perceptions and experience of resilience as influenced by coaching interventions in South Africa

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The executive's perceptions and experience of resilience as influenced by coaching interventions in South Africa

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in Business and Executive Coaching

University of the Witwatersrand Business School

By

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March 2013

ABSTRACT

Today's business world is dynamic and ever-changing, and for organisations and executives to survive and thrive, learning and self-development must be a vital component of their individual and business strategy (Luthans, Vogelgesang, & Lester, 2006). Linked to this, in their roles as leaders, executives have to navigate a constant onslaught of changes and challenges from the environment which makes their ability to 'bounce back' from negative events, and thus be resilient, crucial (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Hamel & Valikangas, 2003). Continued learning and development is therefore required in order to enhance executives' resilience and their ability to adjust to change and deal with the challenges they face (Moran, 2011; Passmore, 2010; Kaye, 2006). One method that has been identified to assist executives in their continued learning and self-development is Executive Coaching, which has emerged as one of the most important developmental and training tools for these individuals (Jones, Reafferty, & Griffin, 2006).

This study aims to contribute to the field of Executive Coaching by investigating how executives who have been coached perceive and experience resilience and well as how executives who have not been coached perceive and experience resilience. The study explores the differences between the perceptions and experiences of resilience between the 'coached' and the 'non-coached' and examines the coaching interventions that played a part in influencing these perceptions. 18 South African executives were interviewed using an unstructured interview format for this study. These interviews were then transcribed and analysed using methods of thematic content analysis and several themes emerged as a result.

The study found that, overall, coaching interventions do influence an executive's perceptions and experience of resilience, most notably in the areas of increased self-confidence, self-awareness and emotional regulation and awareness. The findings further highlight that participants perceive resilience as a multi-dimensional process influenced by multiple factors, and although all the respondents who had been coached indicated they found Executive Coaching to be both helpful and useful, the influence of coaching interventions on resilience fluctuated across the themes that emerged.

A significant recommendation from the study is the need for coaches to address coaching interventions and resilience holistically in order to provide comprehensive support and attention to all of the aspects that impact an executive's resilience.

DECLARATION

I, Tanya Stevens, 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 (University of the Witwatersrand Business School, Johannesburg).

It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Name: Tanya Stevens

Date: March, 2013

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my husband for his unconditional love, unwavering support and ever present encouragement in the pursuit of my dreams.

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My sincere thanks and appreciation to Natalie Cunningham, my supervisor, for her guidance, wisdom, expertise and encouragement. Her passion for learning inspired and motivated me during this journey. It was a privilege to be supervised by her.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of this study

The purpose of this research study was to explore the influence of coaching interventions on executives' perceptions and experiences of resilience.

This research therefore investigates:

- How executives who have not been coached perceive and experience resilience.
- How executives who have been coached perceive and experience resilience.
- The difference of the perceptions and experiences of resilience between those executives who had received coaching versus those who had not.
- The ways in which coaching interventions influenced executives' perceptions and experiences of resilience.

This exploration necessitates the broad description of the concept of coaching interventions and the construct of resilience within a South African context.

1.2 Context of this study

The following section provides a brief overview of the challenges facing South African executives, the importance of resilience in facing those challenges and the role of Executive Coaching as a strategy that supports executive learning and development.

Today's business world is dynamic and ever-changing, and for organisations and executives to survive and thrive, learning and self-development must be a vital component of their individual and business strategy (De Vries, 2008; Luthans, Vogelgesang, & Lester, 2006). Linked to this, in their roles as leaders, executives have to navigate a constant onslaught of changes and challenges from the environment, which makes it crucial for them to be able to 'bounce back' from negative events and be resilient (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Hamel & Valikangas, 2003). Continued learning and development is therefore required in order to enhance executives' resilience and their ability to adjust to change and deal with the challenges they face (Moran, 2011;

Passmore, 2010; Kaye, 2006). One method that has been identified to assist executives in their continued learning and self-development is Executive Coaching (Jones, Reafferty, & Griffin, 2006).

According to Kokt (2003), executives working in South Africa operate within a dynamic, complex and often turbulent environment. They encounter various situations throughout their careers that generate conflict and stress. South Africa has a multi-faceted and constantly evolving social, economic and political climate that exposes those living and working in the country to multiple opportunities as well as various challenges (O'Flaherty & Everson, 2009; Luthans, Van Wyk, & Walumbwa, 2004). In addition, South Africa is a mix of cultural, racial and language groups with a rich, and often dark, history that included conflicts through colonialism, civil wars and the legacy of Apartheid (Stout Rostron, 2006b).

As a result, this country and its residents face various challenges that include issues surrounding race and gender inequalities, poverty, low educational standards, the prevalence of HIV and AIDS and a high crime rate (Luthans, et al., 2004). In addition, demanding local and international economic conditions and the global recession over the past few years have resulted in increased retrenchments, a decline in living standards, high unemployment rates and future uncertainty. Companies have also faced increased global competition, increased regulation, union strikes and skills shortages, as well as reduced profit margins, which have all contributed to an organisational environment fraught with uncertainty and tension (Taylor, 2003; Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994).

Executives in South Africa have therefore had to adapt quickly in order to operate within these dynamic circumstances. These individuals are often faced with internal or external challenges that exceed their resources and as a result, these stressful situations can have negative effects on their health and performance (Taylor, 2003). However, despite these challenges, executives are still expected to achieve organisational goals and for many, this requires developing and maintaining qualities such as confidence, resilience and optimism (Khan, 2010).

Contributing to the pressure experienced by executives is the anxiety related to succeeding despite potentially trying circumstances. Studies have indicated that there is

a high risk of failure in senior and executive positions, with some research revealing that up to 50% of individuals in executive positions experience failure at some point in their careers (Hogan, et al., 1994). One of the suggested explanations for executive derailment is the failure to learn and grow as a leader (Hughes & Terrell, 2008). This highlights the importance of interventions which enhance learning and leadership. Passmore (2010) asserted that Executive Coaching interventions can contribute to building individual resilience which facilitates learning and improves well-being, supporting executive and leadership development.

Leadership development is therefore the primary focus of Executive Coaching (Weller & Weller, 2004). Executive Coaching has emerged as one of the most important developmental and training tools for executives as it focuses on the unique issues and challenges that individuals in these positions face (Jones, et al., 2006). Hall, Otazo and Hollenbeck (1999) stated that Executive Coaching results in the acquisition of new abilities, skills and perspectives that contribute to continued development and new achievements in particular professional contexts. Executive Coaching is therefore considered a powerful instrument for talent management that focuses on enhancing and broadening the skills base, learning, development and performance of senior and middle management and facilitating management transition in organisations (Joo, 2005). Although the phenomenon is a relatively new one in South Africa, internationally it has become so widely accepted that the demand for competent coaches who can deliver measurable and expected outcomes far exceeds the current supply (Ennis, Goodman, Otto & Stern, 2008).

Executive Coaching has thus proven to be increasingly beneficial and popular in recent years (Jones, et al., 2006) and the influence of coaching interventions on the executive's perceptions and experiences of resilience is a crucial consideration in this research study.

Previous research indicates that through intensive Executive Coaching, clients are equipped with the necessary skills to increase their resilience (Grant, Curtayne, & Burton, 2009). Resilience can be described as a "dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000, p. 543) and is conceptualised as one's ability and "capacity to persist in

demanding circumstances" (Leiter & Maslach, 2005, p. 52). Resilience encapsulates the individual qualities that enable a person to thrive in the face of challenges or adversity. It is viewed as a multi-dimensional construct that varies according to age, context, time, gender and cultural origin, as well as individual life circumstances (Connor & Davidson, 2003). In the context of this research, coaching is a means by which executives are encouraged to engage in continued self-development and learning. According to authors including Jones et al. (2006) and Taylor (2003), Executive Coaching has far-reaching impacts for clients who occupy senior managerial or leadership positions. These impacts include increased performance; enhanced leadership effectiveness by improved self-awareness, decision-making skills and interpersonal awareness; adaptability; flexibility in managing change; and increased resilience (Grant, et al., 2009; Salmon, 2009; Kaye, 2006; Weller & Weller, 2004).

Although the benefits of coaching have been identified at individual, team and organisational levels, some authors argue that there is little empirical evidence to support the claim that coaching improves executive and organisational performance (Passmore, Pena, Rosinski, & Szabo, 2006; Joo, 2005). There is currently limited research that explores which coaching interventions and methodologies work best for which clients (and in which situations), and there is a general lack of clarity regarding coaching practices and processes (Bono, Purvanova, Towler, & Peterson, 2009; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007). Questions that have arisen but remain largely unanswered include how or why Executive Coaching works; when it has the best potential of succeeding; and whether it translates into greater organisational effectiveness (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). Grant (2001) encouraged research into the efficacy of the various coaching interventions based on these questions.

Furthermore, an additional consideration from the field of Executive Coaching questions the extent to, and ways in which, coaching can influence business executives' perceptions and experiences of resilience (Seligman, 2011). According to Richardson (2002, p. 543), "Resiliency and resilience have emerged as intriguing areas of inquiry that explore personal and interpersonal gifts and strengths that can be accessed to grow through adversity". In addition, research on resilience needs to focus on the in-depth processes that determine and influence its development (Luthar, et al., 2000). There is a considerable gap in the current body of literature detailing the importance and benefits of

Executive Coaching to enhance a business person's levels of resilience within a South African context. Thus, in light of the relevance of research of this nature to South African businesses and organisations, this proposed research has the potential to have far-reaching implications in the South African business community.

This study therefore offers a nuanced exploration of coaching interventions and the subsequent influence that these interventions have on coaching clients' perceptions and experiences of resilience.

1.3 Problem statement

While Executive Coaching is widely practised, there is little empirical evidence regarding the process and the results thereof. This includes limited information regarding its effectiveness and the potential factors that might impact this effectiveness (MacKie, 2007; Joo, 2005). Coaching is an emerging discipline and relevant literature reveals that the impact of coaching interventions on resilience requires further investigation (Joo, 2005). Current research is predominantly concerned with describing resilience, various resilience theories and models of resilience coaching (Luthar, et al., 2000) and whilst the insights gained from these studies are beneficial in formulating our understanding of what resilience entails, it does not delve deeply enough into considerations of whether or how executive perceptions and experiences of resilience are influenced through coaching. Bonanno (2004, p. 135) added that the study of adult resilience is "nascent and there are a myriad of questions for future research".

With regard to literature on the topic, a search for articles with both the key words "Executive Coaching" and "resilience" in the title of the electronic data bases EBSCO host, PsycINFO, PsycNET and Proquest, delivered only one result. An expanded search, which included a search for both of the keywords "Executive Coaching" and "resilience" in the abstract, delivered twelve results in PsycInfo and two in EBSCOhost. Of these articles, two involved studies of the influence of Executive Coaching on resilience whilst the other articles were discussions of various coaching models and potential approaches to the role of Executive Coaching in building resilience.

As a result, the review of literature indicates that empirical research regarding the influence of Executive Coaching on executive resilience is limited. The first, a randomised controlled study, found that Executive Coaching enhanced resilience along with goal attainment and workplace well-being (Grant, et al., 2009). Although the study indicated that participants experienced improved self-confidence and resilience, it did not provide information regarding the various ways in which resilience was increased from the perspective of the participants. Grant et al. (2009) acknowledged that future studies should explore the efficacy of Executive Coaching interventions on resilience in more detail, which is a point that this research study aims to address. The aforementioned research also included a half-day leadership training programme and this raised the question as to whether the same result would have been achieved if the study was based exclusively on a coaching intervention. The second study is outlined in the journal article "*Developing Leadership in U.S. Government Financial Institutions during Times of Crisis*" and provides insight into the practices that coaches use to build executive clients' resilience. However, once again this work did not explore the ways in which these practices influence the executives' perceptions or experiences of resilience, other than to say that they experienced increased self-confidence (Salmon, 2009).

It is argued that understanding the perspective of the client who engages in a coaching intervention is essential since what is viewed as important by the coach might not be viewed as valuable by the client (Lowman, 2005). Stevens (2005) supported this view, stating that a coach's foundation of theory and practice could be enhanced by a deeper understanding of the client's perspective of coaching. It is envisioned that, by exploring and understanding this relationship, this study would offer insights into the fairly underdeveloped field of Executive Coaching in South Africa, where there is a scarcity of published research regarding Executive Coaching, specifically that of the influence of coaching on resilience. Such understanding can then enable coaches to design and implement coaching interventions directed at enhancing executive resilience in the South African context, where resilience is a much needed executive characteristic.

Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) indicated that formal coaching training should be founded on research about what tends to be effective during coaching interventions. Research should also explore why specific methods work while others do not. These authors reasoned that research has the potential to provide benefits for coaching

practitioners as it could provide a knowledge base regarding the effectiveness of coaching interventions.

The problem statement for this study is therefore: *To explore and understand the executive's perceptions and experience of resilience as influenced by coaching interventions in South Africa.*

1.4 Significance of the study

Coaching is a fast-growing field and the popularity of, and demand for, Executive Coaching indicates an undeniable need in the market place (Hudson, 1999). Due to it being a relatively new field of study, there are a limited number of empirical studies that focus on coaching, especially in South Africa and on the South African population. The research that there is specifically focuses on the subjective experience of executives who have received coaching.

This study endeavours to contribute to the field of organisational coaching, which is relevant and beneficial to academics, coaches, business executives and organisations who wish to understand the influence of coaching interventions on resilience. It thus has the potential to assist coaches in the design of coaching programmes and enhance organisations in their day-to-day running.

Worldwide, organisations are investing in Executive Coaching as a leadership development tool (Sherman & Freas, 2004). Exploration of the application of coaching to meet executive's individual needs could assist training and development personnel in making appropriate decisions regarding whether or not to hire a coach for individual and organisational development. The knowledge gathered from this research adds to the body of empirical evidence that details how coaching interventions influence the coaching client. This expansion of knowledge will prove useful for future coaching and leadership development interventions.

Leaders need to be adaptable to change and deal effectively with challenges, and coaching has been identified as a developmental strategy that allows executives to work through both personal and professional challenges (Cox, Bachkirova, & Clutterbuck,

2010; Sherman & Freas, 2004). This study sheds some light on the different perceptions and unique experiences of executives regarding coaching and resilience. In addition, it also explores the differences and similarities of the perceptions and experiences of resilience of both executives who have, and those who have not, been exposed to coaching. This allows for the identification of those areas where executives report that coaching had an influence on their perceptions and experience of resilience, how it had an influence, and where those perceptions and experiences varied compared to those executives who had not been coached (if such a variation exists). It is anticipated that this study will stimulate further research on the influence of coaching on resilience.

There is still much to be learned about the phenomena of resilience in terms of how individuals meet and adapt to challenges, adversity and stressful situations. This being said, the evolution of the construct of resilience from physiological and psychological research has shown that it is important to acknowledge its dynamic and interactive features (Stevens, 2005). The construct of resilience embodies numerous theories but a common thread between these models and frameworks is the core belief that an individual's ability to develop resiliency and thus be resilient, can provide hope and improved self-efficacy, resulting in an increased sense of control and order in their lives (Bonanno, 2004). Resilience can also be considered a mechanism for coping with stress and, as a result, be an important means for overcoming anxiety, depression and stress reactions (Stevens, 2005).

From the existing body of literature, it is evident that building personal resilience (in both one's private and professional life) has the capacity to assist executives with the day-to-day challenges they face. Considering the extreme pressure and stress that executives face, it is important to explore ways of enabling executives to thrive and sustain satisfying careers, despite the context of organisational difficulty and workplace adversity.

Research such as this into coaching interventions is therefore important as it signals the methods that can be used by coaches to either decrease their client's exposure to risk factors and stressful situations, or to increase the number of available protective factors (such as personal characteristics or support structures) during times of challenge and adversity. As outlined in Section 1.3, the main goal of this research is to identify the

influence that various coaching interventions have on an executive's perceptions and experiences of resilience. That is, this study investigates the influence of intervention strategies (as used by executive coaches) on an executive client's perceptions of resilience as well as their experiences with this phenomenon in a professional context. Being able to cope with stress and disruptive changes is an integral part of life and living. How one reacts to these experiences, however, and the success with which they are able to continue with their life, is the basis of the resilience framework (Flach, 1988).

1.5 Delimitations of the study

The following factors defined the parameters of the research:

- This study was confined to business executives working in Johannesburg and Cape Town.
- Only those executives who had been coached by business coaches between January 2010 and December 2011 and whose coaching programmes had been completed were included in this study.
- The executives used in this study were individuals who held senior management positions in organisations.
- Only South African business executives were interviewed in light of this research's focus on the South African organisational context.
- The focus of the study was on the executive's perceptions and experiences of resilience as influenced by coaching interventions.
- A longitudinal approach was not adopted in this study.

1.6 Definition of key terms

The following operational definitions are pertinent to this research study:

1.6.1 Executive Coaching

Executive Coaching is defined as the process where business leaders or would-be leaders are put through a series of developmental phases that aim to build on their capabilities to achieve various goals; both professionally and personally (Cox,

Bachkirova, & Clutterbuck, 2010). Stern (2008) stated that this method of coaching often requires both one-on-one interactions between the coach and the client, as well as group interactions. He added that this coaching is driven by evidence and data from multiple perspectives, and is based on mutual trust and respect. Thus the success of this type of coaching is dependent on the various stakeholders involved in the coaching process, namely the coach, the individuals being coached, and the organisations. These stakeholders work in partnership in order to achieve the goals which are agreed upon prior to the start of the coaching process.

1.6.2 Resilience

A number of factors contribute to how well people adjust to challenges and adversity (Luthans, et al., 2006). The American Psychological Association (2007, p. 792) defined resilience as the "process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioural flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands". An important consideration with this working definition of resilience is the emphasis placed on resilience being part of a 'process' and not merely an outcome, and this study pays careful attention to the construction of resilience in this light.

1.6.3 Intervention

Intervention can be broadly understood as various action(s) implemented by the coach (or 'therapist' in traditional psychological discourse) to deal with the problems and concerns of their clients (Seligman, 2011). There are often a wide range of intervention strategies that a coach can draw on and the choice in strategy is guided by the nature and context of the problem, as well as the personal orientations of the coach. Furthermore, the client's own willingness and contributions to the process are crucial in the intervention decisions (American Psychological Association, 2007).

According to De-Vries, Guillen, Korotov and Florent-Treacy (2010), intervention techniques include socially guided methods such as leadership coaching, role play, storytelling, mirroring, positive reframing and stressing self-efficacy. These interventions

require “active participation to shape not only what executives do but also who they are and how they interpret what they do” (2010, p. 5).

1.6.4 Executive and client

For the purpose of this research study, an ‘executive’ is defined as an individual who holds an upper-level leadership position within an organisation and has to play certain roles with certain responsibilities to deliver results (Long, 2003). In this research, the terms ‘executive’ and ‘leader’ are used interchangeably as all executive participants in this study are leaders of their organisations. The term ‘client’ also refers to the executive in their capacity as a ‘coachee’ in the overall coaching process. For this reason, the terms ‘client’ and ‘coachee’ are also used interchangeably.

1.7 Assumptions

- The researcher assumed that those interviewees within the study who had received coaching would give an honest response with regard to the coaching interventions and the influence of these strategies on them.

- It was also assumed that the executives would be able to recall the coaching intervention with relative accuracy.

- The researcher assumed that all interviewees had an understanding of the concepts of resilience, and in the case of those who had been coached, of coaching. All interviewees were asked to share their understanding of these concepts and all were able to describe them, indicating their familiarity with them.

- It was assumed that all the interviewees were willing to disclose information and personal histories.

- This study was based on the influence of Executive Coaching on an executive’s perceptions and experiences of resilience. It was assumed that a qualitative approach would allow for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

1.8 Structure of the report

Chapter 1 serves as the introduction to the research and contextualises the study. It specifies the purpose and significance of the study and details the delimitations, assumptions and definitions relevant to this research.

Chapter 2 consists of a review of the current literature that guides and informs this research. In this chapter there is a detailed review of the conceptual framework of this study and an outline of the research paradigm that guides this research. There is then an exploration of the working definitions and explanations of the key terms in the study. Lastly, this chapter contextualises the importance of the theme of resilience in the South African workplace.

Chapter 3, the research methodology section, provides a detailed explanation of the data collection procedures, the data used in the research and the tools used to analyse the chosen texts. Motivations for why these methods were chosen are also provided.

Chapter 4 details the findings obtained from the data analysis process. For ease of reference, this chapter is guided by patterns revealed through the thematic content analysis and is divided into key themes.

Chapter 5 includes the analysis and discussion of the research findings, investigates support for the findings in the literature review, makes interpretations and draws conclusions as a result of this. Similarities and/or differences between the literature review and the findings are also discussed.

The final chapter, **Chapter 6**, makes recommendations to coaches and executives based on the findings. This chapter also suggests how the limitations of the study give rise to potential future research in this area.

The list of **references** follows Chapter 6 and the respondent letter, interview agenda and transcripts are contained in the **Appendices**.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter contains a literature review that outlines and explores the themes of Executive Coaching and resilience. This chapter begins with the conceptual framework that serves to contextualise the research and forms the basis of this study. The emphasis is on an intepretivist perspective, which is essentially concerned with aspects of human experience. This is followed by a discussion of Executive Coaching, including a definition of this phenomena and the link between organisational stress and resilience in the workplace. In the following section, current literature in this field is highlighted and insights into the types of practices and interventions that guide the coaching process are offered. The focus then moves on to a section contextualising resilience and provides a working definition and overall understanding of this multi-dimensional term. Finally, a discussion of a basic resilience framework is explored and includes a look at the role and impact of the pathways to resilience, all within a South African context.

2.2 Conceptual framework and paradigm

The research problem of this study is to explore the influence of coaching interventions on executives' perceptions and experiences of resilience. One of the basic functions of conceptual frameworks is that of classification (Mouton, 1996). This study is guided by a constructivist perspective and can be classified as a qualitative conceptual framework based on an interpretivist paradigm. An interpretivist approach was selected as this study is concerned with understanding the individual realities of executives and is focused on exploring their qualitative experiences and perceptions of resilience as influenced by coaching interventions. This conceptual framework was developed in order to fully explore the research problem and the multi-dimensional concepts of Executive Coaching and resilience. Marshall and Rossman (1999) stated that the conceptual framework of a research proposal describes the study's topic, purpose, the focus of the research, as well as its significance.

The aim of this interpretivist research study is to understand the human experience from the perspective of those individuals involved in the phenomena, namely South African

executives (Krauss, 2005). The conceptual framework adopted in this study is illustrated in Figure 1 below. It is based on a qualitative methodology, guided by an interpretivist approach, and is based on the design of a conceptual framework for a research proposal as outlined by Marshall and Rossman (1999):

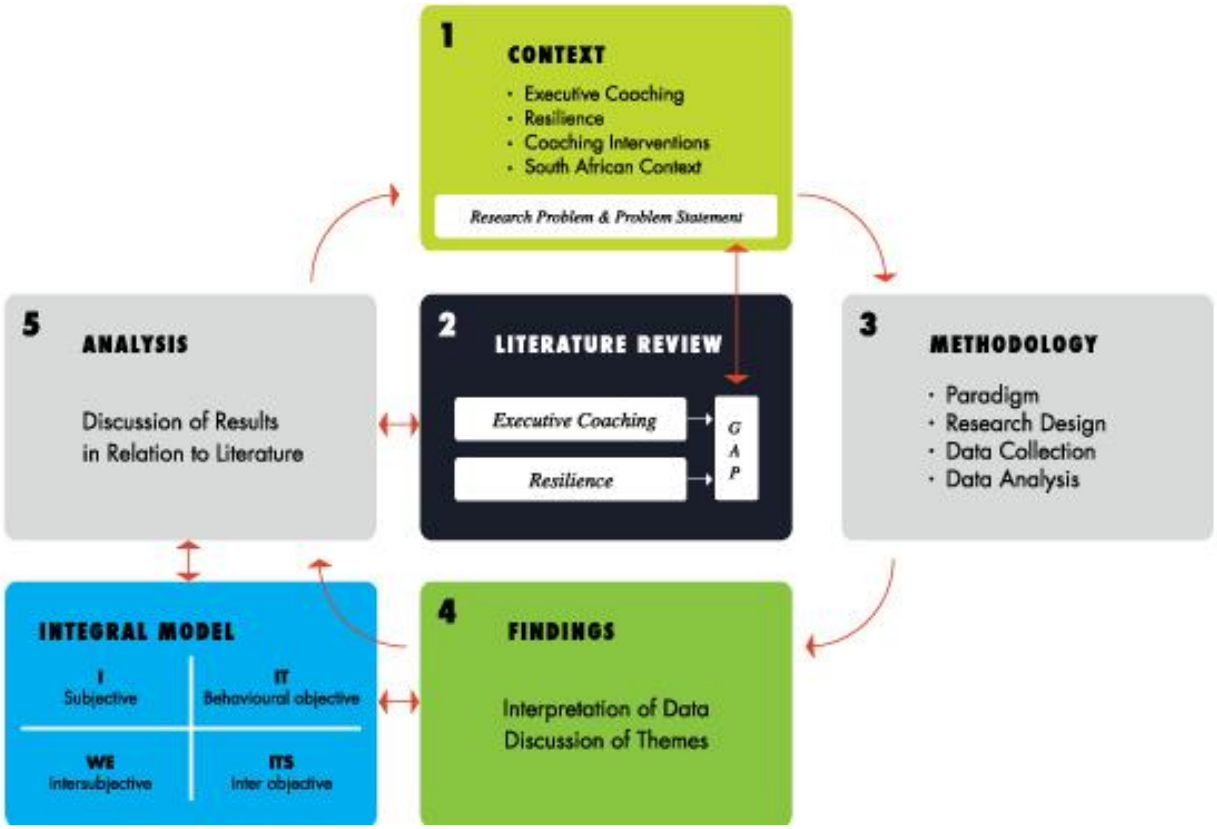

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

As indicated in Figure 1, the research study introduces the South African context within which the research takes place and highlights the topic and focus of the research, namely Executive Coaching and resilience. It states the research problem, "*Explore and understand the executive's perceptions and experience of resilience as influenced by coaching interventions in South Africa",* which was clarified and refined after a thorough review of the relevant literature was conducted. The research problem statement of this study guided the decisions regarding the overall methodology, data gathering, and the conceptual framework that were chosen for this research. Thus, the methodology adopted in this study is qualitative and unstructured interviews were used to gather the data.

The literature review investigates, explores, reviews and critiques previous research concerning Executive Coaching and resilience. Executive Coaching interventions, models, tools and techniques are discussed and the construct of resilience is investigated. The limited research exploring the influence of Executive Coaching interventions on executives in the South African context was identified as a gap in the literature and this led to a refinement of the problem statement. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), qualitative research requires flexibility in relation to the research problem and design, due to the non-linear and interrelated nature of this type of research. Research problem statements thus often require refinement or refocusing after a review of the literature.

Following this, methods of data collection (with unstructured interviews) and analysis (using inductive content analysis) are established. Meaning is constructed through qualitative data analysis and is achieved through applying specific methods used in the data analysis process. According to Krauss (2005), thoroughness and rigor is an essential requirement in qualitative research data analysis as it enhances the prospective meaning making, thus an integral framework is adopted to categorise the themes and analyse the findings. Themes are identified and the findings are discussed. Finally, the findings are analysed in relation to existing literature.

The complexity and multi-dimensionality of the constructs of resilience and Executive Coaching, together with the interpretivist view that the world is complex and dynamic and that reality is subjective and constructed, interpreted and experienced by people in their interactions with each other and the environment, required a conceptual framework that could ‘hold’ subjectivity, complexity, multi-dimensionality, inter-relatedness, different contexts and numerous perspectives across various domains (Sherman & Freas, 2004). The role of research is to understand the meaning of a phenomena, which includes the description of multiple realities related to a phenomena. As such, the requirements of this study necessitated a conceptual framework that would allow the researcher to ‘grasp’ the full extent of the various perspectives, theories and models related to Executive Coaching and resilience, yet also do so in a way that would be clear and understandable.

The exploratory, interpretivist nature of this study needs to be grounded in a theory that allows the researcher to develop an understanding of the whole of the phenomena in terms of its individual parts and the relationships among those parts (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Schwandt, 1994). For the purposes of this study, and contained within the broader conceptual framework mentioned above, an integral conceptual framework was adopted for the findings (Chapter 4) and analysis (Chapter 5) sections. Adopting a conceptual framework that includes a meta-model such as Integral Theory's AQAL model facilitates and allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the executive's perceptions and experiences of the multi-dimensional constructs of Executive Coaching and resilience. The integral AQAL model provides an inclusive and comprehensive tool with which to study a phenomena, in this case Executive Coaching and resilience. A short discussion of Integral Theory is provided below.

The word 'integral' is defined as essential to completeness and relating to other elements to form a unit (Merriam-Webster Online, 2013). Ken Wilber developed Integral Theory by exploring the major human disciplines of knowledge, such as cultural anthropology, philosophy, sociology, physics, healthcare, environmental studies, science and religion, and postmodernism (Quinn, 2010). He brought together and strategically linked the insights from various perspectives, concepts and methodologies in order to form a realistic, workable, fluid, and dynamic "meta-vision or meta-theory" (Saiter, 2010, p. 3). According to Saiter (2010), Integral Theory overlooks nothing while remaining realistic and sensitive to time, place, state, and perspective. As a result, Integral Theory stresses that irreducible aspects of reality are linked, leveraged and aligned to help address the problems and prospects of human existence (Quinn, 2010).

The centrepiece of Wilber's work and of the theory is the four quadrant model, 'All Quadrants, All Levels' (AQAL) (Flaherty & Handelsman, 2004). This model is a dynamic framework with interrelated elements or perceptions of reality (subjective, objective, inter-subjective and inter-objective) and is based on the concept that you cannot understand one of these realities without considering the others (Küpers & Weibler, 2008). This links to the multi-dimensional construct of resilience and the inter-related nature of the themes and sub-themes contained in Chapters 4 and 5, which resulted in the adaptation of an integral model to discuss the findings.

The AQAL model is used to assess what is happening in relation to a phenomena and it aims to include all aspects and dimensions of a person's life (Flaherty & Handelsman, 2004).

Figure 2. The AQAL Model for Integral Sustainable Development (Brown, 2005)

Integral Theory was chosen for this research because of its multi-faceted, flexible and coherent nature, which creates a space for a multitude of perspectives and solutions to complex issues and problems (Flaherty & Handelsman, 2004). By using a variety of the quadrants in the analyses, the approach becomes more 'integral' and provides a place for including the essential aspects of any given situation. Integral Theory allows the researcher to explore the literature review and executive's perceptions and experiences of resilience as it relates to all four quadrants.

In addition to this, Integral Theory helps guide understanding of the relationships between the various facets of reality that individuals come across (Hayward, 2007). Wilber observed that a fundamental distinguishing feature of our modern period is the differentiation of the cultural value spheres: the realms of the individual (I), culture (WE),

nature (IT) and society (ITS). Wilber's representation of these modern differentiations ensures that they are not separate phenomena, but four different features of the same phenomenon (Esbjörn-Hargens, 2009).

Although Integral Theory could be criticised for being too inclusive and comprehensive, the multi-dimensional nature of Executive Coaching and resilience requires an inclusive and comprehensive, yet grounded, lens through which they can be explored and investigated. In fact, it is argued that the comprehensive nature of Integral Theory and the AQAL model allows for an appropriately detailed analysis of complex phenomena (Cacioppe & Edwards, 2005). As such, Integral Theory is a holistic framework with which to examine the many different aspects of Executive Coaching and resilience as an integrated whole.

2.3 Executive Coaching

2.3.1 Introduction to Executive Coaching

In order to discuss Executive Coaching it is important to consider the concept of coaching in general. Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck (2010) identified coaching as a significant method of increasing performance, achieving desired outcomes and results and improving individual effectiveness. Coaching is a field of practice that draws heavily from a range of disciplines that include: psychology, theories of human and organisational development, adult learning theories, sports psychology and performance, leadership theories, business management and motivation theories (Carey, Philippon, & Cummings, 2011; Cox, et al., 2010; Biswas-Diener, 2009; Kilburg, 1996). As coaching draws from both a variety of methodological approaches and a wide variety of disciplines, there are differing perspectives regarding what forms best practice in terms of ethics, focus and approaches (Grant, 2006).

Cox et al. (2010) stated that coaching can be explored across four quadrants, as seen in Figure 3. These four quadrants correlate with Integral Theory and Wilbur's AQAL model which is explored in greater depth in Chapter 4.

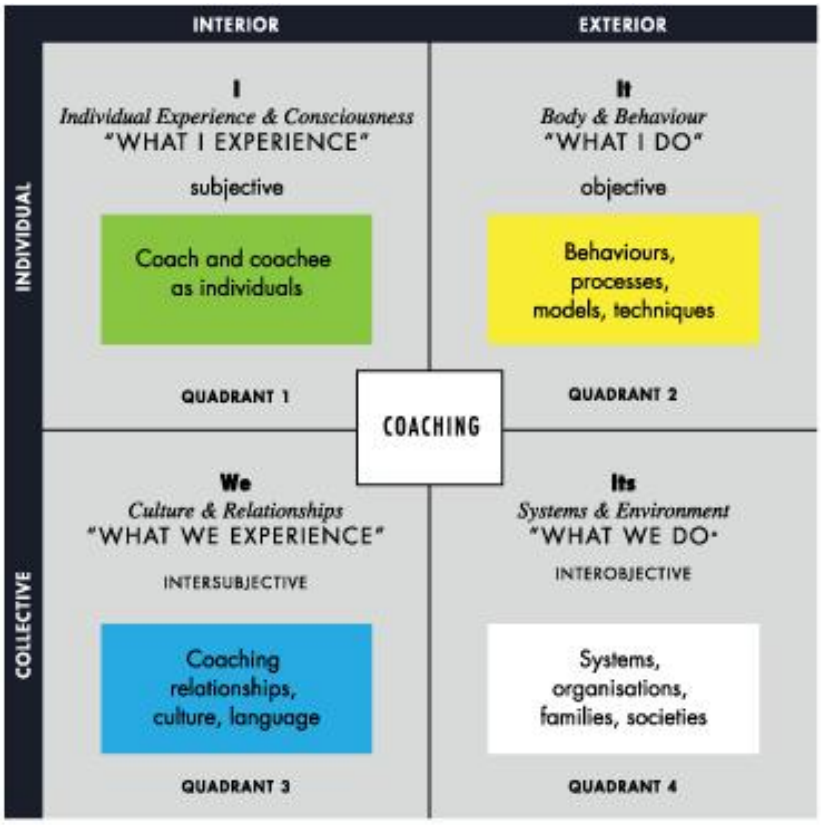

Figure 3. Four quadrants of the AQAL Model (Cox, et al., 2010).

The four quadrants that make up this model are:

- ***I –*** a subjective, first person perspective of the coaching intervention and process as experienced by the coach and/or client. It relates to the individual perceptions and experiences of both parties.

- ***IT –*** relates to the observable aspects of the coaching intervention. It includes the use of particular tools and techniques, models, behaviours, approaches, practices and movement.

- ***WE –*** is the intersubjective quadrant or second person perspective that focuses on the relationship between the coach and client, shared values, communication, use of language and worldviews.

- ***ITS –*** is the quadrant of systems and the environment. It looks at the systems influencing the coaching process and includes societal structures, resources and the sponsoring organisation.

Cox et al. (2010) pointed out that coaching interventions could focus on all or only some of these quadrants. For instance, coaching interventions that focus very heavily on the client's thoughts and feelings tend to come from the 'I' quadrant, while those interventions that look at relationships, interaction and language look more towards the 'WE' quadrant.

The basis of Integral Theory, however, is that all quadrants need to be addressed and that focusing on only one quadrant is limiting. As such, the literature review on Executive Coaching will address all four of the quadrants mentioned above. Due to the integral nature of the coaching process, these quadrants will not be addressed individually, but rather as part of a cohesive whole.

2.3.2 Executive Coaching defined

The coaching industry has developed extensively since 1998 and there are various perspectives regarding the definitions of coaching (Grant, 2003). Most definitions incorporate a focus on personal growth and development; the relationship between the coach and the client; learning; and enhanced performance (Grant, 2001). Sherman and Freas (2004) stated that the purpose of Executive Coaching is to generate growth, learning and behavioural change in the client to the benefit of the organisation.

Cox et al. (2010, p. 1) defined coaching as a "human development process that involves structured, focused interaction and the use of appropriate strategies, tools and techniques to promote desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the coachee and potentially for other stakeholders". For Joo (2005, p. 468), coaching refers to a "one-on-one relationship" with the specific purpose of improving the client's development through "self-awareness and learning".

According to Grant (2006, p. 13), "coaching is a cross-disciplinary methodology for fostering individual and organisational change, and compromises both personal or 'life' coaching and workplace coaching with staff, managers and executives". Lastly, coaching is also described as the facilitation of goal attainment and the enhancement of performance through cognitive, emotional and behavioural changes (Douglas & McCauley, 1999).

For the purposes of this research, the Executive Coaching Hand Book (Ennis, et al., 2005 p. 19) offers a comprehensive definition of Executive Coaching as an “experiential individualised leader development process that builds a leader’s capability to achieve short and long-term organisational goals. It is conducted through one-on-one interactions, driven by data from multiple perspectives, and based on mutual trust and respect”. This definition of Executive Coaching recognises that as part of the process, the organisation, the executive and the executive coach work in partnership to achieve maximum impact. Therefore the competencies required by the coach for this maximum impact must not only include business and organisational knowledge, but also psychological and coaching knowledge. When applied to business coaching, ‘competencies’ refer to the knowledge that the coach and client bring to the coaching session and, consequently, the knowledge that emerges from this process. Stout Rostron (2009) emphasised the importance of the key players in the Executive Coaching relationship and stressed that the dynamic between these parties is crucial throughout the coaching process.

The use of Executive Coaching has become increasingly widespread during the past decade (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). According to Barner and Higgins (2007, p. 148), Executive Coaching is a method of coaching used in a business or organisational environment which both promotes and supports “individual development and organisational effectiveness”. It is often viewed as an invaluable way of enhancing the performance of those in leadership positions and involves the use of various tools and techniques by coaches to assist their clients. Stern (2004, p. 154) regarded Executive Coaching as “an important organisational intervention”.

A central set of principles underscores the process of Executive Coaching, including the creation of a partnership between the coach and the client, increased awareness and insight, accountability, respect, mutual responsibility and dedication, as well as the planning and implementation of the required interventions (Peltier, 2001). Irrespective of theoretical formulation, coaches work together with their clients, agree on mutually specified goals and develop a plan of action to achieve these goals (Kemp, 2008). Thus coaches use a variety of techniques depending on the context, the client and the aim of the coaching.

A review of the relevant literature reveals that Executive Coaching is characterised as a means of enabling peak performance and goal achievement, facilitating learning, enhancing personal development, developing resilience, providing feedback and improving individual and organisational effectiveness (Passmore, 2010; Stern, 2004; Grant, 2001; Hall, Otazo, & Hollenbeck, 1999; Kilburg, 1996; Peterson & Hicks, 1995).

In his work on understanding and defining Executive Coaching, Kilburg (1996, p. 142) described the process as "a helping relationship between a client who has managerial responsibility in an organisation and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and, consequently, to improve the effectiveness of the client's organisation within a formally defined coaching agreement". Grant (2001, p. 8) further defined coaching in the workplace as a "solution focused, result orientated systemic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of work performance and the self-directed learning and personal growth of the coachee".

After reviewing various definitions of Executive Coaching, Koo (2005, p. 468) identified Executive Coaching as the relationship between a coach and the executive aimed at increasing development. He saw coaching as "behavioural change through self-awareness and learning".

2.3.3 Organisational stress and resilience

Organisational stress was defined by Mowbray (2008) as an adverse reaction caused by excessive pressure or demands in the workplace. Resilience, on the other hand, is defined as the ability to adapt to pressure and stress, and even thrive as a result of it (Taylor, 2003).

The underlying assumption of this research is that business executives are often faced with internal or external situations that may exceed their resources and result in a stress response. Mowbray (2008) argued that major organisational problems result from a lack of openness by executives in addressing issues related to work stress. Stress remains a considerable factor affecting performance and organisational goals and has far-reaching

effects such as illness, staff turnover, workplace absenteeism and burnout, which in turn are all factors that have the potential to adversely influence productivity and turnover (Mowbray, 2008). According to Taylor (2003), stress is an automatic response to a negative experience that is accompanied by biochemical, physiological, cognitive and behavioural changes. Stress is experienced as bodily sensations in the 'fight-or-flight' response as the body is quickly aroused and driven by the sympathetic nervous system and the endocrine system (Cannon, 1932).

Research shows that long-term exposure to stress can have negative consequences on an individual's physical health, and can compromise their immune function, increase their blood pressure and heart rate, result in neuro-chemical imbalances and increase an theirs vulnerability to develop illnesses such as heart disease, asthma, diabetes, allergies, auto-immune disorders and obesity (McDowell-Larsen, 2006; Taylor, 2003). Additionally, stress can cause psychological effects, such as a shutdown of higher brain functions, interfere with the ability to think creatively and reinforce habitual behavioural responses (Palmer, 2010). In an organisational context, chronic levels of stress negatively impact performance by lowering employee morale and increasing medical and disability costs (McHenry, 2008). Executives, in particular, are exposed to high levels of responsibility and demand, contributing to persistent stress (McDowell-Larsen, 2006). Thus the potential role of Executive Coaching with specific reference to resilience is to provide a new repertoire of responses to stress for the coaching client.

With regard to the array of the negative effects of stress, research also shows that an individual's unique psychobiological reaction to stress will influence the effect that stress has on the body (McDowell-Larsen, 2006; Taylor, 2003). Moreover, the source of stress is not necessarily external. Hawkins (2002) argued that some stress is internally generated by one's attitude to an external event. For example, if a leader's individual and organisational goals are not aligned with personal and professional values, this can contribute to stress through increased anxiety, decreased self-confidence and decision making, and ineffective working relationships within the organisation (Stout Rostron, 2011).

Building individual resilience has the potential to assist business executives in coping with day-to-day challenges, adversity and stress, thereby improving performance and

increasing both their and their company's productivity, which in turn holds long-lasting benefits for the organisation. Executives who strengthen their resilience are more able to cope with, and recover from, difficult circumstances and consequently also display improved leadership skills (Khan, 2010). Luthans, Van Wyk and Walumbwa (2004, p. 10) emphasised that it is crucial for South African organisational leaders to have both hope and resilience in the modern business world.

Over the past decade, Executive Coaching has become increasingly popular and prevalent in the modern business environment in South African (O'Flaherty & Everson, 2009). According to Grant et al. (2009), workplace stressors and performance requirements place continued demands on executives. Developments in the internal and external environment contribute to continued organisational change, which in turn compound the challenges executives face (Giglio, Diamante, & Urban, 1998). Executives seem to engage in coaching interventions in order to develop skills, reduce and manage stress, build resilience, enhance personal relationships, increase performance, manage transitions and meet the daily challenges they face and thereby improve organisational effectiveness (Jowett, Kanakoglou, & Passmore, 2012; Cox, et al., 2010; Salmon, 2009; Wasylyshyn, 2003; Kilburg, 1996).

Indications are that Executive Coaching is an effective way of increasing executive resilience. As referenced in Chapter 1, in one of the first randomised controlled studies of 41 executives in Australia, researchers found that the Executive Coaching programme used in the study did indeed enhance resilience (Grant, et al., 2009). These researchers therefore recommended that future studies investigate this phenomenon in greater depth. One of the questions that remained unanswered by their study was the extent to which the coaching enhanced and influenced the executives' experiences and perceptions of resilience. Thus, this pioneering research opened multiple avenues for future studies to explore the development of individual resilience, its effect on executives and the resulting impact on organisations.

Grant et al. (2009) argued that although existing literature indicates that Executive Coaching may indeed be effective in the development of executive's leadership styles and in creating meaningful individual change, there are few studies that have adequately explored the effect of Executive Coaching on issues such as resilience. According to

Salmon (2009), an evaluation of an Executive Coaching programme launched in 2005 in an American financial institution indicated that coaching is effective in building an executive's resilience and adaptability to change. A third study worth mentioning assessed the impact of coaching on performance and found that coaching enhanced resilience in university students using the resilience measurement means of a 33-item Resilience Scale for Adults (Franklin & Doran, 2009). This quantitative study supports the view that coaching influences resilience and, although the participants were university students and not executives, it does provide noteworthy and relatable findings.

Overall, coaches endeavour to assist their clients in the attainment of their goals, which often requires increased performance and overcoming challenges, necessitating improved and/or sustained resilience. Resilience is therefore an important component of leadership and a necessary quality in order for executives to function and cope with stress successfully in the highly competitive and demanding business world (Franklin & Doran, 2009).

2.4 Coaching interventions

Coaching can be viewed as a multi-dimensional intervention process or activity (Stevens, 2005). To explore the influence of coaching interventions on an executive's perception and experience of resilience, it is firstly important to investigate the use of the term 'coaching intervention'. Although numerous authors use this term, none provide a holistic definition of the term (Bono, et al., 2009; MacKie, 2007; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007; Stevens, 2005; Kilburg, 1996). As such, the researcher draws from the field of psychology in order to describe the term 'coaching intervention'. As previously stated, intervention can be broadly understood as various action(s) implemented by the coach (or 'therapist' in traditional psychological discourse) to deal with the problems and concerns of their clients. According to Stern (2004), the duration of Executive Coaching interventions are time-bound and usually only comprise of 5-15 coaching sessions. Thus, establishing clarity regarding coaching approaches and desired outcomes is imperative from the outset.

According to Witherspoon and White (1996), coaching interventions can be divided into three main groups: skills coaching (for example improving presentation or

communication skills), performance coaching (reaching specific goals over a period of time) and developmental coaching (facilitating of new perspectives, meaning making, a strategic approach aimed at enhancing self-understanding). In research undertaken in 1995, Weinberger attempted to find common factors present in all psychotherapy approaches. A year later, Kilburg (1996) adapted Weinberger's findings and outlined five common components of Executive Coaching interventions, which are set out in Table 1. Although exploring the details of this table falls beyond the scope of this research study, it does however provide a guide to illustrate some of the components of a coaching intervention.

Table 1. Components of Executive Coaching interventions (adapted from Kilburg, 1996)

1. Developing an intervention agreement	Establishing a focus and goals for the coaching effort. Making a commitment of time. Committing other resources. Identifying and agreeing on methods. Setting confidentiality constraints and agreements. Establishing amounts and methods of payment.
2. Building a coaching relationship	Establishing the working alliance. Identifying and managing transferences. Initiating and preserving containment.
3. Creating and managing expectations of coaching success	
4. Providing an experience of behavioural mastery or cognitive control over the problems or issues	Assessing, confronting or solving problems or issues. Identifying and working with emotions. Identifying and managing resistance, defences, and operating problems. Identifying and managing conflicts in the organisation, in the working relationship, and in the unconscious life of the client. Using techniques and methods flexibly and

	effectively. Make the 'unsaid' said and the unknown known, get the issues on the table. Use feedback, disclosure and other communication techniques to maximise effect. Emphasise the reality principle – what will work most effectively with the best long-term outcomes. Be prepared to confront acting out, moral issues, or ethical lapses in a tactful way. Try to use and engage in yourself and your client the highest level defensive operations – sublimation, learning and problem solving, communication, curiosity, humour, creativity.
5. Evaluation and attribution of coaching success or failure	

Despite the ubiquity of coaching interventions, it is important to note that coaches use a wide variety of different approaches, methods, activities, techniques and goals when coaching executives (Bono, et al., 2009; Kilburg, 2001). There are a broad range of approaches which coaches draw on and interventions may include cognitive, psychoanalytic, behavioural, somatic, systematic and meaning-related techniques (Bono, et al., 2009). A selection or combination of these techniques are usually chosen by the coach to assist a client in achieving agreed-upon goals in order to improve business effectiveness (Grant, et al., 2009; Jones, et al., 2006). Bono et al. (2009) added that coaches vary greatly in terms of the processes and tools they use and that organisations find this lack of standardisation challenging, specifically in terms of developing criteria for coach selection.

Bono et al. (2009) continued by suggesting that coaches need to be specific regarding the approaches they use, while organisations need to be clear regarding their objectives in order to match the coach to the client and the desired outcomes of the coaching intervention.

2.5 Coaching interventions: models, methods and techniques

Coaching interventions are informed by a wide variety of methodological approaches and perspectives regarding best practice (Bono, et al., 2009; Grant, 2006). Evidence-based research regarding which methodologies work best are limited at present; as such, no one methodology can claim to be superior (Passmore & Gibbes, 2007). Grant (2006, p. 18) emphasised that "coaching should be collaborative and client-centred" and that models and approaches should be aligned and selected in accordance with the needs and requirements of the client.

The purpose of this research study was to explore coaching interventions in terms of their influence on resilience, and as such it did not fall under the scope of this research study to provide a detailed investigation of coaching approaches, techniques or models. However, in order to provide a broad perspective of Executive Coaching, a brief description of some aspects of the coaching intervention or process follows below. This description merely serves to illustrate the variety and scope of the approaches, models and techniques that coaches can draw on and does not claim to be exhaustive or complete.

2.5.1 Coaching models

Over the years, studies have aimed to review coaching models for leadership development. One such study included research done by Carey et al. (2011), which showed that there are various commonalities within the different coaching models. An analysis of the data in the aforementioned study, which looked at ten research papers, identified five key elements that were present in each model.

These elements included relationship building; problem defining and goal setting; problem solving; the transformation process; and outcomes.

a) Relationship building

Of the ten papers in the study done by Carey et al. (2011), 80% stressed the importance of an open and trusting environment for effective coaching where the client feels

supported and not judged. Skills such as objectivity and empathy were highlighted as crucial for a coach to have in order for the client to trust the coach enough to be open and willing to change (Hoojiberg & Lane, 2009; Kowalski & Casper, 2007; Passmore, 2007; Joo, 2005). Specifically in terms of Executive Coaching, Passmore (2007) stressed that it is necessary to have a long-term coaching relationship in order to create any sustainable behaviour change.

b) Problem defining and goal setting

An important aspect of coaching relates to measuring client performance by setting goals and recognising problem areas that the client needs to address (Carey et al., 2011). The majority of coaching models incorporate assessment tools that are particularly in-depth measures in order to provide both the coach and the client with adequate feedback. Some of the areas that require feedback include the client's strengths, weaknesses, motivations and expectations. There is also an emphasis on how the client deals with conflict (Carey et al., 2011). In addition to formalised measuring tools, exploratory methods are also beneficial. These use reflection, elaboration, and classifying to target areas that the client needs to work on (Truijen & Woerkom, 2008; Passmore, 2007). The aim of the coaching models is to increase self-awareness and encourage self-reflection. In this way, the client has an understanding of how they can adapt and modify their behaviours to achieve some sort of change. Problem defining and setting goals also help the client to recognise the importance of this change (Carey et al., 2011).

c) Problem solving

With the exception of three papers, all models acknowledged the role of creating an action plan in order for the client to pro-actively address the goals they had set (Carey et al., 2011). Strategies such as role play and dialogue were recommended as important tools to help the client develop the skills they needed, although ways to determine if the strategies had been successful varied across the models (Kowalski & Casper, 2007; McNally & Lukens, 2006). Some authors recommended self-monitoring to gauge success (Sherman & Freas, 2004), whilst others preferred 'spot-check interviews' conducted by the coach in order to determine performance (Saporito, 1996).

d) Transformation process

Behaviour change is arguably the most important aspect of any coaching process, with the main aim being for a coach to assist in a client's mind shift (Carey et al., 2011). There is emphasis on helping the client to change their perceptions and attitudes and adopt new patterns of thinking that will be beneficial to them in achieving their goals (Kowalski & Casper, 2007; McNally & Lukens, 2006; Joo, 2005). A central theme in all coaching models was for clients to see their future with optimism and increased energy in order for successful personal transformation to be achieved. There was also an underlying expectation that clients take ownership of their lives and have a sense of responsibility for their behaviour (Sherman & Freas, 2004).

e) Outcomes

All coaching models suggested that behaviour change can only become a reality with structured action plans and goal setting (Carey et al., 2011). Hoojiberg and Lane (2009) added that noticing and acknowledging achievement keeps clients motivated and thus serves as an important mechanism to achieve outcomes. In addition, by showing the client how behaviour change can have far-reaching and positive implications in their personal and professional life, there is more likelihood of this behaviour being adopted. With the exception of two models, all of the coaching models suggest that the outcomes from Executive Coaching will include improved personal performance and added value for the organisation (Carey et al., 2011).

Having considered various commonalities between coaching methods, it is now important to discuss four established coaching models. Barner and Higgins (2007) concluded that coaches (whether consciously or not) tend to follow one of four established coaching models. These four models include the Clinical Model, the Behavioural Model, the Systems Model and the Social Constructionist Model, however this is a very wide landscape within which to practise, so each model is further sub-divided into its own techniques and preferred methods of interventions (Barner & Higgins, 2007).

a) The **Clinical Mode**l is focused on assisting the client in altering their self-perceptions and personality. This model emphasises that change is an internal process that extends to the wider environment (workplace and personal spheres) and the focus of coaching is the underlying structure of the client's personality.

b) The goal of the **Behavioural Model** is to help the client modify certain problematic areas of behaviour. Practitioners of this model maintain that change comes from changing behaviour. The coach acts as an advisor and trainer and the focus of coaching is on modifying recurring ineffective behaviour.

c) According to the **Systems Model,** change comes from transforming interactions between the client and key 'others' (family, organisational and social systems). The purpose of this model is to help the client align their personal goals with those of their organisation. The role of the coach is that of a systems modeler and the focus is on changing ineffective patterns of interaction.

d) The **Social Constructionist Model** suggests that our individual and social identities are constructed as a result of the "social interactions and the symbolic frameworks within which we interact" (Barner & Higgins, 2007, p. 153). Social Constructionists believe that by assisting the client in changing their narrative, they (the client) can create a new social reality. The coach acts as an analyst of the client's narrative and places the emphasis of the coaching on the client's 'story'. In doing this, they assist the client in understanding how they shape their reality through the way they frame their experiences (Barner & Higgins, 2007).

2.5.2 Coaching methods and techniques

Coaches also use an almost unlimited range of techniques and Seligman (2007) stated that some of these include visualisation, goal-setting, correcting cognitive distortions, affirmations, assertiveness training and meditation. According to Cavanagh and Grant (2007), coaches should be well versed in a variety of techniques that promote change, including listening skills, challenging, probing and the ability to administer assessments.

Kilburg (1996) provided an abbreviated list of coaching methods and techniques (outlined in Table 2). Kilburg indicated that coaches may use any of a variety of these techniques but that selecting from such a wide array of potential techniques remains challenging. He emphasised the need for coaches to have agreement with their clients regarding the use of specific methods and techniques and the need for coaches to possess adequate training and knowledge of techniques before using them.

Table 2. Abbreviated list of coaching methods and techniques (Kilburg, 1996)

1. Assessment and feedback (Intelligence, leadership style and preferences, conflict management and crisis management approaches, knowledge, ability, skills)
2. Education
3. Training
4. Skill development: description, modeling, demonstration, rehearsal, practice, evaluation of life experiences
5. Simulations
6. Role playing
7. Organisational assessment and diagnosis
8. Brainstorming (strategies, methods, approaches, diagnosis, problem solving, intervention plans, evaluation approaches, hypothesis testing, worst case analysis)
9. Conflict and crisis management
10. Communications (active-emphatic listening/silence, free association, open and closed questions, memory, translation, interpretation, analysis, synthesis and evaluation questions)
11. Clarifications: restatements of client's communications, explanations of coaching communications
12. Confrontations (verbal interventions to direct the client's attention to issues, behaviours, problems, thoughts, or emotions that are evident to both the client and the coach)
13. Interpretations (verbal interventions to direct the client's attention in a meaningful way to issues, behaviours, problems, thoughts, or emotions that are evident to the coach but are out of the client's conscious awareness)
14. Reconstructions (attempts based on what is present in and missing from the client's communications, memories, etc., to fill in an apparently important gap in

recollection of some life event along with its actual emotional and reality repercussions)

15. Empathy and encouragement
16. Tact
17. Helping to set limits
18. Helping to maintain boundaries
19. Depreciating and devaluing maladaptive behaviours, defences, attitudes, values, emotions, fantasies
20. Punishment and extinction of maladaptive behaviours
21. Establishing consequences for behaviours
22. Behavioural analysis: gathering and assessing information
23. Group process interventions
24. Working relationship interventions (usually with key subordinates or superiors)
25. Project- and/or process-focused work on structure, process, and content issues in the organisation or on input, throughput, or output problem or issues
26. Journaling, reading assignments, conferences, and workshops
27. Other interventions, using organisation development or training technologies

2.6 The effectiveness of coaching interventions

The researcher regarded the lack of evidence on the types of interventions that result in effective outcomes for clients as one of the biggest challenges facing coaches. This view is supported by Passmore and Gibbes (2007), who, in their comparison of counselling psychology and coaching psychology, pointed out that there may indeed be differences in effectiveness between various interventions. In addition, determining the effectiveness of Executive Coaching interventions is fraught with difficulties (MacKie, 2007; Kilburg, 1996). Additionally, Kilburg (2001) suggested that due to the financial cost of coaching, organisations will increasingly demand accountability from coaches.

Horner (2002), as cited in MacKie (2007), found that coaching interventions focused mostly on changes in executives' impact and influencing skills, however interventions may also involve changing executive attitudes and habits. Kilburg (2004) added that effectively applied psychodynamic approaches and coaching interventions might improve, amongst others, executive self-awareness, emotional management, executive

performance, behavioural flexibility and creativity and human resiliency. A study conducted by Wasylyshyn (2003) found that coaching interventions paid attention to personal behaviour change, enhancing leadership effectiveness and improving interpersonal relationships, followed by personal development and better work-life integration. Interventions can also be aimed at improving skills, job performance, well-being, self-efficacy, insight and quality of life (MacKie, 2007).

Indications of successful coaching interventions may include increased leadership effectiveness, long-term behavioural change, self-awareness and understanding (Wasylyshyn, 2003). Kilburg (2001) emphasised that even simple interventions have the potential to have important and powerful influences on the lives of coaching clients.

More recent research conducted by Simpson (2010) indicated that coaching interventions contribute to individual development in six key areas, namely: increased confidence; improved personal skills; enhanced self-awareness; more considered work-life balance; better career planning and better decision making. Passmore (2010) indicated that coaching contributes to leadership development in various areas such as the development and enhancement of skills; increasing self-awareness and thereby bringing about new insights and learning; enhancing motivation; the development of improved confidence and self-regard; and developing resilience and reducing stress thereby assisting with well-being.

In their study of Executive Coaching interventions, Feldman and Lankau (2005) applied Kirkpatrick's (1996) framework for evaluating training interventions to summarise their findings regarding the effectiveness of coaching interventions. They found that the majority of clients had positive affective reactions to the coaching experience, enhanced learning through the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, and displayed behavioural changes in their on-the-job performance.

Participants in the Gegner study also reported that coaching had a positive effect on their personal lives and 24% indicated that it contributed to an increased perception of self-confidence and openness to change (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). What is significant to note is that no improvement in organisational effectiveness was reported in either of these studies.

Table 3 offers a summarised list of existing literature on themes relating to the effectiveness of coaching interventions.

Table 3. Summary of themes related to coaching intervention effectiveness or influence

Coaching intervention effectiveness	**Relevant literature**
Increased leadership effectiveness and performance	Jowett, et al. (2012); Passmore (2010); Samuel & Diamante (2005); Kilburg (2004); Wasylyshyn (2003)
Self-awareness and understanding	Simpson (2010); Kilburg (2004); Wasylyshyn (2003)
Behavioural change including improved flexibility and creativity	Feldman & Lankau (2005); Kilburg (2004); Wasylyshyn (2003)
Increased confidence	Passmore (2010); Wasylyshyn (2003)
Skill development and enhancement	Jowett, et al. (2012); Simpson (2010); Feldman & Lankau (2005)
Improved work-life balance	Simpson (2010)
Improved career planning and decision-making	Simpson (2010)
Increased learning	Jowett, et al. (2012); Passmore (2010)
Enhanced motivation	Passmore (2010)
Improved resilience, reduced stress and increased well-being	Passmore (2010); Grant, et al. (2009); Samuel & Diamante (2005); Kilburg (2004)
Emotional containment and management	Kilburg (2004)
Improved relationships	Samuel & Diamante (2005); Kilburg (2004)

However, despite the findings shown above, coaching interventions are not always successful and Kilburg (2000) identified various factors which can impact coaching interventions negatively. These included factors related to the client such as a lack of motivation, excessive or unrealistic expectations, interpersonal problems or psychopathology and not attending to 'homework'. Factors related to the coaches included a lack of empathy for the client, inability to assess the level of the client's problems, lack of expertise regarding the client's problems, poor coaching methods, and use of inappropriate assessments (Kilburg, 2000; Kilburg, 1996).

In addition, Franklin and Doran (2009) cited a lack of empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of coaching and pointed out that it should not be assumed that all types of coaching are beneficial. Outcome research needs to be conducted to test whether coaching interventions work and variables such as resilience, performance, well-being, quality of relationships and goal attainment should be examined (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007).

Killburg (2001) proposed a model of coaching effectiveness containing eight elements. He suggested that in order for a coaching process to be successful, the client needs to be committed to self-development and the coach needs to be committed to the client's development plan. In addition, the features of the client's problems or issues (frequency, intensity, duration, etc.) need to be outlined and the structure of the coaching agreement (clarity of agreement, goal specificity) has to be agreed upon. There also has to be a deep sense of empathy and trust between the coach and client, with flexibility for both parties to negotiate the choice of coaching interventions. Additionally, the client's organisational setting needs to be in support of the coaching process. Finally, both the coach and client need to adhere to protocols in terms of attendance, preparation and 'homework'. Peltier (2001) believed that coaching works best when executives perceive it as a benefit provided to high achievers as opposed to a remedial activity. He advocated framing coaching as an opportunity for executives and provided four examples of where coaching can assist executives (2001):

- During times of organisational change.
- During individual transitions that involve greater accountability and responsibility.
- When specific skill development is required such as presentation skills, delegation or strategic planning.
- When there is a need to resolve specific problems such as improving stress management or enhancing self-confidence.

2.7 Contextualising resilience

Despite recent developments in the field of resilience research it remains a difficult construct to understand (Kumpfer, 1999). Resilience is commonly defined as the ability to persist and adapt well in demanding circumstances (Leiter & Maslach, 2005) and is

also referred to as ‘adaptive capability’ (Leiter & Maslach, 2005). According to Masten (1994, p. 3) “Resilience in an individual refers to successful adaptation despite risk and adversity”.

Polk described resilience as “the ability to transform disaster into a growth experience and move forward” (1997, p. 5). Campbell (2009, p. 2) added that resilience is “the ability to overcome setbacks and absorb any learning offered by those setbacks, quickly, and at minimum cost”. He also stated that resilience includes having the skills to cope with high levels of disruptive change in one’s personal, social and professional environment. Campbell (2009, p. 2) suggested that resilience includes having the self-awareness to change one’s ways of working and be able to “incorporate learning when old ways are no longer possible, without acting in dysfunctional or harmful ways”.

In terms of the rise of interest in the field of resilience study, the majority of the earliest research into resilience originated in relation to studies of childhood and adolescent development. A field of study that has shown interest in the concept of resilience is that of positive psychology (Luthar, et al., 2000). Positive psychology emerged from a need to correct the perceived imbalance in the focus of psychology on human pathology and negative states to human potential, development and self-actualisation, and the concept of resilience is viewed as fundamental within the movement (Atkinson, Martin, & Rankin, 2009; Resnick, Warmoth, & Serlin, 2001). Proponents of positive psychology called for a more comprehensive outlook of human experience that encompassed an appreciation and understanding of positive aspects of human behaviour, such as ability, strength and positive adaptation (Campbell-Sills, Cohan, & Stein, 2006). They also advocated the use of teaching interventions aimed at fostering resilience, which included the development of positive mental attitudes (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Based on psychological literature centred on stress and coping, laying the foundations for resilience in an individual results in them being able to cope better and improve in the face of adversity (Tusaie, 2004, p. 4). According to Richardson (2002), resilience has emerged as a significant area of enquiry related to human adversity and the personal strengths that allow certain individuals to adapt successfully to difficulty, trauma, stress and loss. Recent years have also seen a developing interest in the field of wellness and

health promotion, which has resulted in increased interest surrounding the link between resilience, health and well-being (Connor & Davidson, 2003).

Developmental researchers and theorists have for many years focused on an array of 'protective factors' such as supportive relationships, mental toughness, adaptability and self-esteem, which seem to advance healthy adjustment among children exposed to adversity such as poverty and parental alcoholism (Bonanno, 2007; Connor & Davidson, 2003). The search to determine the protective factors that separated children who displayed greater adaptation profiles from those who were comparatively less well adapted, indicates that various factors are linked to greater adaptation.

Some of these factors include (1) internal traits of the children, (2) parental, family and adult support, and (3) environmental considerations (Campbell-Sills, et al., 2006). This has resulted in resilience being viewed as a multi-dimensional construct comprised of various factors that enable individuals to adjust and recover from trauma and stress (Bonanno, 2004). Thus, the development of resilience can be traced from an initial focus on 'protective factors' to a more inclusive understanding and investigation of the types and ways in which adaptive capabilities are influenced (Bonanno, 2005).

Resilience research has faced some major challenges over the years that include ambiguities in terminology and definitions, instability in the phenomenon of resilience, a diverse application of the concept of resilience, confusion regarding how the concept is best researched and the increasing need for a high quality measure of the construct (Atkinson, et al., 2009; Campbell-Sills, et al., 2006; Luthar, et al., 2000). On-going debates exist regarding whether resilience should be considered a personality trait, implying that it remains relatively measurable and stable over time, or whether it should be considered as a dynamic process which can fluctuate depending on context (Jacelon, 1997).

Support for resilience as a dynamic process came from Rutter (2007), who believed that resilience develops through adversity and varies depending on a given situation. Rutter (2007) argued that resilience is best understood as a process and not as a set of rigid factors and emphasised its dynamic nature. He stated that this is a result of the interaction between external factors such as the environment, and individual factors such

as genetics and coping styles (Rutter, 2007). This perspective was supported by Gillepsie et al. (2007a) and Masten and Obradovic (2006). These authors, however, added that resilience would be better described as a multi-faceted group of concepts instead of a single trait or process. Although indivduals react to stress and resiliency in different ways, research shows that resilience is a skill that can be learned, sustained and embodied (McHenry, 2008).

In addition to this, many theorists argue over the feasibility of measuring resilience. Luther et al. (2000) stated that future resilience research needs to take these problematic issues into account and suggested that definitions and terminology in this field be kept clear and concise. Additionally, these authors warned against ignoring the multi-dimensional nature of resilience and emphasised the need to present studies within a clearly delineated theoretical framework. On a more positive note, Seligman (2011) stated that thirty years of scientific research on the construct of resilience has brought us closer to answering questions about whether resilience can be measured and taught.

As previously outlined, resilience is the capacity to recover and even thrive, despite a traumatic experience or situation where an individual is faced with adversity and stress (Atkinson, et al., 2009). According to these authors, developing resilience is central to the “paradigms of strengths-based practice and recovery models within the mental health field” (Atkinson, et al., 2009, p. 137). Positive psychology views the concept of resilience as essential due to its impact on individual mental and physical health (Seligman, 2011).

Despite the prominence of the role of resilience in psychological study, knowledge surrounding its theoretical models and practical applications is still unfolding. Atkinson et al. (2009, p. 137) expanded on the complexity inherent in the “concept of resilience” and signposted several characteristics of this phenomena including hardiness, invulnerability, stress-buffering and stress related growth, mental toughness, ability to ‘bounce back’, and stress resistance (Atkinson, et al., 2009; Feder, Nestler, & Charney, 2009). Currently, various disciplines such as psychology, psychiatry, coaching, trauma studies, management studies, education and social work, influence the discourse of resilience.

2.8 Basic resilience framework

There are a range of variables related to the construct of resilience. Kumpfer (1999) developed a transactional model that attempted to address the variety of factors that

impact resilience. This model included a representation of the dynamic process between the individual and the environment, risk and protective factors, individual characteristics and potential outcomes after a negative event.

The aim of this model was to organise multiple resilience constructs into a framework in an attempt to aid resilience research. Figure 4 below depicts this model and sections 2.8.1 to 2.8.5 provide an overview of the concepts and models of resilience that are drawn on in this work linked to this framework.

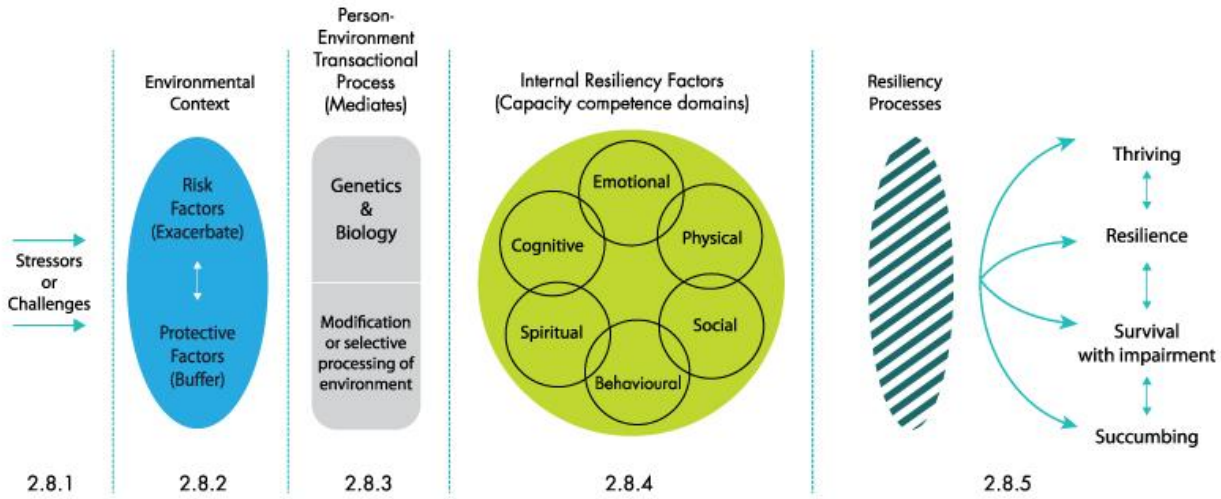

Figure 4. Overview of basic resilience framework (adapted from Kumpfer, 1999)

2.8.1 Stressors or challenges

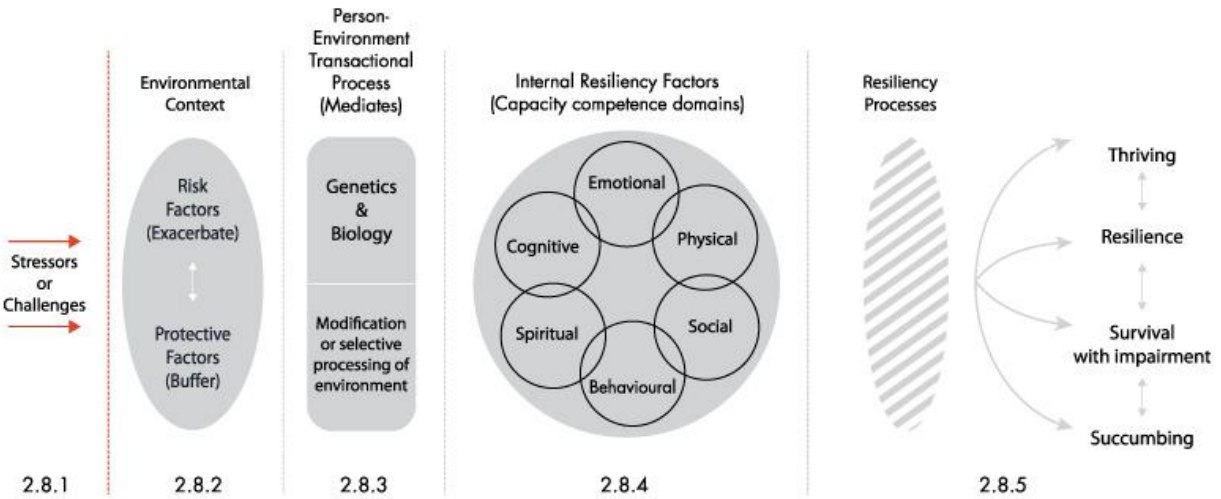

Figure 4.1. Stressors of challenges

The first stage of the basic resilience framework looks at the influence of stressors or challenges. Resilience tends to be a skill that comes about as a result of some sort of challenge or stress in an individual's life, although measuring these stressors and challenges presents its own challenge (Luthar & Cushing, 1996). Challenges can help a person to face new stressors and to grow from a challenging experience. With specific reference to executives, these individuals are constantly balancing their own successes and failures, and the sign of a good leader is to be able to cope successfully with negative life events and learn from these (Kumpfer, 1990).

2.8.2 Environmental context and the role of protective factors in resilience

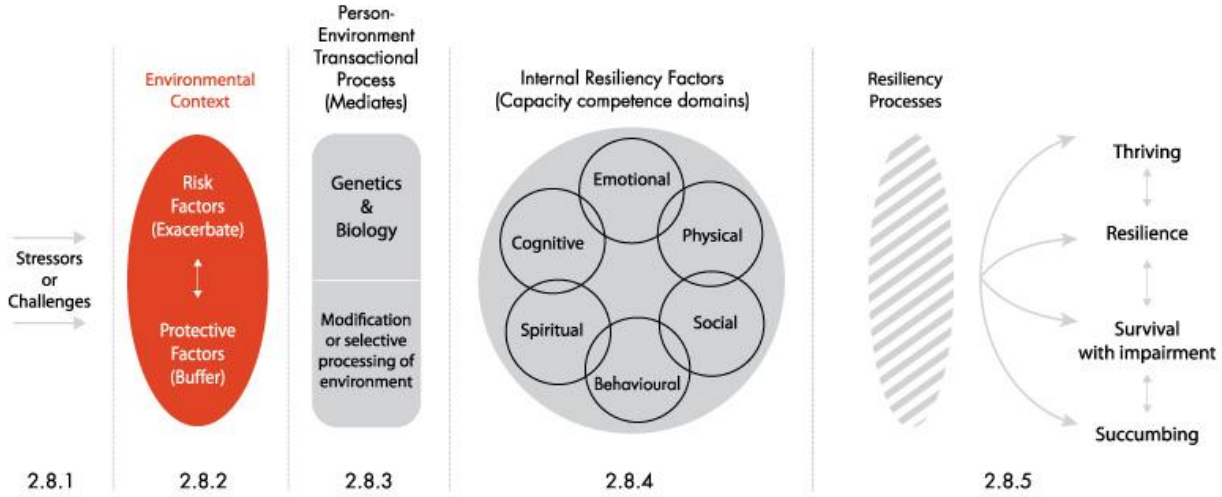

Figure 4.2. Environmental context

The second stage of the basic resilience framework considers a client's environmental context. Masten (2001) stated that the majority of models of resilience that have support in literature incorporate two factors: (1) risk factors and (2) protective factors.

Risk factors are defined as factors that are able to increase the probability of a future negative outcome affecting an individual (Keller, 2003). Examples of risk factors are dysfunctional family relationships, chronic discrimination, poverty, and negative life events (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Keller, 2003). A protective factor, on the other hand, is a variable that decreases such likelihoods by acting as a 'buffer' against the effects of risk factors (Durlak, 1998). While researching childhood development, researchers identified some of the protective factors, characteristics and qualities that assist children who face high-risk environments. These factors include tolerance, good

communication skills, healthy self-esteem, the ability to adapt, social responsibility, self-mastery, planning skills, easy going temperament and being female (Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Luthans, et al., 2006; Jacelon, 1997).

In addition, external factors such as close personal relationships, family support and a caring environment also seem to play a role (Werner & Smith, 1989; Rutter, 1985). Further studies located critical thinking skills, good problem solving skills, self-discipline, an internal locus of control and effectiveness in work, play and love as additional protective factors. These findings resulted in Garmenzy's (1991) triad of factors that impact resilience. These are external support, a caring and supportive family, and individual personality disposition (Garmenzy, 1991).

Recent positive psychology studies into adult resilience indicated that the qualities of optimism, forgiveness, gratitude, humility, faith, self-determination and creativity are considered resilient qualities (Richardson, 2002). Luthar et al. (2000) also highlighted the importance of social connections and support as protective factors.

2.8.3 Person-environment transactional process

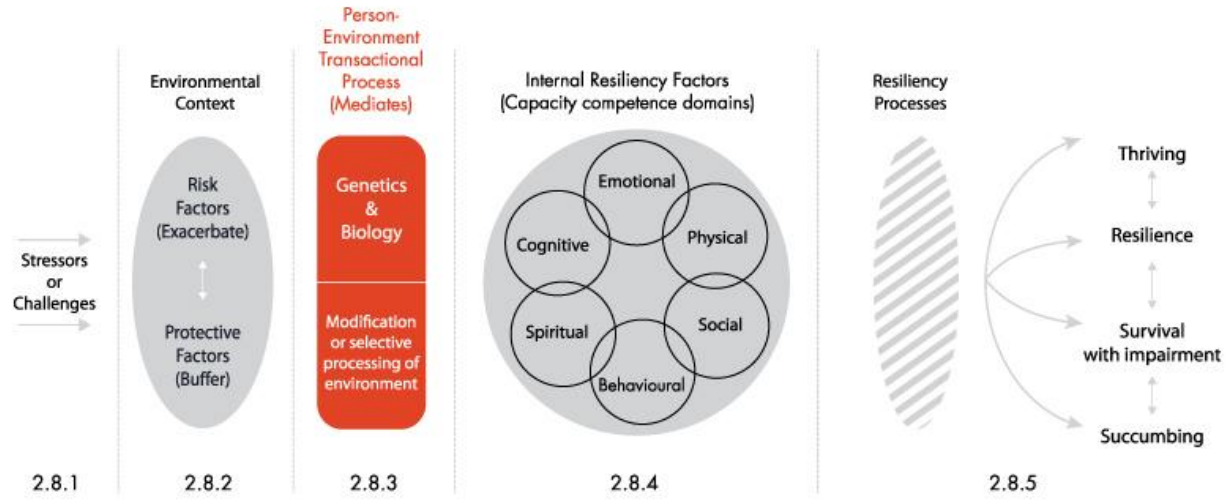

Figure 4.3. Person-environmental transactional process

The third stage in the basic resilience model looks at the interaction between people and their environment. Developments in resilience research included an interest in the role of psychobiological factors on resilience, including genetics, neurobiology and endocrine

systems (Atkinson, et al., 2009), with genetics playing a prominent role in the body's reaction to stress. An individual's personal history and past exposure to environmental stress interact with their genetic make-up and determines the level of adaptability of neurochemical stress response systems to new experiences of stress (Feder, et al., 2009; Pert, 1997). Feder et al. (2009) stated that neurobiology and the impact of neural circuitry on resilience warrants further investigation. It is already known that several limbic regions in the forebrain regulate emotional states, including emotional behaviour linked to resilience, and, in a study using functional magnetic resonance imaging, researchers found evidence to support the hypothesis that trait resilience may be affected by emotional flexibility (Waugh, Wagner, Fredrickson, Noll, & Taylor, 2008).

Polk (1997) referred to a dispositional pattern of physical and psychosocial attributes that are ego-related which characterise a resilient person. Psychosocial attributes are intrapersonal characteristics which are physical factors such as intelligence, personality and genetics. Studies have shown (Brown & Rhodes, 1991; Werner & Smith, 1982) that resilient individuals are normally intelligent.

2.8.4 Internal resilience factors and competencies

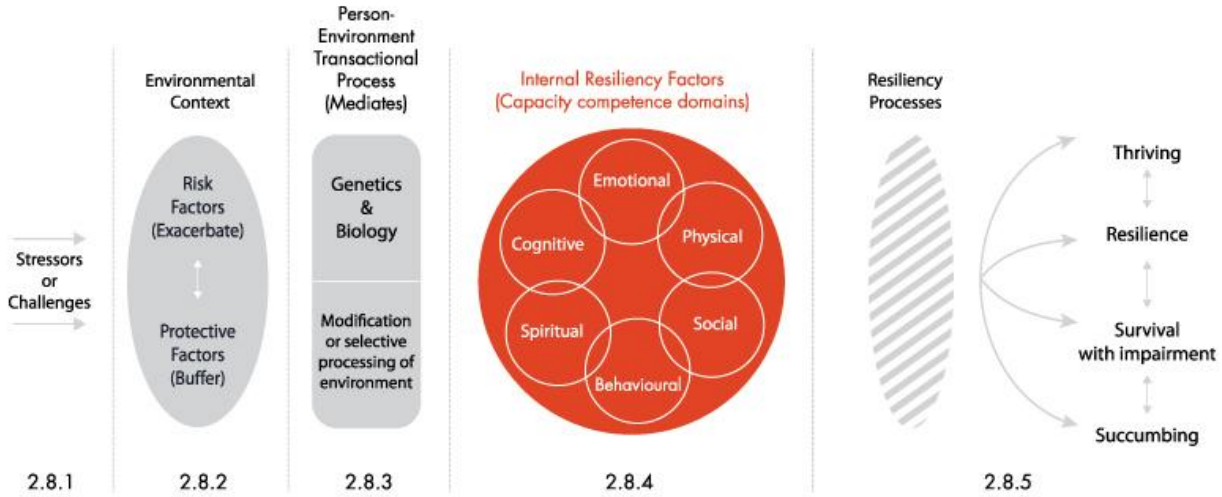

Figure 4.4. Internal resiliency factors

The fourth consideration when looking at the basic resilience framework are internal resilience factors. The premise of this research is that individuals can develop and

strengthen their personal resilience through incorporating various strategies. Tugade and Fredrickson (2004) suggested that everyone has resilience potential, but your individual level of resilience level is determined by your experiences, personality, and your personal combination of risk and protective factors.

It is therefore important for executives to fine-tune skills to help them be more resilient and better able to cope in the workplace. Increasingly, research shows that 'hardiness' (the capability to adapt and survive the rigors of life) acts as a buffer to offset stressful events (Judkins, et al., 2005; Collins, 1996). Fredrickson suggested that this hardiness can be harnessed through the promotion of positive emotions. She added that "positive emotions broaden a person's initial thought-action inventory, increasing thoughts and possible actions that come to mind when faced with an adverse situation" (2004, p. 56).

Campbell-Sills et al. (2006, p. 597) stated that "resilience co-varies with certain personality traits and coping styles, and moderates the impact of adversity on emotional health". This is valuable information for coaches as it suggests that coaching interventions that are designed to improve executives' coping styles could have a beneficial impact on resilience. A search of the relevant literature indicates the importance of developing 'pathways' towards individual resilience (Campbell, 2009; Feder, et al., 2009). Although some of the points relate to methods of coping, it has been documented that coping styles contribute to resilience and as such, play a valuable role in the development of resilience (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). In addition, Jackson, Firtko and Edenborough (2007) identified various self-development strategies that can help build personal resilience to workplace adversity.

A brief summary of the internal resiliency factors in Figure 4.4 will now be discussed. These include: cognitive competencies, emotional competencies, behavioural competencies, social competencies, physical well-being and spirituality.

a) Cognitive competencies

Self-reflection is a way to develop insight and understanding into one's lived experiences. It is also a means by which to learn from previous experiences and develop knowledge for future situations (Giordano, 1997). Cognitive reframing and acceptance as

a coping strategy entails the reinterpretation of the meaning of adversity and negative events and allows for self-acceptance. Bonanno (2004) highlighted the importance of flexible adaptation. He viewed the ability to adjust one's cognitive and emotional processes under varying stressful conditions as a valuable tool for improving resilience. Those individuals who view adversity as temporal and changeable seem less likely to give up in the face of adversity (Seligman, 2011). This is linked to the ways in which executives think about adversity and is based on the premise that executives can build high resilience by taking charge of their thoughts (Margolis & Stoltz, 2010).

Research indicates that most individuals have familiar and routine patterns of thinking. These patterns often become entrenched and develop into deeply ingrained habits which are not always beneficial when facing challenges and adversity. Independent studies in psychology suggest that an individual's resilience depends on their ability to step back from their intrinsic beliefs about adversity, and change how they respond to it (Margolis & Stoltz, 2010).

Cognitive competency includes an individual's ability to make sense of adversity, trauma or stress. It addresses the aspects that are involved when an individual is faced with a stressful situation and focuses on our appraisal and interpretation skills as well as our ability to solve problems. This competency includes the ability to make a realistic assessment of the actions one can take to overcome the challenge and make an informed decision on whether the consequences of this action are appropriate. This pattern also suggests that resilient individuals have an awareness of what can and cannot be achieved (Beardslee, 1989; Werner, 1982), at the same time as having a sense of curiosity and "novelty seeking" (Kemp, 2000, p. 21), with the desire to explore options.

b) Emotional competencies

Being able to remain optimistic during stressful or traumatic periods can be difficult, but maintaining a hopeful outlook is an important part of resiliency. Positive thinking means understanding that setbacks are temporary and that you have (or can get) the skills and abilities to overcome the challenges you face. Fredrickson (2004) pointed out that people with high levels of resilience are able to draw on positive emotions when faced with

hardship. These individuals can then start to focus on the positive aspects and consequences of a particular situation. Bonanno (2004) suggested that this positive emotion can result in reduced adversity-related stress. Fredrikson (2001) believed that 'thought action repertoires' are positively influenced by positive emotions, and as such, enable an increase in flexible thinking. In turn, flexible thinking multiplies options for action. In his article "*Building Resilience*", Seligman (2011) agreed with Fredrikson's (2001) contributions and added that optimism is the key to developing resilience.

Emotional intelligence is the ability to be aware of and understand one's emotional needs, and the ability to gain insight into the emotional needs of others (Daly, et al., 2004). In doing this, one is able to understand one's own emotional reactions better and develop ways to cope more easily with stress and adversity (Giordano, 1997). Relating this back to a work environment, self-reflection and journaling are two strategies that can be incorporated into an executive's life in order improve their emotional intelligence and thereby strengthen their personal resilience (McGee, 2006).

c) Physical well-being

Campbell (2009) postulated that leaders need to be able to maintain their energy levels. This includes pacing themselves and looking after their general health and well-being, in addition to engaging in activities that feed their energy. Research obtained from various studies shows how somatic techniques and practices reduce psychological and physical symptoms of stress and improve coping and resiliency (Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt & Walach, 2004; Baer, 2003; Bishop, 2002; Chapman & Pepler, 1998). For example, the *Kabat-Zinn Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Programme* aims to develop awareness of moment-to-moment experiences of perceptible mental and physical processes, such as physical sensations, perceptions, affective states, thoughts and imagery (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). A meta-analysis by Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, and Walach (2004) showed that this bodily-orientated approach provides benefits for psychological dimensions, such as the client's quality of life, reducing depression and anxiety, as well as enhancing their coping styles and levels of resiliency. Furthermore, somatic practices positively affect physical well-being, including alleviating medical symptoms related to sensory pain and physical impairment.

d) Behavioural competencies

Active coping includes strategies such as problem-solving, planning and physical exercise. A form of pragmatic coping is self-enhancement (self-serving bias) such as overestimating one's positive qualities or abilities (Bonanno, 2005).

e) Social competencies

According to Tusaie and Fredrickson (2004), social support and relationships are a crucial consideration when it comes to fostering resilience. Building and maintaining positive work relationships allows executives access to a network of people that they can rely on for support. Professional networks should ideally be made up of nurturing and interactive relationships. An example of this type of relationship is a mentoring partnership which is a mutually beneficial and supportive relationship (Jackson, Firtko & Edenborough, 2007). Studies have shown that mentoring partnerships help individuals to build healthy bonds with other people in their lives and promote resiliency (Benard & Marshall, 2001). Having caring, supportive people around you acts as a protective factor during times of crisis and resilience is positively influenced by openness to social support. Social support is therefore recognised as a buffer against stress and is a means by which to develop one's levels of resilience (Steinhardt & Dolbier, 2008).

Intrinsic aspects linked to roles and relationships include confiding in another person to make sense of an experience or when seeking comfort (Beardslee & Podorefsky, 1988). It also relates to one's willingness to confide in others and identity potential role models (Werner, 1982). Extrinsic aspects, such as social interests and hobbies, also make up the relational pattern. Resilient individuals are willing to seek community support in times of adversity and have positive interactions with those around them (Werner, 1982). Overall, the relational pattern is linked to an individual's role(s) in society and their relationships with others (Steinhardt & Dolbier, 2008).

f) Spirituality and meaning

Research suggests that feeling connected in your life is an important "anchoring force" (Giordano, 1997, p. 1033). Tusaie and Fredrickson added that this can be realised by

having a spiritual priority in your life such as a "belief system that provides existential meaning, a cohesive life narrative and an appreciation of the uniqueness of oneself" (2004, p. 4). Regardless of an individual's spiritual beliefs, it is important to actively engage in activities outside of one's working life in order to feel nurtured both emotionally and spiritually. This makes it possible for executives to retain some balance in life, even when faced with a demanding career (Jackson, Firtko & Edenborough, 2007). Existing literature on positive psychology suggests that religious beliefs and practices could assist with resilience. Campbell (2009) endorsed this view and identified the value of belief in one's purpose in life, and attributing meaning to it as a motivating force in overcoming adversity.

Polk (1997) reflected on the role of philosophical patterns which refers to an individual's worldview or life perspective. This is manifested by personal beliefs such as the value in self-knowledge as well as an astute ability to reflect on oneself (Higgins, 1994; Beardslee, 1989). This pattern emphasises the positive meaning people find in their lives which contributes to an individual's belief that self-development is important and life has a purpose. This can include various beliefs that promote resilience, such as the belief that positive meaning can be found in all experiences, the belief that self-development is important and the belief that life is purposeful.

2.8.5 The resiliency process

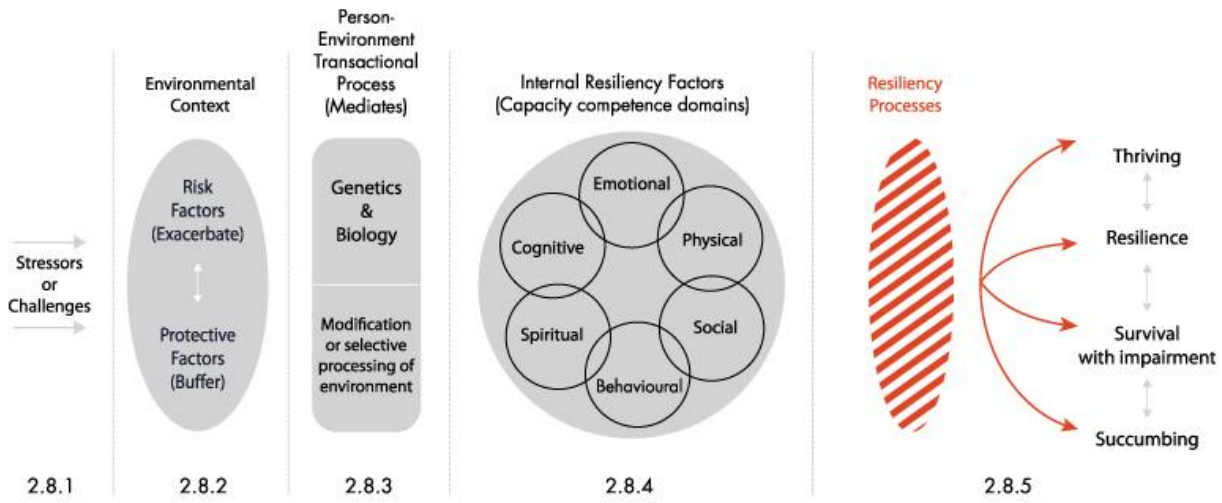

Figure 4.5. Resiliency process

The figures above illustrate the final stages in the basic resilience framework in terms of the resilience process. An important consideration at this point is the impact that adversity has on an individual. As can be seen in Figure 4.6, there are four different responses to the effects of stress and adversity. One potential reaction after an adverse event is that an individual will begin to follow a downward trajectory and eventually succumb. A second reaction is where a person is impaired in some way following an adverse event. The third reaction is a return to a level of functioning equal to the level of functioning prior to the adversity and lastly, the final, and optimal, reaction following an adverse event entails the person not only surviving the event, but surpassing previous levels of functioning.

Executive Coaching is concerned with assisting clients to realise trajectories of resilience (recovery) and thriving (O'Leary & Ickovics, 1995).

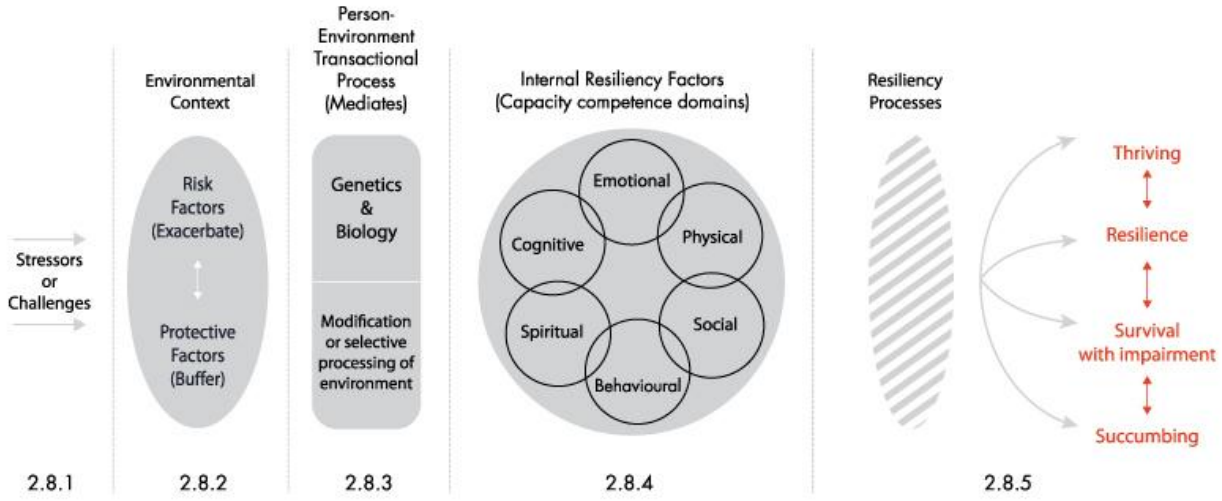

Figure 4.6. Potential responses to trauma (Adapted from O'Leary & Ickovics, 1995)

According to Glantz and Johnson, the most agreed upon definition of resilience is the 'successful' adaptation to life tasks in the face of adverse situations. These authors state that resiliency is inferred "on the basis of significant interventions between risk and protective factors to the extent that protective factors are associated with healthy adaptation" (1999, p. 163).

2.9 Concluding remarks

The purpose of the literature review was to examine the study's chosen conceptual paradigm and framework, as well as explore the constructs of Executive Coaching and resilience, both separately and in relation to each other.

In the first part of the review, an overall explanation of this study's conceptual paradigm and framework, including that of the Integral Theory 'All Quadrants, All Levels' (AQAL) model, was offered. This model highlights four quadrants: I (subjective), IT (objective), WE (intersubjective) and ITS (interobjective). Integral Theory was chosen for the categorisation of the findings of this research study because of its multi-faceted, flexible and coherent nature, which creates a space for a multitude of perspectives and solutions to complex issues and problems (Flaherty & Handelsman, 2004).

The literature review also explores Executive Coaching in terms of its definition, and the components of coaching interventions and their meaning for executive development were explored. When highlighting definitions of Executive Coaching, it was evident that most definitions incorporate a focus on personal growth and development, the relationship between the coach and the client, and learning and enhanced performance.

Various coaching models, methods and techniques were presented in this chapter which prioritise relationship building, problem defining and goal setting, problem solving, transformation processes and overall outcomes. A summary of Kilburg's (1996) list of coaching methods and techniques was provided in Table 2 and contributed to the research methods used in this study.

The second part of the literature review focused on contextualising resilience and presenting a basic resilience framework that illustrates the multi-dimensional nature of the construct of resilience. The underlying assumption of this research is that business executives are often faced with internal or external situations that may exceed their resources and result in a stress response, hence the need for developing levels of resilience. The basic resilience model addresses the variety of factors that impact resilience and include stressors or challenges, the environmental context and the role of protective factors in resilience, person-environmental transactional processes, internal

resiliency factors and the resiliency process in general, with potential responses to trauma (O'Leary & Ickovics, 1995).

The literature review underlines Executive Coaching as an increasingly popular strategy for developing executive leadership. Although coaches use a variety of different models, methods and techniques, there appears to be agreement in literature that Executive Coaching interventions aim to assist executives in developing the skills and behaviours that support them in their role as leaders. It is increasingly evident that executives who are faced with challenges and adversity, both in their personal and professional lives, require sustained resilience. A review of the literature illustrates the different factors that contribute to and influence resilience, highlighting the complex and multi-dimensional nature thereof. Research has shown that internal resilience factors and competencies are fronted as an important part of the resilience process. These factors include cognitive competencies, emotional competencies, physical well-being, behavioural competencies, social competencies and an individual's sense of spirituality. It is clear that the relationship between risk, protection, internal resilience factors and business executive outcomes is complex. Consequently, the research is not always easy to integrate into practice or strategy, therefore it is important to note that our understanding of resilience is constantly evolving and further research, such as this study, will help researchers to better understand how resilience can be fostered through coaching interventions.

There is a need to continue the exploration into the outcomes of Executive Coaching. The focus of this Executive Coaching research in relation to resilience should provide an additional perspective regarding the value and influence of coaching interventions on executive development. Despite the body of knowledge regarding Executive Coaching, there is little literature to provide evidence of what influence coaching interventions have on resilience and whether executives view improved resilience as an outcome of Executive Coaching.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a detailed explanation of the data collection procedures, the data used in the research and the tools used to analyse the generated data. The chapter highlights the research methodologies that guide this study and outlines how these methodologies focus the analysis on the goals at the core of the research. Lastly, a summary of the ethical considerations, issues of reliability and validity, and the limitations of the study are considered.

3.1 Research methodology and paradigm

This research design was qualitative in nature. Qualitative research emphasises the socially constructed nature of reality and is shaped by the phenomena that is being researched, at the same time as seeking to understand how meaning is attributed. The significance of this type of research is that a great deal of emphasis is placed on the individual's point of view. It also explores differences and similarities in individual experiences and the various ways in which these experiences are perceived (Cresswell, 2002). In essence, this study is concerned with the lived experience of the coaching client which is experienced through the senses and communicated through language.

This approach was favoured because it enabled the researcher to describe and understand the phenomena being investigated rather than attempting to explain it (Babbie & Mouton, 2002). It also allowed for an understanding of what is meaningful and relevant to the people being studied and to discover the meaning they attribute to social interactions (Neuman, 2006). Qualitative research attempts to study human action from the perspective of the social actors themselves (Babbie & Mouton, 2002), and it also allows the participants to describe their attitudes and feelings without losing the rich descriptions and the essence of their experiences (Morse, 1994). One of the most important aspects of this type of research is the ability to view the world through the eyes of the participant. Therefore the study examined the information from the participants' perspectives in order to understand their individual experiences of Executive Coaching (Burgelmann, 1983). Qualitative research is appropriate for researchers who want to acquire an in-depth understanding of people, the human experience and humanity (Neuman, 2006).

Central to this approach is a focus on the context in which the data is positioned within a specific set of socio-economic and cultural circumstances (Guba & Lincoln, 1982) This is in line with Wilber's AQAL model which argued against studying aspects of psychology in isolation. In addition, qualitative research is characterised by a lack of an initial hypothesis that needs to be tested (Bowen, 2005). This is because the nature of this type of research is exploratory and its strength is that it is data-driven (Creswell, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 1982).

It is important to note that the terms 'interpretivism' and 'qualitative research' are sometimes used inter-changeably (Denzin & Lincoln, 1995). Neither 'qualitative research' or 'interpretivism' are precise or agreed terms, but often those who define themselves as 'interpretivists' (as opposed to more generic qualitative researchers) deny the possibility of generalisation and highlight that qualitative research refers to the process or method by which research is conducted, whereas 'interpretivism' refers to a paradigm that informs the researcher's worldview (Denzin & Lincoln, 1995)

3.2 Research design

The purpose of this study was to explore executives' perceptions and experiences of resilience as influenced by coaching interventions. Because the nature of qualitative research is data-driven and context-dependent, interviews are a valuable method of exploring the coaching client's understanding of the meaning of their own experiences. For this reason, the principle means of data collection was one-to-one unstructured interviews. This decision was based on the assumption that the coaching client would describe and explain their unique experiences and thinking in an in-depth manner to the interviewer (Denscombe, 2008).

The goal of this study was not to determine general principles of behaviour that can be applied to all settings, but rather to gain a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of how the coaching process operates and affects the individual coaching client's perception and experience of resilience. The qualitative framework therefore allowed the interviewer to embrace the coaching client's experiences as valuable topics of study, as well as use the coaching client's responses to the interview questions as qualitative and analysable data.

3.3 Population and sample

3.3.1 Population

This research was focused on the South African population working as executives in corporate organisations. Due to the depth of information being more important than the size of the population, it was decided to use a smaller sample size in order to focus on individual, in-depth interviews. The population was limited by geographical factors as it was only possible to conduct interviews within the Western Cape, KwaZulu Natal and Gauteng areas.

3.3.2 Criteria for selection

For the purposes of this research, an 'executive' was defined as an individual with executive responsibility or accountability and also decision-making authority. This included managers, directors or other high potential people (McAdam, 2005). Additional selection criteria included those who had been involved in Executive Coaching, as well as those who had not, in order to offer views from both experiences. Once it was established if a participant met this criteria, they were invited to participate in the study via email. Because the perceived value-adds and experiences of the coaching process may differ from the start to the end of the process, it was necessary for the researcher to clarify how long the client had been in a coaching relationship. If this invitation was accepted, individual interviews with the participant were arranged.

As mentioned above, the research study consisted of two groups of participants: those who had received coaching and those who had not. As such, two methods of locating participants were followed:

(1) Executive coaches in South Africa were contacted to suggest names of possible participants for the study. Because of confidentiality and sensitivity around the information, the coaches were asked to contact the coachee/client directly. Once the client was comfortable enough to take part in the process, their details were given to the researcher who contacted them to arrange an interview. Some of the executives who were willing to take part in the study were also able to recommend

other executives in various South African-based industries. These potential participants were then contacted telephonically or by email to ensure that they met the specific criteria outlined above.

(2) Executives who had not received coaching were identified through media and internet searches, as well as through business associations such as the Business Women's Association of South Africa. Once suitable candidates were identified, they were contacted via email or telephone, and after it was clarified that they met the specific criteria of not having been coached, were in an executive position and available, they were invited to participate.

3.3.3 Sample and sampling method

In this study, non-probability purposive sampling was used as participants were selected with a specific purpose in mind (Neuman, 1997). This sampling method was also used because the participants for this study were a difficult-to-reach and specialised population (Neuman, 1997).

According to Morton-Williams (1985), the chosen sampling method should be informed by the purpose of the study, as well as its design and methodology. It was necessary to identify participants from the population who were able to contribute to the research area in question (Leech, 2007). The subjects chosen were therefore based on very specific characteristics and only respondents who met these were selected to participate in the study (Dooley, 2001). According to Sarantakos (2000), sampling in qualitative studies is less structured and less strictly applied than in quantitative research. A limitation of this method is that a researcher can never be certain if the cases selected are a representative sample of the population (Neuman, 1997), but because the focus of this study was on in-depth information and an investigation of specific cases rather than a generalisation of the findings, non-probability purposive sampling was appropriate.

The total sample comprised 18 participants. In terms of gender, there was a distribution of 60% of the participants being male and 40% being female. A summary of the participants' contextual data is provided in Tables 4 and 5 that follow. Of this sample of 18 participants, 9 participants had received coaching and 9 had not.

Table 4. Profile of respondents

Description of respondent type	**Number sampled**
Executives had been coached	9
Executives who had not been coached	9
Total respondents	**18**

Table 5. Level of management of respondents

Management level of respondents	**Number sampled**
Executives who had been coached	
Senior manager	**2**
Executive manager	**3**
CEO	**4**
Executives who had not been coached	
Senior manager	**0**
Executive manager	**4**
CEO	**5**

3.4 Research instrument

In-depth unstructured interviews were used as part of the data collection process in this study. The interviews were guided by a list of questions called an agenda. The questions were based on their relevance to the problem statement and the study's purpose (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1990). An example of the agenda is attached in Appendix A. The use of an agenda allowed the researcher to balance consistency and flexibility.

The agenda consisted of a series of open-ended questions. The study sought information and understanding rather than to offer generalised findings, so it was not necessary to use a standard and fixed set of questions for all interviews (Walker, 1985). Instead, the agenda included a variety of questions that related to the different elements of the research problem. Follow-up questions were then used to ensure that the participants' personalised views and experiences were explored (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

The questions were tested prior to the start of the research and their relevance and clarity were assessed, with questions adjusted where required. The value of the interview was that the interviewer could ensure that a detailed description of the experiences being investigated were obtained, as well as ensure that the interviewer's interpretation of the coaching client's experience was accurate. Interviews lasting between 60 to 120 minutes were conducted with 18 participants.

The unstructured nature of the interviews allowed the interviewer to converse with the coaching client in a relaxed, flexible manner, discussing the experiences and meanings that were significant to the coaching client. In-depth unstructured interviews are suitable for this type of qualitative study as they allow the interview to be flexible and conversational in nature (Whitley, 2002), which in turn encourages more truthful and open responses from the interviewee.

The interviewer is an integral part of the research instrument in unstructured interviews as it depends on the interviewer's skill and ability to generate questions that are contextually relevant and appropriate during the interview (Minichiello, et al., 1990). As such, the interviewer needs to be skilled at listening carefully and must be able to generate questions quickly. It is important to acknowledge that this type of interview runs the risk of being influenced by the researcher's bias and is often difficult to organise and analyse (Whitley, 2002). Due to this, it was important to follow a specific research protocol and to provide the participants with a detailed information document regarding the nature of the study prior to the interview process.

3.5 Procedure for data collection

As outlined in Section 3.4, the collection of natural data occurred as a result of in-depth unstructured interviews with open-ended questions to a small sample. The interviewer conducted 18 face-to-face interviews with the participants. During this process, the interview was recorded with the participants' knowledge and consent and the interviewer made field notes to provide additional information. This contributed to a more accurate and complete account and assisted in detailed analysis (Bryman, 2004). The interviewer outlined certain topics of discussion in the interview guide to ensure that all aspects of the coaching client's lived experiences were discussed. Additionally, the unstructured

nature of the interview allowed the coaching client to discuss what was significant in their experiences and clarify their interpretations (Whitley, 2002).

Field notes were taken during the interview or immediately afterwards, and in order to preserve confidentiality, the names of the participants were not used. Instead, the participants are referred to by pseudonyms. After the conclusion of this study, the recordings and field notes will be destroyed. Requests were made for interviews by telephone, email or through personal referral. All of the face-to-face interviews took place at the respondents' offices as this helped to provide a meaningful context to their experience and perspectives (Bluhm, Harman, Lee, & Mitchell, 2010). Face-to-face interviews were preferred because of the additional information in paralinguistic clues (such as body language and voice tone), which offered additional insight (Bryman, 2004). Furthermore, face-to-face interviews were preferred because they gave the interviewer the opportunity to put the participant at ease and to clarify any uncertainties around the research.

The duration of each interview was between one and two hours and participants were encouraged to elaborate fully and give comprehensive information regarding their experiences and perceptions. The interviewer's role included establishing rapport, asking the open-ended questions, listening analytically, probing for additional information, motivating the participants, and maintaining control of the interview process (Whitely, 2002). The interviews remained flexible and the researcher attempted to create an open environment that allowed the participants to share detailed and accurate experiences of coaching. According to Kvale (1996), the researcher must create a trusting atmosphere to enable a participant to share their experiences honestly. An empathic alliance was therefore an important aspect of the interview process.

The taped recordings were transcribed in their entirety after the interview. These transcripts form the basis of the data analysis and are attached as Appendix G on the enclosed CD.

3.6 Data analysis and interpretation

The intepretivist or qualitative approach to data analysis involves seeking the essence or core structure of an experience through the eyes of the individual. The aim was to

discover the essential nature of the phenomena under investigation, therefore each transcribed interview required detailed analysis. Denscombe (1998) stated that qualitative data analysis should be guided by four principles:

- Conclusions should be grounded in data.
- Detailed and thorough reading of the data.
- The researcher should be aware of personal biases and preconceptions and avoid introducing these into the data analysis.
- Analysis of data should follow an iterative process which moves back and forth, constantly comparing data with codes.

The full data analysis process is illustrated in Figure 5.

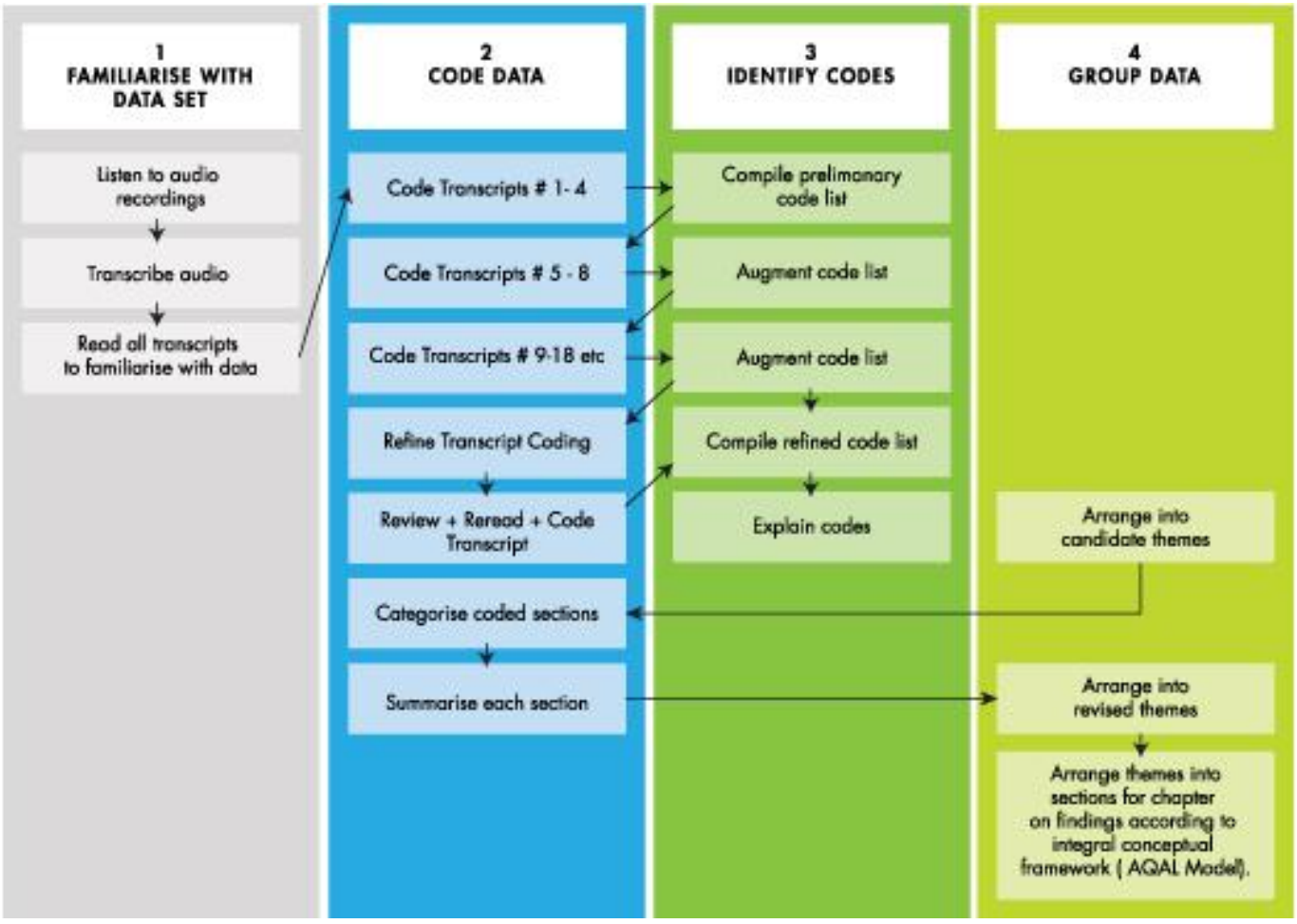

Figure 5. Data analysis process

In order to emphasise the rich description of the coaching client's lived experiences, thematic content analysis was used as the method of data analysis. Thematic content

analysis provides a means of qualitative data organisation, whereby themes emerge from the data following a detailed analysis. These themes reflect the research problem as well as the participants' perceptions and experiences (Banister, Burman, Parker & Tindall, 1994). Thematic content analysis encourages interpretation and description that is guided by emphatic understanding of the individual (Kvale, 1996). As part of this method, the researcher constantly analyses and compares the emerging data. This is then interpreted and translated into codes and code categories, which allow the researcher to address common characteristics using thematic analysis techniques (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006). Thematic content analysis combines techniques and principles of thematic and content analysis.

One research method used to analyse written data is content analysis (Cole, 1998). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) stated that conventional content analysis is best suited for research that endeavours to describe a phenomenon. They highlighted that this is an approach which encourages codes and categories to emerge through a process where the researcher actively engages with the data and moves from the specific to the general. One advantage of this type of analysis is flexibility regarding research design (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). Another advantage is that it is a context-sensitive method as it allows relevant information to emerge from the data without clouding it with preconceived theories and categories. However this method can pose a challenge if the researcher fails to develop a thorough understanding of the data and fails to identify central and important categories (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Other challenges include the amount of time involved in 'immersing' oneself in the reading of the data and the sheer quantity of the qualitative data, which can amount to hundreds of pages of data depending on the size of the study. According to Elo and Kyngäs (2007), content analysis involves three main phases, namely preparation (selecting the unit of analysis), organising and reporting.

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) provided the following steps as guidelines for data analysis:

- Thorough reading of all data in order to engage and establish an understanding of the entire data set.
- A second, in-depth, word-by-word reading of the data in order to identify and highlight key concepts of meaning from which the codes are derived.

- A review of the text which includes notation by the researcher of thoughts and perceptions and ideas.
- The development of an initial coding scheme derived directly from the text.
- Codes are combined into categories (categories are established from codes which are meaningfully interrelated and connected).
- Definitions for each code and category are established.
- Examples of each code and category are extracted from the data.
- Categories are combined into applicable clusters which can number between 10 and 15.

Braun and Clark (2006, p. 9) defined thematic analysis as a “method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data”. The researcher plays an active role in identifying and selecting these patterns or themes through a process analysis of the whole data set. These authors (2006) rejected the passive language of ‘emerging themes’ and emphasised the active role that the researcher takes in the process of theme identification and reporting. Thematic analysis differs from other forms of qualitative analysis such as IPA and grounded theory, and Braun and Clark (2006) stated that whereas IPA and grounded theory are theoretically bounded, thematic analysis is not, and unlike grounded theory, thematic analysis is not directly geared towards theory development. Since thematic analysis is not bound to a pre-existing theoretical framework, it can be applied within a variety of theoretical frameworks and thus be used as a method to describe the experiences and perceptions of research participants and to reflect their reality (Braun & Clark, 2006). This being said, the analysis of data, specifically in qualitative research, remains a complicated matter.

According to Thorne (2000), a researcher must employ an active and strict process of analysis during the research process. Qualitative data analysis differs from quantitative data analysis in that it employs a strategy that involves assumptions, perceptions and values regarding knowledge, whereas qualitative research employs more scientific measures to construct an understanding of the world and reality. Aronson (1994), Thomas (2006) and Braun and Clark (2006) suggested taking the following steps when doing thematic analysis:

- Collect the data.
- Transcribe the data.

- Immerse and familiarise yourself with the data through ‘repeated reading’, searching for meanings and patterns, and note ideas for coding.
- Identify patterns of experience from the transcribed data and produce initial codes.
- Identify all the data that relates to those specific patterns of experience and code, working through the entire data set.
- Analyse and identify corresponding and related patterns/codes.
- Combine related patterns/codes into clusters and search for candidate themes.
- Review themes at the level of coded data and at the level of the entire data set and consider whether it forms a coherent pattern and an accurate reflection of the meaning contained in the data (transcripts).
- Identify and establish a valid argument for the selection of the final themes.
- Consider the relevance of each theme in isolation and in relation to the other themes.
- Refine the themes.
- Establish a clear definition of each theme.

Based on these considerations, it was appropriate for the data analysis approach in this study to combine content analysis and thematic analysis. Certain decision-making processes guided the thematic content analysis in order to refine the strategy in approaching the qualitative data. According to Silverman (2008), the process of transcribing data initiates the data analysis. During the transcription phase, the researcher became familiar with the ‘depth’ and ‘breadth’ of the data set and took note of any potential patterns and specific points of interest (Braun & Clark, 2006). The codification of the transcript ensured that the qualitative data was classified into certain themes, patterns or relationships that emerged in the data set. For the purposes of this study, themes were defined as a “patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 82). Themes were identified through an inductive, ‘bottom up’ approach, whereby they emerged from the data naturally without fitting data into pre-existing categories or the author’s analytical preconceptions (Braun & Clark, 2006). The choice of categories was a subjective process, in this instance determined by a reading of the data known as inductive coding, rather than on the basis of pre-existing theory, referred to as theoretical coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This

type of category generation is appropriate to a study such as this, which is largely exploratory.

The following steps were followed during the data analysis process:

- Preparation of the data: After the completion of the interviews, the recorded interviews were transcribed to provide a qualitative data set that was easier to access and analyse.
- Each transcript was imported into a separate Microsoft Excel document.
- Each line in every transcript was numbered and columns were created next to each line for codes. Line numbering was included as it allowed for the navigation and identification of different parts of the transcript. The final transcripts mirrored the original verbal account as closely as possible and included the participants' speech patterns, such as pauses, emphasis and indistinct words, to provide a richer meaning to the words being spoken (Denscombe, 2008). Any other information obtained from the field notes was also captured in the transcripts.
- All the transcripts were read through twice before the coding process began to ensure understanding and get a 'sense of the whole'.
- Units of analysis were defined as 'meaningful segments' which could be words, phrases or sentences (Minichiello et al., 1990).
- Codes were assigned to meaningful segments (words, phrases or sentences) and the relevant words, phrases or sentences were highlighted.
- The use of separate columns next to each line allowed for more than one code if the relevant section of the text was considered to be applicable to more than one code.
- The codes emerged from the text and were not pre-determined.
- After the first few transcripts were coded the master list of codes was refined and expanded.
- Each transcript was read a second time and the codes were reviewed and refined again.
- Enumeration: the number of times a specific code appeared was counted using Microsoft Excel in order to determine the frequency and prevalence of that code across the data set. This was included in order to ensure researcher awareness,

assist in the identification of patterns, clarify and deepen insight, and to mediate subjectivity.

- The coded data was arranged into candidate themes that reflected shared patterns of meaning.
- The initial candidate themes were reviewed and this indicated the need for a review of the coded sections.
- Codes were assessed to determine consistency.
- Coded sections were reviewed and assigned to categories, which were based on conclusions drawn from the coded data.
- The initial 24 candidate themes were revised and refined after the coded sections had been grouped according to category and code.
- This resulted in the identification of nine revised themes. These nine revised themes were identified after a thorough analysis of the 24 candidate themes and the relationship among them. The final themes encapsulated the original 24 themes and the process of analysis is presented in Appendices B and C.
- The themes were reviewed at the level of coded data and at the level of the entire data set and evaluated to consider whether they formed a coherent pattern and an accurate reflection of the meaning contained in the data (transcripts). The findings indicated that the nine revised themes were inter-related and required additional categorisation in order to illustrate this interrelation and facilitate a deeper understanding of the findings in relation to the multi-dimensional construct of resilience.
- This resulted in the presentation of the findings according to the Meta-AQAL Model derived from Integral Theory, which allowed for a Meta perspective and deeper analysis of the findings. Creswell (2002) highlighted the importance of the reduction of overlap and redundancy among categories and suggested the creation of a model which incorporates the most important categories.
- Presentation of findings.

A list of the categories, themes and codes, as well as an illustration of the thematic map that guided the analysis of data in this study and final categorisation according to Integral Theory and the AQAL model, are attached as Appendices B and C.

3.7 Ethical considerations

An important consideration in any study of this nature relates to the issue of ethics. For this reason, multiple ethical considerations were taken into account and applied during the course of this study. It was possible to avoid potential ethical issues by ensuring written informed consent was given by all participants. It was also important that all communication was in 'plain language' and that the participants had the option to have the communication in their preferred home language.

All of the participants were informed about the nature of the research and the methods that were to be used during the study. As a result, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study, including how the findings of the research will be used and distributed within professional contexts and academic communities. Confidentiality was emphasised and the researcher made it clear that participation was on a purely voluntary basis, and should they have chosen to, they could leave the study at any point. Participants were also encouraged to ask any questions they had. A copy of the information sheet provided to all participants is attached as Appendix D.

The researcher took heed of Mason's (2002) warning to be aware of the fact that the nature of qualitative research entails close interaction with the participants' lives and that unforeseen ethical dilemmas could occur while research is being conducted. For example, the author could not predict the effects and implications of the proposed interviews on the participants. Mason (2002) suggested compensating for this by ensuring that the researcher's intentions are clearly thought out before the commencement of the study, and clarity regarding the purpose, understanding of the attributes and characteristics of the participants and implications of the study should be addressed.

In this study, the utmost effort went into ensuring the protection of the participants and any unforeseen negative consequences were considered to the extent that they could be. Furthermore, it was acknowledged that the presence of the researcher, and her role as active participant, would influence the data in some way as a result of 'observer's paradox'.

3.8 Validity and reliability

3.8.1 External validity

External validity refers to the degree to which the phenomenon that is being investigated is accurately represented by the research findings and vice versa. Various factors can undermine validity, such as poor sampling, faulty research procedures and research errors. Additionally, validity refers to measuring or demonstrating what the researcher intends to measure or demonstrate (Welman, Kruger, & Mitchell, 2005), whereas reliability relates to accuracy (Whitley, 2002). This study safeguarded sample appropriateness by ensuring that the participants had knowledge of the research topic and adequately represented the research topic. In this case it entailed selecting individuals who held executive positions in organisations.

3.8.2 Internal validity

Because internal validity requires a researcher to apply rigorous and consistent data collection processes throughout, this study endeavoured to reproduce similar research structures and procedures with each interview. The study applied the four aspects of 'trustworthiness' that a growing number of qualitative researchers advocate, in addition to the traditional concept of validity. This aimed to ensure adequate rigour during the research process. These four aspects of trustworthiness are; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Morse, et al., 2002). A set of guidelines informed the process for each interview.

Elo and Kyngäs (2007) suggested the following steps be taken to enhance trustworthiness:

- The researcher should provide a detailed description of the data collection and analysis process, and the results and the strengths and limitations of the analysis should be clear.
- The researcher needs to establish and demonstrate a clear link between the data and the results.
- Detailed descriptions of the selection and characteristics of the participants should be provided.

- Authentic citations from the data should be used to enhance trustworthiness and to indicate the origin of the formulation of the data categories.

3.8.3 Reliability

Reliability refers to a measurement's degree of consistency in a study. The question that needed to be asked to determine reliability was: Does this measurement give the same result every time when applied to the same thing or person (Whitley, 2002)? In other words: Can this study be replicated? This study made use of a system to record field notes and state the impact of these field notes on the data and findings. In addition, all transcripts were coded as this is used to ensure a uniform approach to data analysis (Silverman, 2005). Importantly, all procedures followed and methods used during this study were documented. Verbatim records of participants' accounts were included and observations were made in the most concrete way possible, rather than relying on the researcher's reconstruction of what the participant said. Silverman (2005) pointed out the importance of including even seemingly trivial, but often important, pauses and overlaps when transcribing tape recorded interactions. Failure to notate this may significantly reduce and weaken the ability to interpret transcripts reliably.

3.9 Limitations of the study

Qualitative analysis is a subjective process, with the author's personal frame of reference being an unavoidable, but often helpful and valuable, influence on the research process. As a result, critical self-reflective practice was required, particularly during the analysis of data.

The researcher's interpretive framework and the implementation of the study may have been influenced by training and studying in Integral Coaching; training in Conscious Embodiment; previous research on resilience; and training in psychology. It was important to be attentive to these factors from the start of the study, so that care could be taken to limit and set aside preconceived expectations. This helped to reduce unwarranted selective attention during the research and interviews. Nevertheless, the researcher's own frame of reference and lens for interpreting the world inevitably impacts on the study and it was thus important to acknowledge this throughout the research. Any study that takes place within an interpretive paradigm is naturally shaped by the

subjective meanings established by the researcher (Creswell, 2003). Although largely unavoidable, Barusch et al. (2011) suggested that an argument can be made that having preconceived ideas of the findings gives a more nuanced and clearer understanding of context.

Thematic content analysis has inherent challenges and as data is sorted and categorised, it is possible for certain critical elements to be misinterpreted (Weber, 1990). Weber (1990) stressed, however, that this is always present in a qualitative approach but can be offset by making analysis a reflective process.

An additional limitation in this study relates to recruitment bias. Recruitment bias could have had an impact on the research due to the small, limited sample used in this research (Whitley, 2002). It may be the case that the contact persons based at coaching organisations only put forward individuals who were positive about coaching. Moreover, it could be that only those individuals who considered their coaching to be successful agreed to take part in the study. This interferes with the representativeness of the sample and reduces the ability to make generalised statements based on the findings. Further qualitative studies and replication studies across a diverse environment will need to be conducted to demonstrate the robustness of this study's findings and ensure representativeness and generalisability of the research findings.

Both time and resource constraints affected this study. With regard to time constraints, the restrictions for the completion of this study meant that the number of people interviewed had to be limited because of the time-consuming nature of qualitative research. With regard to resource constraints, the choice of interviewees was limited to KwaZulu Natal, Gauteng and the Western Cape, because of interviewer availability.

3.10 Concluding remarks

Overall, this chapter provided a detailed explanation of the data collection procedures, the data used in the research and the tools used to analyse the generated data. This chapter focused on the research methodologies that guided this study and outlined how these methodologies focused the analysis on the goals at the core of the research.

Lastly, a summary of the ethical considerations, issues of reliability and validity, and the limitations of the study were considered.

As has been discussed in this section, the combination of integral conceptual framework and the qualitative analysis of data inherent in Thematic Content Analysis is necessary for a well-balanced analysis of participant interviews on the effects of Executive Coaching on resilience.

This enabled the researcher to have an in-depth understanding and quality analysis and results. At the same time, the researcher was able to delve into a more fine-grained analysis of key areas that the thematic content analysis highlights. Research findings from the data will now be explored in Chapter 4.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction to the research findings

This chapter presents and outlines the main findings of the research and will be presented as follows. First, the research is contextualised with an overview of the respondents' profiles. Next, responses from the interviews, together with key trends and patterns that emerged from the data-set, are presented. These are presented as themes extracted through a process of thematic content analysis and are discussed from an integral perspective. Direct quotations, examples and descriptions extracted from the interview transcripts are included to elucidate the selected themes. In addition, models and tables are used to illustrate the link between themes and sub-themes. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main findings.

4.2 Interview questions

To provide a deeper, more subjective understanding of the perceptions and experiences of the respondents, 18 unstructured interviews were conducted: nine interviews with executives who had been coached and nine with executives who had not received coaching. Due to the unstructured nature of the interviews, broad questions related to the topic of resilience and coaching were adapted for each respondent.

These interview questions were arranged around four main themes:

- General understanding of the concept of resilience.
- Past challenges, perceptions and experiences of resilience.
- Current challenges, perceptions and experiences of resilience.
- The influence of coaching on their perceptions and experiences of resilience.

The interview questions were intended to explore the respondents' understanding of resilience and the perceived influence that coaching had on executives' perceptions and experiences of resilience. The guidelines for the unstructured interviews are listed in Appendix F.

4.3 Profile of participants

The findings from the study interviews are based on the insights and contributions of 18 executives from 17 different organisations. Of these respondents, nine executives had received some form of Executive Coaching whilst the other nine had not. As reflected on in the methodology, the rationale for the selection of both coached and non-coached participants was in order to gain a balanced overview of the effects (if any) of Executive Coaching on one's experience of resilience, in addition to any differences and/or similarities between the perceptions and experiences of the two groups. This would allow for a deeper understanding of the influence (if any) of Executive Coaching on executives' perceptions and experiences of resilience. The demographic information of the participants is presented in the table that follows.

Table 6. Participant demographic information

PARTICIPANTS (ALIAS)	COACHED Y/N	LEVEL IN ORGANISATION	AGE	GENDER
Jim	Y	CEO	55	Male
Mark	N	Head HR	41	Male
Mary	Y	Head HR	50	Female
Dean	N	CEO	47	Male
Rose	Y	Head OD	34	Female
Linda	Y	CEO	40	Female
Eugene	Y	CEO	60	Male
Dina	Y	MD	45	Female
Ursula	N	MD	54	Female
Laura	Y	MD	50	Female
Hank	N	MD	51	Male
Simon	N	Owner/ CEO	52	Male
Justin	N	CFO	54	Male
Leonard	N	COO	39	Male
Melinda	Y	Head HR	38	Female
Alison	Y	CFO	48	Female
Keith	N	CEO	52	Male
JP	N	CEO	40	Male

4.4 Integral perspective

Overall, the responses obtained indicated that when it comes to resilience, 'the whole is greater than the sum of its parts'. As such, resilience proved to be a difficult concept to divide into separate themes as many statements contained aspects of multiple themes. More so than any singular theme, what stood out most was the inter-relatedness and dynamic interaction of the themes. Furthermore, it was evident that the experience and perception of resilience is multi-dimensional. This meant that one theme would be closely linked to one or more other themes. The following quote illustrates this multi-dimensional inter-relatedness as it speaks to themes of insight, action, control, emotions, relationships and attitude:

> "The lessons that I learnt in the past was that: don't give up. You know what you want, go for it. If it doesn't go your way, be able to control your emotions, be able to control your temper because you could actually make things worse. Talk about it, talk to other people about it and express if it's about anger express it, get someone to explain you know, ask you know ask questions ... Knowing what you want and going for it. And if you fall just get up and move again." (Dina 6:185)

The following diagram illustrates the links between various themes as described by the participants:

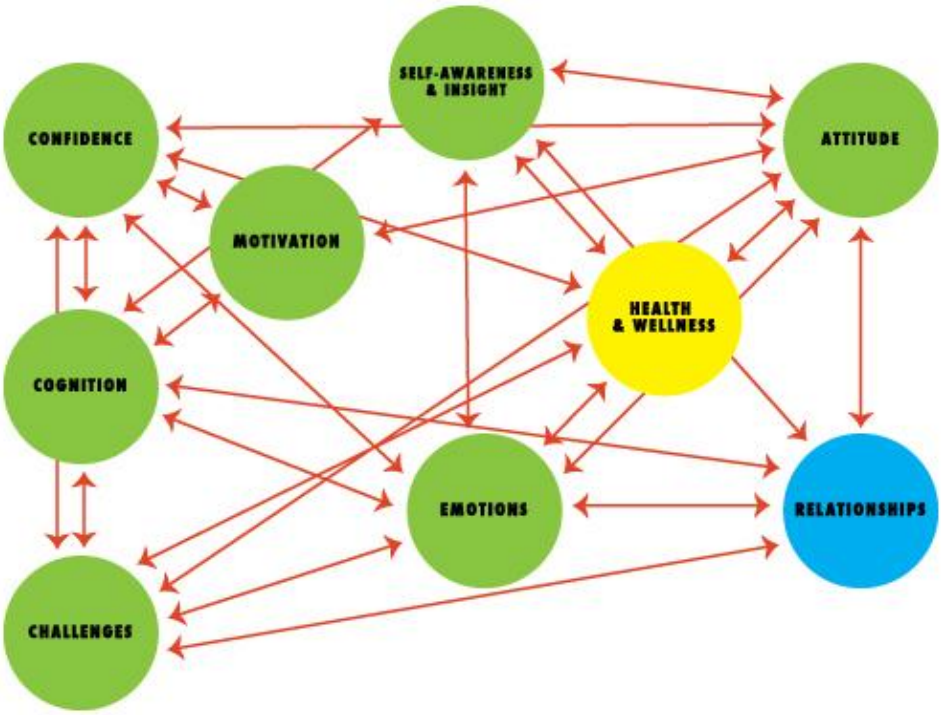

Figure 6. Interrelation of themes

This feature of multi-dimensional inter-relatedness regarding the experience and perception of resilience required the discussion of these findings to be structured in a way that would allow for this to be demonstrated. In addition, authors Tusaie and Dyer (2004) argued for the need to take a holistic perspective of resilience that also explores the dynamic interaction between resilience characteristics. Therefore the Integral Model described in detail in Chapter 2 was utilised to structure the findings, as it is well-suited to address and demonstrate the multi-dimensional, holistic and interrelated aspects of both the construct of resilience and the themes that emerged from the data.

As outlined in Chapter 2, the Integral model or AQAL framework consists of four quadrants, namely I (*subjective experience*), IT (*objective experience*), WE (*intersubjective experience*) and ITS (*interobjective experience*). The link to these four quadrants will be discussed in turn.

Although alternative frameworks could have been used to categorise the findings, such as resilience characteristics, risk factors or protective factors, the use of Integral Theory and the AQAL model allowed patterns of significance to emerge while maintaining a holistic perspective. In addition, the four sections or quadrants of the Integral Theory AQAL model align with the basic resilience framework presented in Section 2.8 and the four quadrants for the exploration of coaching as suggested by Cox et al. (2010) in 2.3.1. The division of the themes according to the AQAL model made it possible to identify where respondents placed the greatest emphasis with regard to their perceptions and experiences of resilience, and to ascertain the influence of Executive Coaching interventions.

4.5 Resilience themes discussed from an integral perspective

When it came to analysing the data in this study, content analysis was conducted on the whole data set. Content analysis presents recurring patterns of meaning that exist in the dataset. Clustering data into themes requires a level of interpretation which is influenced by a variety of theoretical choices made by the researcher.

The aim was to identify the common denominators related to the influence of coaching interventions on executives' perceptions and experiences of resilience. Gaining an

understanding of the influence of Executive Coaching necessitated a comprehensive understanding of executives' perceptions and understanding of resilience in general.

In light of this, the main themes that were revealed by the interview data included: cognition (focus and planning), attitude, perception of challenges and adversity, confidence (self-trust, self-doubt and control), motivation (purpose), self-awareness and insight, emotional awareness and regulation, health and wellness, relationships and support. Examples and quotations extracted from the interviews were included to clarify and illustrate the selected themes. As mentioned previously, the themes that emerged in this research are structured in line with the AQAL model and integral perspective and are presented in four sections, namely; I (*subjective experience*), IT (*objective experience*), WE (*intersubjective experience*) and ITS (*interobjective experience*)

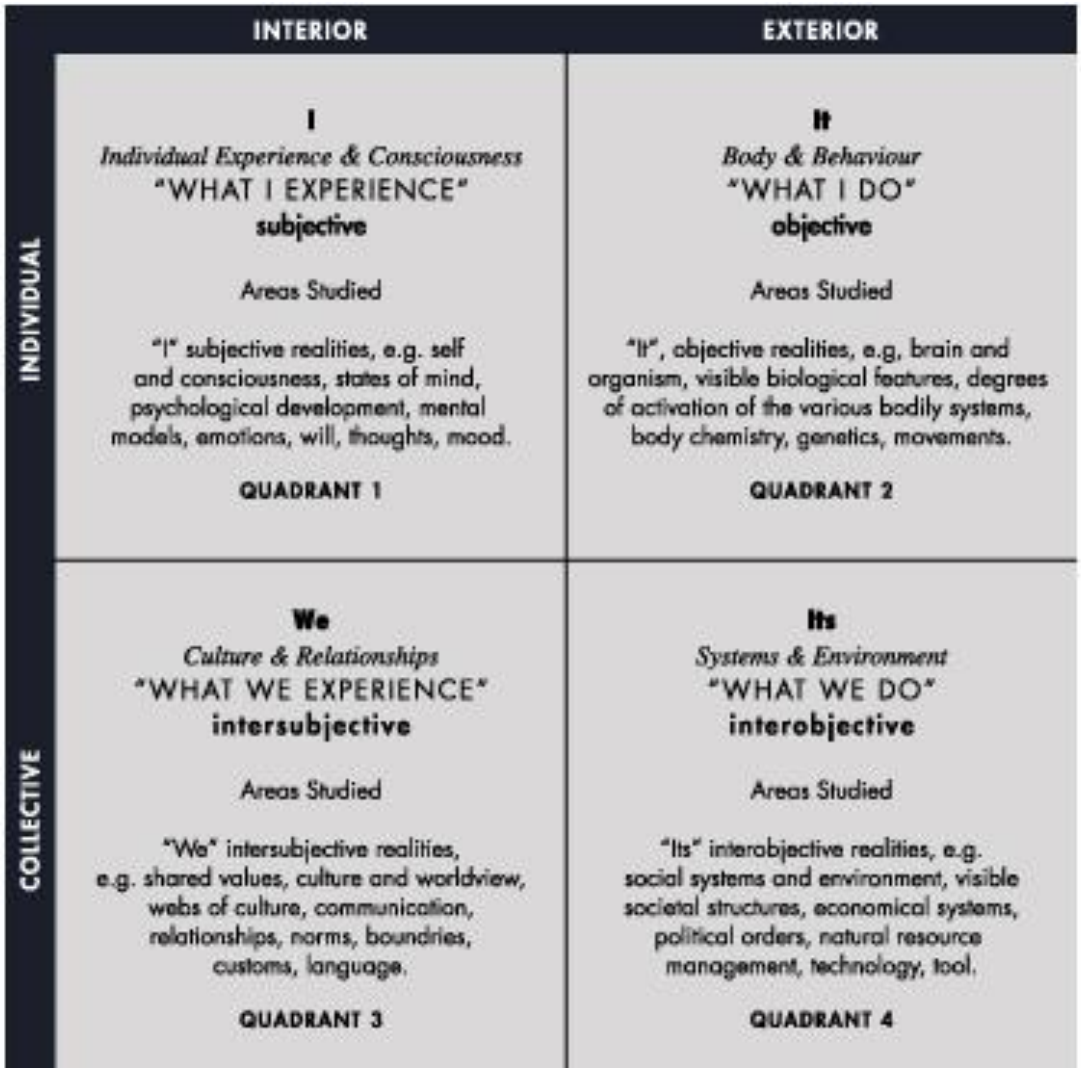

Figure 7. Significant areas of study in AQAL Model

4.5.1 I (subjective experience)

All 18 respondents indicated that the subjective experience of resilience was both that of a multi-dimensional construct and a process of 'being' resilient, which resulted from facing various challenges and/or adversity. All respondents indicated that the path to resilience was constructed from a combination of factors. One respondent, Jim, saw resilience as the ability to cope under pressure and "pick yourself up" (Jim 1:6) when necessary. He stressed that resilience is about recognising your weaknesses and your strengths and being able to acknowledge circumstances that would play to these. He added that resilience "is a whole combination of determination, of motivation, of forward visioning, of understanding the reason why you have done something" (Jim 1:26). From an integral perspective, the following themes form part of the "I" in terms of the subjective experience of self and consciousness; cognition (focus and planning); attitude; challenges; confidence (self-trust, self-doubt and control); motivation (purpose); awareness and insight (learning); and emotions. These will be discussed in turn.

4.5.1.1 Cognition

Cognition is a group of mental processes that include attention, memory, producing and understanding language, solving problems, and making decisions. Cognition is about applying knowledge, and for the purpose of this study, thinking is seen as a central component of cognition.

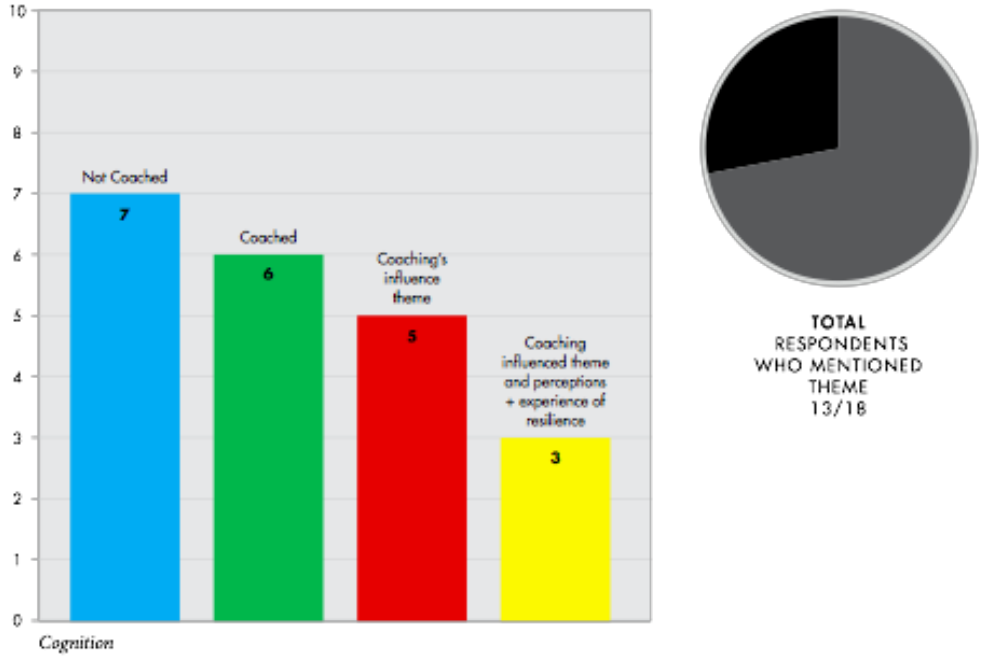

Figure 8. Cognition

Respondents stated that exposure to challenges and adverse situations required them to strategise, plan and direct their thinking. The majority of the respondents discussed the importance of being able to focus on the task at hand, while others mentioned the importance of understanding the situation clearly. Some spoke about the importance of managing their thinking and limiting unnecessary worry and fruitless rumination. For others, over-thinking reduced their ability to remain present to face what they needed to, while for others actively engaging in thinking helped them to achieve clarity.

According to JP, he noticed that the pressure he was under impacted his thinking and decision-making. Greater pressure reduced the time for thinking and increased his inclination to proceed into action. According to him, the ability to switch between thinking and acting depending on the situation was valuable in terms of coping with challenges and remaining resilient:

> "My personality type is that I do like to think properly before I make a decision but what I have noticed is that in a crisis situation I actually change my style to making decisions and getting on with it and that sometimes involves making compromises. So I get into a more decisive mode under pressure. More of an action type ... More action orientated. You find more salvaging like at least I am doing something about it." (JP 56)

Two sub-themes emerged under the theme of cognition. They are the need to focus and the importance of planning.

a) Focus

Focusing refers to a cognitive process of paying attention to stimuli related to either an internal or external event. Although only five of the respondents mentioned focus, they spoke with great emphasis regarding the importance of the ability to remain focused. Respondents viewed the ability to focus as a significant aspect of being resilient. The value of focus was underscored by Alison who stated "focus on one thing at a time to be more resilient" (Alison 10:337).

For Laura, focus and full attention allow her to make the best decisions during times of challenge:

> "So you need to re-group and re-centre yourself to come back, to actually keep focus and attention ... you are just being absorbed by what is present right now and trying to take in as much information to enable you to make the best decision right now". (Laura 37)

b) Planning

Planning is defined as "a mental representation of an intended action" (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2007). 12 participants referred to thinking about and taking actionable steps in order to feel less vulnerable during trying times. These actionable steps result from the process of planning, a strategy used by the respondents during challenging times. In their view, planning helped them to regain a sense of control. The importance of a sense of control in regard to resilience is referred to again later on in the findings. For these respondents, planning played an important part in their resilience.

Keith stated that having a plan of action is key and he stresses that being resilient is not about "just sitting there and hoping something is going to happen", but is rather having "a plan of action and time/dates and what needs to be achieved when". He believed that if you don't have a plan, you are not being resilient.

Linda deals with threats to her business in much the same way. She takes time to think carefully about the situation and then devises a plan that will address the problem. For her, planning helps her to feel more in control and resilient. She recalled a time when this strategy was useful to her:

> "I sat there and decided what we needed to do and how we needed to do it. And I tried at that point to step back and look at the bigger perspective about why this was happening and what opportunities there were in it. Then I shaped a plan at that point and I executed it from there onwards." (Linda 116)

c) The influence of coaching with regard to resilience and cognition, focus and planning

All nine of the respondents who had been coached reported that coaching influenced cognition. Coaching played a positive role in terms of their ability to solve problems, focus, and plan or think things through, which aided their resilience during challenging times. This is reflected in the statements below:

> "It is a case where at first where a coach stretches you to a uncomfortable feeling of "Oh my god, what now" because she is posing a whole lot of extra things that you did not think of, or you thought of them but you tried to like suppress them, because it is a hard thing to think about. So it is that, it doesn't help you least, but it is the thing that triggers you to feel uncomfortable at first, and then it helps you more." (Renee 507)

> "What coaching did was it enabled me to unpack in no uncertain terms almost to categorise and label the issues. And the power of doing that on the one hand created some rationalisations, created calmness, it created new perspective ... that all of a sudden you were spoilt for choice and it was out of that that you were able to choose a route, understand quickly whether that was right route. In other words the thing you needed to be resilient in or whether in fact you should choose another route or combine something. So coaching gave you the sounding board to unpack the issue and then determine the way forward from there." (Jim 258)

> "Coaching is about getting out of you and then getting you to think about it. Why did you do that? Why are you thinking like that? How would you do that in the future?" (Eugene 232)

4.5.1.2 Attitude

The APA dictionary describes attitude as a "relatively enduring and general evaluation of an object, person, group, issue or concept on a scale ranging from positive to negative" (APA, 2013).

Both the respondents who had received coaching, as well as those who had not been coached, indicated the important role that their attitude plays with regard to their

experience and perception of resilience. The majority spoke about the value of a positive attitude and an optimistic outlook on life.

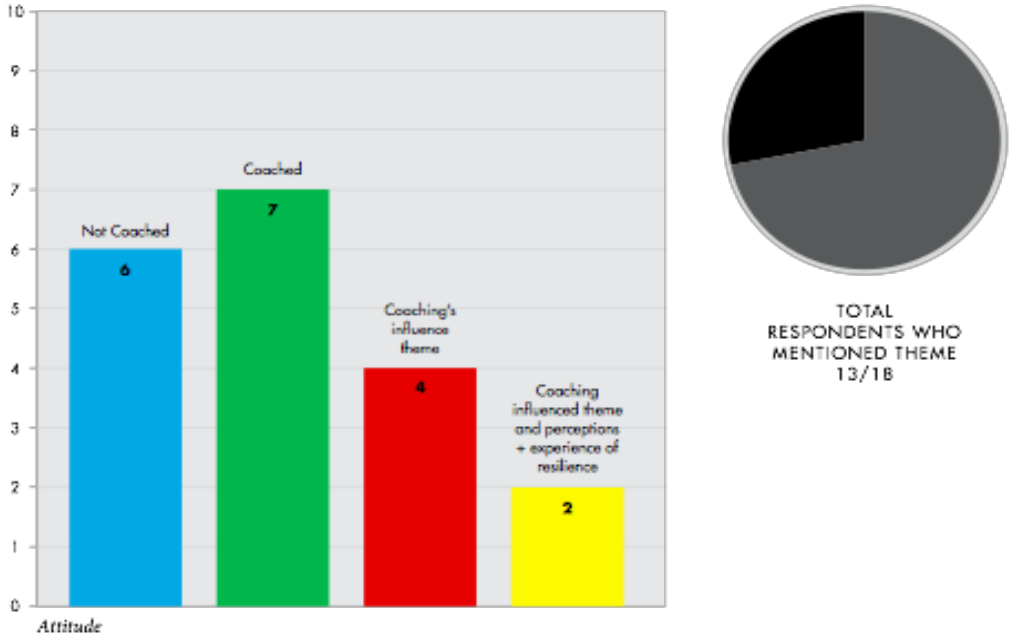

Figure 9. Attitude

For some respondents, having a 'can-do' attitude enables them to feel resilient and to spin a negative situation into a more positive one, as the following statement illustrates:

> "I just decided I am not going to be a victim, I am not going to be intimidated, and I will surface this information, and I have in life a very much a can-do attitude, and I will find a way to have it fixed. I think it was just realising and recognising that I would persist ... For me to be resilient ... my can-do attitude has spun it around." (Mary 152 and 179)

Other respondents comment that a positive attitude is central to their ability to remain resilient and is therefore important. Dave, for example, revealed:

> "Well, I think attitude is important. Attitude is a combination of your mental attitude but also a combination of your intellectual and ability but also there is a physical element to it as well because it can be very damaging to your health and even to those around you unless you have an overall balance. There would be very little point in practice in being resilience to the point that you destroy everything around you." (Dave 3:65)

Some respondents reflected on using techniques to assist them in sustaining a positive attitude. For them, being appreciative leads them to value who they are, what they have to offer, and the small and big things that make the world worthy of their engagement. As a result they feel more resilient, able to adapt, and 'surf the waves' of change. Hank, in particular, underlined the valuable role that gratitude plays in remaining resilient despite challenges:

> "And to therefore be, to deliberately express gratitude for what you do have. Wonderful boy, wonderful house, etc. etc. So that's also been a very powerful thing, I think is to deliberately make a point of expressing gratitude for what you do have." (Hank 8:236)

a) The influence of coaching with regard to resilience and attitude:

Four of the nine respondents who had been coached mentioned processes their coaches used in order to review their attitudes. Mary's coach, for example, used a metaphor to assist her in reviewing and reframing her attitude; this process of reframing is also linked to cognition mentioned previously. She recalled that she was told to "redefine opportunity as change arises and redefine and review my attitude in terms when I've been facing those challenges" (Mary 557). The metaphor her coach had her draw on was to see 'being burnt' (facing a challenge) in the same way that metal is 'burnt' to make gold. By allowing herself to view her challenges as something that has/will turn her into 'gold', Mary is able to face future challenges with increased resilience. Linda, whose coach encouraged her to actively develop the attitude of gratitude, echoed this. She stated that one of the lessons she learned was to thank people sincerely for the role they play in her life. She has taken this advice to heart and regularly sits down to "think of people that I don't think … that I haven't thanked who I'm thanking now" (Linda 152).

However, with the exception of Mary, only one other respondent made a clear link between coaching and its impact on their attitude positively influencing their perceptions and experience of resilience.

4.5.1.3 Perceptions of challenges and adversity

Adversity is conceptualised as a state of difficulty, distress or hardship linked to suffering, trauma, prolonged stress, misfortune or a tragic event (Tugade & Frederickson, 2004; Rutter, 1985). For the purpose of this study, a challenge was defined as an experience or situation that is perceived as an obstacle or a threat (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2007). However, a challenge can also be seen as an opportunity if the individual believes that he or she has the resources, competency and skills to manage the stress related to the challenge and the means to overcome it.

All 18 of the respondents in this study spoke about their individual experiences of challenges and adversity, with some viewing themselves as resilient, while others described various stages of resiliency. Most respondents drew a direct link between their perceptions and experiences of resilience being enhanced as a result of learning from the past challenges and exposure to adversity.

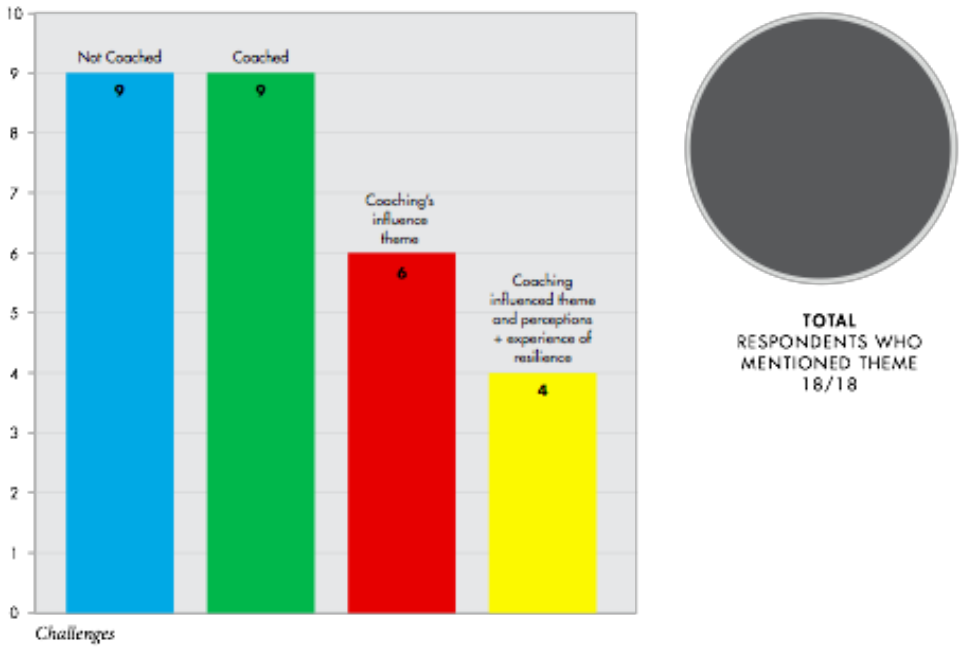

Figure 10. Challenges

Respondents dealt with challenges in different ways; some by ignoring them until they had to be faced, while others (like Alison) preferred a more direct approach:

> “I think for me resilience is to sort of as these day-to-day challenges or a problem present themselves is to ... sort of take a step back and tackle them head on.” (Alison 2:42)

For the female respondents, challenges often relate to working in male-dominated environments or maintaining a work/life balance. Alison stated that being a woman is “a daily challenge” (1:20), a point of view that is supported by Melinda who said:

> “Well from a work perspective I think there have been a number of instances in my career where I’ve had to show resilience. I think from two main factors, one that I work in a very male-dominated industry so being a woman has for me provided a couple of extra challenges and then also being relatively young for some of the positions that I found myself in.” (Melinda 36)

Respondents shared numerous examples of workplace challenges and adversity. These included dealing with workplace conflict, the pressure of career demands and dealing with staff resignations, daily work stress, retrenchment and the pressure to perform. Eugene, in particular, found that interpersonal conflict with others at work impacted negatively on his performance and stated that this challenge had triggered his interest in coaching:

> “I wasn’t doing well with those people. So that’s was actually quite a stressful time. I’d been in the job for a long time and I was used to doing things my way and I disagreed with their way. If I agreed with their way it was fine, but, I disagreed with the approach they were using. So I fought it and I think it became quite challenging at that stage and that was then when I went into coaching to go and sort that out.” (Eugene 1:18)

Many of the respondents shared intensely personal stories related to the death of loved ones, going through divorce and facing serious illnesses. Hank revealed experiencing great loss as a teenager, having lost his father at an early age and then being separated from his mother who relocated overseas. He referred to these experiences as “quite a curve ball” (Hank 1:17). Keith cited going through a divorce as one of the most challenging experiences of his life:

> “My first marriage, for hanging in there and trying to make it work. There was a whole thing of not being resilient I think I think … where do you stop something and say that is enough. When you continue to try and make it work.” (Keith 50)

a) The influence of coaching with regard to resilience and perceptions of challenges and adversity:

Of the nine respondents who had been coached, six reported that coaching helped them to address challenges in one way or another. The way in which this was accomplished varied from situation to situation. Some respondents reported that just being able to talk about their challenges helped them.

Four of the nine respondents who had been coached indicated that the coaching assisted them directly with facing their challenges, which in turn positively influenced their perception and experience of their resilience.

Eugene shared how, through coaching, he was able to gain a clearer perspective of the challenges he was facing at work and how this improved his resilience in dealing with the challenge. This assisted him in tackling conflict at work in a manner that served both him and the organisation better. He stated:

> “And my fighting it was not doing the organisation any good and myself any good and I needed to overcome that hurdle and I think that, that actually was a form of resilience that I needed and don’t think I had it at that stage. I just stuck blindly to my own way because I was convinced that my way was the right way ... So resilience there was very important and I needed to able to come back to realise earlier probably that hey ok, there’s a huge gap here, let us really sort this thing out once and for all and go forward, but, I wasn’t. That’s what I realised after the coaching, during the coaching, that that is what I should have been doing instead of just trying to fight it ... So during coaching I then, this was highlighted to me more effectively and I would then able to then come out and say ok I’m going to address this.” (Eugene 2:32)

4.5.1.4 Confidence

In the context of this research, 'confidence' refers to the feeling or belief that one can rely and trust in oneself and a belief in one's abilities. Confidence is closely related to the concepts of self-esteem and self-efficacy, with self-efficacy being defined as the belief in one's ability to perform a required task (Bandura, 1977).

15 of the 18 respondents mentioned confidence as a key component of their resilience. Linked to this belief that confidence was important for resilience, was the belief that lack of confidence or self-doubt had a negative impact on resilience.

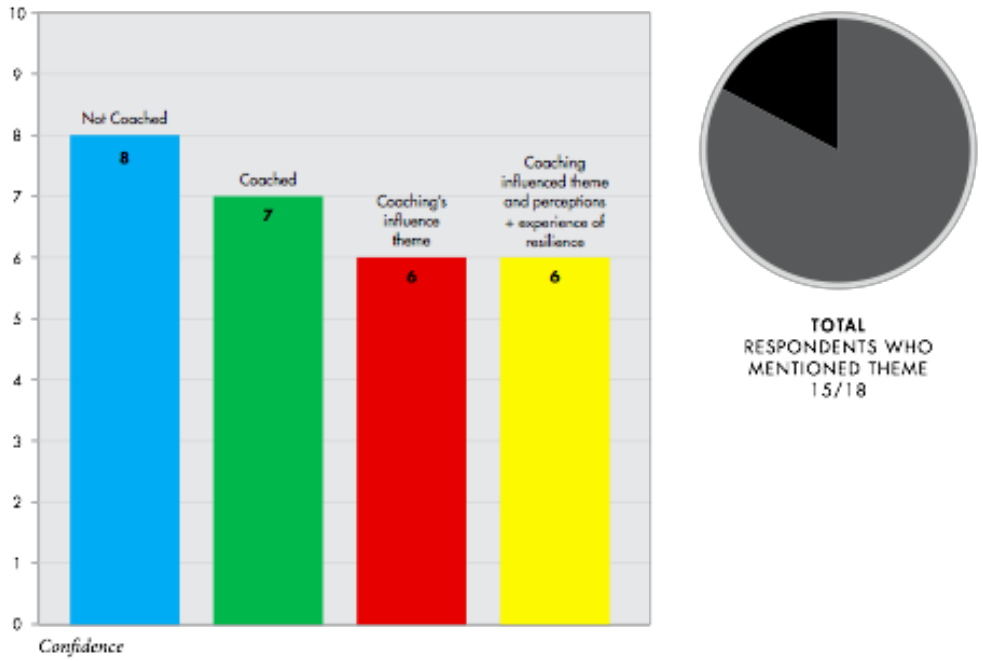

Figure 11. Confidence

The aspect of confidence that was cited most frequently by the respondents was the belief that overcoming challenges and adversity in their past increased their confidence in their ability to deal with current or potential challenges. In other words, their confidence was boosted by past experiences of being resilient. The majority of the respondents mentioned situations where they experienced themselves as being resilient even as young children or young adults. Respondents mentioned that they draw strength and confidence from these experiences as adults. The following view expresses the perspective and experience of many of the respondents:

> "I do have some deep-rooted confidence that when I have faced similar situations in my life before I have been able to deal with them and I think I have the mechanisms that I would regard as being resilient. I think to have some sense confidence that you have faced uncertainty before and managed it, then I think that certainly helps in making the decision and go forward and say I'll embrace and take it on …" (Dean 1:25)

The theme of confidence includes three sub-themes, namely self-trust, self-doubt and control.

a) Self-trust

Central to the concept of confidence is the sense of being able to trust oneself. This seems to be linked to trusting one's gut feeling or instinct and acting upon it. Mark recalled how "trusting his gut" assisted him through difficult times and thereby enhanced his ability to be resilient:

> "That I can trust myself, that I can trust that instinct and that gut. I think, for me, it was a revelation to be put under such pressure and then go through this and come out fine. In hindsight it was that I can trust myself to make the right decision at critical, critical moments. It can be 'make or break' and for me, under that stressful environment, your family is falling apart and all of that, it was 'make or break'. I am either going to stuff up my job badly or you don't take care of yourself to the point where you are physically not well. In hindsight, trusting my gut." (Mark 72)

Mary echoed this by stating:

> "And that was the fact that I can trust myself, I can trust my instinct. I am ok. It reaffirmed a lot of decisions I was making and needed to make, because there wasn't anybody." (Mary 92)

b) Self-doubt

A significant number of respondents shared that they attributed reduced self-confidence to self-doubt and uncertainty, which in turn decreased their resilience. These moments of

doubt and uncertainty related to a variety of issues and were experienced differently by each respondent, however in each instance an increase in self-doubt or a lack of confidence related to a decrease in their experience and perception of resilience. For Alison it was about being passed over for a promotion that she was earmarked for:

> "It also made me question my place in the organisation ... and it raised issues for me on a personal level as well. Well I think when I first heard the news because of my own lack of self-confidence I wasn't entirely surprised. I don't think I fully believed that they would actually appoint me ... so it was almost as if it was just confirmation that I truly wasn't good enough for the role." (Alison 4:106-108)

For others, such as Keith, this related to uncertainty:

> "At the moment I wake up every day and think, "Do I sell XYZ? Do I close it down? Do I work?" There are 3 different options there and each has a different outcome and it's all about what is important in life. Where I am lacking resilience now is that I am lacking the answers, I am not quite sure what is important."
> (Keith 278)

c) Control

The feeling of being either in or out of control of a situation, change or challenge was reported as being central to the respondents' perceptions and experiences of resilience, as it influenced their level of confidence to deal with the issue at hand. Many reported that the ability to distinguish between what was within their control, and could, therefore be influenced, versus that which was outside their control, influenced their resilience. They shared that a sense of being in control improved their confidence levels, which, in turn, enhanced their resilience.

Here, Mark describes his thoughts regarding feeling out of control:

> "You just have to handle the cards you are dealt with and you either have to climb up or down the mountain, that's it. You can't stay there. It was at the acceptance that I have no control over this. It is about accepting that there is no control and

taking something very logically, 'What is the logical next step?' and working through that." (Mark 43)

In order to regain a sense of control, Mark developed a plan to deal with his challenge. By pro-actively making a decision to think ahead, he regained some sense of direction. He referred to this as his "turning point" (Mark 62). This sub-theme and quote once again highlights the inter-relatedness of the themes as it speaks to control and planning (4.6.1.1 b) in relation to each other and to resilience. For Dean, a lack of control has a negative impact on his confidence and resilience. He indicated his preference for being in control of situations when he said: "As soon as I feel I don't have control of it then my confidence would be diluted because now I am in somebody else's hands and I am not in control of it and I don't know what he is going to do in his bit. Therefore I feel I must be in control of all the components that are necessary" (Dean 15:501).

Ursula, too, spoke about how her experience of confidence and resilience was reduced when faced with things she perceived as outside her control. She stressed that her biggest challenge is dealing with the "uncontrollable" aspects of life (Ursula 32).

d) The influence of coaching on resilience and confidence

Six of the nine respondents who received coaching reported that it had a positive impact on their confidence levels, and that this, in turn, enhanced their resilience. Significantly, although coaching influenced self-trust and reduced self-doubt, none of the respondents reported that coaching impacted their resilience in terms of their perception and experience of control.

For these six respondents, coaching enhanced their confidence and influenced their perceptions and experiences of resilience positively. This varied from a sense of being able to sustain the necessary confidence to keep going, the confidence to try new things, increased confidence in their instinct and gut feeling when facing difficult decisions, and in 'pushing through' tough situations.

For Alison, the coaching process highlighted her value and assisted her in maintaining a certain level of confidence:

> "I think in a lot of ways the coaching last year reminded me that I am valuable that I do have something to offer that it's not ok to treat people that way. Like I say I have my own confidence issues and when that happened it just floored me. That is probably one of my bigger challenges is my confidence in myself. And the person *[coach]* just really helped to sort of keep that confidence up." (Alison 12:421)

Through the gentle encouragement of her coach, Melinda experienced a new willingness and confidence to explore options. She noted, "it just gave me confidence to try and pursue things" (Melinda 252). Melinda, amongst others, also spoke about the value of having a coach that provided a 'sounding board' and how that assisted in the development of their confidence. Melinda still uses many of the questioning techniques her coach used during the process subsequent to coaching:

> "Also that from my coaching I felt that my coach was very good in providing me with that kind of unbiased sounding board feedback and that's specifically what I had asked her for. I didn't want her just to prompt. I wanted her to prompt me to think about situations but I didn't want her to simply endorse my take on the situation. I wanted her to test it and question it and you know if she believed I was wrong to tell me. But I had developed quite a lot of confidence as well from that the whole coaching experience so while I was going through this situation I would kind of go back and think well if I still had a coach kind of what would the questions be that she would ask me around this?" (Melinda 180)

4.5.1.5 Motivation and purpose

Motivation refers to one's sense of purpose, specifically in the face of adversity, and is the personal meaning people find in the world which drives them to persevere. This connection and personal belief system offers a higher purpose or meaning to many. 13 of the 18 respondents interviewed discussed the role of motivation in goal achievement and overcoming adversity, which, in turn, supported their resilience.

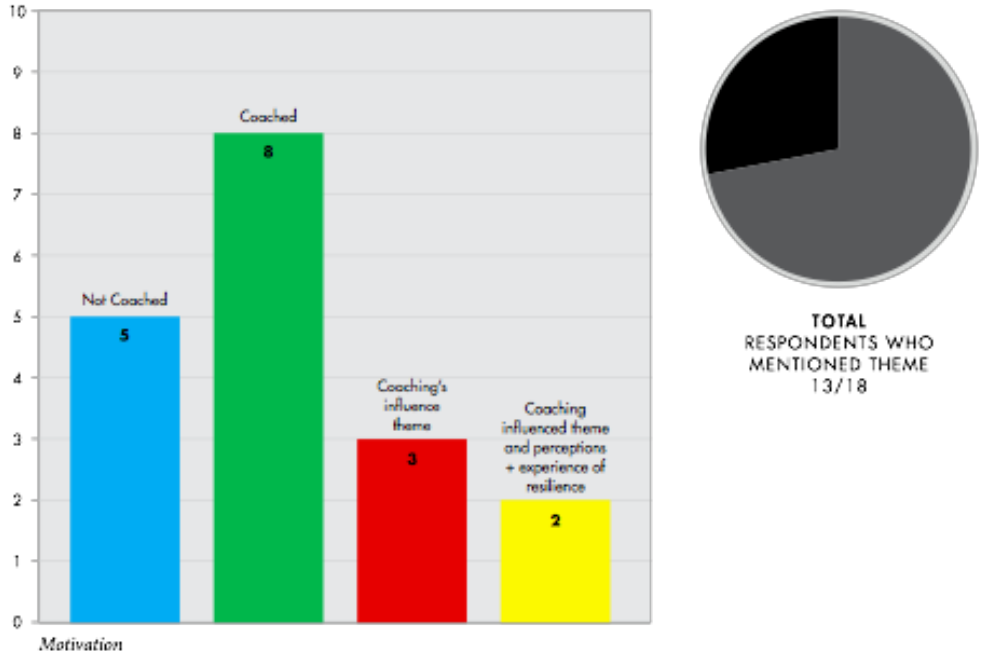

Figure 12. Motivation

The goals and motivational factors were wide-ranging and differed amongst the respondents. The common denominator, however, was the positive impact that the motivation and/or goals had on their resilience.

Leonard spoke about how he was motivated from a young age by to do well, and even though he had made mistakes in the past, he believes that even small successes motivate him to keep going despite challenges.

> "I have always been incredibly ambitious business wise, even from a young age like I wanted to do very well as a business man, I didn't know anything else. I think if you get a bit of good news, a little victory, it kind of helps you, you know."
> (Leonard 260)

Alison felt that it was her role as provider for her family that 'kept her going', despite negative encounters and challenges:

> "I'm the primary breadwinner and regardless of what happens I need to bring home an income ... I don't know if that gives me energy necessarily but it's certainly a motivating factor to want to work it out." (Alison 10:340)

Eugene draws strength from within with his motivation, linking it to an internal drive. He said that he attributes his resilience to "wanting to succeed and wanting to improve and wanting to do better" (Eugene 4:109). In addition to Eugene's internal drive, external praise and overcoming failure also play a role:

> "I am hugely buoyed by success and praise. So I'm easily flattered. I am when I, have success, it really just makes me want to just perform even more and tackle more. I can rule the world. When I hit failure, I take a while to absorb it but then it's my next challenge and then I'm determined to overcome it. And I've had many, many failures in life as we all have and I just need that time to absorb it and to get through it and to think it through. And then I pick myself up and I run with it again. And ja so, either success or failure has sort of made me want to go and get out there and do more again." (Eugene 102)

a) The influence of coaching on resilience and motivation:

For the respondents who had been coached, three reported that coaching influenced their goals and motivation. However, although there was feedback that coaching supported goal setting and that this was valuable, only two established a discernible link between coaching, goal setting and their resilience. Alison shared that she found goal setting motivational and helpful in terms of her personal development:

> "We discussed setting our own goals in a work environment. What are my goals, what am I trying to achieve but instead of just verbalising them write them down. He'd often make you write things down so you've always got it to refer back to." (Alison 586)

The influence of coaching on motivation and resilience is reflected in the following statement:

> "If all you're thinking of is the pain and the weight and so on which is where we go emotionally ... the coach takes the away. The coach reminds you of why you're there. And it's very powerful." (Jack 152)

4.5.1.6 Self-awareness and insight

15 of the 18 respondents made statements regarding self-awareness and insight. Self-awareness and insight serve as a foundation for self-knowledge, which equipped them to respond to challenges and adversity in an appropriate manner according to the requirements of the situation. Self-awareness is defined as the attainment of insight into one's attitudes, motives, reactions, defenses, strengths and weaknesses (APA, 2007). Insight involves the ability to ask deep and powerful questions of oneself and consequently provide honest answers of one thoughts, behaviour and motivation. (Kumpfer, 1999)

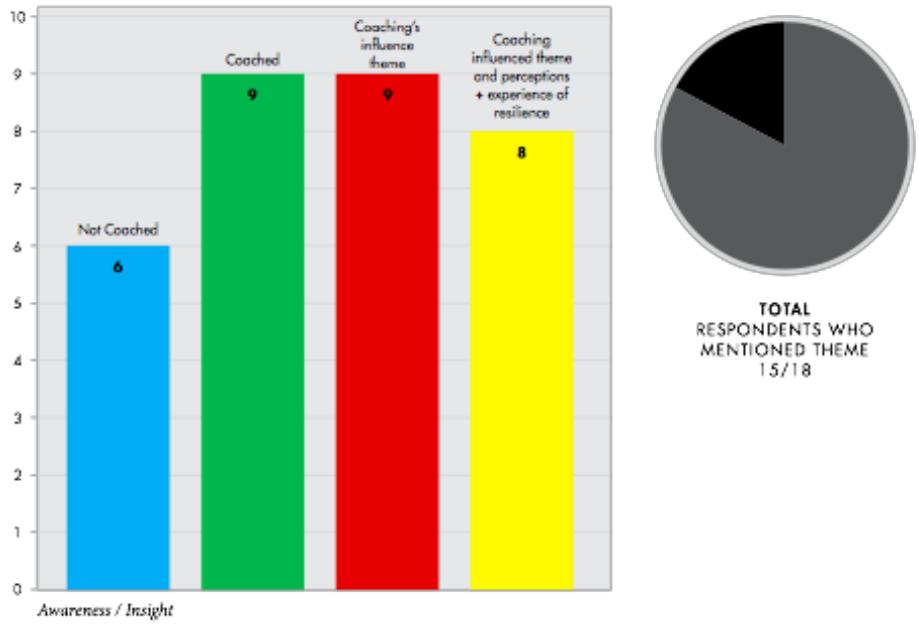

Figure 13. Awareness and insight

When the respondents reflected on the concept of self-awareness they spoke about awareness on different levels, including their thinking, behaviour, emotions, personal strengths and weaknesses and their attitude. It was stated that increased awareness assisted them in terms of a clearer understanding of themselves and their abilities. In addition, it enabled them to identify areas that required development or increased attention in order to improve or enhance their resilience.

Laura found that being self-aware of her thinking, emotions and natural reaction when under pressure assists her in forging ahead when her natural inclination might be to pull back:

> "My awareness, awareness of where my thinking is. So it's my awareness of being angry with myself … I would try and access different access points of information. I would also have to be very self-aware because if you get in a stressful situation and it is only when you are in a stressful situation that you know what you do … When I am under pressure I back off. So just having that awareness when going back to the particular situation that I am in and I knew what I did under pressure and I knew I had to push through that and get hold of my natural disposition of pulling back. I am just trying to get as much information and awareness of what is going on within myself to execute." (Laura 58)

For Mary, being resilient is linked to self-awareness regarding her subjective perspective and the reality of the situation and that this requires "the self-awareness is the capacity for introspection….. and also to observe what is the truth" (Mary 609).

For some like Dina, the positive link between awareness and resilience is clear. She stated:

> "I suppose what enhanced the resilience is being aware and knowing exactly the areas of my weakness." (Dina 7:2)

Insight naturally emerged from the interviews set as a theme relating to the coached respondents' experience and perception of resilience. For the purpose of this study, insight is defined as the understanding of a specific cause and effect in a specific context. This occurs when one is able to solve a problem by seeing it in a new way, connecting the problem to another relevant problem and seeing 'the bigger picture'. Respondents noted that moments of insight and learning generated greater awareness, much like greater awareness generated insight. This seems to be a 'chicken-and-egg' situation.

Dean described the relatedness between awareness and insight well when he referred to how self-observation (awareness) facilitates insight and self-knowledge which assists him through life's challenges:

> "If you are willing to observe the evidence of your own experience and recognise it for what it really is then I think you can gain a lot of key things which can help you for the rest of your life. If you can do that when you are younger … it then again helps you to navigate life's choppy seas." (Dean 539)

a) The influence of coaching on resilience, self-awareness and insight

Each respondent who had been coached emphasised that coaching increased their self-awareness. Of those nine, eight linked increased self-awareness to improved resilience.

A respondent described it as follows:

> "I could see more clearly, I could see things that I wasn't willing to look at before. It allowed me to take ownership of things I hadn't yet taken responsibility for. It allowed new capabilities to emerge. It allowed me to move to a different level which, initially, was way beyond my vision of who I was. The impact of saying it's mine, I take responsibility for it. I was allowed to integrate it and I just moved to a higher level of understanding." (Laura 108)

When asked how coaching improved self-awareness the respondent stated:

> "Well, I think what helps you the most in coaching is the mirroring. You are able to see yourself in what you are doing. So it's the mirroring aspect, ja. There is no arguing about what you have seen in the mirror. You can argue with what other people have to say but you can't argue with what you see in the mirror." (Laura 207)

When asked to share in which ways coaching had impacted their experience and perception of resilience, the majority of respondents mentioned that it enhanced personal insight.

Laura found that she gained insight through the coach's questioning. She raised a valid point stating that she might still have come to the same insights on her own, but that it may have taken a longer time. Other respondents echoed this perspective. From this,

the researcher concluded that coaches have a valuable role to play in regard to stimulating thinking through effective questioning with the aim of facilitating insight:

> "The difference with coaching is that you…um…with coaching you force the issue because the coaches ask you the questions, you don't always come to those questions without the coach. So I think the coach forced the questions that had to be asked, so maybe I would have come to the conclusions but maybe in a longer life cycle, in a longer span." (Laura 202)

Ursula highlighted how a coaching conversation created a moment of insight and clarity for her, as it also did for other participants:

> "My coach made a comment about it once….. And that made me think about it and reflect about it a bit, about why it is. What role that played for me, and what it is if I am still caught in that. What it is I need to free myself from it. Yes, I've thought about that. So it was, it was really a by the way comment made by him that then hooked and I took that one up and reflected on that particular one, because it just hit a nerve in me. It freed me……. So in that sense just that coaching is very good." (Ursula 175)

4.5.1.7 Emotional regulation and awareness

Emotional regulation refers to a person's ability to modulate emotion and emotional awareness refers to insight into one's feelings and emotional reaction. 16 of the respondents commented on how their emotions influence their level of resilience both positively and negatively. They shared that emotional regulation and management played a significant role in improving their resilience.

In contrast, overwhelming emotions reduce their sense of resilience. Respondents reported experiencing a wide range of emotions during times of challenge and adversity these include (but are not limited to) fear, rage, anxiety and sadness.

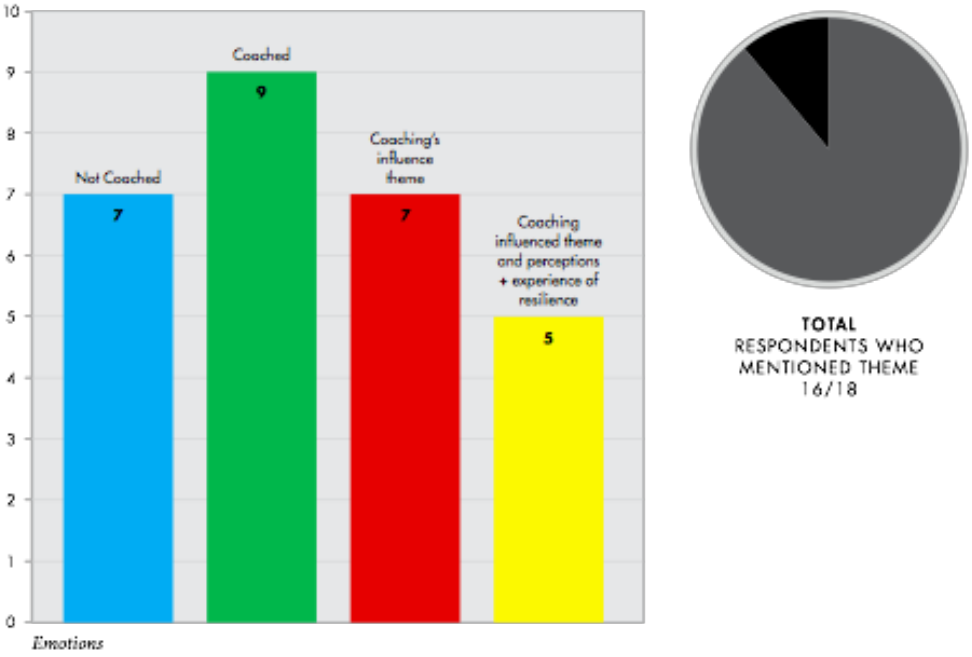

Figure 14. Emotions

Most respondents indicated that their experience and perception of resilience was enhanced when they managed their emotions successfully. This is also referred to as emotional-regulation. JP shared his view on resilience: “If you can, control your emotions, always keep a clear head and be calm, particularly in a leadership position”. He added that maintaining a sense of humour during challenges aids his resilience:

> “Another one is actually humour. It is such a wonderful thing to have, if you can laugh about things that have happened. By the way, I think that is a wonderful South African character trait, we really have the ability to laugh at ourselves and situations ... Another thing that humour does is it allows you to escape from whatever the pressure is and it allows you to stand back off yourself.” (JP 83)

For Laura, it is important to acknowledge her feelings but to refrain from action until she has been able to process them. She explained that she tries to not act out of emotion and to instead put some distance between what has happened and herself in order to have more choices with how she responds (129). While many respondents mentioned the importance of managing their emotions, they also noted that it is equally important to be aware of and acknowledge emotions that surface as a result of challenges and adversity. According to Dean:

> "I certainly never, ever pretend that I am not getting a battering or when I feel humiliated, I never say I don't care because I do care ... I go into my fear, anger, sulk or whatever it is for a while and bounce back quite quick and get my brain working to see what I can do about this." (Dean 6:158)

The experience is similar for Hank, who learnt the importance of recognising and appreciating the role of emotions later in his life. According to him, resilience requires the following:

> "To understand what emotions are and tackle them ... There's sort to two steps to it I think. The first one is to be able to identify what emotions you're experiencing. To be able to label them and describe what's happening. Whereas before I would have just ignored them. So, now the big step is how am I feeling? And to deliberately think about how am I feeling and how does that make me feel? So that's a major step is just to surface it and then once you've surfaced it and labelled it, is for you then to understand why you feel like that." (Hank 6:156)

a) The influence of coaching on resilience and emotional regulation and awareness

Seven respondents stated that the coaching process allowed them to access their emotions, develop ways to regulate and manage their emotions and also provided an opportunity to share what they were feeling in a safe environment. For many, simply being able to talk freely about their emotions enhanced their experience and perception of their resilience, and supported them in forging ahead while dealing with challenges. Coaching released long-suppressed emotions and facilitated dealing with them, thereby also increasing emotional awareness. This allowed respondents to remain calm and think clearly. Some extracts that highlight this theme include:

> "I found it very valuable and I decided to see her on a monthly basis after that ... because I could see the value in it for me in terms of managing my resilience, my emotional levels and building up specific skills to deal with certain situations." (Linda 230)

> "It was a resilience to accept that he was meant to be in my life for a season maybe not a permanent fixture, it wasn't easy to cope with when you feeling sad but when you get over that, you realise that it was meant to be. So that was a resilience I worked on then, that acceptance of an emotional hurt. The resilience now, I think is, you know my coach is also helping me a lot not to be emotional about things." (Rose 441)

> "I think it allowed me to air more and more than I would have normally with anybody else. I spoke about feelings and issues that I had that I, they were like my darkest deepest secrets. It was friendly I felt that I could talk about it and also felt I needed to talk about it." (Eugene 5:138)

Of the seven who indicated that coaching influenced their emotions, five drew a link between the influence on their emotions and improved resilience.

4.5.2 IT (objective experience)

According to the Integral framework, the "IT" or objective experience is that which is observable and can be tested. It focuses on the individual domain of the physical body and behaviour and includes biology, neurobiology, physical activity and health and wellness.

a) Wellness

A key theme that emerged in the IT (objective experience) arena is that of wellness. For the purpose of this study, 'wellness' was defined as physical health and health promoting behaviours including healthy eating habits, getting enough sleep and exercising regularly in order to maintain good health and vitality. Respondents commented on experiencing long working hours, illness, lack of sleep due to stress and eating on the run as negative to resilience, while exercise, a healthy diet, relaxation and enough rest was linked to increased resilience. Overall, respondents highlighted the importance of general well-being, health and energy.

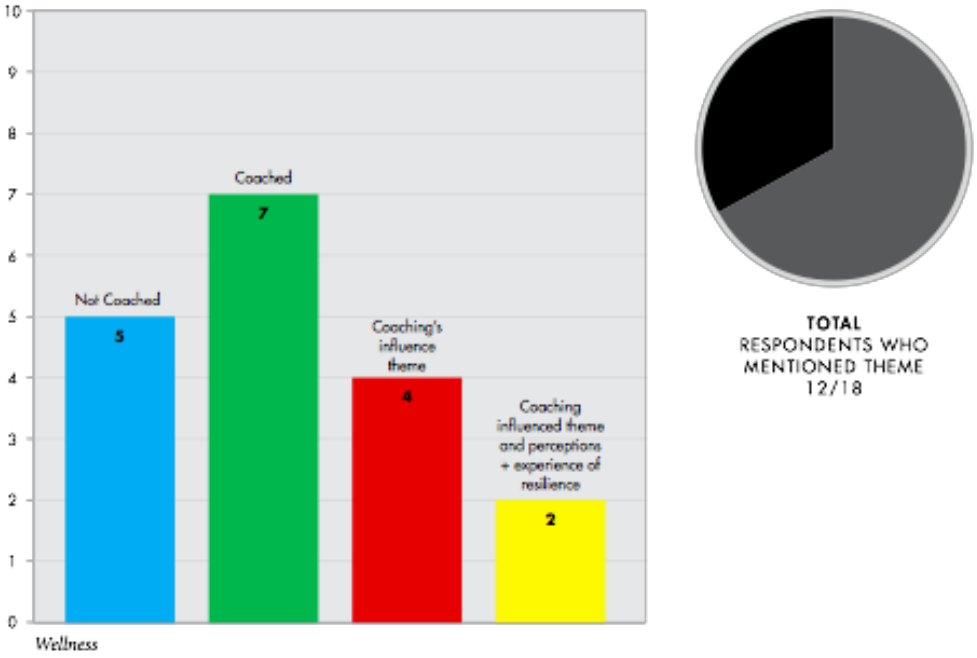

Figure 15. Wellness

The majority of the respondents mentioned the importance of having energy in order to be resilient. As Mark put it: “Personally I would say that energy level has a lot to do with how resilient I can be. If I have low energy levels I battle to be resilient. So energy has a lot to do with it” (130). JP, who added that energy can be gained by taking a break from work-related issues, echoed this. He finds that spending time with friends and family helps him and refers to this time off as “an important part of being resilient, ‘tanking’ up energy” (117).

Some respondents commented that their resilience was reduced when they were tired or very emotional as these factors reduced their energy levels. Linda noted:

> “I’d say the only thing that makes you feel ... that makes me feel less resilient is when you go through challenging times, emotionally you get very tired and your energy levels … you burn so much energy because you’re in a creative stage, so you burn mental energy, emotional energy. You burn energy and you spend a lot of time dealing with the emotions. So for me it’s to do with energy. It’s the emotions, it’s the energy and often in those times you don’t sleep well either. So it’s a physical drain too. That’s the only thing that really, really kills it for me.”
> (Linda 208)

A healthy diet is also cited as a key component of health and resilience. Mary revealed that in order to be resilient she eats healthily to “get health back” (466).

One of the respondents spoke about the value of meditation as tool for relaxation. This also fits into an overall health and well-being theme. Laura stated:

> “So I think meditation definitely helps, it gets me out of my brain ... I mean it cultivates an environment for answers to come up and present themselves. So meditation definitely and also an attitude of openness, just being present. I suppose that is what it is just being present and the more I can be present the more I can be aware of things that cross my path that might offer a solution to whatever it is I’m struggling with.” (Laura 157)

For some of the respondents, the effect of adversity or prolonged stress resulted in physical ailments, which in turn reduced their resilience. Dina commented on how her body reacted to severe stress when she said: “Yes and headaches migraines and now I realise that that’s how my body was actually reacting” (5:130).

b) The influence of coaching on resilience and wellness

Four respondents mentioned that coaching addressed wellness. One respondent (Linda) mentioned that coaching is “not only brainwork it’s bodywork as well”. Interestingly, only two respondents indicated this as an influence on their perceptions and experiences of resilience.

For Dina, however, the impact was dramatic. She stated: “the fact that when I was coached and I got to know about you know somatic intelligence it helped me to go far back and understand what I was going through and because I understood what I was going through it helped me to accelerate in terms of my healing” (Dina 253).

4.5.3 WE (intersubjective experience)

Integral Theory views this quadrant as the realm of relationships, communities and culture.

a) Relationships and support

For the purpose of this research, 'relationship' was defined as a meaningful connection between two or more people such as in the context of a family, marriage, friendship or workplace environment. 'Support' was defined as acceptance, reassurance, encouragement and assistance.

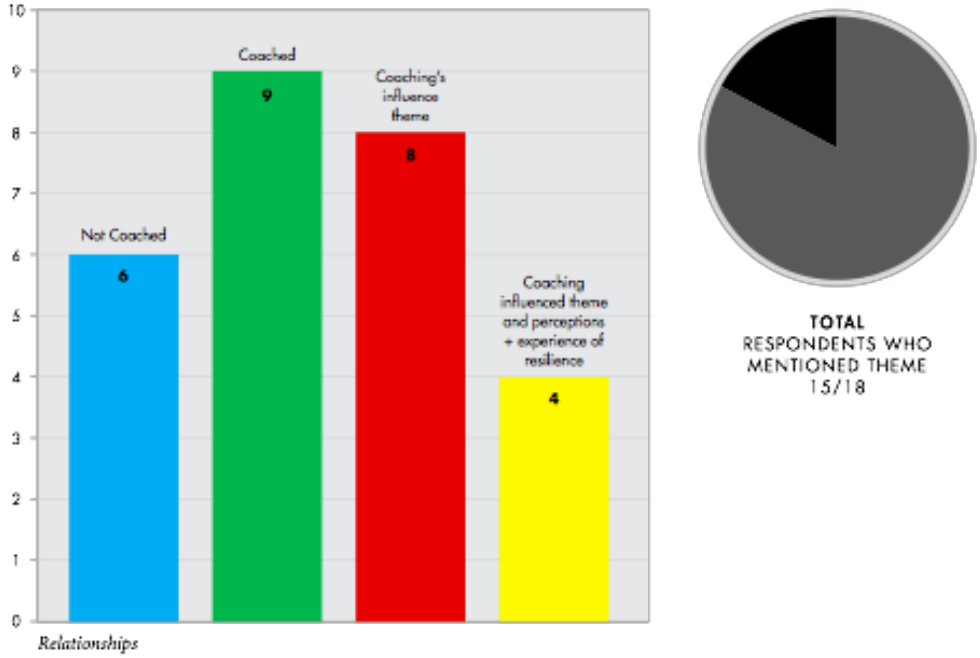

Figure 16. Relationships

15 of the 18 respondents spoke about the importance of relationships, specifically those relationships that were considered to be supportive. Some extracts highlighting the value of support and support structures include:

> "For me having the sort of unconditional support of my loved ones helps me be more resilient. I think having people to talk it through because often our own perceptions can be quite different ... so it's nice to talk things through with people who can give you a different perspective." (Alison 319)

> "I think what it's done, and it's interesting in the light of our earlier conversation - what it's done is it's emphasised even more how important relationships with people are when - you know the what's-it hits the fan ..." (Hank 342)

> "You're supported to that extent by the guys, gives you the confidence to sort of take on anything. It's quite incredible. You know that guys are there for you. They're really, really there for you." (Hank 11:355)

> "What I did do, in retrospect, and this is how I now know a little bit about resilience is that I had a lot of very positive relationships. So I had some really good friends ... In fact I seem to remember one girlfriend it was probably an 18 month relationship. So, it was quite a serious relationship and I'm sure that must have contributed very significantly." (Hank 3:73)

In the same way that positive relationships can help build levels of resilience, Keith noted that the opposite is true "if people that are close to me don't have faith in my ability" (300). Relationships therefore also have the power to affect levels of resilience negatively.

b) The influence of coaching on resilience, relationships and support

The majority of the respondents who received coaching indicated that the coaching relationship itself was beneficial and supportive. The following extracts demonstrate the respondents' perspectives on the coaching relationships they experienced:

> "And he actually … even the situation with ABC company he could see the dynamics. So he could really help me with that, and I think with Pierre, I loved his sense of humour, I trusted him, I felt comfortable. He was the first port of call when I heard I was going blind, and then I discovered he was blind in one eye. And I was like "wow, how did you deal with that as a child?" So I think the coaching relationship we had was extraordinary." (Mary 261)

> "Because I think it is a unique relationship that is there to cultivate the potential in the person and I don't think any other relationship fosters that intention. You've got therapy, there is no commitment to future growth. Your parents have the intention but not necessarily the skills to do that, your spouse may be loving and accepting but then not necessarily have the skills to or the understanding of where you want to go to. Children, you can't expect that from the children, your awareness and consciousness is way more than theirs. You can't expect that from

> your children so where else would you get that relationship from? A friend, as well, a friend could be another source who could cultivate an environment where you can be completely authentic. Again to have the skills to reflect back and to put it back into your court and trust that you know the answer. Coaching is the only environment that does that." (Laura 26)

In addition, coaching improved many respondents' interpersonal relationships. Dina's statement captures this:

> "And, and, and one of the areas I improved was listening skills. And having patience ... improving on my relationships, improving on my listening skills, my relationships, the way I do things" (Dina 35)

> "What helped me the most was my coach being able to help me to look into different aspects of my life and you know the way I started asking questions at work in meetings, the way I started dealing with my relationships you know I could see areas where maybe we've got an argument with my husband where I was actually perpetuating because of the way that I was doing things like I wouldn't even listen to the whole sentence I would already have an answer. I would block and not even breathe." (Dina 344)

Four respondents who had been coached drew a link between a trusting and supportive relationship with their coach and a positive influence on their perceptions and experiences of resilience.

4.5.4 ITS (interobjective experience)

Respondents focused limited attention on the interobjective experience. The interobjective experience includes the realm of the environment (both natural and human made), systems and technology. Six respondents made statements related to the interobjective experience. Analysis of the interviews did not reveal the presence of significant themes under the ITS (interobjective) quadrant as can be seen in the summary of findings in Figure 17.

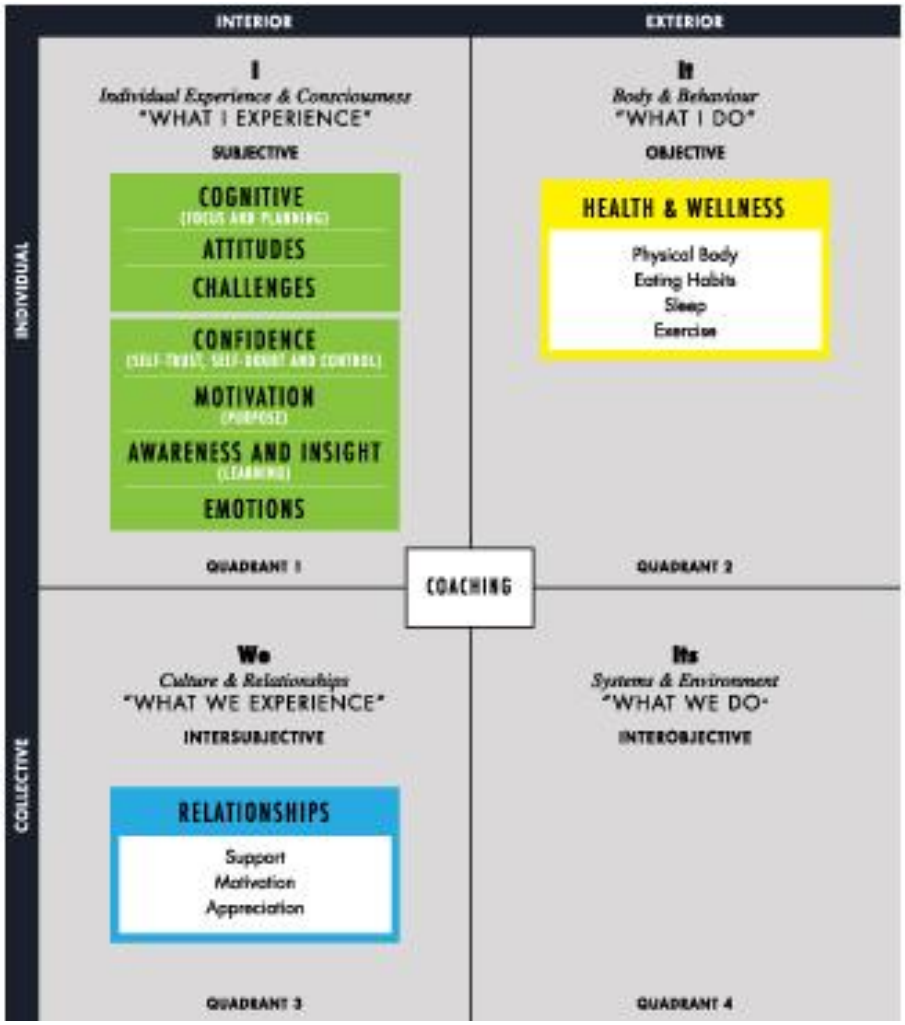

Figure 17. Summary of findings

4.6 Concluding remarks

This chapter described the findings from the thematic content analysis conducted within the framework of the research question. The findings provide insights into challenges that executives face, their perceptions and experience of resilience and the influence of coaching on their perceptions and experiences of resilience, as well as the ways in which this influence is experienced. Furthermore, the findings provide insight into the difference(s) of the perceptions and experiences of resilience between those respondents who had received coaching versus those who had not. Finally, the adoption of an Integral framework allowed for additional insights regarding which aspects of resilience executives pay the most attention to. In Chapter 5 the findings are analysed, discussed and compared to existing literature detailed in Chapter 2.

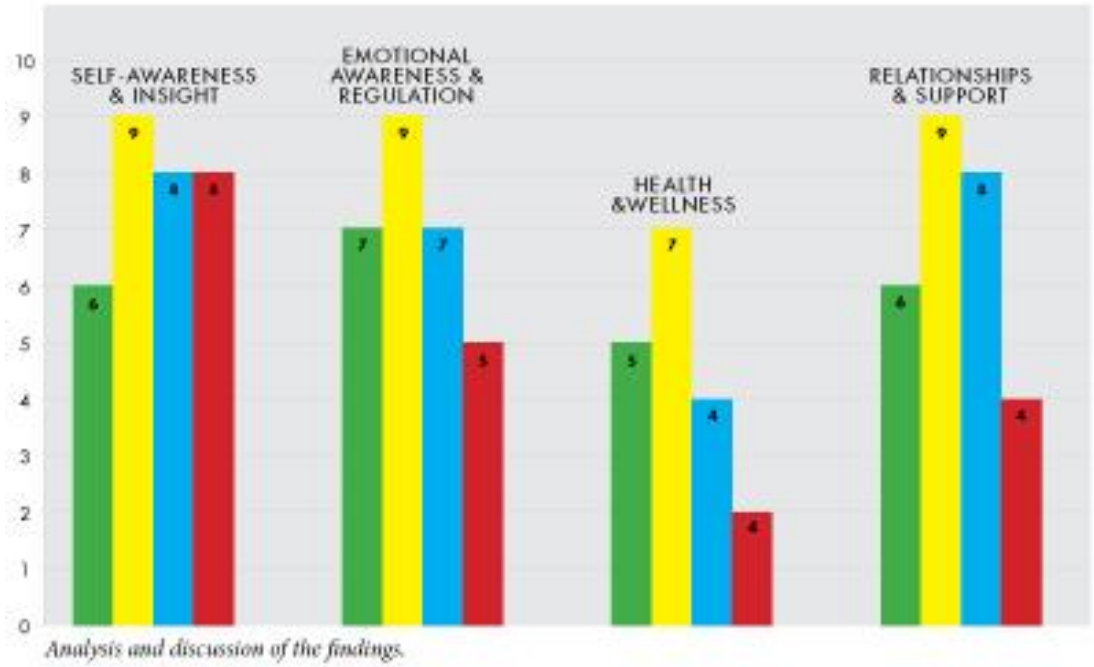

Figure 18. Overall themes and participants

5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter of the research report focuses on the discussion and analysis of the research findings presented in Chapter 4 in relation to the problem statement and the literature, and presents the interpretation of the data obtained from the research participants. This does not imply that the findings contained within Chapter 4 are the only ones with relevance, but rather that brevity necessitated a focus on the most prominent themes extracted from the data set. Chapter 5 is organised according to the Integral framework adopted in Chapter 4. First, the participants' subjective experience of the construct of resilience is discussed, followed by a focus on the behavioural, inter-subjective and objective experience of resilience, placing these themes in context with the literature.

Lastly, this chapter is concluded by a general discussion regarding the influence of coaching interventions on executives' perceptions and experiences of resilience.

5.2 Discussion of results from an integral perspective

The purpose of this research study was to explore the influence of coaching interventions on executives' perceptions and experiences of resilience.

This research therefore investigated:

- How executives who have not been coached perceive and experience resilience.
- How executives who have been coached perceive and experience resilience.
- The difference of the perceptions and experiences of resilience between those executives who had received coaching versus those who had not.
- The ways in which coaching interventions influenced executives' perceptions and experiences of resilience.

5.2.1 Discussion pertaining to 'I' (Subjective experience)

Seven themes related to the subjective experience of resilience were extracted from the interviews through a process of thematic content analysis. These themes were cognition (focus and planning), attitude, perspectives of challenges and adversity, confidence (self-trust, self-doubt and control), motivation, self-awareness and insight, and emotional regulation and awareness.

Although the findings show that coaching interventions influenced participants' perceptions and experiences of the themes, the level of influence varied significantly from one theme to the next. The findings also indicate that the influence of coaching interventions on a theme do not automatically translate to an equal influence on participants' perceptions and experiences of resilience. Although coaching influenced participant's perceptions and experiences of resilience, the findings show the influence was most pertinent to three themes (confidence, self-awareness and insight, and emotional awareness and regulation), and lower for the other four (attitude, cognition, motivation, and perceptions of challenges and adversity).

The findings indicate that resilience is commonly described as 'the ability to bounce back', and that the respondents view resilience both as a multi-faceted construct and a process which is linked to positive adaptation despite experiences of adversity and challenges. One participant explained resilience in the following way:

> "Resilience to me it says despite having goals or a vision, despite knowing your destination you know that along the path you are going to meet obstacles, bottlenecks but when you meet that you should be able to step back, look at it, deal with it and still move forward. That's how I could explain resilience." (Dina 2:38)

More recent literature supports the notion that the construct of resilience is comprised of protective factors, risk factors and the individual's processing of these factors, resulting in positive outcomes, which links resilience to a process of adaptation despite individual challenges and adversity, as opposed to a fixed personality trait (Montpetit, Bergeman,

Deboeck, Tiberio, & Boker, 2010; Rutter, 2007; Richardson, 2002; Mastens, 2001; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Kumpfer, 1999).

Melinda articulated the perspective of resilience being a process of not only returning to previous levels of functioning but perhaps even beyond that which you have become familiar with. She noted:

> "And it's certainly the word resilience for me suggests that you do kind of comeback you know that although there is maybe some difficulty in it during the time you're experiencing it you definitely kind of bounce back to your former self or perhaps even better." (Melinda 22)

This view is supported in literature which indicates that resilience is often characterised and perceived as this ability to 'bounce back'. A central feature of the development of resilience is the ability to regain equilibrium or 'recover' after experiencing challenges or adversity (Atkinson, Martin, & Rankin, 2009; Collins, 2007; Tugade & Frederickson, 2004).

The findings also suggest that there is no single perception or experience of resilience. Much of what we might find challenging, or even stressful, in our lives is rooted in our construction of a particular reality. It is often not the event itself but a particular interpretation (or anticipation) of the event that leads to stress. Consequently, although most respondents refer to the ability to 'bounce-back' from a crisis, there are distinct differences in how 'bouncing back' is comprehended. Jim (3:63) echoed this view and added that resilience comes in different forms. He suggested that there are various types of resilience – resilience in relationships, in emotional situations, and in the face of physical pressure. Dean added that resilience not only varies from one person to the next, but also varies individually over a period of time. He stated:

> "If I look back because what I would have gathered to be my resilience then is very different from what I regard it now because it has been tested on a higher level" (Dean)

Potentially, this difference could be ascribed to variations in personality, personal history, risk and protective factors, attributional style and the way respondents perceive, manage and experience challenges. This aligns with the literature on resilience, which indicates that resilience is a difficult construct to understand and conceptualise, evolves over time and varies across contexts, depending on the individual's unique risk and protective factors and the nature of the challenge (Montpetit, et al., 2010; Kumpfer, 1999).

Despite commonalities in how the respondents viewed the construct of resilience and its relation to adversity, the ways in which challenges or adversity are perceived and experienced varies from one person to the next. Jack highlighted this by noting "adversity to one person may be a walk in the park for somebody else so that adversity is in the mind of the person who's dealing with it" (Jack 24). This perspective is consistent with literature which indicates that individuals ascribe different meaning to adversity and react to negative events in different ways (Coifman, Bonanno, Ray, & Gross, 2007; Gordon & Song, 1994).

The findings reflect that participants perceive resilience as a process influenced by multiple factors. This perspective of resilience is echoed in literature that emphasises the importance of recognising the multi-dimensionality of resilience (Luthar, et al., 2000). Several authors argued that resilience is influenced by a diverse range of protective factors, risk factors and constitutional variables such as personality (Campbell-Sills, Cohan, & Stein, 2006; Kumpfer, 1999). Each of the seven themes in "I" (subjective experience) quadrant will now be discussed in detail.

5.2.1.1 Cognition

The findings of this research show that 13 respondents made statements regarding the role of cognition in their resilience. This finding aligns with the literature, which emphasises the role of intelligence and the use of cognitive strategies such as planning, problem solving and reframing on resilience (Bonanno, 2004; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000; Kumpfer, 1999; Polk, 1997). In addition, having a range of problem solving strategies is consistently linked with positive adaptation to challenges and thus enhances resilience (Collins, 2007). The literature on resilience highlights that the ways in which executives think about challenges and adversity influences their resilience (Margolis &

Stoltz, 2010). Respondents spoke about the importance of thinking during the periods where they required resilience. Dean remarked that for him, being resilient requires the ability to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of pursuing a specific path. He views careful evaluation of a situation as central to decision-making. He noted:

> "Resilience requires an intellectual component to it. It is not just being bloody-minded; it is not just being stubborn. I really think it has to be considered to be true resilience, otherwise it is just bluffing." (Dean 4:104)

Several respondents shared Dean's view that clarity of mind is required during adversity, and that emotion, although valuable, should not override the cognitive process. Cognitive clarity is required to understand, evaluate and make intelligent decisions when facing challenges. Dean went on to say:

> "I would never let my emotions get control of my intellectual understanding of the process. So I just understand why I am feeling the way I am now and I would never deal when my emotions are dominating my intellect ... So there is an intellectual component that must override the emotional component." (Dean 4:141)

The following statements were extracted from the interview process highlighting the role of cognitive processes such as focus, attention and planning in resilience:

> "It's interesting because, from a though perspective I was very much very focused. I went into a situation where it was crystal clear what I needed to do, what discussions I needed to have with my clients and how I needed to gear up the business. So, I had a plan in my mind that was picture perfect and I was almost calm in executing it. But on an emotional side, the betrayal was huge. And it was rather difficult. So, that's how I feel." (Linda 64)

> "For me to cope with that and balance the process of divorce in work and life that took a lot of resilience or the ability to bounce back because it needed focusing." (Mark 28)

> "I think to be resilient, whether consciously or unconsciously, requires focus." (Ursula 142)

The findings of this study show that five participants reported an influence on their thinking and cognition as a result of their Executive Coaching experience. It must be pointed out, however, that these five participants were very emphatic that coaching had a positive influence on their cognition. Despite this, of the five only three participants drew a link to an influence on their resilience. Kilburg (2004) proposed that Executive Coaching interventions should assist clients in developing cognitive control, and literature on Executive Coaching indicates that cognitive-behavioural, solution-focused coaching interventions have a positive influence on executive resilience (Grant, Curtayne, & Burton, 2009). Thus, the researcher was surprised to find that the participants did not express a greater influence on their resilience, thinking and cognitive strategies as a result of their coaching experience.

The five participants who indicated an influence on their cognition reported that the experience of Executive Coaching provided a space for them to think, analyse, assess and obtain clarity of thought. Some mentioned that it allowed them to look at challenges objectively while others indicated the value of having a conversation with a coach during which they could 'collect their thoughts'. Some excerpts on the theme of cognition and coaching include:

> "I think that's what coaching does. Coaching can only work with your own information ... Coaching is about getting out of you and then getting you to think about it. Why did you do that? Why are you thinking like that? How would you do that in the future? It's that kind of stuff and if you don't express yourself and if you don't really bring out the truth, it's gonna be useless to you." (Eugene 8:232)

> "It is a case where at first where a coach stretches you to a uncomfortable feeling of "Oh my god, what now" because she is posing a whole lot of extra things that you did not think of, or you thought of them but you tried to like suppress them, because it is a hard thing to think about. So it is that, it doesn't help you least, but it is the thing that triggers you to feel uncomfortable at first, and then it helps you more." (Rose 507)

> "What coaching did was it enabled me to unpack in no uncertain terms almost to categorise and label the issues. And the power of doing that on the one hand

created some rationalisations, created calmness ... just put so many alternatives on the table, so many different perspectives that all of a sudden you were spoilt for choice and it was out of that that you were able to choose a route, understand quickly whether that was right route. In other words the thing you needed to be resilient in or whether in fact you should choose another route or combine something. So coaching gave you the sounding board to unpack the issue and then determine the way forward from there and constantly as a mirror or as a sounding board to reflect back on and say this is where I'm going this is what I'm doing I feel like I'm in a cul-de-sac and the coach, skilled as they are, are just able to say to you how does that feel you know it's reflective. And I mean I love that. I think that's very, very powerful because otherwise you become engrossed in the issue." (Jack 258)

5.2.1.2 Attitude

The importance of a positive attitude as an internal resilience factor was evident in the findings. 13 of the 18 respondents in this study contributed to a differentiated theme around the concept of attitude. Some respondents mentioned the importance of remaining positive during adversity, while others respondents spoke about an attitude of perseverance, determination and responsibility. Several respondents expressed opinions about the interplay between a positive or negative attitude and resilience. Most of the respondents indicated that for them, the workplace was filled with challenges, and as such, requires a positive attitude to counteract stress. This is reflected in this statement:

> "The stress of doing things that involve confrontation, just the general stress of performing. For you to then survive that you need to have resilience and the way I view it, and I have not thought of it formally, part of it comes from character traits, I just think that some people with attitude are more resilient than others." (JP 8)

This concept of attitude in relation to resilience is reflected on in literature, which identifies that resilient individuals generally have a zestful, energetic, open, positive and optimistic attitude (Collins, 2007; Tugade & Frederickson, 2004; Folkman, 1997). This aligns to a research study conducted in Canada which found that people's attitudes and perspectives are central to their experience of resilience (Jensen, Trollope-Kumar,

Waters, & Everson, 2008) . Richardson (2002) cited studies into adult resilience from a perspective of positive psychology, which highlighted that the attitudinal qualities of optimism, gratitude and humility are considered resilient qualities.

It was reflected that the 'right' attitude is required in order to remain open to possibility, persevere and keep going, despite challenges and adversity, which is a key component of resilience. Dean spoke about the importance of maintaining an attitude that allows one to keep trying, making decisions and moving forward:

> "Not making the decision is a mistake and that is part of resilience, you have got to go in there and keep doing things even if it is not working. Don't ever get into your shell and start saying, 'I got that wrong, I got that wrong.' That is not the attitude you must have, you have got to say, 'I didn't know, I made a call, it didn't work out the way I wanted it to.' It has nothing to do with right or wrong. What is right or wrong is how I react to the changed circumstances and that hooks back to my re-balancing and say, 'It didn't work out, how do I go forward?" (Dean 20:673)

Although a total of 13 participants from both groups mentioned the importance of attitude in their resilience, the findings of this study only partially confirm the influence of Executive Coaching on changing or improving attitude, with only four of the nine executives who had been coached indicating that they experienced an improvement in their general attitude. This finding is only somewhat aligned with Carey et al. (2011), who argued that the main aim of coaching is affecting behavioural change through influencing and changing clients' perceptions and attitudes.

Even though four participants indicated that their coaching experience influenced their attitude, this did not translate to an influence on resilience, with only two respondents indicating a link between an improved general attitude and increased resilience. This finding is also reflected in the lack of literature linking coaching interventions and an influence on resilience as a result of an improvement in attitude. The researcher views this as an area that would benefit from additional research.

5.2.1.3 Thoughts and perceptions of challenges and adversity

It was noteworthy that according to all the participants' subjective interviews, 'resilience' was perceived, experienced and understood in relation to challenge and adversity. Some respondents, like Linda, highlighted how being exposed to challenges during childhood improved and developed her resilience later in life. She acknowledged that it has not been an easy 'ride' but believes that:

> "If you, as a child, are empowered to make your decisions, to deal with your own consequences and you don't go through life in a cocoon environment, your resilience tends to be better than if you are molly-coddled and you grew up in lala-land and you've never had to fight your own battles or there were never any deep issues that you had to face." (Linda 191)

For Linda and others, these make-or-break moments have been critical in helping them build their personal levels of resilience. The literature on resilience supports the view that, for most individuals, resilience is demonstrated and experienced when dealing with adversity, challenges and demanding situations such as bereavement, post traumatic stress and illness (Jackson, Firtko, & Edenborough, 2007; Bonanno, 2004).

Respondents in this study contributed to a differentiated theme around their individual experiences of challenges and adversity. Perceptions and experiences of challenges and adversity were varied, multi-faceted and originated from a variety of sources. The theme centred on both personal and career challenges and adversity. For some, challenges and adversity included retrenchment, interpersonal conflict, illness, loss of a loved one, working under pressure, career stress, leadership, people management, divorce, financial pressure and failure, while others revealed facing challenges of discrimination and inequality, based on gender, race and cultural background. Dina's challenge was working in a white-dominated industry where she constantly had to prove her worth:

> "And I really had that resilience you know whatever that would come to me it would just bounce back because I constantly told myself that I'm going to show, I'm going to show that I'm not in this position because I'm black. It's because I've got so much to offer. And I must just be seen that way." (Dina 2:37)

The concept of being shaped and strengthened as a result of challenging events and adversity surfaced in many of the interviews. This finding aligns with Bonanno's (2004) assertion that resilience entails individual growth and strengthening subsequent to adversity and is reflected in JP's statement, "if it doesn't kill you, it makes you stronger". Dina echoed this when she stated: "For me that was the most difficult time but I think it's actually what built me" (Dina 4:103). Mary shared a similar perspective and said: "But it is as it is, and I am who I am today and in very many instances maybe better and stronger because of it" (Mary 67).

The respondents all occupy senior positions of employment and are expected to operate in challenging and stressful environments. As anticipated, the majority of respondents reported that they originally engaged with coaches with the intention of developing the skills and competencies that they require in order to cope with personal and career demands. Of the participant group who had received coaching, six participants mentioned an influence on their view of challenges. Thus the findings of this study indicated that coaching had a noteworthy influence on participants' perceptions and experiences of challenges, however the influence did not translate to a significant effect on resilience, with only four participants identifying an impact. One participant provided the following example of how coaching assisted her in dealing with challenges and indirectly with resilience:

> "I think coaching helps you to build up tools. I think it's helped my resilience, not directly, but it's helped me get myself into situations or out of situations where I needed to be resilient. So, it's taught me skills and how to navigate difficult situations so that I can manage my energy, my emotion and not get myself into situations too much where I needed to be resilient." (Louise 248)

Although the literature on coaching suggests that some of the reasons that executives engage in coaching interventions include challenges such as conflict management, transitions and stress management, there is a lack of literature that investigates the impact of coaching on executives' perceptions and experiences of challenges (Jowett, Kanakoglou, & Passmore, 2012; Cox, Bachkirova, & Clutterbuck, 2010; Wasylyshyn, 2003). In a research study that explored the effectiveness of coaching on perceived workplace stress, it was found that although coaching assisted participants indirectly with

coping with stress through increased self-confidence, it did not necessarily reduce stress (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2005). It is the researcher's view that a similar result can be seen from this research; although coaching interventions assisted the respondents' ability to deal with challenges, it did so indirectly through introducing new cognitive strategies, improved self-awareness and confidence - not through explicitly influencing the challenge. It is felt that this is a potential area for future research.

5.2.1.4 Self-Confidence

The findings of this research showed that 15 respondents mentioned self-confidence as an important internal resilience factor. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the term self-confidence includes the constructs of self-esteem and self-efficacy. Respondents described the belief in their ability (self-efficacy) as a key to their confidence. This belief in ability includes the ability to adapt to change, make decisions and execute them. This in turn enhances the capacity to remain resilient, "to be more resilient, even if I had the attitude, you need the ability" (Dean 11:324). The literature refers extensively to the importance of self-esteem and self-efficacy as key contributors to resilience (Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Luthans, Vogelgesang, & Lester, 2006; Kumpfer, 1999; Jacelon, 1997).

It should be noted that respondents reflected on various internal beliefs that influence self-confidence. The findings show that the most significant internal beliefs influencing confidence are linked to self-trust, self-doubt and beliefs about control. A number of respondents pointed to the fact that confidence and trust-in-self does not mean that they never get 'derailed', but that their belief in their ability to adjust and 'sort it out' carries them through adversity and keeps them resilient. Self-trust is reflected in the following statement:

> "I have this quiet sense of confidence in myself. I don't know where it comes from, maybe from my parents did a good job of raising me. So I always know that I would be able to sort things out … so I don't have a long term panic." (Leonard 27)

In contrast, the findings indicate that self-doubt impacts negatively on resilience; this finding is reflected in the response below:

> ‘Don’t ever get to a situation where you doubt your ability to make decisions because you believe they were wrong when they were merely made under uncertainty and in this case it didn’t work out for you. That is a mind-set that is extremely damaging in life in general.” (Dean 20:688)

Participants stated that an integral part of resilience is the ability to cope with reality, acknowledge challenges and adversity, and deal with them or accept them and move forward if they cannot be influenced. However, many participants reported that their confidence and resilience was eroded when they felt unable to influence things. This introduced the concept of control. Respondents shared that knowing what one could and could not control, was essential in terms of their resilience. The ability to differentiate between what can and cannot be controlled is well encapsulated in the following statement where Laura reflected on her resilience:

> “You know you can influence it to a certain extent and then beyond that you can’t, and as long as I know I am doing the most that I can, and the more conscious I become about myself, and my impact on my surroundings, that is the only control I can have because I can’t control chaos that is going on out there, I can react to it but the more I can respond to it rather than react to it, the more I am in control within, and beyond that, I have no control.” (Laura 137)

This is supported by the literature on resilience where it is stated that the ability to differentiate between what one can and cannot control is a characteristic of resilient individuals (Kumpfer, 1999). In addition, positive self-esteem, a perceived sense of control and an internal locus of control are often regarded as typical characteristics of individual resilience (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000; Major, Richards, Cooper, Cozzarelli, & Zubek, 1998; Werner & Smith, 1992). The value of a perceived sense of control is evident in this statement:

> “The feeling like I said that I had options you know, that I wasn’t stuck in this situation, you know it gave me some feeling of control of the situation … I think that’s a personal thing but I like to have some sense of control over a situation you know. So those are things that made me feel that you know the whole situation

> wasn't completely dismal you know. So those were kind of things that I clung to at the time." (Melinda 279)

Six respondents in this study who had received coaching mentioned that coaching influenced both their perception and experience of confidence and resilience. Several respondents contributed comments regarding coaching interventions role in improving their ability to trust and rely on their 'instinct and gut feel', which improved their self-confidence. Again, this finding is supported by literature. Research conducted by Simpson (2010) found that Executive Coaching increased confidence, which matched research conducted by Leedham (2005) and Wasylyshyn (2003). Salmon (2009) found that executive leadership development coaching interventions at several U.S. government financial institutions supported leaders through times of change. The aforementioned coaching interventions were aimed at developing executive resilience and linked an increase in confidence with an increase in resilience (Salmon, 2009).

In addition, findings from a seminal study conducted by Grant et al. (2009) indicated that Executive Coaching interventions based on a cognitive-behavioural, solution-focused framework that identifies individual strengths and promotes self-efficacy, enhances goal attainment, resilience and workplace well-being. The influence of coaching on confidence is reflected on in the following statement:

> "I think the bouncing lots of things off Peter helped me realise that you know Mary, if you have got such a strong gut, go with it." (Mary 269)

> "You know that you know, so it's also that resilience of being more trustworthy of my intuition and my gut feel and knowing that I'm doing the right thing. That conduct, that inner confidence that still confidence that you doing the right thing. I think that's what's important." (Renee 450)

The role of coaching, in terms of increasing self-confidence and enhanced resilience, is shown in this statement:

> 'What this has done, this process that I'm talking about, has moved my locus of control much ... quite a long way away from external. I don't think it's ... whether

it's even gone, if it's gone too internal, I don't know. But, it's certainly moved to a much more healthy space that I'm not nearly so dependent on what other people think" (Hank 7:191).

5.2.1.5 Motivation

Feeling motivated emerged from the results as being another important internal resilience factor. 13 participants made statements related to motivation. These statements showed that when motivation wavered, respondents found life more difficult and their resilience decreased. In contrast, high levels of motivation increased resilience despite challenges. This is supported by literature which indicates that goals, dreams, and purpose in life are important factors that assist resilient individuals to persevere despite challenges and adversity (Kumpfer, 1999). Many of the respondents stated that having a goal or a vision motivates and enables them to 'bounce back' and maintain their focus through challenging circumstances.

Until recently, the literature showed a paucity of articles describing theoretical frameworks that connect Executive Coaching directly to goal theory. The first randomised controlled study indicating a connection between Executive Coaching and goal attainment was conducted in Sydney by Grant et al. (2009). Following on this, Grant's (2012) paper attempted to address this gap in the literature. It is the researcher's view that Grant's integrated model of goal-focused coaching might increase the attention coaches pay to goal focused coaching. Although Grant (2012) mentioned a link between goal-focused coaching and its relationship to change, insight and behavioural change, no mention is made of a direct connection between goal-focused coaching, goal attainment and resilience.

Three out of the nine participants who received coaching reported that coaching interventions influenced their motivation and two reported a correlation between increased motivation as a result of coaching linked to an influence on resilience. The findings show that coaching interventions had an insignificant influence on resilience in relation to motivation, with only two respondents identifying a link between coaching, improved motivation and resilience in their responses. Although literature on Executive Coaching refers to increased goal attainment through coaching interventions, there is

weak support in the findings of this study to support the influence of coaching on resilience through changes in motivation or goal attainment.

5.2.1.6 Self-awareness and insight

The concept of self-awareness and insight as key internal resilience factors was strongly evident in the findings and mentioned by 15 of the 18 respondents. Many of the respondents felt that resilience is about gaining insight into one's ability to endure challenges and adversity. The concept of self-awareness is central to emotional intelligence and is believed to be an essential cornerstone of successful leaders (Goleman, 2004). It is stated in the literature that self-development strategies such as developing emotional insight and becoming more reflective might build individual resilience to adversity (Jackson, et al., 2007). Whilst literature refers extensively to the role of coaching interventions in increased self-awareness, there is limited reference in resilience literature supporting the role of improved self-awareness in increased resilience. Only two articles, of which one is peer reviewed, mention self-awareness regarding thoughts, belief structures and behavioural consequences as central to resilience (Jensen, et al., 2008; Jackson & Watkin, 2004).

The concept of self-awareness emerged as a key theme in the findings and all nine participants who received coaching mentioned self-awareness in their interviews. Coached participants discussed how the Executive Coaching process changed their understanding of self-awareness. Through a process of reflection, feedback, realisation and self-observation, the experience of Executive Coaching provided participants with a space where they could "see themselves more clearly". Improved self-awareness is acquired through increased self-knowledge, which in turn provides individuals with insight into weaknesses, strengths, motivational forces and behavioural patterns (Beecham, Dammers, & van Zwanenberg, 2004; Wales, 2003). Wales (2003) proposed that self-awareness includes the ability to reflect and learn from the past. Participants' opinions supported the literature, indicating that reflection was a central component of their Executive Coaching experience.

The findings indicate that coaching interventions had a significant influence not only on the theme of self-awareness, but specifically on the participants' perceptions and

experiences of resilience. Heightened self-awareness was the most commonly reported outcome of the Executive Coaching interventions discussed in the research study. Participants reported a change in their ability to observe their own actions, thoughts and emotions. This is supported in the literature (Leedham, 2005; Wasylyshyn, 2003). According to Beecham et al. (2004), the Executive Coaching process centres on skills such as trust in relationships, change management, effective listening, collaboration, and focus, in addition to enhancing perceptions of self-awareness. Because Executive Coaching improves self-awareness, it allows executives to identify strengths, weaknesses, and potential behaviour problems so they can prepare a developmental plan for personal improvement (Beecham et al., 2004). This view was supported by Kilburg (2004), who emphasised the important role of Executive Coaching in increasing executives' self-awareness. Kilburg (2004) postulated that executives who have conscious awareness of their thoughts, patterns of behaviour and feelings are in a better position to understand their decisions and actions. The following statement highlights the value and influence of coaching on increased self-awareness:

> "Well I definitely had more self-awareness. Self-awareness that when I stress I go into my head. So I had a greater self-awareness and having a greater self-awareness has given me the ability to choose when I am stressed to be aware of what I do and know that I am doing this and I question that and then come up with a better solution. Then I have to draw on that type of behaviour that is more in line with what I really want to achieve. I am not so much on auto pilot, I am more in a responsive than a reactive mode. It is just self-knowledge, self-knowledge of who and what you are ... that is what good coaching does." (Laura 227)

Many, like Alison, found that self-awareness and self-knowledge helped her to identify and unpack the reasons for some of her difficulties and improve her work performance:

> "So for me the opportunity first of all to be coached was fantastic. Umm ... and I think I learnt a lot about myself through doing that. Like I say I mean I've done lots of therapy in the past for personal stuff but I've never talked through what I struggled with at work and why I struggle with it and that kind of thing so it was really good to be in that safe place again and just put it out there and ok let's dissect that behaviour, let's look at why you react that way in certain work

> situations and that kind of thing and I definitely think it's helped me be more rounded as an employee and a manager." (Alison 14:501)

Interestingly, although Laura acknowledged that self-awareness and insight play an important role in her resilience, she is undecided regarding the origin of that insight. This lack of clarity opens up an interesting debate. A study of critical moments in Executive Coaching found similar results; clients reported an increase in insight and awareness subsequent to coaching interventions, but did not recognise explicitly that specific actions, techniques or interventions during the coaching contributed to this increase (De Haan, Bertie, Day, & Sills, 2010). However, Griffiths (2005, p. 57) argued that coaching facilitates and creates a space for learning, stating, "Learning is inherent within the coaching process". It is the researcher's view this is an area that could be researched further.

> "I had the insights of what I did, I had the insights of what I do under stress, I had the insight that I wasn't being compassionate with myself. So I don't know if it was the coaching or whether it was just being more compassionate to myself that allowed me to be more resilient, I am not sure." (Laura 195)

Eight participants who had been coached spoke about the power of reflection, describing the benefits of taking time to think about actions, decisions, relationships, challenges and emotions. This finding compares to previous research (Reeves, 2006) in which it was found that coaching was an intervention strategy that guides the development of an executive's self-awareness.

5.2.1.7 Emotional awareness and regulation

The concepts of emotional awareness, regulation and positive emotions, emerged strongly as individual resilience factors, and were evident in the interview responses of 16 of the 18 participants. Most respondents emphasised the importance of managing their emotions during times of stress and adversity. The findings reflected that emotional regulation aided focus and improved clarity of mind, which, in turn, reduced anxiety and increased resilience. As noted earlier in this chapter, cognition and its related processes are also key internal resilience factors, and the ability to regulate emotions facilitates the ability to think clearly and calmly about challenges. However, it is important to note that

emotional regulation does not imply suppression of emotions. In fact, many participants highlighted the importance of emotional awareness and processing in regard to resilience. This is reflected in the statement below

> "I think that was a turning point in my resilience. I realised I had to be weak and show that sadness and that breakdown properly to actually get strong again. You know be sad to feel better." (Rose 1184)

Most respondents spoke of the importance of a 'positive state of mind and a positive state of emotions' when asked about factors that contribute to their resilience. This aligns with literature which indicates that emotional regulation and positive emotions increase resilience (Cohn, Brown, Fredrickson, & Mikels, 2009; Collins, 2007; Ong, Bergeman, Bisconti, & Wallace, 2006; Bonanno, 2004; Tugade & Frederickson, 2004; Kumpfer, 1999). Fredrickson (2004) suggested that resilience can be harnessed through the promotion of positive emotions, as highlighted in her 'broaden-and-build' theory of positive emotions referred to in the literature review chapter of this study. Kumpfer (1999) highlighted that resilient individuals often display the characteristics of happiness, emotional management skills, humour and emotional awareness.

Interestingly, emotions such as anger, sadness, shame and disappointment often reduced respondents' sense of resilience. Jim reflected aspects of this when he asked, "What do you do and how do you cope with those feelings of failure, those feelings of anxiety, those feelings of blame, those feelings of guilt"? (Jim 4:106). His words illustrated what many of the respondents shared, that emotions are often experienced intensely during adversity and regularly linked to uncertainty about how to process or deal with them. Leonard encapsulated what the majority of the respondents shared when he stated: "over the course of the last year I had to really dig deep you know, more emotionally than physically or financially or stuff like that". Leonard highlighted that it is often the emotions resulting from adversity and challenges that are the most demanding to deal with, and where the greatest resilience is required.

For those who were able to face the deep emotions emanating from adversity it resulted in enhanced feelings of resilience. The findings indicate that it takes time to process intense emotions and a willingness to experience unpleasant feelings in order to 'bounce

back'. Mary highlighted the significance of emotional processing in building resilience, saying: "I need to also feel the emotions, not suppress them, but I know I can bounce back, and I know I can deal with it" (Mary 208).

The influence of Executive Coaching interventions on emotions was mentioned by all nine of the participants who received coaching. Participants experienced emotions ranging from joy to sadness, hope to despair, and gratitude to anger, misery, pain and pride. Participants discussed how coaching helped them to process, label and manage their emotions. Five of the participants who received coaching indicated that they experienced an influence on emotions that in turn influenced their resilience.

> "So coaching has been huge, where my emotions had atrophied since my fiancé's death I think, it completely broke the Berlin wall down, that for me was really, really big and I think even when I was made redundant ... I think if I look at where I am now, being able to move to Johannesburg, coaching has definitely helped me, I am just a better person. I know it." (Mary 233)

> "Resilience I would say that was coaching that was one of the things that helped me to understand what I was going through in terms of my feelings, in terms of my body for years and it, I was able to scrape back into that and once I understood it really helped me to move forward even much, much quicker." (Dina 8:261)

As mentioned previously, many of the themes that emerged from the data are interrelated. A case in point was Hank's expression of how he gained insight into the value of working through his emotions with his coach. He shared that this was a key insight that helps him to be resilient:

> "But, the bottom line is that what I have learned is you must interrogate and process your emotions. Now just don't bottle them up and try and lock them away. You need to consciously think about what it is that upset you and whatever, whatever and tackle it and process it and go through it. A lot." (Hank 6:153)

The link between Executive Coaching, emotional awareness, and regulation and resilience was not apparent in the literature. Although research conducted into Executive Coaching shows that Executive Coaching influences resilience, hope and well-being,

there is very little that explores it in-depth. In addition, no studies explore that one of the ways in which coaching experiences might influence resilience could be through influencing emotional awareness and regulation. It is the researcher's belief that this is a vastly unexplored area of the potential impact of Executive Coaching interventions.

5.2.2 IT (Objective experience)

One theme related to the objective experience of resilience was extracted from the interviews through a process of thematic content analysis. It is important to note that aspects of the objective experience sphere such as neurobiology and genetics could not be included in the findings because they fall beyond the scope of the research study.

a) Health and physical wellness

The findings reflected a range of responses from 12 participants regarding the management, maintenance and importance of health and physical wellness. The majority of these centred on physical requirements such as sleep, nutrition, relaxation and exercise, and were perceived to be key factors in resilience. The findings showed that fast-paced lifestyles and high pressure careers left executives with little time for themselves, and often resulted in behaviour such as 'eating on the run', and excessive working hours, with very limited time allocated to exercise and rest. In addition, the findings indicate that high levels of stress interfered with the respondents' ability to fall asleep, which led to sleep pattern disturbances and fatigue. The findings show that the aforementioned physical and behavioural factors have negative implications for health and well-being and resulted in experiences of decreased energy and resilience. In contrast, respondents stated that sufficient sleep, good nutrition and exercise improved their health and wellness and increased their resilience. This finding is reflected in the following statements:

> "Yes, the big thing is sleep. If you don't sleep enough, I think that's like tonic, it takes away from your resilience and then just general physical well-being. If you have eaten and slept well and if you are fit, I find that my resilience goes up significantly and my ability to handle stress, as well." (JP 62)

> "If you're eating properly, exercising properly, sleeping properly, so much, goes well in your life because then at least you're thinking clearly, you've got energy, you've got a clear mind so I think exercise, eating and sleeping properly is a big ... aids resilience. It helps me be more resilient." (Rose 358)

Interestingly, this view was not apparent in the literature. There is a general lack of information regarding health and physical wellness and its relationship to resilience. Only one study indicated that recreation and exercise are useful approaches in building resilience (Jensen, et al., 2008). As such, the findings are poorly supported by literature. With the exception of four respondents (from the group that had received coaching), none reported that coaching addressed the issue of wellness, consequently the findings reflect that the influence of coaching interventions on health and wellness is limited (three out of nine respondents from the coached group experienced an influence), coaching interventions' influence on resilience in terms of health and wellness was even lower (only two out of nine from the coached group reported an influence). When this is contrasted with the findings that seven respondents from the coached group perceived health and wellness as key factors in resilience, it raises the question whether or not coaching interventions pay sufficient attention to the quadrant of objective experience. When considering that 12 respondents commented on the importance of health and wellness in relation to their ability to be resilient, the researcher feels that this is an area that would benefit from additional research.

5.2.3 WE (Intersubjective experience)

One theme related to the "WE" intersubjective experience of resilience was extracted from the interviews through a process of thematic content analysis.

a) Relationships and support

15 respondents made statements regarding the importance of relationships and support in their resilience. Many respondents mentioned that they draw support from positive relationships with family, friends and co-workers when confronting life's challenges. They nurture a network of intimate, fulfilling relationships, accept assistance and support and see this as their greatest resource in times of adversity. It was reflected in literature that

positive nurturing relationships and social support are fundamental protective factors in the resilience process (Jensen, et al., 2008; Jackson, et al., 2007; Werner, 1995; Werner & Smith, 1989). Forms of social support beneficial to individual resilience in the workplace include positive professional relationships and networks (Jackson, et al., 2007).

> "I think that that's probably maybe the biggest problem in terms of personal and organisational things, is that when you're having those crises moments, you need that support group. And funny enough, like I got into a group of friends and colleagues, a business workgroup, where they were all working on the same goals, the same inspirations and we were all using each other as a kind of a support group. And it's really good." (Simon 104)

Respondents also draw on a sense of inspiration, motivation and wanting to achieve because of the people in their lives. JP emphasised the role of positive relationships in their lives:

> "The other thing though is that I do get energy from other people as well if they have energy. It is very sapping when you walk into a room and no one has energy but if you have other people that inspire you, motivate you and come up with good ideas, it helps." (JP 117)

Relationships were recognised by many of the participants as being influenced by their Executive Coaching experiences. Eight of the participants who had been coached mentioned that coaching had a positive influence on their interpersonal relationships, both in their personal and professional lives. This included improving their communications skills, conflict management and increased support. Coaching influenced four participants with regard to both relationships and their perceptions and experiences of resilience. The literature on coaching and resilience has relevance to this study's findings, indicating that coaching interventions improved clients' interpersonal relationships and communication skills thereby enhancing their perception of resilience (Salmon, 2009). The influence of coaching interventions on inter-personal relationships is reflected in the following statement:

> "I think one of the things the coaching helped me the most in my life was, it helped me to see, I have a complex relationship with my mother because she's my mother but she's also the business partner. And I've always struggled with the duality of that role and the role of the mother and daughter almost got lost in the business role. And it helped me split those two things up and almost deal with the two personae's as different people who want different things and act in different ways. And it's helped my relationship tremendously and it's made me a lot more resilient because I know where to fight the battles and where not to fight the battles." (Linda 257)

> "He (the coach) gives you a sounding board, he starts teaching you certain skills that you can use in a conflict situation." (Alison 11:385)

Five respondents indicated that the coaching relationship itself enhanced resilience because it provided a safe and supportive environment in which to discuss challenges and work through adversity. Participants in this study expressed the value of having someone to confide in, who was there to listen and who provided positive affirmation. Four participants portrayed Executive Coaching as a confidential, safe experience in which to share fears, thoughts, explore ideas, and gain new perspectives about themselves and others. Participants added that the coaching relationship provided a safe space which assisted them in coping with daily pressure and stressful events. This view is supported by literature which states the importance of a "sounding board" that provides support and guidance during times of challenge and adversity, and that relieves anxiety and stress, thereby promoting individual resilience (Jackson, et al., 2007; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007; Joo, 2005).

5.2.4 ITS (Interobjective experience)

It is significant to note that there were several themes which one would have expected to have been present and it was therefore surprising, and telling, that these themes were missing. No themes emerged from the ITS (interobjective experience) quadrant. This could be because the study focused on experience and perception which both relate more to the quadrant of subjective experience dealing with thoughts, feelings, hopes, perceptions, dreams, etc. Literature, specifically studies into childhood resilience,

indicates that environmental factors have a significant influence on resilience. This includes aspects such as schools, neighbourhoods, historical periods, technology, and family structure (Luthans, et al., 2006; Kumpfer, 1999). Extensive research into resilience indicates that both external (contextual) and internal (psychological) factors influence an individual's ability to be resilient (Luthar, et al., 2000; Werner & Smith, 1989). In addition, the literature also refers to the fact that individuals modify their environment in order to aid the resilience process (Kumpfer, 1999). It is also important to consider the role of the environment in relation to stress; as mentioned previously, stress occurs when individuals view their ability to meet environmental demands as insufficient (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

5.3 General discussion and analysis

The findings illustrate that due to the individualised nature of an Executive Coaching relationship, participants extract different outcomes from the experience. In other words, Executive Coaching fulfills different needs for different people and the identified outcomes are not applicable to all, but are important for some. The interview process used to elicit the data was semi-structured, which led to the participants mentioning what was top of mind for them as an outcome of Executive Coaching, as opposed to providing an exhaustive list of all the possible outcomes they may have experienced. In this way, not all outcomes were applicable to all participants and differed in frequency of mention. Both the findings of the study and literature indicate that executives generally view coaching interventions as a valuable and useful development tool. The findings also indicate that all nine respondents who received coaching found it useful and this view is supported in literature, which states that coaching clients generally perceive value in coaching interventions (Bono, Purvanova, Towler, & Peterson, 2009).

It is important to note the role of client adherence to coaching interventions. Kilburg identified that a client's commitment to self development, ability and willingness to learn has a significant influence on coaching effectiveness and may impact participants (Kilburg, 2001). Kilburg (2004) conceded that while some clients view coaching as a valuable developmental tool, other clients may experience low or insignificant positive impact. The researcher's view aligns with that of Passmore (2010), that when compared with other organisational interventions, evidence of the impact of coaching interventions

is still relatively weak, which does not imply that coaching is ineffective, but rather that additional empirical research is required to provide the necessary support regarding the positive influence of coaching interventions.

The purpose of this research was to determine the influence of coaching on an executive's perceptions and experience of resilience. Those who had received coaching all indicated that it had impacted them in a variety of ways, including helping to raise their day-to-day awareness, understanding emotions, managing energy and increasing their insight. The nine respondents that were coached reflected on what they deemed to be most helpful:

> "In terms of moving forward and maybe, maybe it's you know you asked me the question what enhanced you know the resilience I would say that was coaching that was one of the things that helped me to understand what I was going through in terms of my feelings, in terms of my body for years and it, I was able to scrape back into that and once I understood it really helped me to move forward even much, much quicker." (Dina 8:26)

For Linda, the ability to manage herself in specific situations, including managing her energy and emotions, stood out. She suggested that coaching "helps you to build up tools" (248) to get into and out of situations as needed. She added that coaching "taught me skills and how to navigate difficult situations so that I can manage my energy, my emotion and not get myself into situations too much where I needed to be resilient."

It is interesting to note that in four of the coaching relationships, the topic of resilience was never mentioned, however, as Melinda stated, this did not result in an absence of influence on her learning about resilience. The researcher feels that it would however be interesting to see what would happen if resilience had been highlighted explicitly by the coach rather than learned about 'by default'. Melinda recalled:

> "We never coached specifically for resilience. Like I said the objective from the coaching set out from the start and there were it was detailed as such because you know we set ourselves certain goals. The one was to try and find this you know work-life balance which still remains quite elusive that's ... It's elusive. It's one of those things. So that was the one thing and the other was for who to assist

> in ... from her experience just her help with managing these first line managers. So those were the two objectives. But I think you know one of the ... you can't strive to fulfil any objective or go through any difficult process without learning something about resilience." (Melinda 291)

Eugene was very clear that he only reflected on the impact of coaching on resilience at the time of the interview and for him, the link between coaching and his ability to be a more resilient leader was a clear one:

> "If you're asking me that now, at the time I wouldn't have not thought about resilience. At the time there was no thinking was I resilient or not? Now that you ask the question, I definitely think so. I definitely think that knowing what I know and knowing what the outcome was and how it worked. It definitely made me a more resilient leader or manager or whatever you want to call it. Definitely."
> (Eugene 5:150)

It is the researcher's view that these findings suggest that the concept of resilience, and thus its understanding and development, may be more impactful if highlighted and discussed explicitly in a coaching environment. If coaching clients are encouraged to think about resilience and reflect on it, there might be a greater likelihood of it influencing their levels of resilience. One respondent, JP, took this further by suggesting that if he can develop his own resilience, he can then help to foster the skill in his organisation as a whole. He stated:

> "I suppose it is also something that leaders should, I mean everything we have spoken about is about me, but actually I should be thinking of the resilience of my team and how we can build that up." (JP 135)

A final point worth raising is that the majority of the respondents recognised the importance of resilience in their role as leaders. Eugene, for example, stressed:

> "Resilience is a very, very valuable aspect of a leader to have that resilience and to be able to come out and pick yourself up and go out there, without letting ego

drive you and without letting anger drive you and all those things, but really saying I can do this. I can get over there." (Eugene 9:257)

It is interesting that, in general, respondents could not identify specific things that the coach did other than listen and ask questions. It was quite difficult to get them to identify the specific tools and techniques that were used and this might point to the need for a more transparent process, where the client is able to recognise the strategies being used in order to take shared ownership of the coaching process. Of those participants who had received coaching, none made a specific link between the coaching they received and the ways in which or how it impacted their resilience until this was specifically asked during the interviews for this research study. Once asked, participants could come up with many ways where coaching had indeed influenced their resilience, but most concluded that they "had never thought about it before".

The theme with the biggest difference between group A and group B (those who had been coached and those who had not been coached) was around self-awareness. Those participants who had been coached spoke in greater depth and with more 'passion' about their increased awareness. Those who had not been coached also spoke about the need to be self-aware but none of them mentioned that they perceived or experienced anything that had increased their self-awareness. Those who had been coached emphasised the fact that it increased their self-awareness and thereby their levels of resilience.

Another finding was that there is often a 'yin and yang' contrast contained within some of the themes. For instance, under confidence, doubt also emerged. Under the importance of cognition, the value and interplay with emotion also emerged. Under wellness, action (exercise) and inaction (sleep) is mentioned. With control, the respondents spoke about taking control at times as well as letting go of what you cannot control. Additionally, respondents noted that relationships can both assist and increase resilience, but also have the ability to reduce resilience.

These last few points relate more to resilience than coaching, but they highlight the paradoxes or complexities that need to be dealt with when one looks at how people perceive and experience resilience.

The following table provides a brief summary of the findings in relation to the literature.

Table 7. Existing literature findings

Literature Review – Resilience Factors (Protective factors)	**Findings – Resilience Factors**
Hardiness Self-esteem Social support Optimism Positive affect Supportive relationships (Steinhardt & Dolbier, 2008; Luthans, et al., 2006; Tugade & Frederickson, 2004)	Cognition Attitude Perceptions of challenges and adversity Self-confidence Motivation Self-awareness and insight Emotional-awareness and regulation Health and wellness Positive relationships and support
Literature review – Coaching Interventions Outcomes	**Findings Coaching – Influence of Coaching Interventions on themes**
Interpersonal skills and relationships Stress management Strategic thinking Time management Conflict management staffing Management style leadership Communication adaptability Motivation Delegation and planning Sales or financial performance Work/life balance Better decision making Increased confidence Increased self-awareness Emotional containment and management Executive performance	**High (six or more respondents)** Perceptions of challenges and adversity Increased self-confidence Increased self-awareness and insight Increased emotional awareness and regulation Improved positive relationships and support **Medium (three or more respondents)** Positive influence on attitude Enhanced cognition Motivation Health and wellness

Resilience Reduce burnout (Simpson, 2010; Bono, et al., 2009; Kilburg, 2004; Wasylyshyn, 2003; Hall, Otazo, & Hollenbeck, 1999)	**Low (fewer than three respondents)** None
Literature review – Coaching Interventions and Influence on resilience	**Findings – Coaching Interventions and Influence on Resilience**
Solution focused coaching fostered resilience in medical students. Reduced stress and improved interpersonal relationships. Executive coaching enhances resilience through cognitive-behavioural, solution-focused approach. (Grant, et al., 2009; Salmon, 2009; Taylor, 1997)	**High (six or more respondents)** Increased self-confidence Increased self-awareness and insight **Medium (three or more respondents)** Perceptions of challenges and adversity Increased emotional awareness and regulation Improved positive relationships and support Enhanced cognition **Low (fewer than three respondents)** Positive influence on attitude Motivation Health and wellness

5.4 Concluding remarks

This chapter analysed and discussed the findings and themes extracted from 18 in-depth interviews with executive leaders in relation to the research problem and in relation to literature. The findings indicate that all nine participants who received coaching discussed how the experiences in the Executive Coaching intervention changed their perceptions, understanding and experience of resilience in a variety of ways.

The core influence of Executive Coaching interventions on resilience revolved around themes of increased self-confidence and increased self-awareness. These ‘themes’ are aligned with the discussions contained in the existing literature on resilience and were partially aligned with the limited literature on Executive Coaching and resilience.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters have examined the constructs of resilience and Executive Coaching and explored the influence of coaching interventions on executives' perceptions and experiences of resilience. This chapter concludes this study. It summarises the main contributions of this research against the research problem and the literature on resilience and Executive Coaching, and makes specific recommendations for coaches, executives and individuals within relevant areas of practice. It also makes suggestions for further research in this field of study.

6.2 Conclusion of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of resilience in South African executives as influenced by coaching interventions. There is a paucity of literature which investigates the way in which Executive Coaching interventions impact executive resilience. This research study thus aimed to investigate the ways in which coaching impacted these perceptions and experiences of resilience and to discover what influence the coaching intervention(s) had on changes in executives' resilience.

The use of in-depth and unstructured interviews allowed for the gathering of naturally occurring, qualitative data on the coaching clients' lived experiences of resilience in the coaching intervention engagement. Thematic content analysis guided the search for common themes of perceptions and experiences regarding resilience and the influence of Executive Coaching. The study aimed to address a gap in current research and contribute to the growing body of applied coaching knowledge.

The findings and analysis have been described in the preceding chapters. The results of the findings indicate the following:

- Coaching interventions influenced executives' perceptions and experiences of resilience, most notably in the areas of increased self-confidence, self-awareness and emotional regulation and awareness.

- The findings further highlight that the coaching relationship itself also influenced the manner in which executives perceived challenges and experienced resilience. It was found that coaching interventions provide executives with the time and space to engage in discussions with a coach within a safe and confidential environment. This open communication provides a platform for executives to address a broad range of issues, which in turn affords them the opportunity to engage in a process of self-discovery and development, which impacts their perceived resilience. These areas of self-discovery and development were explored in relation to the nine themes pertaining to executives' perceptions and experiences of resilience. Participants in the research study felt Executive Coaching interventions offered an opportunity to explore challenges, gain an awareness of self and others, and grow personally and professionally, thereby improving interpersonal relationships and enhancing resilience.
- In addition, the findings reflect that participants perceive resilience as a multi-dimensional process influenced by multiple factors.
- Although all the respondents who had been coached indicated they found Executive Coaching both helpful and useful, the influence of coaching interventions on resilience fluctuated across nine themes. These nine themes emerged from the analysis of the data.
- The study shows that the influence of coaching interventions tend to be focused on executives' subjective perceptions and experiences of resilience, with less attention paid to the objective and intersubjective quadrants of human experience.
- Lastly, the findings indicate that contrary to literature on resilience which highlights the important role of the environment on levels of resilience, neither executives' discussions of their perceptions and experiences of resilience, nor coaching interventions, pay much attention to the systems and environmental factors found in the interobjective quadrant and its impact on resilience.

In conclusion, while South African executives face a variety of challenges and adversity they are still required to remain focused on the achievement of organisational goals and objectives. This requires executives to remain resilient during stressful and demanding times. The insights gleaned from this study have implications for leadership development and individual perceptions of resilience and the conclusions drawn from this study have implications for organisations, executives and the coaching profession. This study

supports the existing literature which suggests that coaching interventions have an influence on executive resilience. The findings from the study suggest that Executive Coaching interventions result in changes in levels of executive self-confidence, self-awareness and insight, as well as their emotional regulation and awareness.

This research study touches on various coaching and resilience models found in existing literature that may offer some guidance to coaches in furthering their knowledge of the multi-dimensional nature of resilience. The literature and findings also offer insights that may be integrated into coaching interventions for building and developing resilience with a view to supporting clients to meet organisational goals and their own quest for success.

6.3 Suggestions for future research

This study focused on executives working in South Africa and explored the subjective influence of Executive Coaching interventions on executives' perceptions and experiences of resilience. 18 in-depth interviews provided insight into the ways in which coaching interventions are experienced and its influence or lack thereof on resilience. Several areas for future research emerged during this research process. Recommendations for future research include:

- Exploring the role of the coaching relationship itself as an influence on executives' perceptions and experiences of resilience.
- Investigating the impact of coaching interventions' influence on resilience in terms of changes in leadership effectiveness and performance.
- Replicating this study in empirical settings and quantitatively measuring the effects of coaching interventions on executive resilience, specifically in the areas of self-awareness, emotional management and regulation, and self-confidence.
- Replicating this study with a larger number of participants.
- Replicating this study using a multi-method approach that comprises of self-report, peer-report, physiological, qualitative and experimental data in an endeavour to understand psychological resilience.
- Replicating this study with participants from middle and junior management.
- Investigating the knowledge, models, tools, techniques, skills, and abilities that

coaches require when designing coaching interventions aimed at influencing resilience.

- Conducting research that explores the tools and techniques coaches use aimed at increasing their client's self-confidence, self-awareness and emotional awareness and management.
- Investigating the role of increased self-awareness and its link to increased perceptions and experience of resilience. (Whilst literature refers extensively to the role of coaching interventions in increased self-awareness, there is limited reference in resilience literature supporting the role of improved self-awareness in increased resilience.)
- Comparing the impact of coaching interventions aimed specifically at improving resilience versus general coaching interventions, in order to determine how and if they differ in influencing executives' perceptions and experiences of resilience.
- Exploring Executive Coaching interventions' influence on changes in individual attitudes in relation to changes in perceptions and experience of resilience.
- Expanding the research on resilience to explore the characteristics of resilient executives and how these characteristics can be developed in order to improve executives' ability to cope with adversity and challenges.
- Exploring the link between Executive Coaching, emotional awareness and regulation and resilience, as it was not apparent in the current literature. Although research conducted into Executive Coaching shows that it influences resilience, hope and well-being, there is very little that explores it in-depth. In addition, no studies explore the ways in which coaching experiences might influence resilience through influencing emotional awareness and regulation.
- Examining and exploring the impact of Executive Coaching on increased goal attainment and its relationship to changes in resilience as a result of changes in motivation or goal attainment.
- Exploring the relationship between coaching interventions and perceptions and experiences of resilience in other social, organisational and cultural contexts outside corporate organisations, such as academic institutions, NGOs and government organisations.
- Investigating the apparent link between Executive Coaching, emotional awareness and regulation and resilience.

- Exploring the construct of resilience and Executive Coaching utilising an integral conceptual framework. While the interrelated findings indicate that the investigation of the multi-dimensional nature of Executive Coaching and resilience might benefit from the use of meta-model, currently there is no empirical evidence to support the use of an integral theoretical or conceptual framework.
- Exploring the ways in which Executive Coaching interventions that focus on health and wellbeing influence perceptions and experiences of resilience. The findings show that 12 respondents commented on the importance of health and wellness in relation to their ability to be resilient. As such it begs the question, "why are coaching interventions not paying more attention to this area of executive resilience?"
- The literature review shows that literature on resilience places an emphasis on the role of the environment on individual resilience, however the findings show that neither executives nor coaching interventions address the role of the environment in relation to resilience. Further research is required to fully understand the role of the environment on executives' perceptions and experiences of resilience.

6.4 Recommendations

This section recommends areas of focus for professionals involved in the design of leadership programmes: executives themselves as well as for executive coaches.

6.4.1 Recommendations for leadership training and development

The focus of this study was on exploring the influence of coaching interventions on executives' perceptions and experiences of resilience. Understanding the impact of Executive Coaching on resilience may be useful in gaining knowledge about how coaching can be used as part of a leadership development plan.

Demanding business environments have made resilience a sought after characteristic in executives, who are required to perform and achieve organisational goals despite facing ever increasing challenges and obstacles. Identifying effective leadership development strategies presents an ongoing challenge for organisations. Recognising the value and impact of coaching interventions and its role in influencing and increasing executives'

perceptions and experiences of resilience is important for successful leadership. The executives who experienced coaching and participated in this study all found that their coaching programme related to an increase in their level of resilience, although mostly in a variety of different ways. Established leadership training and development initiatives may need to consider the inclusion of Executive Coaching interventions for sustained leadership development and success, specifically during times of organisational challenges and adversity.

6.4.2 Recommendations for executives

Today's executives are required to be resilient despite facing increasing pressure in their work environments and ever increasing business demands. The coaching experience has the potential to bring awareness to those areas that executives need to consider when additional resilience is required. These areas include paying additional attention to their motivation, health and well-being, improving relationships, seeking support, and awareness and management of emotions and thought processes and general self-awareness. The results of this study show that executives found the coaching relationship itself to be beneficial in terms of increasing their perceived level of resilience and ability to face challenges.

Coaching provides executives with an opportunity to explore their thoughts, emotions, relationships and attitudes in order to create a plan for improved performance and dealing with challenges. Executives focused on improving their ability to manage stress, cope with challenges and withstand adversity, might discover improved resilience through Executive Coaching interventions.

6.4.3 Recommendations for the coaching profession

The results of the study add to academic research exploring the experience of Executive Coaching. It adds the dimension of understanding the ways in which coaching interventions influence executives' perceived levels of resilience.

The study outcomes added supporting information to the body of knowledge and showed that coaching interventions have the potential to influence executives' perceived levels of resilience. The study's findings uncovered various themes that impact executives'

experiences of resilience and explored their meaning for leaders' perceived levels of resilience. Coaches might consider adding a dimension to their practice that encourages the development of resilience in order to ensure executives' ability to cope with ongoing challenges and adversity.

Coaching has the potential of increasing executives' self-awareness, self-confidence and emotional awareness and regulation, and the findings of this study show that an increase in these areas relates positively to an increase in executives' perceived resilience. Therefore, coaches need to ensure that they have the necessary skills, tools and techniques to ensure that they facilitate the development of self-confidence, emotional awareness and regulation and self-awareness. Merely having the theoretical knowledge, and using coaching models are in themselves not sufficient, and coaches need to instead understand how these theories and models relate to the development of resilience.

Sustained self-awareness cannot be taught in a typical leadership development programme. Because coaching is experiential, relationship based, individualised and provides a reflective space, it provides a unique opportunity for executives to improve their self-awareness capabilities.

The findings of this study indicate that executives view their health and wellbeing as central to their perceived levels of resilience, however hardly any coaching interventions paid attention to this facet of resilience. Coaches need to address coaching interventions and resilience holistically in order to provide comprehensive support and attention to all of the aspects that impact an executive's resilience.

6.5 Concluding remarks

In conclusion, Helen Keller once said: "Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired and success achieved". These sentiments are reflected in this study by a research respondent who noted, "I think [hardship] has contributed to who I am. I think it is actually a fascinating topic. I have never thought of it before and I know, driving home tonight; I am going to reflect more deeply on this". This respondent went on

to say that for her, resilience means survival, and begs the question, “What is the alternative to resilience? Failure? Disappointment? Being, feeling a victim? Not coping? Not achieving goals and objectives that I would want to have?”

The experience of conducting research regarding executive coaching and resilience taught the researcher a great deal. The process of reading the literature, conducting the interviews and comparing the findings of the study to literature provided the researcher with insights and a deeper understanding of the constructs of executive coaching and resilience. The exploration of the participants’ perspectives and experiences highlighted the multi-dimensional and integrated aspect of the construct of resilience and this required the researcher to think about the research in a holistic and systemic way. This allowed for more questions to emerge and encouraged the researcher to identify areas for further research.

South African executives face daily challenges in the workplace, including performance, economic, political and labour issues. Many executives experience symptoms of stress and anxiety which result in strain and increased pressure. Some executives face burnout as a result of issues associated with workplace adversity, yet others seem able to succeed and thrive despite facing similar challenges and demanding organisational situations. Individual resilience is often viewed as a central characteristic that sets these two groups of executives apart from each other. As such, executive resilience is critical for organisational growth, development and success, and can be positively influenced by Executive Coaching interventions.

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APPENDIX A: Research Instrument: The Interview Agenda

The Executive's perceptions and experience of resilience as influenced by coaching interventions in South Africa

Interview Agenda (*Aide Memoire*)

Broad guide to topic issues:

Please share your understanding of the word resilience

In which instances in your life have you needed resilience?

Are you facing any current situations, which require resilience?

What, if anything assists or detracts from your resilience?

How has this impacted you?

Is there anything that you would like to add?

Have you ever been coached?

Could you please tell me about your coaching journey?

What was your reason for entering into a coaching programme?

In which ways, if any, did coaching influence your perceptions and experience of resilience?

In which ways has this influenced you?

Please tell me more?

Is there anything that you would like to add?

APPENDIX B: Summary of 24 candidate themes

24 Candidate Themes

ATTITUDE	RELATIONSHIPS	COGNITIVE	EMOTIONS
Just do it	Family	Pondering	Anger
Keep going	Friends	Thinking	Assess emotions
Make it work	Fighting	Analyse	Desperate
Take it on?	Listening (someone to)	Assess	Unhappy
Positive	Affirmation	Clarity of thought	Vulnerability
Take responsibility	Confidence in others	Evaluate	Enjoy
Persevere	Conflict	Logical	Frustration emotions
Determination	Conversations	Collect thoughts	Fun emotions
Acceptance	Talking to someone	Clear head	Humiliation
Gratitude	Discussions	Compartmentalise	Interrogate emotions
Tenacity	Impact on relationships	Composed mind	Label emotions
Curiosity	Interacting (importance of)	Considered	Lonely
Deal with things	Letting others down	Denial	Love
Handle it	Relationships	Intellectual	Misery
Make decisions	Positive and negative	Learning	Pain
Put yourself out there Positive outlook	Boundaries	Mind	Disappointment
	Telling	Mental attitude	Emotions
	Trusting others	Reframe	Enthusiasm
	Opinions of others	Self-talk?	Engaged
		Stop thinking	Pride
		Understanding	Despair
			Stress
			Cry
			Process
			Remove
			Feelings
			Fear
			Self-compassion
			Express
			Terrified
			Pressure?

			Stress Stressed out Bitterness Collect myself Compassion Control emotions
AWARENESS/ OBSERVATION Awareness Self-awareness See more clearly Take a step back Identify (gaps, opportunities, triggers, change, emotions, negative relationships, options) Reflecting Feedback Introspection Realisation Self-observation	**WELLNESS/SOMATIC** Body Breathing Eating well Energy!! Exercise Health Meditation Nurture self Physical capacity Fitness Illness Lack of sleep Physical activity Sport	**MOTIVATION** Achievement Acknowledgement (from others) Affirmation Ambition Determination (attitude?) Better myself Improve myself Desire to know Goals 'Loving it" game! (it's a)	**CHALLENGE** Bounce back Death Divorce Financial Stress New challenge Coping Work/life balance Demotion Childhood experiences Dealing with challenge Change

	Tiredness		
CHANGE Adapt to change Adjust to new reality Accept change Is difficult Comfort with change	**DOUBT** Questioning self Questions general Uncertainty (dealing with) Doubting self Questioning self	**MEANING/PURPOSE?** Belief in something Faith God Spiritual Bigger plan Values Vision?	**GUT/INSTINCT** Gut feel Instinct Intuition Sense of knowing “knowing”
PLANNING Strategy Lack of planning Preparation Execute plan	**LEARNING** About self From past That it is also an opportunity From opportunities	**ABILITY** choose manage emotions manage thoughts reach out deal with things endure distinguish evaluate move on make decisions	**MANAGE** Thoughts Emotions Energy Self Self-discipline

ACTION Positive action Just do it Take action Take control? (control?) Move forward Respond vs react	**FOCUS** Attention Ability to focus Must focus =look at observe	**COPING** How Just have to	**RESILIENCE** Experience of Description of Understanding of
CONFIDENCE From Knowing self Self-trust Trust abilities Past experience Keeping confidence	**ENVIRONMENT** Impact of Awareness of	**BALANCE** Work/Life balance Emotions/Logic Self/others Confidence/Doubt	**SUPPORT** Support (Asking for it, getting it, value of

APPENDIX C: Summary of 9 revised themes

Analysis 24 Candidate Themes to 9 revised and Final Themes

Confidence Ability Self-doubt Gut Instinct Self-trust Change Balance self-trust and self-doubt	**Self-awareness & Insight** Learning Observation Environment	**Attitude** Action
Motivation Meaning and purpose	**Health & Wellness** Work-life balance	**Cognition** Manage thoughts Planning Focus Awareness of thinking
Emotions Manage emotions Awareness of emotions	**Relationships**	**Challenge** Coping Change Control Action Resilience

APPENDIX D: Copy of information sheet to participants

Research Participant Information Document

Name of the researcher	Tanya Stevens
Contact details	082 773 4377 *tanya.stevens@telkomsa.net*
Title of the research project	The executive's perceptions and experiences of resilience as influenced by coaching interventions.
Purpose of the study	The purpose of this research is to explore different executive coaching interventions that have been used by certain executive coaches, and determine the ways in which these interventions influence executives' perceptions and experiences of resilience.
Description of the study	South Africa has a unique and constantly evolving social, economic and political climate. Executives in South Africa have therefore had to adapt quickly and develop various interpersonal skills in order to operate within these dynamic and challenging circumstances. This study aims to explore how coaching affects an executive – specifically how coaching interventions influence their perceptions and experiences of resilience.
Duration of study	1 year

What is involved and how long will the process take?	The proposed study will entail one-on-one semi-structured interviews with the participant at a suitable date and time. Open-ended questions on certain key topics will be asked by the interviewer and the interviewee will be given the opportunity to give their individual point of view in a relaxed, flexible environment. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed to help in the analysis stage of the research. Interviews will take between one and two hours.
Why have you been invited to participate?	You have been invited to participate in this study due to your knowledge and expertise in your capacity as an executive. Additionally, you have been asked to participant because of your exposure and practical experience with executive coaching.
What will happen to the information given by the participant in the study?	The information will be kept confidential during all stages of the research process. Notes, transcripts, and recordings will only be accessible to the researcher and her supervisor.
What will be done with the results of the study?	The results of the interviews will be reported on in the findings section of the research report. This will be done on a pseudonym basis so as to keep the information from individual participants anonymous.
In what way will the study be beneficial, and to whom?	It is hoped that this study will provide useful knowledge to executives, HR practitioners, and executive coaches to gain a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of how the coaching process operates and affects coaching clients' experiences and perceptions of resilience. Furthermore, this research will focus on South Africa and give important insights into the growing field of executive coaching in a South African context.
Who has reviewed this study to ensure that it complies with all the necessary requirements and ethical standards of the University?	This study has undergone an approval process through the Ethics Committee at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. Following this review, the research was approved and the researcher has been granted permission to commence with the study.

Can permission for the researcher to use information from the interview be withdrawn?	Yes. The participant retains the right to have their contributions to the research withdrawn at any time prior to the submission of the research.
Can you refuse to answer any of the interview questions?	Yes. The participant has the right to refuse to answer any question in the interview, and to end the interview at any time

APPENDIX E: Letter of introduction to participants

Wits Business School

Dear X,

We appreciate your time and willingness to consider participating in this research. It is being undertaken by a masters student in business and executive coaching (MM BEC Masters of Management: business and executive coaching) at Wits Business School.

Purpose and Benefits to Research

The purpose of this research is to assess the influence of coaching interventions on resilience. With your participation, we hope to learn more about resilience as it applies to executive coaching.

Procedure

We invite you to participate in an interview with the researcher, which should last approximately one to one and a half hours, at a time and venue convenient to you. You will be asked if you are willing to have the interview recorded, you may decline to do so.

Voluntary participation

Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to ask questions or to discontinue participation at any time.

Anonymous and Confidential

Your anonymity will be protected. All interviews will be kept at a safe location which only the researcher will have access to.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about the study, or would like a copy of the results, please feel free to contact the researcher or faculty listed below.

Tel no: 082-77-343-77

email: Tanya.stevens@telkomsa.net

Please keep a copy of this form, should you need to refer to it in the future.

Sincerely,

.....

Natalie Cunningham

Supervisor

.....

Tanya Stevens

Researcher

Consent to Participate

I ,..... have read the information provided and any questions I asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this study, realising that I may withdraw without prejudice at any time.

I understand that the information, which I supply, is confidential and anonymous and will only be used in the findings of the research.

Signed .....

Date .....

APPENDIX F: Guidelines for the unstructured interviews

From: Unstructured Interviews by Yan Zhang and Barbara M. Wildemuth

Unstructured Interviews are those in which neither the question nor the answer categories are pre-determined.

Unstructured interviews rely on the generation of questions in the natural flow of interaction.

The researcher should keep in mind the study's purpose and the general scope of the issue that she would like to discuss during the interview.

The interviewer follows the interviewee's narration and generates questions spontaneously based on his/her reflection of that narration.

The intention of an unstructured interview is to expose the researcher to unanticipated themes and help him or her to develop a better understanding of the interviewee's reality.

Unstructured interviews often correspond to design studies conducted within an interpretivist research paradigm.

Conducting an Unstructured Interview:

Step 1	Getting in and assessing the setting.
Step 2	Understand the language and the culture of the interviewee.
Step 3	The researcher decides how to present him/herself as the unstructured interview is a two way conversation. The interviewer is a "learner' in the conversation.
Step 4	Locate the interviewee. Decide who will be a good and knowledgeable informant.
Step 5	Gain trust and establish rapport with the interviewee.
Step 6	Capture the data. Audio record where possible.

APPENDIX G: CD with transcribed interviews