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The perceived effectiveness of alternative executive coaching approaches on personal leadership of executives in South African banks

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**The perceived effectiveness of alternative executive coaching
approaches on personal leadership of executives in South African
banks**

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

Wits Business School, Johannesburg, 2021

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to understand the perceived effectiveness of alternative executive coaching approaches on personal leadership of executives in South African banks. Coaching forms part of the leadership development interventions and it is growing in popularity in South Africa. Coaching approaches that are consumed by South Africans were developed in the west. It is therefore important for South Africans to integrate their own worldview and context to benefit from coaching.

In order for a coaching engagement to be successful, there are four (4) dimensions that need to be present; the first(1st) dimension is the coach and the coachee; the second(2nd) dimension is the models and techniques; the third(3rd) dimension is the crucial role that language and culture play during coaching interventions; and finally, the fourth(4th) dimension refers to the role organisations and families play in enabling coached individuals to thrive.

A qualitative methodology was used as a preferred approach for this study. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data in order to understand the lived experiences and perceptions of participants' preferred coaching approaches. The total number of participants was fifteen (15). A snowball sampling method was used to get suitable participants for the study.

The themes that emerged from the study were self-awareness, coaching a person as a whole, the role non-verbal cues play in coaching, self-limiting beliefs, solution orientated coaching, suitable coaching approach and lastly, improved confidence levels of a leader post coaching.

Key words: *executive coaching, ontological coaching, cognitive behavioural coaching, solution focused coaching, personal leadership, whole-person, self-awareness.*

DECLARATION

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

IN RAMAROU

.....

Ivy Ntombifuthi Ramarou

Signed at Johannesburg, on the 26th April 2021

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my two (2) Daughters Reneiloe and Moitheri. There is no limit to what you girls can achieve, thanks for inspiring me to pursue this masters degree.

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I would like to thank God for being with me throughout this journey. To Thabiso, my husband, thank you for encouraging me to be the best version of myself, I couldn't have done this without you. To my parents, thanks for the love and support. To Sis Nonkosi our home executive, you are the best babysitter ever, thanks for taking care of the kids on days that I couldn't.

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To Wits Business School Staff and Students

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

1. CBC - Cognitive behavioural coaching
2. P1- P15 – Participant 1 to Participant 15
3. SFC - Solution focused coaching
4. SFT- Solution focused therapy

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

This qualitative study will explore the perceived effectiveness of alternative executive coaching approaches on personal leadership of executives in South African banks.

Conceptual framework

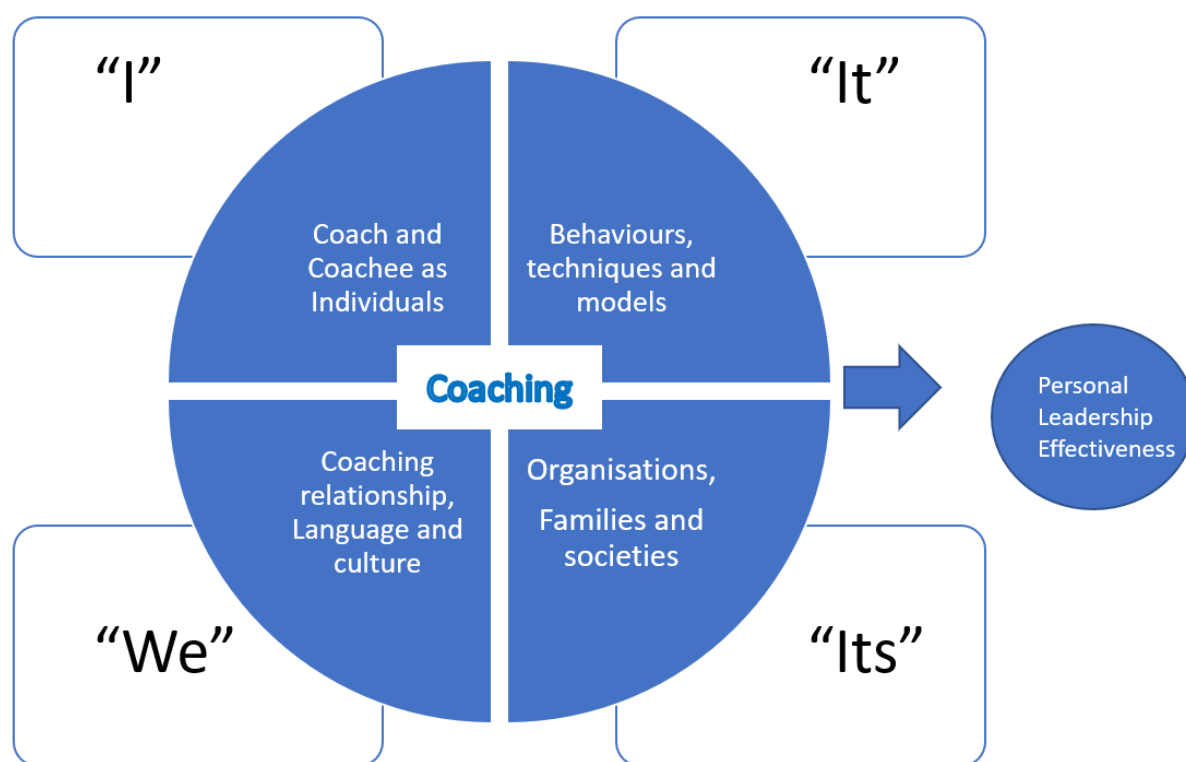


Figure 1. Four (4) dimensions of coaching (**Source:** Adaptation of (Bachkirova, 2016))

The figure refers to four (4) main dimensions of coaching that are required in order to ensure that the coaching intervention is successful. The "I" quadrant refers to the coach and coachee as individuals and what they bring to the coaching engagement (Bachkirova, 2016). The "It" quadrant refers to effective models and techniques that can be used in the coaching encounter. These techniques can be observed and measured. The "We" quadrant places emphasis on the crucial part that language and

culture play during coaching interventions. (Bachkirova, 2016) argues that historical and cultural perspective affects how we interpret the language.

Lastly, the “Its” quadrant refers to the role of organisations and families in enabling coached individuals to thrive. Once an individual has been coached, they will realise their personal leadership effectiveness. According to Whitmore, (2002), the person being coached already possess the potential within themselves, they just need nourishment and encouragement to reach their full potential. While this study mainly focuses on the “It” quadrant, which refers to effective models and techniques that can be used in the coaching encounter, this quadrant will not result in a successful coaching experience in isolation. In order for a coaching engagement to be a success all the quadrants discussed above need to be present. The “We” quadrant for example, refers to the importance of the coaching relationship, language, and cultural considerations during coaching. For coaching to be impactful Rogers, (2012), argues that an individual needs to be treated as a whole person, this means understanding who the person is, their past, present and future all matter.

1.2. Context of the study

In South Africa, business and executive coaching is growing in popularity. It is important for South Africans to integrate their own worldview and still benefit from the coaching process (Geber & Keane, 2013). Coaching often forms part of the leadership development interventions which seek to aid executives with their transition as they ascend the corporate leadership ladder (Ellam-Dyson & Palmer, 2011). In the South African context, leadership is more important than ever before. According to De Haan, (2005), the status of coaching has grown significantly and leaders have realised the value of asking other professionals to help them to be the best versions of themselves. Leaders from some African cultures usually find it difficult to ask for help as this might be construed as a weakness. De Haan (2005) submits that some people are worried about what others would say if they are being coached and they view coaching as the acceptance of a problem that needs fixing.

House, Spangler, and Woycke (1990) assert that the effectiveness of the leader depends on their personality and charisma and not the power that they have to control organisational structures. This research will be focussing on the perceived effectiveness of alternative executive coaching approaches on personal leadership of

executives in South African banks. Since coaching is still relatively new in South Africa, it is important to understand which coaching approaches are effective for diverse South African leaders.

1.3 Research problem

1.3.1 Main Problem

Some coaching approaches are more effective than others, depending on the clients' issue, a skilled coach needs to know which coaching approach to apply in which context (Cox, Bachkirova, & Clutterbuck, 2014). Geber and Keane (2013, p. 4) argued that "drawing on an African perspective could be beneficial and enriching to both the context and to the repertoire of coaching". This research seeks to understand the effective coaching approaches in the South African context and the impact of these approaches on personal leadership.

1.4 Research questions

1.4.1 How are executive coaching approaches perceived by South African executives in banks?

1.4.2 How does executive coaching impact the executive's personal leadership effectiveness?

1.5 Significance of the study

This study seeks to contribute to the conversation that it is important to apply the South African lens to coaching in order for executives to fully benefit from it. Chilisa (2011) and Smith, (1999) argue that finding new ways of doing research in a particular context is necessary, in order to avoid adopting frameworks and methods that belong to a western scientific paradigm. De Meuse, Dai, and Lee (2009) express that the use of executive coaching has increased dramatically over the years and many organisations are using coaching as leadership development intervention. The authors further contend that while coaching has increased, evaluation of the effectiveness of coaching has lagged. This is the case for most countries around the world. This study, therefore, seeks to articulate coaching approaches that are suitable within the South African

context. This research will benefit coaches who coach executives within banks, as well as institutions that provide coaching and coaching professional bodies by contributing to the debate that highlights the importance of coaching the African way, instead of copying the western coaching culture.

Coaching is a relatively new field in the South African context compared to other parts of the world (Geber & Keane, 2013), so the insights gathered from this research will contribute to the body of knowledge regarding preferred coaching approaches and in particular, in South African banks.

1.6 Delimitations of the study

- I. Executives who haven't received coaching before will be excluded
- II. Executives who never worked for financial institutions will not be considered
- III. The study focusses on individuals and not teams.
- IV. Only personal leadership will be unpacked and no other aspects of leadership

1.7 Definition of terms

1.7.1 Executive Coaching is the process of surfacing a person's potential to increase their performance. The preference is to help people to learn on their own rather than teaching them (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011).

Grant (2006, p. 13) defined executive coaching as "a collaborative, solution-focused, results-orientated and systematic process, in which a coach facilitates the enhancement of work performance, life experience, self-directed learning and personal growth of the coachee."

1.7.2 Ontology is the study of being and seeks to examine the nature of human existence by focusing on three (3) domains; language, emotions and body, (Honderich, 1995).

1.7.3 Solution Focused Coaching approach seeks to find solutions rather than dwelling on problems. "The solutions emerge through useful questions framed by the coach,

questions that arise as the result of collaborative thinking and the coach's expertise in the coaching process” (Bachkirova, 2016, p. 16).

1.7.4 Cognitive Behavioural Coaching approach is a type of coaching that integrates the use of cognitive, behavioural, imaginal and problem-solving techniques in order to enable the client to achieve their set goals (Palmer, Edgerton, & Williams, 2014).

1.7.5 Personal Leadership refers to the character, competence and charisma of the leader. It serves as the main foundation for interacting with other people (Smith & Verrier, 2005).

1.8 Assumptions

1.8.1 It was assumed that participants are knowledgeable enough about the topic of coaching and the applicable approaches.

1.8.2 It was assumed that participants will answer the questions as honest as possible without any fear.

1.8.3 It was assumed that the sample is sufficient to obtain adequate data.

1.9 Structure of the report

Chapter 2 -. In this chapter, literature will be reviewed and broad definitions of executive coaching and personal leadership will be articulated. The main theories and main debates will be evaluated in order to generate a proposition for this research.

Chapter 3 - This chapter outlines the methodology that was used in order to address propositions discovered in the literature review. There is also a detailed discussion on data collection method, data analysis and how data was interpreted. The limitations of the study as well as the transferability, dependability, credibility and ethical considerations will also be outlined.

Chapter 4 - The findings of the research will be presented in this chapter. Fifteen (15) participants were interviewed.

Chapter 5 - In this chapter the research findings in relation to the literature that was reviewed in chapter 2 will be discussed.

Chapter 6 - In this chapter, the findings of the propositions will be integrated to the original research questions from Chapter 1 to answer each research question accordingly. Recommendations and suggestions for further research will be discussed in this chapter as well.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The main topics of this research are articulated in detail in this chapter, which include broad definitions of executive coaching and personal leadership. A detailed discussion of coaching approaches that might be suitable for South Africans will also be discussed. The main theories, main debates as well as main authors of the above definitions will be evaluated in order to generate a proposition for this research.

2.2 Definition of executive coaching

Executive coaching can be defined as “a form of leadership development that takes place through a series of contracted one-to-one conversations with a qualified coach. Coaching is tailored to individuals so that they learn and develop through a reflective conversation within an exclusive relationship that is trusting, safe, and supportive. Coaching is, therefore, substantially different from any conventional training and development that is characterized by the imparting of actionable information, instruction, and advice”. (deHaan, Duckworth, Birch, & Jones 2013; p. 2)

The world today is characterised by so much change that is happening at a very rapid pace, coaching has become extremely popular as it is considered as an instrument that supports managers and executives in times of organisational changes. Executives are confronted with rapid sequential innovations and modifications, often instigated by market forces, and as such, executives need to be competent in social skills, they need to reflect on their own emotions, standards and values (Evers, Brouwers, & Tomic, 2006).

According to Rogers (2012), the following six (6) principles differentiate coaching from other disciplines like counselling, therapy, mentoring and teaching:

The client is resourceful - the client has all the resources at their disposal to solve any problem that they may experience in their personal or career lives. In this regard, coaching is different from therapy because the coach already believes that the client is in good health and mental state, they don't need to be fixed.

The coach's role is to develop client's resourcefulness through skilful questioning, challenge and support - This principle is linked to the first one (1) and further elaborates that the role of the coach is not to give advice, as that might imply that the coach believes that they know more than the client.

Coaching addresses the whole person's past, present and future - As a coach it is important to have a holistic view of the client, as this makes the coach understand the client even better. In most cases some of the challenges that clients face in their professional lives are linked to similar challenges that they face in their personal lives. Relationships formed in early life can also affect clients in their adult stages.

The client sets the agenda - Rogers (2012) asserts that this principle differentiates coaching from teaching; the coach is guided by the client's agenda which is linked to what is pertinent to the client at that given time. The coach might have a mental model that they use to give structure to the conversation, but the entire agenda rests with the client.

The coach and the client are equals - The coach and the client work together in a partnership based on mutual respect. They are in an adult - adult and colleague - colleague relationship that is rooted in trust and the suspension of judgement.

Coaching is about change and action - This principle posits that one cannot coach someone who doesn't want to change. Clients often go for coaching because they want something to change or improve. They essentially want to be more effective than they already are. The core purpose of coaching is to close the gap between potential and current performance.

2.3 Theoretical approaches to coaching

For this study, three (3) coaching approaches will be explored, namely; Ontological Coaching, Cognitive Behavioural Coaching and Solution Focused Coaching. These approaches were chosen because they are in one (1) way or the other relevant to the research in that they focus on distinct elements of coaching approaches. Since coaching is still relatively new in South Africa, it is important to understand which coaching approaches are effective for diverse South African leaders. Ontological

coaching focusses on the way of being and argues that the main spheres of human existence are language, emotions and body (Sieler, 2007). Given the diverse South African context, this approach is relevant in that language generates reality and context, emotions influences how we see the world and our behavior. Body language also plays a crucial role and there needs to be alignment between all these aspects (Language, Emotions and Body) in every conversation. In South Africa the above mentioned is very important and it is for that reason that this approach was explored.

Cognitive Behavioural Coaching is relevant in the South African context because this approach assumes that how you think about events has a huge impact on how you end up feeling about them (Neenan, 2013). South Africa has had so many unfortunate events in the past with regards to the apartheid regime, in order to move forward people in leadership positions and citizens in general need to know how to control their thinking.

Solution Focused Coaching is a forward thinking approach, it focuses on solutions rather than problems (Trepper, 2006). Given the South African context mentioned above this approach was chosen in order to explore with the participants whether there is value in focussing on the problems or in finding solutions.

2.3.1 Ontological coaching approach.

Ontology is the study of being, it seeks to examine the nature of human existence (Honderich, 1995). Ontological coaching is rooted in the way of being of the client. This type of coaching aims to facilitate the transformation of being in a respectful manner, which include significant change resulting in the client: (i) seeing themselves and the world around them completely different, (ii) experiencing notable behavioural change, including being able to relate to others more constructively (iii) enhancing the possibility of creating their own positive future (Sieler, 2003). The theory and methodology of ontological coaching enables a coach to observe and work constructively with three (3) essential domains of human existence - language, emotions and body which will be unpacked below (Sieler, 2007).

The language domain

One of the most important premise of ontological coaching is that language generates reality. During the coaching conversation the coach listens to how the client uses language. The coach pays special attention to underlying concerns, types of conversations that the client is having and cultural and historical narratives (Sieler, 2007). Clients often struggle to articulate their concerns. (Heidegger, 1996) suggests that asking these three (3) questions can help the client to understand what is behind the problem that they are experiencing: "What is at stake for you here?, What is missing that is important for you?, and, What is not being taken care of that matters to you?".

The moods and emotions domain

Moods are subtle, yet prevalent emotions that constantly influence perception and behaviour. A coach who is ontologically trained, listens for the language of moods and also observes the physical reaction of the client (Sieler, 2007). Goleman (1998) expanded on the topic of emotions by arguing that emotions are intelligent, they serve as a vehicle to richly engage with the world. Emotions add meaning to life, they are not mere reactions and instincts. Emotional intelligence determines the ability to learn practical skills based on five (5) elements; self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and adeptness in relationships (Goleman, 1998). The five (5) elements are explained further below.

Self-awareness is the ability to know which emotions one is feeling and why, awareness of how feelings affect thoughts and utterances, and lastly recognising how feelings affect performance (Goleman, 1998). It is the awareness or knowledge of one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviours which can be considered as a state of mind (Richards, Campenni, & Muse-Burke, 2010).

Self-regulation is knowing how to successfully manage distressing feelings, disruptive impulses and emotions effectively. It increases one's adaptability of handling any form of change and or challenge (Goleman, 1998).

Motivation: Psychologists define motivation as "that which gives impetus to our behaviour by arousing, sustaining, and directing it toward the attainment of goals" (Wortman, Loftus, & Marshall, 1999, p. 353). People who are highly motivated reach

the state of flow. (Goleman, 1998) describes flow as the state that moves people to do their work excellently and effortlessly. Being in flow allows people to easily adapt to shifting demands with ease.

Empathy is the ability to sense one's own feelings and it increases the chances of understanding moods and emotions of others. People with empathy are attentive to emotional cues and they have good listening skills, they understand others' point of view even though it might be different from theirs. They can help others because they can easily understand the needs and feelings of others (Goleman, 1998).

Adeptness in relationships: People often gravitate to those who demonstrate signs of good qualities and stay away from those that are selfish. People with good qualities often find it easy to strike a balance between the task and the relationship, collaborate with others by sharing plans and resources and promote a cooperative climate (Goleman, 1998).

The body domain

A German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, maintained that the body plays a pivotal role in communication, when he said: "Our most sacred convictions are judgements of our muscles" (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 173). Müller et al. (2013) also highlighted that the body plays an integral part in language and communication. Cox et al. (2014) concluded that the change happens in the body domain. Words, body language and the tone of voice should be congruent with what an individual is feeling. A coach who is ontologically trained, will be able to identify the misalignment between words, body language and tone of voice and can challenge the client to do a self-assessment to reach a state of congruency.

The applicability of ontological coaching

Executive coaching

"Executive coaching helps people know themselves better, live more consciously, and contribute more richly" (Sherman & Freas, 2004, p. 85). Ontological coaching focuses on the way of being for clients which is regarded to be at the centre of how people function, learn and change. This way of being drives communication and behaviour (Sieler, 2007). Executives need to be in alignment in terms of body, emotions and

language, they make decisions that affect the company's future and if these decisions are not thought through, they can have a long lasting negative impact on the organisation and the society.(Cox et al., 2014)

Cross-cultural coaching

Economic globalisation presents an interesting challenge of ensuring that there is effective communication between people from diverse cultural backgrounds (Cox et al., 2014). The way of being differs from one culture to the other, each culture has its own patterns of how people understand and behave in specific situations. In business, productivity is realised if people work together effectively in order to achieve shared goals. An ontologically trained coach can assist in raising awareness at individual level so that all cultural nuances that might affect communication and understanding are addressed.(Cox et al., 2014)

The way of being of a coach

The following section refers to what is expected from the coach in order for a coaching engagement to be successful.

Listening with the whole self

A coach is not just a neutral observer, but is part of the coaching engagement and as such, there is a heightened quality of listening that is required from an ontological coach. This kind of listening requires the coach to have high levels of self-awareness. The coach needs to ask themselves questions such as; 'What is going on with me?', 'How am I listening right now?', 'What am I listening to?', 'Where am I listening from?', 'How might my prejudices be interfering with my listening?', 'How do these interpretations impact on my emotions?' (Sieler, 2003, p. 129).

Surfacing the learning

An ontologically trained coach helps the client to discover their ontological territory, this involves some of the narratives that have shaped the client. The awareness of these narratives helps the client to know and understand themselves better. (Cox et al., 2014).

Practising new ways of being

After the learning has surfaced, the coach plays a crucial role by assisting the coachee to build new practices that are aligned to the way of being for the new self. During this process, it is important for the coachee to align themselves with like-minded people in order for them to benefit from learning from others, especially if those people are already competent in the new way of being that the coachee aspires to be.

Proposition 1

Ontological coaching approach seeks to find the congruency between language, body, moods, and emotions to assist clients to achieve their coaching goals.

2.3.2 Cognitive Behavioural Coaching approaches

Cognitive Behavioural Coaching (CBC) has been defined as: “An integrative approach which combines the use of cognitive, behavioural, imaginal and problem-solving techniques and strategies within a cognitive behavioural framework to enable coachees to achieve their realistic goals” (Palmer et al., 2014, p. 86).

The main goal of CBC is to facilitate a process with a client that ensures that they achieve realistic goals, raise awareness of the clients’ behavioural and cognitive shortcomings that act as barriers to achieving their goals; equip the client with constructive thinking and behavioural skills; and finally enable the client to accept themselves and learn to be their own coach (Cox et al., 2014).

Main assumptions of the Cognitive Behavioural Approach

According to Neenan and Dryden (2013), CBC is based on the premise that the way one thinks about occurrences has a huge influence on how the person ends up feeling about themselves. If people change how they think, how they feel will also change. The way people think and feel has an impact on stress or performance. (Aaron Beck, 1979), described the prevalence of internal dialogue - which is that inner voice that exists in our heads - and it impacts the self-esteem, resulting in people to doubt themselves in terms of their knowledge and self-worth. (Aaron Beck, 1995) argued that some of the thoughts are developed in childhood and in most cases these thoughts can turn into believes.

Behavioural and Cognitive models, tools and techniques

The CBC coach can help the client to achieve their goals by making use of action orientated models like **PRACTICE**, this model was adapted from (Wasik, 1984).

Table 2.1: PRACTICE model of coaching

Steps	Questions/Statements/Actions
Problem identification	What is the problem? What would you like to change? How would you know the situation is improved?
Realistic, relevant goals developed	Develop SMART goals i.e. (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound).
Alternative solutions generated	Confirm available options.
Consideration of consequences	What could happen? On a scale of 1-10 rate how useful each possible solution is.
Target most feasible solution(s)	What is/are the most feasible solution(s)?
Implementation of	Implement the chosen solution by breaking it down into manageable steps.
Chosen solution(s)	Now go and do it.
Evaluation	Use a success rating scale 0-10, reflect on lessons learnt. Then conclude the coaching session.

Source: (Palmer & Gyllensten, 2008)

Table 2.1 provides a detailed view of the successive steps of the PRACTICE model which is a behavioural model that enables the coach to facilitate the coaching conversation, thereby assisting the client to understand the problem, develop realistic goals, select possible solutions, implement chosen solutions and lastly, review progress.

The next section highlights a variety of cognitive models, tools and techniques, that can be used in coaching in order to change negative thoughts to position and effective thoughts

PITS and PETS Technique

This technique can help the client identify unhelpful thinking patterns that hinder them from achieving their goals. This pattern can be identified as Performance Interfering

Thoughts (PITS), these thoughts can be transferred to Performance Enhancing Thoughts (PETS).

Example of PITS and PETS for a newly appointed executive who needs to give a presentation to her one-thousand (1 000) staff complement.

Table 2.2: PITS and PETS model

Performance interfering thoughts (PITS)	Performance enhancing thoughts (PETS)
The presentation will be horrible	The presentation go well
I'm terrible at making presentations	Presentations done in the past have gone well and overall I'm good at making presentation
Visions of being too scared to even talk and being laughed at.	Visions of making one or two mistakes ,but overall presentation goes well
The audience will be bored, (They might focus on their mobile phones instead of listening to the presentation)	How do I know? I haven't given the presentation yet!

Source:(Cox et al., 2014)

Table 2.2 provides an example of how to coach a client in a manner that transitions them from performance interfering thoughts (PITS) into performance enhancing thoughts (PETS).

The ABCDEF Model

The ABCDEF Model is a psychological instrument or tool that helps clients identify irrational beliefs or unhelpful thinking, and convert those into rational believes/thoughts. The acronym stands for: **A**ctivating event or adversity; **B**eliefs of the event or adversity; **C**onsequences; **D**isputation of irrational beliefs; **E**ffective new approach to the concern or problem; and lastly **F**uture Focus. In order to practice this model in a coaching session, a client is often given an A4 page with the ABCDEF headings and they note down their problems, beliefs, consequences, adapted believes, effective new approach and lastly future focus. This is a helpful tool in the coaching engagement. (Palmer & Gyllensten, 2008).

Proposition 2

Cognitive Behavioural Coaching enables the executive to understand behavioural and cognitive shortcomings that hinder them from achieving their goals.

2.3.4 Solution Focused Coaching approach

Solution focused coaching, also referred to as solution focused therapy (SFT), is an approach in psychotherapy that is interested in real results. This approach focuses on solutions rather than problems, and focuses on the future as opposed to what happened a long time ago, or the current state. Many coaches have seen the strength of this approach when applied across a wide facet of problems faced by clients and its possible use across varied cultures (Trepper, 2006).

Solution Focused Therapy was developed by de Shazer and Berg in the eighties as an addition to previous work by (Watzlawick, Weakland, Fisch 1974), who argued that being concerned about where the problem comes from, serves no purpose in terms of finding the actual solution. According to (Cox et al., 2014), solution-focussed approach adheres to constructionist philosophy, in that the way the coachee and a coach think about occurrences can render those occurrences as problematic. In reality, these occurrences might not be problematic but influenced by how other people see them.

According Cox et al. (2014) the solution focused approach seeks two(2) types of change; change the *viewing* and change the *doing*.

Changing the Viewing

Solutions became visible the more one practices finding them. According to (Cox et al., 2014, pp. 58-59) tools that can be used to change viewing and identify resources include:

The Miracle Question: The coach facilitates the process of asking the client an imaginary question which is linked to their desired state. The client needs to articulate how they would notice that a solution was present.

Scaling. This is one of the most commonly used techniques in solution focused coaching. A scale of 1-10 is used where one (1) represents the problem at its

worst and ten (10) represents the desired solution. Using the above scale, the client needs to confirm where they see themselves in relation to the goal.

Highlighting Resources: Every problem has the potential to be resolved - with this technique the coach listens for hidden and unacknowledged resources and brings them to the client's attention.

Reframing: The coach tries to reframe the client's view in a rather positive way in order for the client to see the problem differently, for example, if a client says they hate their jobs, the coach can ask them about pleasant parts of their jobs and the client can then build from the positive mindset.

Changing the Doing

The coach and the client work closely together in order to identify the pathway that would work best for the client. Using small achievable goals is encouraged so that the client can experiment with new possibilities by building from the success of the past. (Cavanagh, 2006). Changing the doing involves identifying and reinforcing the behaviours that support the achievement of the goal and eliminating those behaviours that don't (Cox et al, 2010).

Proposition 3

Solution focused coaching is concerned with finding real results by focussing on the future rather than looking into the current or the past situation for answers.

2.4 How does executive coaching impact the executives' personal leadership effectiveness?

According to Smith and Verrier (2005), personal leadership is the main foundation for interacting with people. They further posit that personal leadership and personal mastery are the key elements that make it possible to endure happy interpersonal and professional relationships that lead to influential leadership.

(Covey, 1994, p. 43) supports this view when he says, "It is futile to put personality ahead of character and try to improve relationships with others before improving ourselves". It can be concluded that coaching in this regard, plays a critical role in helping executives improve on their personal leadership effectiveness so that they can become better leaders. According to Smith & Verrier, (2005, pp. 51-52) "executive

coaching is an action-learning process that is personalised and developmental in nature, aimed at improving the personal fulfilment and performance of executives through enhancing their being (e.g. purpose, meaning, beliefs, values) and performance (goals, actions, execution)".

2.4.1 The anatomy of leadership

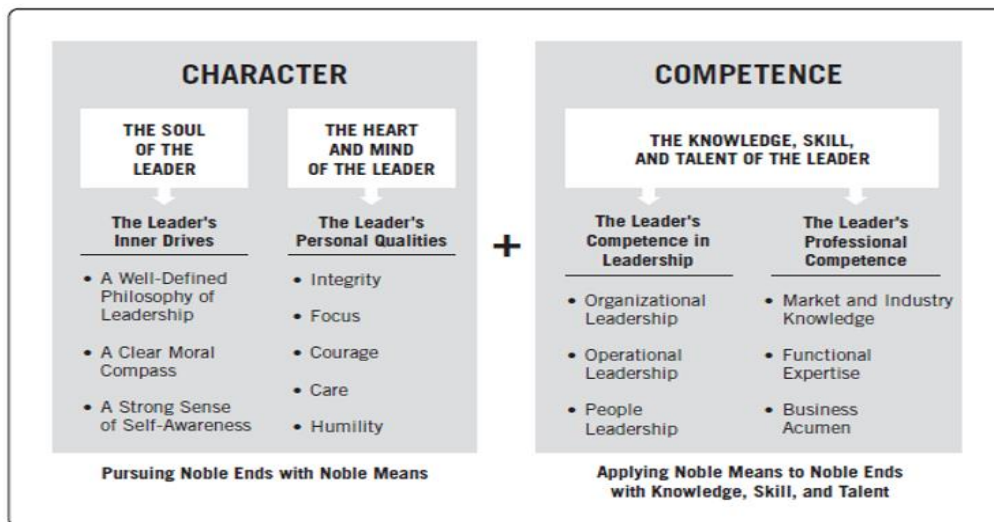
According to Bell (2006, p. 34), "The anatomy of leadership consist of heart, mind, soul and talent of the leader - which can be summed up as character and competence" In terms of **character**, there are a variety of factors that contribute to the development of good character. The first factor is an authoritative parenting style which teaches children the importance of sharing with peers and self-confidence. The second factor is positive reinforcement and positive role modelling (Park, 2004). **Competence** is the expertise in a specific industry or market (Bell, 2006). "In the 1990s, all the emphasis was on competence with little thought about character, leading to the many spectacular scandals in recent years, where issues of character derailed otherwise highly regarded leaders. But, leaders can also fail for lack of competence, especially in a complex world where the exercise of leadership is more demanding than it's ever been"(Bell, 2006, p. 36).

Unpacking character of the leader

Soul of the leader - Great leaders have a good sense of what their purpose in life is and they strongly believe that they have a significant role to play in life overall. Most of their life choices are guided by their purpose in life (Bell, 2006). Table 2.3 also depicts that a leader with character has a clear moral compass and they have a solid sense of **self awareness**. (Bell, 2006) argues that leaders who have self-awareness are great leaders because they know their limitations and are able to put some plans in place in order to compensate for their weakness.

Brown and Ryan (2003) describes self-awareness as the knowledge of self, (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975) adds that self-awareness is the awareness or knowledge of one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. According to (Bell, 2006), the most important **personal qualities** in a leader are integrity, focus, courage, care and humility.

Table 2.5 The anatomy of leadership.



Source: (Bell, 2006, p. 45)

Unpacking competence of the leader

Bell (2006) argues that over and above having good character as a leader, there is a great need to be fully competent. A leader needs to have the skills, knowledge and talents in order to execute their role effectively. He further argues that over and above personal leadership, a successful leader needs to be competent in various types of leadership, for example, organisational, operational and people leadership - such a leader is a fully competent leader.

How can coaching contribute to the effectiveness of personal leadership?

In executive coaching, coaches work with executives who have already achieved immense success in terms of their careers, however, for their further development they need to improve their perspective. An example of improving the perspective might be complimenting their technical skills with a strategical understanding, or to improve their personal leadership by increasing self-awareness which makes the executive authentic. (Cox et al., 2014)

2.4.2 Proposition 4

Personal leadership effectiveness can be achieved through coaching.

2.5. Conclusion of Literature Review

Based on the literature that has been reviewed, there are a number of approaches that can be applied in the South African context. South Africa is a diverse country with people from different race groups, the cultural demographics are also evident in the banks, therefore a suitable coaching approach needs to be used in order for executives to achieve desired results. Personal leadership is the foundation of any type of leadership. It is to improve oneself before trying to improve relationships with other people. Coaching can help executives to understand their purpose which helps guides a lot of their decision making; it can increase self-awareness which leads to authentic leadership.

2.5.1 Proposition 1 Ontological coaching approach seeks to find the congruency between language, body, moods, and emotions to assist clients to achieve their coaching goals..

2.5.2 Proposition 2 Cognitive Behavioural Coaching enables the executive to understand behavioural and cognitive shortcomings that hinders them from achieving their goals.

2.5.3 Proposition 3 Solution Focused Coaching is concerned with finding real results by focussing on the future rather than looking into the current or the past situation for answers.

2.5.4 Proposition 4 Personal leadership effectiveness can be achieved through coaching.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology that was used in order to address propositions discovered in the literature review. A qualitative research approach will be discussed in great detail, since it is a preferred approach for this type of study (Patton & Cochran, 2015). The research design will also be unpacked. Interviews were used as research instrument (See appendix B). There is also a detailed discussion on data collection methods, data analysis and how data was interpreted. The limitations of the study as well as the transferability, dependability, credibility and ethical considerations will also be outlined.

3.2 Research approach

Qualitative research was used for this study as it is the appropriate approach to answer research questions regarding the perceptions of executive coaching approaches and personal leadership effectiveness in South African banks. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016, p. 23) “qualitative research is based on the belief that knowledge is constructed by people in an ongoing fashion as they engage in and make meaning of an activity, experience, or phenomenon.” The aim of the study is to understand how executives in the context of South African banks have experienced the different coaching approaches.

Ponterotto (2005) further expounds that qualitative methods refer to a variety of empirical procedures, which are geared to describe and interpret the experiences of individuals participating in the research in a specific setting. Denzin & Lincoln (2000) and (Patton & Cochran 2015) further contributed to this argument by stating that qualitative research is concerned with the understanding of aspects of social life and its methods which generate words rather than numbers for analysis. Qualitative findings are often presented in an easy-to-understand language and often include participants’ own words to describe a significant event, experience, or phenomenon (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). For this research direct quotations from participants were used as far as possible, to describe their perceptions of executive coaching and personal leadership effectiveness.

3.3 Research Design

Basic qualitative study

This research adopted a basic qualitative study, which is a study that was derived philosophically from constructionism. The main characteristic of all qualitative research is that people construct reality by interacting with their social environment (Merriam & Tisdell 2016). The aim was to understand the meaning attached to coaching approaches from executives' viewpoint. Crotty (1998, pp. 42-43) posits that "meaning is not discovered but constructed. Meaning does not inhere in the object, merely waiting for someone to come upon it, meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting". This basic qualitative research is interested in how executives interpret the various coaching approaches and their experiences, how they construct their worlds in the South African context and what meaning they attach to their coaching approaches. The ultimate goal of this basic qualitative research was to understand how executives make sense of their own lives and their coaching experiences within the South African context (Crotty, 1998).

The advantages of using a basic qualitative study for this research is that executives will share the interpretation of their own experiences and also attach meaning to their experiences. Basic qualitative methods seek to understand the 'what', 'how' and 'why' (Patton & Cochran 2015).

Merriam and Tisdell (2016, p. 23) indicated that "in applied fields of practice such as education, administration, health, social work, counselling, business, and so on, the most common "type" of qualitative research is a basic interpretive study". This research is based in the business context and therefore basic qualitative study is preferable.

The most common disadvantages of basic qualitative research are 1) samples are smaller and not a broader representation; 2) the findings might be biased to the researcher's own opinion (Patton & Cochran, 2015). In order to make sure that sample size is adequate, maximum variation will be used and participants from all major South African banks will be included. Qualitative research is not concerned with the sample number; however, it is important to ensure quality and credibility in the findings. In

order to avoid the researcher's bias, interview questions will be semi-structured which will allow the participants to freely share their opinions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data collection method

For the purpose of this research one-on-one interviews will be used to collect data. "An interview is a conversation that has a structure and a purpose" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 5). deMarrais and Lapan (2003) further define research interviews as a process whereby the researcher and the carefully selected participant engage in a conversation that is concerned with asking questions that are relevant to the research study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) posit that the reason interviews are conducted is because there are things that the researcher cannot directly observe, for example, researchers cannot observe behaviours that took place previously, nor can researchers observe what meaning people attach to their life experiences. For this research, interviews were a preferred method of data collection because the researcher was interested in understanding executives and coaches' experiences and perceptions of their preferred coaching approaches.

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016) there are various types of interview structures. In order to determine the type of interview structure suitable for this study table 3.1 was consulted below. The most suitable interview type is the semi-structured because of three (3) advantages. Firstly, the interview guide has a combination of structured and less structured interview questions. Secondly, all questions are flexible and allow the Participants to share their own stories; and lastly, a specific data regarding which coaching approach is preferred is required from all Participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Table 3.1- Interview Structure Continuum

Interview Structure Continuum		
Highly Structured/ Standardized	Semi-structured	Unstructured/Informal
Wording of questions is predetermined	Interview guide includes a mix of more and less structured interview questions	Open-ended questions
Order of questions is predetermined	All questions used flexibly	Flexible, exploratory
Interview is oral form of a written	Usually specific data required from all respondents	Used when researcher does not know enough about phenomenon to ask relevant questions

3.5 Population and sample

3.5.1 Population

The population for this study is executives from major banks in South Africa, middle and senior managers are excluded from this study. All selected executives have had coaching in their careers. The executives come from various educational, career and cultural backgrounds. Another population for this study is coaches who have coached executives within banks. Demographic data was collected because the study is within the South African banking context and it is always important to understand different views from diverse backgrounds.

3.5.2 Sample and sampling method

The most suitable sampling method for this study was purposeful sampling because the researcher wanted to gain insights from the participants' experience relating to their preferred coaching approaches (Patton & Cochran, 2015). The type of purposeful sample used for this study was Snowball. This sample involves finding a handful of key participants who meet the criteria. As you interview the initial key participants, you ask each one of them to refer you to other suitable participants. "By asking a number of people who else to talk with, the snowball gets bigger and bigger as you accumulate new information-rich cases" (Patton, 2015, p. 29). For the purpose of this study all executives interviewed were requested to recommend two (2) more executives that could be contacted. Eventually ten (10) executives and five (5) coaches were interviewed.

Table 3.2 – Respondent Profile

Executives/Coaches	Role	Race	Gender
Participant 1	Executive	White	Male
Participant 2	Executive	African	Female
Participant 3	Executive	Coloured	Male
Participant 4	Coach	White	Female
Participant 5	Executive	African	Male
Participant 6	Executive	African	Male
Participant 7	Coach	African	Female
Participant 8	Executive	Indian	Female
Participant 9	Executive	White	Female
Participant 10	Executive	African	Male
Participant 11	Coach	White	Male
Participant 12	Executive	African	Female
Participant 13	Coach	African	Female
Participant 14	Executive	African	Female
Participant 15	Coach	White	Female

Developed by researcher: 2020

All executive participants were working for major banks in South Africa at the time of the interview. All the coaches have coached executives within major banks.

3.6 The research instrument

The instrument used was the semi- structured interviews. Furthermore, all participants had the opportunity to sign consent forms (see appendix A). An interview questionnaire was used as the main tool to structure and guide the interview process (see appendix B and C). Jacob and Furgerson (2012) assert that in order for the interview to be effective, the following successful interview protocols should be practiced; use a script in the beginning and end of your interview; questions should be open ended; begin with easy to answer questions and move to difficult or provocative

ones; use the phrase “tell me about...” to start a question; don’t make the interview too long; practice with a friend. In order to check if the interview questions were clear and easy to answer, the questions were verified and tested with someone who was not a participant in the study beforehand (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

3.7 Procedure for data collection

Individuals were approached directly to ask for their participation, after which the snowball approach was initiated. Meeting invites were sent to secure a specific time for the interview. Due to South Africa being on lockdown because of the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic at the time of this research, one-on-one interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams and the interviews were video enabled, in order to ensure full engagement and for reading body language. A semi-structured interview approach was adopted. The researcher listened more and did not interrupt the participants.

During the interview it is important to avoid a situation whereby the researcher’s own experience overtakes the participants. If the researcher talks more than the participants they might miss the best parts of the participants life experience that has a potential to add an interesting dimension to the research (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). To enhance the discussion, the following were done during all interviews: maintained eye contact; made appropriate non-verbal gestures; sought clarity to ensure full understanding; and finally allowed silence in order for the respondent to collect their thoughts.

The duration of each interview was between 45 minutes and an hour, all sessions were recorded and an electronic application “caleed otter.ai” was used to transcribe the audio recording, which made it easy to capture all the important information from the audio discussed during the interview. Participants were also granted access to the audio recording.

3.8 Data Analysis and interpretation

According to Flick (2014, p. 5) “data analysis is the classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it”.

Thematic analysis was used for this research, the identification of themes took place as the data was being collected, this was done by adopting the process outlined by (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997), which is:

1. Make decisions that narrow the study. Not everything was pursued
2. Review field notes and pursue specific leads in next sessions;
3. As interviews progresses try out ideas and themes on participants in order to identify trends.

Dey (1993) cited that data analysis occurs when a researcher reads all the data repeatedly in order to find common themes. This data is then converted to codes. Saldaña (2015) argues that coding is a process of interpreting themes, ideas or constructs that arise from the data. Excel was used as a method of determining codes. (Strauss, 1987) furthermore asserts that this is the process of using Participants' own words. For this research participant's own words were used as far as possible.

3.9 Limitations of the study

- Qualitative research is time consuming due to the number of interviews
- Analysing qualitative data might be time consuming.
- Data collection was a limitation due to the lockdown in South Africa. The preference was to do physical face-to-face meetings with all participants, however, that was not possible due to the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic. Digital platform in a form of Microsoft Teams was used to collect the data.

3.10 Trustworthiness

"All research is concerned with producing valid and trustworthy knowledge in an ethical manner"(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 237). Lincoln and Guba (1986) argue that Participants should feel secure enough that the findings can contrast social policy or labour law. No harm was done during the process of data collection and analysis. This research was carried out in an ethical manner, which reflects the Researcher's values and ethical stance. Consumers of this research should be comfortable to use the finding as a guideline of preferred of coaching approaches in South African banks.

3.10.1 Transferability

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argue that transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of a study can be useful to other situations. In order to enhance transferability, the researcher will use maximum variation in the sample. Findings of this research can be used by executive coaches in future because the study highlights the coached executives preferred executive coaching approaches. This information might be useful to coaches when they coach executives within South African banks. While the researcher would like to ensure that the study is relevant, there is no obligation to ensure that there is a fit with other studies in different contexts. The individual who will read the findings will have to decide whether the information can be used in their own context or not (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

3.10.2 Credibility

Coaching in South Africa is a relatively new field, not a lot of coaching was done in the past. The research was rigorous enough and that enabled the findings of the study to be well-founded and sound (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In order to make the study credible, more than one method of asking the research question was used. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) refers to the process of using more than one source as triangulation. By making use of thorough research questions the researcher ensured that the outcome of the study was reliable and authentic.

3.10.3 Dependability

Research dependability is concerned with the extent to which research findings can be reproduced (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The worldview and experiences of the executives interviewed during the process were captured as accurate as possible. Original copies of field notes were kept, i.e., to avoid any possible bias. Should the research be repeated with the same participants, there is a greater chance that the results will be the same because the nature of the research is to understand preferred coaching approaches that have been experienced already.

3.11 Ethical considerations

There is an obligation to the participants, readers and the Wits Business School to ensure that this research is done in an ethical manner. Ethical considerations were addressed by making use of the four (4) principles by (Beauchamp & Childress, 1983);

1. Autonomy - rights of all participants were respected
2. Beneficent – this study had good intentions
3. Non-maleficence - no harm was done to the participants
4. Justice - All participants were treated fairly and with dignity and respect

There are two (2) further ethical issues that were considered in this research

- Consent

Everyone who participated in the study was requested to give consent for their participation if they are willing to do so. This was to ensure that no one felt pressurised to participate. All participants were given details of the study and what it entails, whereafter they received a consent form which clearly stipulates that even after signing the consent form, the participants could stop participating at any point during the interview process and ceasing to participate will not prejudice them in anyway (Beauchamp & Childress, 1983).

- Confidentiality

The identity of all participants was protected. Notebooks were not left lying around and all electronic copies will be password protected (Beauchamp & Childress, 1983).

3.12 Conclusion of the research methodology

This chapter outlined the qualitative research methodology that was used to address the propositions that were generated and discovered in the literature review. Data collection, data analysis and data interpretation strategies were also discussed. The limitations and ethics that governed the research were also highlighted.

CHAPTER 4 – PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The findings of the research will be presented in this chapter. The purpose of this research was to explore the perceived effectiveness of alternative executive coaching approaches on personal leadership of coached executives in South African banks. This was a qualitative study where a total of fifteen (15) interviews were conducted in order to collect the data. An inductive approach was followed in order to analyse the data.

Findings presented are lived experiences and perceptions of participants. Ten (10) executives who work in major banks in South Africa and five (5) coaches were interviewed. Interviewees will be identified as Participant one (1) to Participant fifteen (15) in order to protect the private identity of the participants and the various banks that they work for.

Presentation of the main findings.

In order to set the scene and build rapport with the participants, two (2) definitions of coaching were shared with the participants (See appendix B and C). Thereafter, participants reflected on the definitions and were asked to share their overall coaching journeys. The following themes emerged when exploring proposition one: Self-awareness, coaching a person as a whole, and the role non-verbal cues play during coaching engagements. For the second proposition, self-limiting beliefs was the main theme that emerged. Solution Orientated Coaching emerged as dominant theme when the third proposition was explored. Lastly when the fourth proposition was unpacked the theme that came up was the impact coaching has on one's personal leadership. All the themes will be discussed in detail in this chapter

Two (2) transcripts were used to collect the data, one (1) for executives and the other for coaches. The researcher reached saturation for both executives and coaches. The two (2) graphs below illustrate saturation for executives and coaches separately.

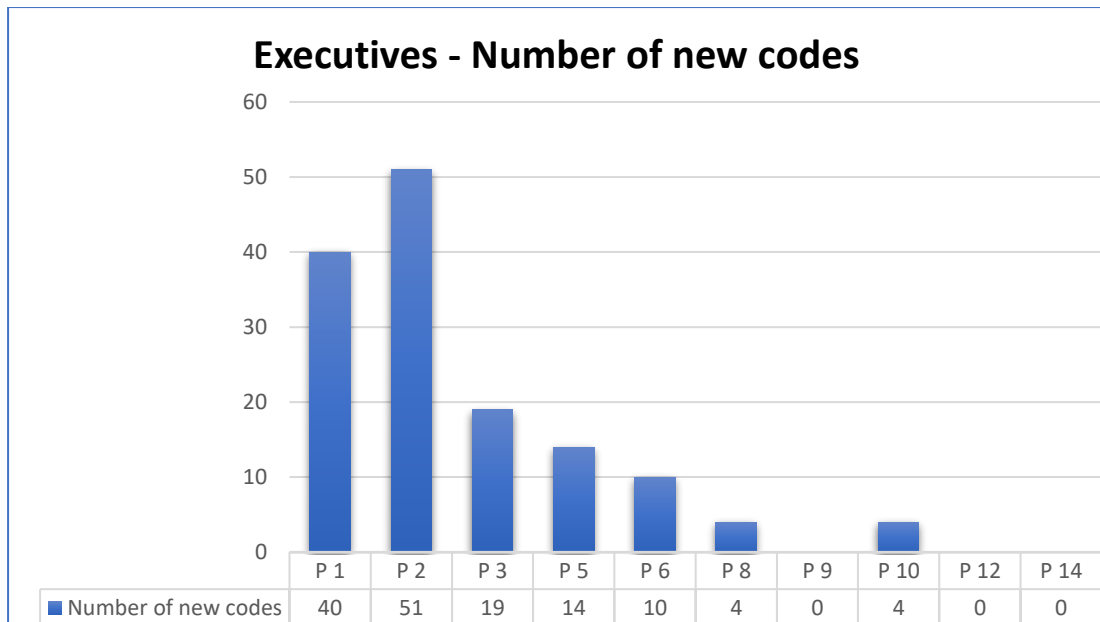


Figure 4.1: Saturation depiction graph for Executives

On the above graph P1 to P14 is used to describe executive participants. A significant drop of codes was evident from P1 to P14. Codes started dropping from the 3rd executive that was interviewed, which is illustrated as P3 on the above graph. P9 which was the 7th executive interviewed, had no new codes whereas P10, the 8th executives had a few. Saturation was reached which means there were no new codes found from P12 and P14 which were the 9th and 10th executives interviewed. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016)

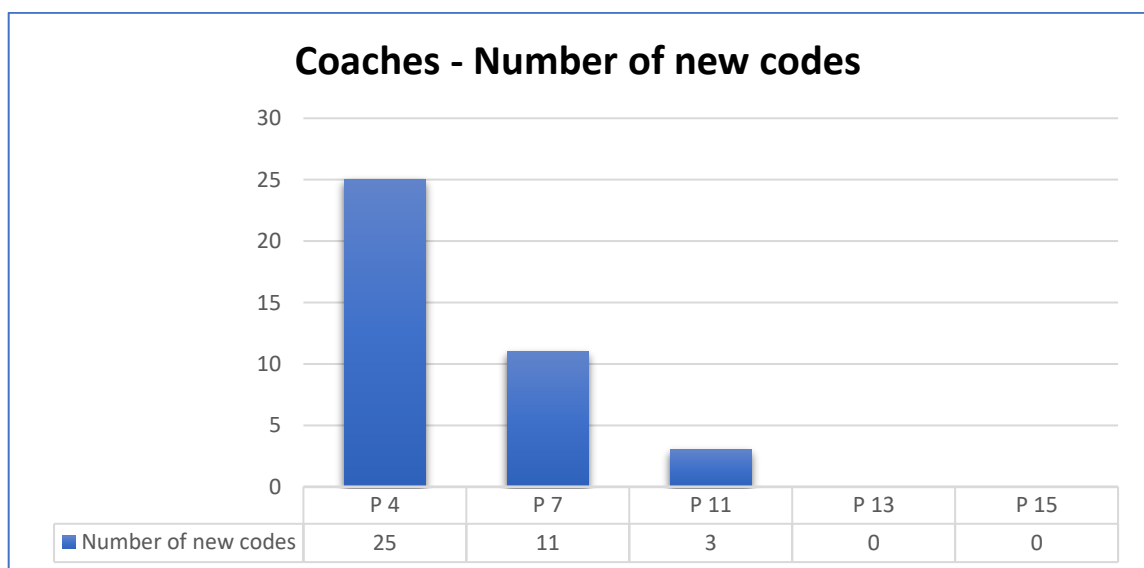


Figure 4.2: Graph showing saturation for Coaches

Out of the five (5) coaches that were interviewed a significant drop of codes is evident from the 1st to the 5th coach, which is illustrated as P4 to P15 on the above graph. The 4th and 5th coaches reported no new codes which means saturation was reached, this is illustrated as P13 and P15 on the above graph. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016)

The codes were divided into related categories and from there, specific themes emerged.

The following discussion is based on themes that were derived from the data analysis. The seven (7) themes are:

- Self-awareness,
- Coaching a person as a whole,
- The role non-verbal cues play in coaching,
- Self-limiting beliefs,
- Solution orientated coaching,
- Suitable coaching approach and lastly,
- Improved confidence levels of a leader post coaching.

These headings were derived from the four (4) propositions that have been discussed in chapter 2 and 3. Each theme being discussed will be linked to a specific proposition.

4.2 Findings pertaining to Proposition 1

The following themes emerged when exploring proposition 1: Self-awareness, coaching a person as a whole, and the role non-verbal cues play during coaching engagements. The proposition states that Ontological coaching approach seeks to find the congruency between language, body, moods, and emotions to assist clients to achieve their coaching goals.

4.2.1 Self-awareness

Self-awareness is one (1) of most important elements of emotional intelligence. In order to achieve alignment between language, body, moods and emotions individuals needs to have a high level of self-awareness. Participants shared their own perceptions and experiences of how their self-awareness improved following their coaching intervention. This is what they had to say:

“The overarching reason for me to seek coaching was to improve my self-awareness just so that I know how to self-regulate. After being coached my self-awareness increased and this helped me to engage and influence key stakeholders better.” - Participant 2- Executive.

At my best I’m an influencer and at my worst I’m a judge. Being aware of this part of myself has helped a lot. I know the kind of steps to take when I’m either one of those and there are practical things that I can do. This has really helped to get to where I am now.” - Participant 3 - Executive

“Self-awareness has been the cornerstone of my coaching; I allow myself to be myself and also allows others to be themselves. Coaching is about self-awareness. As an individual I must have a clear sense of self and purpose.” Participant 5 - Executive

Participant 6 highlighted that no matter how aware one is and how good one generally is at knowing yourself, there is always a benefit to being coached. Coaching highlighted some of the blind spots that he had and was not aware of. Participant 10 indicated that coaching improved his awareness and also reminded him that people have all the answers, he needs to solve his problems.

“I’ve been very fortunate that naturally in my personality and character, I’m very introspective. I’m very reflective, and I’m generally aware, both of myself and others. So, I was not starting from a complete deficit. However, what was less obvious was that notwithstanding my natural endowments, I still had blind spots, even in my self-awareness and in my introspection. With the benefit of the coach, and the questioning and the prompting, it took me to places I had never been. It also gave me a cautionary perspective of some of the derailers that I was not as conscious off no matter how unintended they were, I had to confront the reality that they do have impact on people”.

Participant 6 - Executive

Coaching has improved my self-awareness; coaching reminds you that you actually have many of the answers that you are looking for. Only if you could be led in a direction where you can find those answers, but you do have majority of them.

But also, sometimes you're not aware of some of the things that are happening around you because you're not necessarily spending time thinking about those things. Sometimes lack of the motivation to actually just do something about it creates a situation where you don't quite have that great awareness of yourself. So certainly, it helps to be self-aware all the times. **Participant 10 - Executive**

Participant 11 and 14 also highlighted that their self-awareness has improved and this has helped with self-discovery and self-acknowledgement. It is important to know who you are in order for you not to be controlled by external factors. Participant 8, however, acknowledges that before they received coaching, they had no self-awareness and as a result reacted with emotions in situations if discussions became heated.

“My self-awareness has improved to a large extent, I have always been on a quest of continuous self- discovery, and self- acknowledgement. Coaching has helped me to piece things together”. **Participant 11 - Executive**

“As a leader, it's important for you to be in touch with who you are, and have high levels of self-awareness, you must never allow external environment to determine who you should be and how you should act, my self-awareness has improved a lot”. **Participant 14 - Executive**

“I think over the last few years I've engaged with some very difficult people, In the past I used to take things personally and I would internalise it, this used to affect me. Post my coaching exposure, I let go very quickly and I don't internalise things. I am mindful of how I react in difficult conversations and make sure that I'm reacting with facts and not just emotions. So, I think the coaching has helped me realize that it's of no value to be too emotional in tough situations, but rather sometimes just step back, reflect and go back later to have a meaningful conversation with the individual”.

Participant 8 - Executive

Based on the reflections and lived experiences of the above participants it is evident that being self-aware has helped the participants tremendously in terms of achieving their goals and to be the best version of themselves. This, they all attributed to the impact of coaching.

4.2.2 Coaching a person as a whole

Participants indicated that it is necessary to coach a person as a whole human being. In order to do that, the diversity and background of an individual need to be taken into account in order to ensure that you understand and can connect with that individual. There were also different views from other participants regarding diversity, with some indicating that for them diversity in terms of race and gender doesn't matter, what matters is that they are all human beings. As human beings we should be treated differently in our individual capacity not because we are part of a specific ethnic or cultural group.

Participant 5 explains that his coaching focused on him as a holistic person and it was valuable.

“What was valuable about my coaching experience is that we spoke about me as individual, my perspective, background, what informs my approach to things? How do I show up at work? What is my purpose and what do I believe I want to offer in life? I once heard someone say coaching is about helping the individual to recognize that they need to look in the mirror and not through the window. The coaching approach that I received allowed me to look into the mirror”. **Participant 5 - Executive**

Participant 2 indicated that she had to get a coach who understands her and her background. She is a young South African female in a very senior position and she could not see people she could relate and identify with in most forums and as a result her confidence was affected. After seeking a coach that understood her situation and her background, her confidence and performance improved. Participant 10 also added the importance of understanding people's diversity and to be a good listener as a coach during coaching sessions so that you do not interpret things based on your own context.

I couldn't see people who looked like me in all the engagements that I went to, which was very difficult, I struggled, my confidence took a dip. I moved from being this very outspoken, well-articulated, confident person to being shy. I

reclused and that took away from my effectiveness because my role gives me the license to question and challenge. I then sought for executive coaching, I needed somebody who understands me so that I could be very vulnerable with, someone who can walk the journey with me and let me tell you, it's chalk and cheese now. **Participant 2 - Executive**

People's background matters. Particularly when you want to talk about their development. However, if the coach has got a good listening ear they should be able to deal with people from different ethnic backgrounds. There's a chance as a coach, that if you don't have a good listening ear, you may hear something that is not being spoken about. This can be caused by understanding things in your own context, while the other person has a completely different context. **Participant 10 - Executive.**

Participant 10 also added that the medium of instruction used in corporates is English and as an African person, English doesn't come naturally as he still needs to translate it into his mother tongue in order to ensure that he understands what is being said. It is therefore important for a coach to be mindful of this dynamic.

If we sitting in a boardroom and we are talking, it is very likely that you might find black people slow to react to concepts, and white people being quick to speak about them. Sometimes it's a simple issue of language. This thing that I have to construct my thoughts in Tshivenda and translate them into English. Half the time I'll translate word for word that's just one example. If a coach doesn't understand the coachee, they may prescribe a medication for wrong diagnosis. **Participant 10 – Executive**

Participant 6 (black South African) shared an interesting view about how coaching enabled him to be aware of privileges that he didn't know he had. He further explains that the holistic coaching approach that he received made him aware of his privileges and how he affects other people.

I'm naturally logical and analytical, and I have perfectionist tendencies. While that has helped me to be diligent, it has helped me to excel in many areas, it does affect how I relate to people who lack these qualities. It also affects the language I use, which if not good, it has certain impacts on others. I was never aware of the concept of privileges beyond the demographics, but through my coaching encounters, I got a very powerful lens that opened my eyes to privileges I've never thought about. I'll give you an example, my communication skills are above average okay, and while that is good, it has an effect in how people engage with me, especially sub-ordinates.

Participant 6 - Executive Coach

Below is a perspective from two (2) coaches who prefer to coach a person as a whole as opposed to coaching a particular issue. For them the background of the person matters and needs to be taken into consideration as it might affect how a person shows up.

I coach holistically, I'm not just looking at you as a cog in the corporate machine, you know, you're a father, a mother, a sister, a husband, etc. There's a lot more to you than just what the bank has sent you to me for, so I encourage people to bring whatever that matters to them into the space because it affects people in some way. That's actually one of my favourite things about coaching because if you coach a particular problem, and not the person as a whole, the coachee, stands to gain very little about themselves, and from the coaching engagement itself, but if you coaching them as a whole person, you're able to connect the dots and they get positive outcomes”

Participant 7 - Executive Coach

Coaching is a very personal journey, which I guess by implication, if you seek coaching yourself, it means you are willing to open up. In my opinion how you lead and how you show up, has a lot to do with where you come from and the different aspects that make you who you are. So, if we're talking about South African specifically, I mean, our history is one that has garnered a lot of people. Whether you've been exposed to it directly or not, I do think it has had a big

impact on how a lot of people show up. Context is always very important and to understand context, you generally need to go a little deeper.

Participant 12 - Executive Coach

Participant 3 is an executive who has received coaching before and he is coaching other people as well. He prefers a holistic approach that enables him to understand a person even more.

"I am always keen to engage, know the person holistically in order to understand what it is that they are dealing with. Through a lot of conversation, I can learn a lot about people".

Participant 3- Executive

The following coaches contributed by stating that for them the only thing that matters are to see the coachee as a professional person, and not necessarily their cultural or racial background.

"So, I think it's really just understanding humans better, no matter who they are, culturally, racially, or whatever it may be, we all are very similar, and have similar concerns, aspects and things that we're trying to do to work through in life. So, I think generally, it is a better understanding of human beings that has helped me through with the coaching process."

Participant 1 - Executive and Coach

"The world is not divided by race, colour, gender, all that kind of stuff. The world is divided into wise people and foolish people. And the fools see the world through the lens of race, and gender and religion and all that. If you use these appropriate techniques with a heart to try and help someone, and you listen to them, and you ask good questions, and you do good playback, I don't really think it matters what your background is."

Participant 11 - Executive Coach

“We’re all human beings at the end of the day, some people are racial, others are not, and I encounter these things a lot in what I do. I don’t change my coaching approach because of who I’m working with.”

Participant 13 - Executive Coach

“Every single person in front of you is unique, you need to understand the uniqueness of the person in front of you. I’m coaching the man not the body, does that make sense? I’m coaching you, the you are definitely influenced by beliefs, the values of being black or white woman or male or Muslim, Jewish, all of them influences you, I’m coaching you, and I need to be respectful of you and understand that some of that may be holding you back.

Participant 15 - Executive Coach

Based on the above, the majority of the participants which includes all executive participants and x2 coaches, highlighted that for them, a holistic coaching that takes into account their background is important especially where their development is concerned. They also indicated that how you show up in various spaces especially in a corporate environment, has a lot to do with your background, hence it is important to look at people holistically. Three (3) coaches on the other hand, prefer to deal people as individuals because some of the cultural and racial aspects that people bring and hold on to might affect their leadership negatively.

4.2.3 The role non-verbal cues play in coaching

Most participants especially coaches indicated that more than just the verbal language that is used during coaching session, non-verbal cues also play a huge role in the coaching engagement. They mentioned the importance of making sure that there is alignment between what the coachee is saying and their non-verbal behaviour.

“When I coach, I listen to the language that the person is using both verbal and non-verbal, because sometimes it's not in what people are saying but it's in what they're not saying.” **Participant 4 - Executive Coach**

“I listen to the tone of my clients voice, the speed at which they are speaking, I look at their body language, the energy between us. One of the things that my clients appreciate about my coaching style is that I'm very immersive in the way that I coach. I am looking for alignment of mind, body and soul or cognitive, emotional, and physical, because when that is aligned, then you are in flow and when you are in flow are you able to fulfil whatever purpose that you set out.” **Participant 7 - Executive Coach**

I have realised there is a sensitivity to the non-verbal stuff and I guess I picked up quite a bit of this more now that I'm aware of it I play this back by framing the next question that is informed by everything that I am receiving and processing.

Participant 11 - Executive Coach

Participant 13 indicated that as a coach it is important for her to be aware of her own non-verbal cues that she might be sending to a coachee, because one cannot expect that alignment from the coachee if they themselves are not aligned. During a coaching session she constantly uses a questioning style that ascertain how a person is doing holistically.

You can never take people where you've never been kind of thing, right? So, I must be able to see this thing effective on me first before expecting it to work on other people. In order to ensure holistic alignment, I give my clients a couple of pictures/cards and I ask them to choose picture or cards that talks to how they are doing mentally, physically and emotionally.

Participant 13 - Executive Coach

4.3 Findings pertaining to Proposition 2

For this proposition, self-limiting beliefs was the main theme that emerged throughout the interviews. This proposition argues that cognitive behavioural coaching enables the executive to understand behavioural and cognitive shortcomings that hinders them from achieving their goals. Nine (9) out of ten (10) participants indicated that they had self-limiting beliefs that hindered them from taking action towards achieving their goals. The self-limiting belief manifests itself in a form of self-doubt and fear of the unknown. Cognitive Behavioural Coaching enabled them to reflect on this and their mindset and behaviours changed for the better and they became competent to implement actions to achieve their set goals.

“When I took over a big team which had highly technical males, I had self-doubt, I felt incompetent and intimidated at times. After my coaching intervention I reflected and I knew that something needed to change. I then changed my mindset and started believing in myself. I then started making some concerted effort in terms of what is it that I wanted to achieve and by the end of that year, I did a 360-positive turn.”

Participant 8 – Executive

“Prior to my coaching, I had a lot of self-doubt because I was in a male dominated area. This hindered my speed of growth, coaching helped me to deal with this and shortly after I was given an executive opportunity and I started believing in myself”.

Participant 9 – Executive

Participant 10's contribution referred to the role that the unconscious mind plays. Some of the things that might be hindering a person to develop or achieve their goals might be unconscious. A good coach is able to unearth these unconscious beliefs or fear.

“Normally you don't necessarily know that you have those cognitive and behavioural issues that might be affecting your growth. You then start realising that there are things that are usually at an unconscious level that somehow delaying you reaching your potential. I'll use an example, without necessarily knowing, you may limit your voice in the boardroom, because you just assume that the people in the room know more than you so, therefore, perhaps there's no need for you to say anything at that stage. What

you may not be aware, is that underlying that behaviour, it's the fear that people may actually read me as somebody who either is not taking this conversation seriously, or just not up to the task. But what the coaching exercise then helps with is to remind you that your contribution matters hence you are in that room."

Participant 10 – Executive

Participant 5 had an interesting hindrance, i.e., his beliefs and deep IsiZulu background hindered him from engaging fully with his older colleagues. He was promoted to an executive level at a young age and some of his sub-ordinates were older than him and he assumed that he needed to ask permission to engage with them. He also thought he could not just approach his leadership team to have a conversation without asking for permission. Cultural assumptions affect a lot of people in the workplace.

"The assumptions I made in the workplace were based on my cultural background. I thought I needed to ask for permission for almost everything especially to colleagues older than me. I assumed I couldn't set up a meeting, I had to ask for permission first, I also thought I couldn't just walk up to my leadership and have a conversation. Later it became clear to me that we all here to achieve the same goal and I can engage with anyone if I need to. I think that level of appreciation came with coaching."

Participant 5 – Executive

"I was fortunate in that for me to opt for a coaching intervention, it wasn't because I had any specific hinderance. There were no cognitive or behavioural issues that triggered the coaching intervention, it was for my next reflection of growth. Coaching helped me to become aware of the dark side of my strengths and how to deal with it".

Participant 6 – Executive

Participant 14 has a constant engagement with her coach in order for her to get help in dealing with her intense self-doubt. It is surprising that someone who could be the most competent executive will have self-doubt from time to time.

"I always rate myself behind everybody else, even though I get told that I'm doing extremely well. It got better with age, I am very capable and always has been. I was appointed a director of a big company at the age of 29 and yet I always doubt myself

even today. I engage with my coach often in order to deal with this". **Participant 14 – Executive**

All coaches also weighed in and stated that they coach people with self-limiting beliefs often and some are based on peoples' believes or their past experiences.

"People can be compared to an iceberg, it isn't just about the results that are above the water, below the water is all the past experiences that lead to the beliefs that people have, the self-image etc. When I coach, I listen to the language that a person uses and I try to help them find a different narrative than self-limiting beliefs that might be stopping them from being the best versions of themselves." **Participant 11 – Executive Coach**

"I coach people with self-limiting beliefs from time to time and I help them to deal with that, I had a coachee who came from an extremely poor background. He said growing up they didn't have electricity and running water and he never wanted to go back there again. So as a result, he worked very hard he didn't want to fail and everything was fear driven. He had imposter syndrome always second guessed himself."

Participant 4 – Executive Coach

"That's most of the coaching that I do, people have self-limiting beliefs and this hinders them from being the best versions of themselves. This may be from the language that people use and the things they tell themselves. "I'm too old to try out new things". Or someone who is always anxious, so they don't even try".

Participant 13 – Executive Coach

"One of the approaches I use is meter coaching which focuses on belief system. A lot of it is about what's holding you back? So, I'll give you an example, if coachee is saying that they suffer from insomnia and they have tried everything. I will ask them the following questions:

Do you believe you can sleep? And if they say yes, and then I say, Okay, so what would make you believe it more? How strong is your conviction? Can you give yourself the permission to sleep? Do you allow yourself to do what you believe you can't do?

These types of questions help by unpacking believes that are holding people back”.

Participant 15 – Executive Coach

Self-limiting beliefs affected Nine (9) of the executives and in some instances they still do. Some people might not be aware of this since it can be deep rooted and unconscious in some instances. A coach can help to unearth these believes because they might be a constant hindrance to achieving one’s goals. As indicated above, executives had some good examples of how this affected their lives and coaches also confirmed that they have seen this a lot in their coaching practices.

4.4 Findings pertaining to Proposition 3

In this proposition, the theme of “Solution Orientated Coaching” emerged as dominant. This proposition suggests that solution focused coaching is concerned with finding real results by focussing on the future rather than looking into the current or the past situation for answers. There were varying responses from the participants with regards to this proposition. Three (3) of them prefers solution focused while twelve (12) of them indicated that there is value in understanding patterns and why things happen in a manner that they do.

“A hybrid of approaches was used but definitely going to the past was not a strong factor. It was future orientated and particularly strong on Model’s lenses of viewing things. My philosophy in life is that there's more to be gained in leveraging strengths rather than spending a lot of energy correcting weaknesses. So, I preferred the solution focused approach.”

Participant 6 – Executive

“My coach followed a hybrid but more solution focused approach for example, if I raised something more than once, she would say, this is a third time you saying this? where’s that coming from? So that afforded me the opportunity to zoom in deeper and understand the reasons behind what I was struggling with, but the intent was to find a solution”.

Participant 2 – Executive

“My coach focused on finding solutions but also went to the past if something was hindering me from moving forward or in achieving my goals.”

Participant 9 – Executive

“The two of us jointly started dealing with the problem. So, the coach will not prescribe a solution for me, because they actually do not know the solution. The coach used insightful line of questioning and did not amplify or suppress other things, everything comes into the picture. For example, if I struggle to speak up in the boardroom the coach will not run and say: “Well, what happened in your previous engagement? Or what happened in your childhood, but the coach will then ask me, “Why do I think that is the case?”. If I struggle to answer that or if I provide superficial answers then the coach would use a specific model or suggest a specific book”.

Participant 10 – Executive

There were three (3) executives who experienced an approach that went deep into the past first before even unpacking the solution and for them that approach helped a lot because it allowed them to discover more about themselves.

“In all my coaching engagements my coaches went quite deep in order to help me understand the origins of the problem before solutioning. Another major part of the process was to understand me as a person and why I behave the way that I do. I think that's a very good approach to have started with, the soul searching in the beginning that helped me to go through a journey of self - discovery and I was clear in terms of what I needed to change in order to achieve what I wanted to achieve, solutioning only came at a later stage”.

Participant 8 – Executive

“As a person, all of your being is integrated, nothing works in isolation within yourself. It is important to go back to connect dots and not rush to finding solutions.”

Participant 12 – Executive.

Where am I now? What are the problems I've got now? And then we teased out the issues. So, I would say that they went back and then worked through the solution”.

Participant 3 – Executive

One of the coaches indicated that there are times when a solution-focused approach is needed especially when you have a specific problem that needs to be resolved urgently. She recalls an example where she needed to apply solution focused approach in order to resolve a problem faster.

“A solution focused approach has it’s time and place. I was approached by one director he said he hired this amazing, talented person, who is a huge asset, he didn’t want to lose him. The individual was struggling to connect with some members of the leadership team. As a coach, I contracted with the coachee for a very short term in order to discuss the situation and what he was going to do to turn the ship around. We had a result-based coaching session to unpack his current situation and where he needed to go and how he was going to do to get there? What are the steps we’re going to put in place, etc. and he found it incredibly powerful, because he suddenly had perspective on what he needed to do”?

Participant 4 – Executive

The other coach attested that the solution focused approach is her go-to approach since she is outcome based and futuristic.

“My coaching style is solution and future orientated and often there's something in the future that my client is aspiring towards, my role as a coach is to accelerate the pace at which he or she fulfils bridges and gaps in order to move from the present into the future”.

Participant 7 – Executive Coach

Determining the most effective and preferred coaching approach

After exploring 3 specific coaching approaches; (Ontological, Cognitive Behavioural and Solution focused) with executives and coaches, they were given an opportunity to confirm which coaching approach they prefer if any. Seven (7) participants indicated that when it comes to their development, their background matters and they need to be treated as a whole person. Thus, based on this feedback they seem to prefer ontological coaching. Only three (3) participants had preferences for solution focused

coaching when applied in isolation. It is important to mention that while participants prefer to be treated as a whole human being because of their South African background and history, they are comfortable to use a hybrid of approaches depending on what the coaching issue is. If the coaching issue requires them to go to the past in order to resolve the problem, they are willing to do that and if the coaching issue requires quick solutions, they are also comfortable with that.

“I don’t think I have a specific coaching approach that I prefer, the reason I say this is because in trying to understand the problem, and what gave rise to it, I do want to interrogate it a bit, and even go back and understand what are those life events that could have created this area of life that I want to develop. Sometimes going through those life events actually gives you a good perspective instead of jumping into solution mode. In some instances, there is a need to focus on solutions. All in all, it depends on the situation or maybe there is no such thing as a preferred a coaching approach”.

Participant 10 – Executive

“I prefer a combination of approaches because it really depends on what we trying to solve for, for example if there are things that are blockers to your progress it would be beneficial to dig a bit deeper but if it’s fear of speaking Infront of a larger audience you can just focus on finding the solution for that.”

Participant 12 – Executive

“The approach used in a coaching session depends on the coach, however, in order to find meaningful solutions for myself I prefer a combination of approaches”.

Participant 9 – Executive

All coaches confirmed that in order to do the best for the person that you are coaching you cannot really stick to only one coaching approach or methodology. They mentioned the importance of having a coaching toolbox that will allow you to pull the suitable tools/approaches from as and when required.

“I prefer all coaching approaches but with ontological approach, I seem to get to the heart of the matter quicker, that said I believe in not being a slave to a methodology. I believe in coaching the individual you need to go with the individual needs because being a slave to a certain methodology may not serve the individual. I would describe

my coaching approach as a coaching toolbox, a hammer doesn't solve every problem. I need to be able to open the toolbox and dig through it to find the tool that is most appropriate for situation”.

Participant 4 – Executive Coach

“I can't really say there is a particular coaching approach that I prefer more than others, What I find useful is to have a toolbox it enables me to coach based on what the issue at hand is. Before I make an assumption, I try to understand what the potential problem might be because that gives me guidance on which approach to use”.

Participant 13 – Executive Coach

“Coaching has a couple of fundamentals, and all techniques or approaches have some perspective of those fundamental, using assessment tools can be a good starting point. For me, coaching is around the purpose... the why you in coaching, at the end of the day as a coach I need to be able to do what's best for the individual. In order to do that I need to use a variety of approaches”.

Participant 15 – Executive Coach

The participants below indicated that their preferred approach is one that looks at a person as a whole, where the coach starts by understanding the person they are coaching first, and then proceed with the coaching. This also gives a coachee an opportunity to re-discover themselves.

“There is value in coaching the person holistically, understand their past and allow them to re-discover themselves before finding solutions”.

Participant 8 – Executive

“I prefer an approach that is holistic that doesn't only focus on the cognitive side but rather takes into account your emotional and somatic side, the whole human being”.

Participant 1 – Executive

“I prefer the approach inside out, where you start inside the individual, you coach them outwards, towards their world”.

Participant 5 – Executive

Two (2) participants indicated that they prefer a solution focused coaching approach. One (1) participant indicated that if there is a need to go into the past in order to understand certain patterns, they are comfortable with that too, but the main preference is to focus on finding solutions.

“Coaching is future orientated not focused on looking into the past, often you find that something happened in the past and it’s showing up in the present because it was not processed adequately and remains unresolved. I tell my clients that unpacking the injuries or wounds of the past is therapy not coaching. My approach is simple, I start off on the timeline, and I show my clients that my method of coaching makes an assumption that we are in the present. I assess being present on a number of dimensions; emotional state, moods and mental state. Once you are present and aligned, we can talk about the future”.

Participant 7 – Executive Coach

“I am solution oriented, however I do a deep dive to understand cause and analysis, there's benefits to understanding the pattern of something, but generally I prefer finding solutions”.

Participant 2 – Executive

The below participant is a coach and prefers to use a powerful questioning style of coaching. Depending on the coaching issue, he will have a mental model/coaching framework that he uses to guide the conversation, but he relies a lot on questions.

“My approach is to do as little as possible and let the person talk as much as possible. I ask a good enough question, and then you keep quiet. Coaching is as much about being quiet as it is about talking? I like asking questions that might sound silly like “and what else”. Such questions make the coachee to think deep and come up with their own solutions”.

Participant 11 – Executive Coach

Based on the above the majority of the participants indicated that they don't have an overall preferred approach, however, twelve (12) participants seem to prefer Ontological Coaching, which looks at the person as a whole in order to ensure that there is alignment between body, language and emotions. There were three (3) participants who indicated that they prefer a Solution Focused Coaching approach. What is important to note is that even the participants who are in favour of a particular approach are comfortable to use other approaches as well, depending on the coaching issue that needs to be addressed.

4.5 Findings pertaining to Proposition 4

The fourth proposition suggests that personal leadership effectiveness can be achieved through coaching. The main theme that came up was the impact coaching has on one's personal leadership. All the executives confirmed that their leadership style improved after the coaching engagement.

The executives cited below highlighted how coaching has improved their confidence. They stated that prior to coaching they were not confident enough to have difficult conversations and post coaching they were able to have those courageous conversations to address what needed to be addressed. They have also stopped micro-managing people and they let people develop their own ideas. Their overall self-awareness and emotional intelligence have improved for the better.

"Prior to coaching I was not a confident leader, I used to worry about what will people think or say if I voiced my opinions. Where I am now in my leadership, if I need to have a one- on- one with somebody and call out something, I would do it whereas previously, I would be so scared. Coaching has also set an incredibly positive spin on how I lead people, even my leadership style has changed completely. I don't micro-manage people anymore and I make time to get to know the person and what matters to them".

Participant 8 – Executive

“There’s a few things that my coaching journey has done, it imparted confidence. Confidence comes with self-awareness which is particularly important. Now I embrace leadership a whole lot better because I understand what I bring to the table. Coaching also gave me an opportunity to really look and ask myself, what is my purpose? Is my purpose aligned to the organization's purpose? This whole journey enabled me to be an authentic leader”. **Participant 10 – Executive**

“As a leader coaching has made me aware that my actions count a lot, I need to lead from a place of awareness and authenticity if I want to be a successful leader. I also learnt that if I've got a weakness, I must understand it and be able to deal with it. If I know I've done wrong, I must say I'm sorry. It's all those small things that can move you from being good to great as a leader”.

Participant 5 – Executive

“I have stopped telling people what to do, I allow them to think and come up with their own ideas. I now understand the importance of teaching a man how to fish instead of giving them a fish”.

Participant 9 – Executive

“Post my coaching intervention my direct reports said they've noticed that I ask more questions now instead of telling, I give them time and space to think about options, as opposed to pressurising them into making a decision, I didn't even realise that I did that because my intentions were good, I no longer have a telling and controlling leadership style. My biggest takeaway is that you can't control others, but you can control yourself”.

Participant 2 – Executive

Participant 6 highlighted the fact that his coaching was mostly based on leadership effectiveness and throughout his coaching journey, he learnt certain tools that enable him to energise people and get the best out of them instead of draining them.

“My coaching journey has largely focused on leadership effectiveness. It has been beneficial in many ways. Coaching has benefited me in terms of being aware of my

impact on others. Naturally as a leader you either energise or drain people, I have learned certain tools, behaviours and practices that help me to energise rather than drain. I moved from a task-oriented leader who's not a feeler to being a people - orientated leader who understands that people have social and professional needs and sometimes they are inseparable. Coaching has also helped me in terms of empowering people by delegating tasks to them, this has helped me to move from transactional things to more transformational. Lastly the other key benefit that coaching has imparted in me is the power of questions, it has helped me a great deal to work with people through questions, rather than telling them how to do things. That has been a huge plus".

Participant 6 – Executive

Participant 3 initially had concerns about how his fellow leaders were leading and was personally ill-equipped how to handle the situation. As a result, he defaulted to judging as opposed to addressing the matter correctly. After the coaching intervention he was able to address the matter in a manner that made his peers listen and not feel judged.

"My personal leadership has improved; I think the biggest impact is on dealing with peers in the same leadership position as me. In the past when I raise issues that are objective on the table I did it in a manner that left people feeling judged and attacked. For example, I would say, you've had five appointments, not one of them has been a woman, why? Post my coaching intervention, I say, can we have a discussion about all of our appointments, based on the commitment we've made of accelerating women development. So how I lead myself and others has changed for the better".

Participant 3 – Executive

The executive cited below indicated the importance of being coached at an early age, he was coached five (5) years before retirement and learnt so many lessons that he wished he could have learnt early in his career. Coaching has helped him improve his listening skills; however, he is not there yet, he still wants to develop listening skills even more.

"From a leadership perspective, coaching has helped with improving my listening skills. To a certain extend I'm still developing this skill as I still struggle to completely

listen without making assumptions. I wish I had received coaching much earlier in my career. Coaching should be offered very early in people's careers".

Participant 1 – Executive

4.6 Summary of the findings.

In this chapter, the effectiveness of alternative executive coaching approaches was explored and all participants shared their perspectives and experiences with regards to the various approaches. Participants indicated that coaching has improved their self-awareness significantly, which enables them to self-regulate and approach situations in a manner that allows them to get the best results for the individuals and business. Some participants indicated that they already had self-awareness, but it was enhanced through coaching which allowed them to be more self-aware and adjust their approach accordingly. For some participants, being aware of themselves reminded them of their ability to solve their own problems. Coaching a person as a whole is one (1) of the themes that received similar responses from the majority of the participants. They alluded to the fact that when it comes to their development, their perspectives and backgrounds informs their approach and how they show up generally. The background that participants referred to was ethnic group in the context of South Africa, gender, and in some instances, past experiences. Some coaches highlighted the fact that in their experience, holding on to your background and beliefs might be holding you back and render you as ineffective as a leader. This was actually confirmed by one (1) of the executives referred to earlier who had an actual example of how holding on to his cultural norms held him back in the workplace.

Another interesting theme that surfaced was self-limiting beliefs which manifest through self doubt and lack of confidence. The participants' home language also had an impact on their confidence levels, especially for those whom English is not their first - or home language. 9 out of 10 executive participants experienced a lot of self-limiting beliefs prior to being coached and this improved after the coaching intervention, and participants were able to coach themselves out of a self-limiting situation in future. Solution Focused Coaching was also explored and there were varying responses from the participants with regards to this proposition, three (3) of them prefer Solution Focused Coaching, while twelve (12) of them indicated that

there is value in understanding patterns behind why things happen in a manner that they do.

Participants were also asked to confirm their preferred coaching approach and majority prefer a combination of approaches depending on what the coaching issue at hand is, however, twelve (12) of the participants had a strong preference for ontological coaching. The participants indicated that they are comfortable to use ontological coaching in conjunction with other approaches. Finally, participants shared how the alternative coaching approaches that they received, helped increase their personal leadership effectiveness. All participants experienced a positive shift in their personal leadership effectiveness.

CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDING

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher will discuss the research findings in relation to the literature that was reviewed in chapter 2. Lived experiences and perspectives of participants will be compared to the literature that was reviewed. Demographics of the participants will be discussed since the research study is in the South African context and some participants felt strongly about the importance of one's background in terms of ethnicity during the coaching intervention, while others indicated that background is immaterial. The researcher will highlight the ethnicity of the participants in the discussion only where it is necessary, in order to illustrate points made by some participants.

5.2 Demographic profile of Participants

Participants	Female			Male			Grand Total
	African	Indian	White	African	Coloured	White	
Executive	3	1	1	3	1	1	10
Coach	2		2			1	5
Grand Total	5	1	3	3	1	2	15

Table 5.1 demographic profile of Participants. (Based on South African racial classification)

The total number of participants is fifteen (15), the first group comprised of ten (10) executives. Five (5) of them were females and five (5) were males. In terms of ethnicity there was six (6) African, one (1) Indian, one (1) coloured and two (2) white. They are all executives who work for the four (4) major banks in South Africa. The second group of participants comprised of five (5) coaches. Four (4) of whom were females and only one (1) was male. In terms of ethnicity two (2) were African and three (3) were white.

Below is a summary of themes that emerged from the research, these themes will be discussed in detail and compared to the literature that was reviewed in chapter 2.

Table 5.2 summary of propositions and themes

Propositions	Themes
Proposition 1 - Ontological coaching	Self-awareness
	Coaching a person as a whole
	The role non-verbal cues play in coaching
Proposition 2 - Cognitive behavioural coaching	Self-limiting beliefs
Proposition 3 - Solution focused coaching	Solution orientated coaching
	The most preferred coaching approach
Proposition 4 - Personal leadership effectiveness	The impact coaching has on personal leadership effectiveness.

5.3 Discussion pertaining to Proposition 1

The first (1st) proposition is with reference to Ontological Coaching. The premise of this coaching approach is to assess human existence by focusing on the congruency between language, body, moods, and emotions in order for the client to achieve their coaching goals. There are three (3) themes that emerged when this proposition was explored with participants. The themes are: self-awareness, coaching a person as a whole, and the role non-verbal cues play in the coaching process. In this section the themes will be discussed based on participants lived experiences and this will be compared to literature.

5.3.1 Self awareness

One of the participants mentioned that although he thought he was very much aware of himself and others, after coaching he had to confront the fact that he had some blind spots in his self-awareness. The blind spots were derailers that he was not aware of and they had an impact on other people. He had to confront this in order to be a good leader. In the literature (Kouzes & Posner, 2006) highlighted that good leadership requires competencies such as self-awareness, interpersonal skills and social awareness, which are important for a leader's success.

Another participant highlighted that coaching definitely improved his self-awareness and, in the process, reminded him that he already has all the answers that he needs. In order for the answers to surface that are within him already, he needed to be led in a direction where it is possible to find those answers. (Cox et al., 2014) supports the above statement by indicating that coaching is rooted in the understanding that the coachee is responsible for their own development. It is a self-directed process where the coachee tackles their own problems in the quest to find solutions themselves. (Cox et al., 2014) further weighs in on the relationship between coaching and self-awareness, by indicating that coaching increases self-awareness and whenever a coachee is feeling stuck, it is because of how they are interpreting their world. The awareness of inner powers of thought and emotions, and the outer powers of language and behaviour is important in assisting the coachee to know what needs to change for them to achieve their goals.

Nine (9) of the participants indicated that improving their self-awareness was the main reason they sought coaching. The intention of improving self-awareness was for participants to understand themselves as individuals better and to improve the quality of their interactions with key stakeholders and the people they lead. Overall, the participants wanted to improve their emotional intelligence. (Goleman, 1995) describes the term emotional intelligence by using 5 domains; 1. Self-awareness - the ability to know and understand your own emotions and feelings; 2. Self-regulation - the ability to manage own emotions by handling feelings appropriately; 3. Motivating oneself - being able to motivate yourself in order to reach the highest levels of personal mastery and creativity; 4. Recognising emotions in others – the ability to recognise emotions in others are the fundamentals of people's skills, having empathy is the key

in understanding the needs and wants of other people and lastly 5, handling relationships - the ability to manage emotions in others and an example of this is good leadership. Participants highlighted most of these domains.

Comments regarding self-awareness and recognising emotions in others

“Self-awareness has been the cornerstone of my coaching; I allow myself to be myself and also allow others to be themselves.”

Participant 5- Executive

Comments regarding self-regulations and managing one's emotions

“The overarching reason for me to seek coaching was to improve my self-awareness so that I know how to self-regulate. After being coached my self-awareness increased and this helped me to engage and influence key stakeholders better.”

Participant 2 - Executive

Comments regarding self-regulation and handling relationships

“In the past I used to take things personally and I would internalise things, this used to affect me. Post my coaching exposure, I let go very quickly and I don't internalise things. I am mindful of how I react in difficult conversations and make sure that I'm reacting with facts and not just emotions. So, I think the coaching has helped me realise that it's of no value to be too emotional in tough situations, but rather sometimes just step back, reflect and go back later to have a meaningful conversation with the individual”. **Participant 8 - Executive**

Ontology and emotional intelligence complement each other because ontology is the study of being, it seeks to examine the nature of human existence (Honderich, 1995). Emotional intelligence, on the other hand, measures how successful we exist in the world, because emotions are intelligent and help us to understand who we are in the world and that is deemed as an ontological concern (Terrell & Hughes, 2010).

5.3.2 Coaching a person as a whole

According to Rogers (2012), coaching the whole person's past, present and future is one of the most important principles of coaching. In order to coach effectively, a coach needs to have a holistic view of the client as this helps the coach to understand the client even better. In most cases, some of the challenges that clients face in their professional lives are linked to similar challenges that they face in their personal lives. Relationships formed in early life can also affect clients in their adult stages.

Based on the research conducted, coaching a person as a whole emerged as a consistent theme when Ontological Coaching was explored. Participants indicated that it is necessary to coach a person as a whole human being. In order to do that, the diversity and background of an individual needs to be taken into account to ensure that the coach understands and build better rapport with a coachee. This contribution from participants was significant because the aim of the study was to explore if there is a specific coaching approach that South African executives in the banking sector prefer. Here is what participants had to say:

"What was valuable about my coaching experience is that we spoke about me as individual, my perspective, background, what informs my approach to things? How do I show up at work? what is my purpose? and what do I believe I want to offer in life?"

Participant 5 - Executive

"People's background matters. Particularly when you want to talk about their development. However, if the coach has got a good listening ear, and they should be able to deal with people from different ethnic backgrounds. There's a chance as a coach, that if you don't have a good listening ear, you may hear something that is not being spoken about. This can be caused by understanding things in your own context, while the other person has a completely different context". **Participant 10 - Executive**

The literature agrees with participant 10's sentiments regarding the importance of having good listening skills on the part of the coach. (Cox et al., 2014) argue that Ontological Coaching is an intimate relationship, the coach needs to be fully present during the coaching session. There is also a heightened quality of listening that is required.

A coach needs to listen as a whole self, in order to do that the coach must ask themselves the following questions:

1. What is going on with me?
2. How am I listening right now?
3. What am I listening to?
4. Where am I listening from?
5. How might my prejudices be interfering with my listening?
6. How do these interpretations impact on my emotions?
7. How could I shift my body to listen differently?
8. Am I holding the coachee as a legitimate other? (Sieler, 2003, p. 129)

As discussed in the literature that was reviewed, one of the most important premise of Ontological Coaching is that language generates reality (Sieler, 2003). Participant 10 is an African man who doesn't speak English as a first language. He shared his lived experience of how the use of English only as a medium of instruction in a corporate environment impacts his reality and adoption of new concepts.

"If we sitting in a boardroom and we are talking, it is very likely that you might find black people slow to react to concepts, and white people being quick to speak about them. Sometimes it's a simple issue of language. This thing that I have to construct my thoughts in Tshivenda, translate them into English. Half the time I'll translate word for word that's just one example, if a coach doesn't understand the coachee, they may prescribe a medication for wrong diagnosis." **Participant 10 – Executive**

Language plays a crucial role in the eyes of the observer. If you change the language used, the whole world becomes different given that language is important in the construction of reality (Sieler, 2003). Heidegger (1996) contributed by stating that language is the house of being, who we are and who we became as individuals and as a collective, is formed by the language we use. Based on the literature, Participant 10 has valid concerns about the use of the English language in the boardroom since his reality might be different from everyone else in the room. Language plays a crucial role in the South African context because the country has a magnitude of diverse

people and languages, however, the majority of people were raised in an environment that focused mainly on their first language, as is the case with Participant 10.

Participant 6 (black South African) shared an interesting view about how coaching enabled him to be aware of privileges that he was initially unaware of. He further explained that the holistic coaching approach that he received made him more conscious of his privileges and how he affects other people.

“I’m a naturally logical and analytical, and I have perfectionist tendencies. While that has helped me to be diligent, it has helped me to excel in many areas, it does affect how I relate to people who lack these qualities. It also affects the language I use, which if not good, it has a certain impact on others. I was never aware of it, the concept of privileges beyond the demographics, but through my coaching encounters I got a very powerful lens that opened my eyes to privileges I’ve never thought about. I’ll give you an example, my communication skills are above average, and while that is good, it has an effect in how people engage with me, especially subordinates.”

Participant 6– Executive

Based on the literature that was reviewed an ontologically trained coach needs to do the following in order to fulfil their role entirely: Surface the learning for the coachee and enable them to practice new ways of being (Cox et al., 2014).

Surfacing the learning

Surfacing the learning is about ensuring that the coachee learns something during the coaching session and that they became aware of the narratives that have shaped them (Cox et al., 2014). In the case of Participant 6, during his coaching session he learnt how his strengths were affecting people negatively. The coach then partnered with him in order to explore new ways of developing and improve his existing strengths to enable and ensure a positive experience for everyone. According to (Linley & Burns, 2010), a coachee is able to realise lasting changes and improvement when they are working with their strengths.

Practising new ways of being

After the learning has been surfaced, it brings about new awareness which is important in building the new knowledge. The coach plays a crucial role here by assisting the coachee to build new practices that are aligned to the way of being for the new self. In order to ensure that the coachee builds lasting change of the new self, these practices need to be action that is taken on a constant basis, rather than a once off. In the case of Participant 6, after being aware of how his actions were impacting others, he had to change for the long term instead of a short term (Cox et al., 2014).

Four (4) out of the five (5) coaches that were interviewed mentioned that for them, a person's background, racially or culturally, is irrelevant. People are very unique regardless of their background, however, some values and beliefs that a coachee has might be influenced by their culture and a coach needs to respectfully navigate around this. This is what one of the coaches had to say:

“Every single person in front of you is unique, you need to understand the uniqueness of the person in front of you. I'm coaching the man not the body, I'm coaching you, the you are definitely influenced by beliefs, the values, of being black or white woman or male or Muslim, Jewish, all of them influences you, I'm coaching you, and I need to be respectful of you and understand that some of that may be holding you back.

Participant 15 - Executive Coach

Based on the literature that was reviewed, Rogers (2012) argues that the client sets the agenda - this principle differentiates coaching from teaching. The coach is guided by the client's agenda which is linked to what is pertinent to the client at that given time. The coach might have a mental model that they use to give structure to the conversation, but the entire agenda resides with the client. Based on this literature, while the coaches might think that a person's background is not that important because people are unique, they have to pay special attention to the needs of each coachee since they set the agenda based on what is important to them.

5.3.3 The role non-verbal cues play in the coaching process

All the coaches indicated that verbal communication is critical in order to keep the conversation going, but non-verbal cues play a huge role in the coaching engagement. There needs to be a clear alignment between what the coachee is saying and their body language. One of the coaches asserts the following:

“I listen to the tone of my clients voice, the speed at which they are speaking, I look at their body language, the energy between us. One of the things that my clients appreciate about my coaching style is that I'm very immersive in the way that I coach. I am looking for alignment of mind, body and soul or cognitive, emotional, and physical, because when that is aligned, then you are in flow and when you are in flow are you able to fulfil whatever purpose that you set out”.

Participant 7- Executive Coach

In the literature that was reviewed, a couple of scholars concluded that the body plays a pivotal role in communication. “Our most sacred convictions are judgements of our muscles” (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 173). Müller et al. (2013) also highlighted that the body plays an integral part in language and communication. Cox et al. (2014) also supported this view, by saying that the change happens in the body domain. Words, body language and the tone of voice should be congruent with what an individual is feeling. A coach who is ontologically trained will be able to identify the misalignment between words, body language and tone of voice and can challenge the coachee to do a self-assessment to reach a state of congruency.

Further research also concurs that body language in itself is a dialogue, it contributes to the overall communication process and ensures that there is alignment between what the coachee is saying and feeling. If the coachee is aligned then they are able to learn and transform (Sammut, 2014). According to (Baron & Azizollah, 2008), during the coaching session, the coach's body language and emotions must also be aligned in order to ensure that the coachee feels supported. The coach cannot expect the coachee to be in alignment, while they are not aligned and emerged into the coaching conversation themselves. During the research process, one of the coaches mentioned

that as a coach, she also ensures that her entire being is aligned in order to effectively assist the coachee to align. This is what she had to say:

“You can never take people where you've never been kind of thing, I must be able to see this thing effective on me first before expecting it to work on other people. In order to ensure holistic alignment, I give my clients a couple of pictures/cards and I ask them to choose pictures or cards that talks to how they are doing mentally, physically and emotionally”. **Participant 13 - Executive Coach**

5.4 Discussion pertaining to Proposition 2

The second (2nd) proposition relates to Cognitive Behavioural Coaching. This proposition enables the executive to understand behavioural and cognitive shortcomings that hinder them from achieving their goals. Based on the literature that was reviewed the main goal of CBC is to facilitate a process with a client that ensures that they achieve realistic goals; raise awareness of the clients' behavioural and cognitive shortcomings that act as barriers to achieving their goals; equip the client with constructive thinking and behavioural skills; and finally, enable the client to accept themselves and learn to be their own coach (Cox et al., 2014).

Based on the participants' lived experiences, the theme that came up when this proposition was explored, is self-limiting beliefs. Nine (9) of the participants indicated that they had self-limiting beliefs that blocked them from taking action towards achieving their goals. The self-limiting belief manifests in the form of self-doubt and fear of the unknown. Participants attested that coaching increased their awareness to thoughts and behaviours that were limiting them from achieving their goals. Here is what some of the participants had to say:

“When I took over a big team which had highly technical males, I had self-doubt, I felt incompetent and I felt intimidated at times. After my coaching intervention I reflected and I knew that something needed to change. I then changed my mindset and started believing in myself. I then started making some concerted effort in terms of what is it that I wanted to achieve and by the end of that year, I did a 360-positive turn.”

Participant 8 – Executive

“Prior to my coaching, I had a lot of self-doubt because I was in a male dominated area. This hindered my speed of growth, coaching helped me to deal with this and shortly after I was given an executive opportunity and I started believing in myself”.

Participant 9 – Executive.

(Aaron Beck, 1979), described self-limiting beliefs as the prevalence of internal dialogue which is that inner voice that exists in our heads and it impacts the self-esteem, making people to doubt themselves in terms of their knowledge and self-worth. The two (2) participants who suffered self-doubt were doubting their capabilities and self-worth.

Participant 10 highlighted that some of the hindrance might be unknown to the individual, because it lies in the unconscious mind. A good coach is able to unearth these unconscious beliefs or fear. Below is what he had to say.

“Normally you don't necessarily know that you have those cognitive and behavioural issues that might be affecting your growth. You then start realising that there are things that are usually at an unconscious level that somehow delaying you reaching your potential. I'll use an example, without necessarily knowing, you may limit your voice in the boardroom, because you just assume that the people in the room know more than you so, therefore, perhaps there's no need for you to say anything at that stage. What you may not be aware, is that underlying that behaviour, it's the fear that people may actually read me as somebody who either is not taking this conversation seriously, or just not up to the task. The coaching exercise then helps reminding people that their contribution matters hence they are in that room.” **Participant 10 – Executive**

Additional literature that was reviewed supports the above statement (Palmer et al., 2014) argues that the ‘inner world’ dictates how we interact with the outer world. This forms a huge part of our personalities and how we generally engage with other people. The large part of our inner world is unconscious rather than conscious and it contains experiences, beliefs, feelings, and memories. In the example made by Participant 10 above, the reason for not contributing in meetings is based on a belief that some people know more than them, which is a self-limiting belief that is deep rooted in the

unconscious mind and the coach can assist in bringing it to the awareness of the coachee.

Participant 5 had a couple of limitations which were based on three (3) aspects; his beliefs, past experience and background as a traditional Zulu man. These three (3) aspects hindered him from engaging fully with older colleagues.

“The assumptions I made in the workplace were based on my cultural background. I thought I needed to ask for permission for almost everything especially to colleagues older than me. I assumed I couldn’t set up a meeting, I had to ask for permission first. I also thought I couldn’t just walk up to my leadership and have a conversation.

Later it became clear to me that we all here to achieve the same goal and I can engage with anyone if I need to. I think that level of appreciation came with coaching.”

Participant 5 – Executive

Additional research also suggest that the coach needs to encourage the coachee to reflect on beliefs that might be inhibiting their performance. The coach needs to further motivate the coachee to reflect on past experiences and ensure that issues rooted deep in the unconscious mind are brought into conscious awareness, so that the coachee can be able to deal with them appropriately in order to be the best versions of themselves (Palmer et al., 2014).

5.5 Discussion pertaining to Proposition 3

The third (3rd) proposition refers to Solution Focused Coaching, also referred to as Solution Focused Therapy (SFT). It is described as an approach in psychotherapy that is interested with real results. The approach focuses on solutions rather than problems, and focus on the future as opposed to what is happening currently or what happened a long time ago. (Trepper, 2006).

The origin of this approach was coined by (Watzlawick, Weakland, Fisch 1974) who posits that in order to find a solution, it serves no value to be concerned about where the problem comes from. This proposition will be interrogated based on the lived experiences of the participants. Coaches reflected on when and how they use Solution Focused Approach in their coaching practices. One (1) of the coaches

confirmed that Solution Focused Coaching is her number one go-to approach because coaching in its very nature is futuristic and not backward looking - this is what she had to say:

“My coaching style is solution and future orientated and often there's something in the future that my client is aspiring towards. My role as a coach is to accelerate the pace at which he or she fulfils bridges and gaps in order to move from the present into the future”. **Participant 7 – Executive Coach**

Based on the literature, solutions became more visible if one practices finding them. People need to change the way in which they view their circumstances and problems. In the case mentioned above, the coach uses futuristic approaches which enables the coachee to focus on solutions rather than unpacking the problems. These approaches were discussed extensively in chapter 2 and they are; the miracle question, scaling, highlighting resources, and reframing.(Cox et al., 2014). Further research from (Berg & Szabo, 2005) added that Solution Focused - approach views the client as someone who is fully capable of solving their problems and find with suitable solutions; the client has all the resources needed to reach the solution state.

The rest of the coaches indicated that Solution Focused Coaching has its time and place and it works better to resolve an urgent coaching issue. One of the coaches made an example of a time when she needed to apply solution focused approach in order to assist a client to solve their problem faster. Below is her account of the interaction:

“A Solution Focused Approach has it's time and place. I was approached by one director he said he hired an amazing, talented person, who is a huge asset. He didn't want to lose him. The individual was struggling to connect with some members of the leadership team. As a coach, I contracted with the coachee for a very short term in order to discuss the situation and what he was going to do to turn the ship around. We had a result-based coaching session to unpack his current situation and where he needed to go and what he was going to do to get there? He found it incredibly powerful, because he suddenly had perspective on what he needed to do”.

Participant 4 – Executive Coach

The literature from (Berg & Szabo, 2005) describes Solution Focused Coaching as an approach in coaching that is meant to be a brief intervention because it does not dwell in the past but is rather futuristic in nature. This description is fully aligned with the approach that the above coach took when she engaged with a coachee on a short assignment. The coach needed to understand the desired state of the coachee and they partnered in order to determine what he was required to do to close those gaps. Executive participants confirmed that they have been exposed to Solution Focused Coaching previously and it is an approach that yields the desired results, however, based on their lived experiences, this approach was not used in isolation. This is what a couple of executives had to say:

“A hybrid of approaches was used but definitely going to the past was not a strong factor. It was future orientated and particularly strong on models and lenses of viewing things. My philosophy in life is that there's more to be gained in leveraging strengths rather than spending a lot of energy correcting weaknesses. So, I preferred the Solution Focused approach.” **Participant 6 – Executive**

“My coach followed a hybrid but more Solution Focused approach, for example, if I raised something more than once, she would say, this is a third time you saying this? where's that coming from? So that afforded me the opportunity to zoom in deeper and understand the reasons behind what I was struggling with, but the intention was to find a solution”. **Participant 2 – Executive**

“My coach focused on finding solutions but also went to the past if something was hindering me from moving forward or in achieving my goals.”

Participant 9 – Executive

“The two (2) of us jointly started dealing with the problem. So, the coach will not prescribe a solution for me, because they actually do not know the solution. The coach used insightful line of questioning and did not amplify or suppress other things, everything comes into the picture. For example, if I struggle to speak up in the boardroom the coach will not run and say, well, what happened in your previous engagement? Or what happened in your childhood? but the coach will then ask me, why do I think that is the case? If I struggle to answer that or if I provide superficial

answers then the coach would use a specific model or suggest a specific book”.

Participant 10 – Executive

Based on further literature that was reviewed, Solution Focused Coaching is a strength-based approach, it helps clients to see themselves as capable and healthy as opposed to delving deeper into their problems which might leave them feeling unhealthy and disabled (Chou, 2007). The majority of the executive participants demonstrated the need to focus on what is the cause of the problem and then move on to solutioning mode. (Cox et al., 2014) argues that it can be a challenge for clients to have a solution focused mindset only, since some clients tend to want to explore the problem in detail before finding a solution. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the coach to help shift the clients' mindset from problem-focused to a solution-focused mode. The coach will have to be patient with the client if they are unable to move swiftly from problem to solution - focused. In the literature that was reviewed in chapter 2 (Rogers, 2012) highlighted six (6) coaching principles that distinguishes coaching from other disciplines. One (1) of the principles states that the client sets the agenda; this agenda is based on what is important for the client at a given time. If the client wants to unpack the problem further, the coach will have to be patient in order to meet the client where they are, but will have to gradually move the client to solution focused mode.

Finally, (Berg & Szabo, 2005) confirmed that the Solution Focused approach is not meant for resolving past injuries or effect character change, but rather seeks to tap into the clients' own resourcefulness so that they can find their own solutions. The role of the coach is imperative in this instance. The coach looks for the swiftest way to resolve a problem that will also be satisfactory to the client's expectations. Based on the above explanation and the lived experiences and preferences of the participants, a conclusion can be drawn that this approach can definitely not be applied in isolation, as its presents major limitations. It cannot be applied simply in all given situations for most of the time, as some people have the need to resolve the issue at hand from its root cause to avoid a situation in the future where the same problem resurface again.

5.6 The most preferred coaching approach

After exploring 3 specific coaching approaches; (Ontological, Cognitive Behavioural and Solution focused) with executives and coaches, they were given an opportunity to confirm which coaching approach they prefer if any. Seven (7) participants indicated that when it comes to their development, their background matters and they need to be treated as a whole person. Participants had a strong preference of bringing their whole self to the coaching session which is aligned to ontological coaching. In the literature that was reviewed Rogers (2012) argues that **coaching addresses the whole person's past, present and future** - As a coach it is important to have a holistic view of the client, as this makes the coach understand the client even better. In most cases some of the challenges that clients face in their professional lives are linked to similar challenges that they face in their personal lives. Rogers (2012) further argues that **the client sets the agenda** - this principle differentiates coaching from teaching; the coach is guided by the client's agenda which is linked to what is pertinent to the client at that given time. This literature supports the preferences of Participants as it relates to being treated as a whole person.

5.7 Discussion pertaining to Proposition 4

The fourth (4th) and last proposition that was explored, argues that personal leadership effectiveness can be achieved through coaching. In the literature that was reviewed (Smith & Verrier, 2005) claims that personal leadership is the main foundation for interacting with people. They further posit that personal leadership and personal mastery are the key elements that make it possible to endure happy interpersonal and professional relationships. According to the lived experiences of the participants, their personal leadership improved for the better after they received coaching and this impacted the quality of their relationships positively. Below is an illustration of how their personal leadership changed for the better.

How personal leadership improved post coaching



Figure 5.3 How personal leadership improved post-coaching (Compiled by the researcher, 2021)

The above illustration highlights personal leadership improvements that participants observed in their leadership abilities after their coaching encounter. They moved from having a lack of confidence to an improved level of confidence; from micro-management to delegation and support; from telling people what to do to allowing people to be creative and develop their own ideas; from lack of self-awareness to improved self-awareness; from being task-orientated to being people-orientated and finally from draining people/subordinates to energising them. Below is what the participants had to say:

“Prior to coaching I was not a confident leader, I used to worry about what will people think or say if I voiced my opinions. Where I am now in my leadership, if I need to have a one-on- one with somebody and call out something, I would do it whereas previously, I would be so scared. Coaching has also set an incredibly positive spin on how I lead people, even my leadership style has changed completely. I don’t micro-manage people anymore and I make time to get to know the person and what matters to them”.

Participant 8 – Executive

“There’s a few things that my coaching journey has done, it imparted confidence. Confidence comes with self-awareness which is particularly important. Now I embrace leadership a whole lot better because I understand what I bring to the table. Coaching also gave me an opportunity to really look and ask myself, what is my purpose? Is my purpose aligned to the organization's purpose? This whole journey enabled me to be an authentic leader”. **Participant 10 – Executive**

“I have stopped telling people what to do, I allow them to think and come up with their own ideas. I now understand the importance of teaching a man how to fish instead of giving them a fish”. **Participant 9 – Executive**

“Post my coaching intervention my direct reports said they've noticed that I ask more questions now instead of telling, I give them time and space to think about options, as opposed to pressurising them into making a decision, I didn't even realise that I did that because my intentions were good, I no longer have a telling and controlling leadership style. My biggest takeaway is that you can't control others, but you can control yourself”. **Participant 2 – Executive**

“My coaching journey has largely focused on leadership effectiveness. It has been beneficial in many ways. Coaching has benefited me in terms of being aware of my impact on others. Naturally as a leader you either energise or drain people, I have learned certain tools, behaviours and practices that help me to energise rather than drain. I moved from a task-oriented leader who’s not a feeler to being a people orientated leader who understands that people have social and professional needs and sometimes they are inseparable. Coaching has also helped me in terms of empowering people by delegating tasks to them, this has helped me to move from transactional things to more transformational. Lastly the other key benefit that coaching has imparted in me is the power of questions, it has helped me a great deal to work with people through questions, rather than telling them how to do things. That has been a huge plus”. **Participant 6 – Executive.**

In the literature that was reviewed “The anatomy of leadership consist of heart, mind, soul, and talent of the leader - which can be summed up as character and competence”

Bell (2006, p. 34). Character refers to the soul of the leader, a leader with a great sense of what their purpose is in life. A leader with high levels of self-awareness possesses important qualities such as integrity, courage, focus, care and humility. Competence is the expertise in a specific industry or market (Bell, 2006). The participants that were interviewed are senior executives with demonstrated competence over several years. During the interviews it was clear that their competence was aligned to the expectations of their role. They needed to improve some aspects of their character, which has a lot to do with their personal leadership, self-awareness and interpersonal skills. A holistic coaching approach proved to be the most suitable leadership development programme to address the needs of the participants and this approach rendered them to be more effective leaders.

5.8 Conclusion

The research study explored the participants' responses with regards to the four (4) propositions discussed above. The responses were compared to the literature that was already reviewed in chapter 2 as well as the additional research conducted after the findings. Self-awareness is one of the main themes that surfaced when the ontological coaching was explored. Participants indicated that improving their self-awareness is one of the reasons they sought coaching in the first place. They needed to understand themselves better and in turn improve their overall emotional intelligence. In literature (Kouzes & Posner, 2006) supports the above, by highlighting that good leadership requires competencies such as self-awareness, interpersonal skills and social awareness which are important for a leader's success. Another significant theme that surfaced was coaching of the person as a whole. This theme is particularly important because the study was conducted in the South African context and intended to understand if participants have a specific coaching approach that they prefer or find more effective. Based on the lived experiences of the participants as well as their preferences, coaching a person as a whole, which is aligned to Ontological Coaching, is imperative because the majority of the participants indicated that their backgrounds needed to be taken into account, especially where their personal development is concerned. On the contrary, coaches advised against dwelling a lot on issues of the past, since that can hinder the executive's ability to find solutions faster.

Participants also indicated that Cognitive Behavioural Coaching (CFC) brought into their awareness self-limiting beliefs that were hindering them from achieving their goals. Participants found this approach very useful because once they gained insights into their own self-limiting beliefs and they were able to become their own coaches, every time a self-limiting belief came to mind, they were able to coach themselves out of that situation even after the coaching intervention was concluded. Solution Focused Approach was the least preferred approach since it cannot be applied in isolation and the participants prefer to understand the origin of the problem first before attempting to resolve it. The participants indicated that their personal leadership effectiveness improved significantly after being exposed to the various coaching approaches especially Ontological and Cognitive Behavioural - Coaching approaches.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to explore the perceived effectiveness of alternative executive coaching approaches on personal leadership of executives in South African banks. To answer the research questions the researcher will integrate the findings of the four (4) propositions to the two (2) research questions. Recommendations and suggestions for further research will be discussed in this chapter as well.

6.2 Conclusions regarding research questions

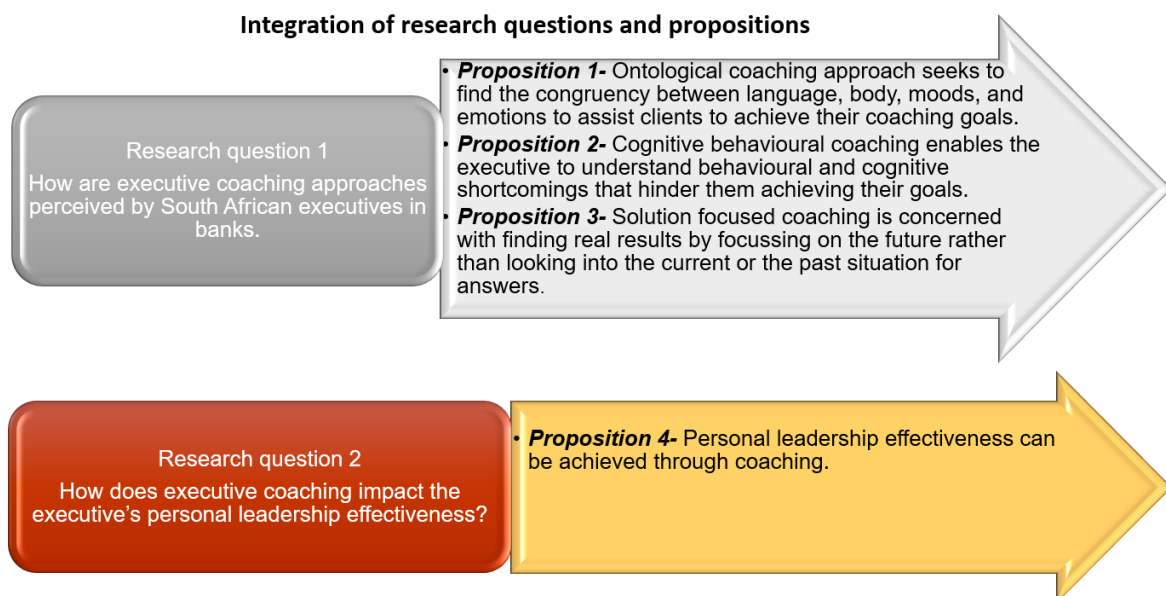


Figure 6.1 Integration of research questions and proposition

The above illustration is a reflection of the original research questions and the proposition aligned to each research question. The researcher will discuss the answers to the main research questions in detail below.

6.2.1 Conclusions regarding research question

This study was conducted exclusively for and in the South African context. Three (3) coaching approaches were explored and participants were invited to share how these approaches have assisted them in terms of achieving their goals and how they have contributed to the change in behaviour. Participants also shared which approaches they perceive to be the most effective.

a. Ontological coaching

The researcher can conclude that based on participants' lived experiences and preference, Ontological Coaching was the most preferred coaching approach, since it focuses on the way of being for clients which is regarded to be at the centre of how people function, learn and change. In order for executives to achieve full alignment in terms of body, emotions and language they need to have high levels of self-awareness. Research participants indicated that post coaching, their self-awareness improved and this allowed them to self-regulate and they were able to change their behaviour and achieve personal goals. Since Ontological Coaching focuses on the overall alignment, participants highlighted that an approach that coaches a person as a whole is preferred, because when it comes to their development, their backgrounds in terms of culture, race and language needs to be taken into consideration. On the other hand, some coaches highlighted the fact that in their experience holding on to background and belief systems, might be holding one back and render the person ineffective as a leader.

b. Cognitive Behavioural Coaching

Participants also indicated that Cognitive Behavioural Coaching brought into their awareness the issue of self-limiting beliefs, that were preventing them from achieving their objectives. This approach was very useful to participants because it removed blockers that were making it difficult for them to achieve their goals. In line with literature, participants agreed that Cognitive Behavioural Coaching equipped them with constructive thinking and behavioural skills, it offered them an opportunity to learn to become their own coach and be able to deal with self-limiting thoughts that manifest in self-doubt, lack of confidence and fear of the unknown. What emerged in the research study which has not

been explored in literature of CBC, is that some of the self-limiting beliefs are deeply rooted in the unconscious mind. An experienced coach can help a coachee to uncover these unconscious beliefs in order to deal with it appropriately.

c. Solution Focused Approach

Solution Focused Approach was the least preferred approach, since it is only focused on solutions and do not explore what caused the problem. Participants had a strong preference for understanding the origin of the problem first, before attempting to resolve it. Very few coaches indicated that their go-to coaching approach is Solution Focused Coaching, because there is value in focusing on strengths rather than to try and understand weaknesses. They further indicated that coaching by its very nature is future focused and not backward looking.

d. Coaching toolbox (Combination of approaches)

No approach works in isolation, there is value in using multiple approaches depending on the coaching issue at hand. A good coach does not use one (1) coaching approach only all of the time, they have a Coaching Toolbox. Having this toolbox allows a coach to be flexible and use the right approach at the right time. This toolbox also enables the coachee to own the agenda as opposed to the coach being the one (1) who determines the direction of the coaching engagement. While Ontological Coaching was preferred because it looks at the person holistically, it is important to mention that it is not the only coaching approach that is effective and participants were comfortable with the use of multiple coaching approaches in order for them to get the best out of the coaching engagement.

e. Differences between prior research and this research study

In the Solution Focussed Coaching literature (Palmer et al., 2014) argues that although people carry their past and they need to learn from mistakes, solution focused is only concerned with the coachee's present moment and the desired future. Past lessons can bring people down and re-surface old problems. It might be helpful to understand the cause of problems, however, it is not always important or even helpful. Digging into the past can lead to finding people to

blame and not taking responsibility. In this research, only three (3) participants agreed with the above sentiments, twelve (12) participants indicated that they prefer to understand the origin of the problem first before attempting to resolve it. They confirmed to have found a lot of value when they explored the origin of the problem in the past, as the first step to try and resolve the said problem. They also mentioned that understanding the cause of the problem helps in ensuring that it doesn't re-occur in the future.

f. Similarities between prior research and this research study

Coaching can contribute significantly to a country like South Africa which is characterised by many inequalities and past and present social traumas. There is a need to include the African paradigm of Ubuntu (humanism i.e., compassion and understanding of each other) to coaching research, coaching training and leadership coaching. Coaching theory that is consumed by South Africans was adopted from the west; it is, therefore, important for South Africans to honour their own worldview in order to ensure that they benefit fully from coaching engagements. The spirit of Ubuntu which is also referred to, is aligned to an ontological paradigm: "I am because you are", so it is important to incorporate ways of being in the South African context when coaching South Africans (Geber & Keane, 2013).

The research conducted agrees with the sentiments expressed above, as the majority of the participants gravitated towards ontological coaching. Participants indicated that their backgrounds matter when it comes to their personal development. They also want an approach that looks at them as whole beings, an inclusive one that focusses on the past, present, and future, an approach that seeks to find alignment in body, language and emotions in order to ensure that they are in flow, and are able to adopt the right behaviours and achieve their individual and organizational goals.

6.2.2 Conclusions regarding research question 2

After exploring the three (3) executive coaching approaches, participants were asked to reflect on how these approaches have impacted their personal leadership effectiveness. The proposition that was made in the beginning of the study was that personal leadership effectiveness can be achieved through coaching. Participants reflected on their personal leadership journey before and after coaching and they confirmed that there have been positive changes in their leadership. These changes not only have benefited them as individuals, but it has also benefited the people they engage with regularly and those that they lead. Participants moved from being task-orientated to being people-orientated. This shift allowed them to delegate and support their sub-ordinates better instead of micro managing them. They now allow people to be creative and develop their own ideas, instead of telling them what to do. Their self-awareness improved significantly and as a result, confidence levels also improved. Participants found a way to get the best out of the people that they lead and were able to energise them instead of draining them.

a. Integrating personal leadership theory and the research study

In the literature that was reviewed, (Bell, 2006) cited that the anatomy of leadership consists of character and competence. Character refers to the soul of the leader, a leader with a great sense of what their purpose is in life. A leader with high levels of self-awareness and possesses important qualities such as integrity, courage, focus, care and humility. Competence is the expertise in a specific industry or market. Participants who were interviewed are senior executives with demonstrated competence over many years. During the interviews it was clear that their competence was aligned to the expectations of their roles. They needed to improve some aspects of their character which has a lot to do with their personal leadership, self-awareness and interpersonal skills. Executive coaching improved personal leadership effectiveness for all executive participants, and they experienced positive changes post their coaching interventions as illustrated by the researcher in figure 5.3.

b. Shortcomings identified in the literature review

Executive coaching is a relatively new field in South Africa and it is growing in popularity. It is important for South Africans to integrate their own worldview and still benefit from the coaching process (Geber & Keane, 2013). Since coaching forms part of leadership development, it is important to understand the backgrounds of the leaders that are being developed, the leadership interventions need to be aligned to their context. This research study was conducted within the South African context because there is not a lot of coaching material/theory that incorporates the South African worldview. The findings of the study have confirmed that leaders within the South African context prefer a coaching leadership intervention that looks at them as whole beings and takes into account their past, present and future.

6.3 Recommendations

The recommendations below will be made per stakeholder.

6.3.1 Coaches

Coaches have a wealth of knowledge in terms of various coaching approaches that can be used in order to aid the coachee to become the best version of themselves. However, these approaches are mainly born from western cultures. It is recommended for coaches who coach South Africans to incorporate the worldview of the coachee in order to get the best out of the coaching engagement. There are benefits in coaching the person as a whole and allowing them to lead the agenda.

6.3.2 Coaching professional bodies and coaching training institutions

Professional bodies play a huge part in the development and enhancement of knowledge. The professional South African coaching bodies can benefit a lot from developing and promoting coaching learning materials that has distinct South African characteristics to it. It is recommended that further research be done on the preferred coaching approaches in SA and a specific course be designed that focusses strictly on this topic.

6.3.3 Executives

In the study most executives indicated the need to be treated as a whole person and for their backgrounds to be taken into consideration. More executives can benefit from this study by knowing that there is nothing wrong about requesting their backgrounds to be considered, so that they can feel free to bring their whole self into every forum that they are part of. Personal development of executives needs to be aligned with who they are, in order for it to be effective.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

6.4.1 Context

The research focused on South African banks. The results might not cater for all executives in other industries, further research can be done in different industries other than banking. It might also be helpful to extend the research to the public sector and do some comparative analysis across the various industries. The location of the research was strictly South Africa, further research can be done for other African countries in order to get a holistic African perspective.

6.4.2 Sample

The sample size was only 15 participants, a bigger sample might yield different results. Further research could be done and increase the sample size to get a view from more participants.

6.4.3 Suggestions for further qualitative research in future includes:

- a. Explore the preference of other coaching approaches especially the psychodynamic approach, since most participants indicated the importance of exploring their backgrounds first before recommending solutions.
- b. In the research, only personal leadership was explored, it would be recommended to look at how coaching impacts the broader leadership, not only limited to personal leadership. This is another area that could also be explored.

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APPENDIX A - Adapted from Wits Business School Template

CONSENT FORM

I hereby consent to participate in research conducted by I.N Ramarou student number 2274598, a master's student from Wits Business School. The topic is **“The perceived effectiveness of alternative executive coaching approaches on personal leadership of executives in South African banks”**

I can attest that my participation is voluntary, and I was not forced in any way. I understand that should I decide to stop participating at any point during the interview process. I will not be impacted negatively in anyway.

I understand that my participation will remain confidential and anonymity is not guaranteed, however, my name will not be included on the final report.

I understand that the interview will be recorded.

.....

Signature of participant

Date:

APPENDIX B

MMBEC RESEARCH INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EXECUTIVES

Good day (name)

I am Ivy Ntombi Ramarou. I am conducting research for the purpose of completing a master's degree at Wits Business School. The research title is **“The perceived effectiveness of alternative executive coaching approaches on personal leadership of executives in South African banks”**

I am conducting a qualitative study and I will be interviewing 15 executives and coachess from various banks in South Africa.

As indicated in the consent form that you have signed, your participation is voluntary, and the duration of the interview will be between 45 minutes to an hour. In order to make sure that I capture what you say correctly I will be making use of a voice recording device. I would like to assure you that the interview will remain confidential and the information will solely be used for the purposes of research. At this stage I would like to check if you are comfortable with all the information that has been shared with you before we proceed?

Questions

Icebreaker question

Can you please share at a high level, about your career background in terms of where you started before being appointed into this executive role?

Coaching related questions.

I would like to share 2 of my favourite coaching definitions with you.

“Coaching is a process of partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential” – ICF

“Coaching is unlocking a person’s potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them... we are more like an acorn which contains within it all the potential to be a magnificent oak tree. We need nourishment, encouragement and the light to reach toward, but the oak-treeness is already within”. – John Whitmore

1. Tell me about your experience of being coached, here you can share anything that you think is relevant with regards to your coaching journey.
2. Do you recall the coaching approach that your coach used?

3. Ontological coaching questions

- a. Prior to your coaching engagement did you have any specific way that you viewed yourself and your life in general? How did that change post your coaching?
- b. Has coaching improved your self-awareness and the relationships you have with others? If so, how?

4. Behavioural Cognitive coaching questions

Were there any cognitive and/or behavioural aspects of your life that were hindering you from achieving your goals? If so, what was it and how this hindered you?

5. Solution focused coaching questions

Did the coach focus on partnering with you in order to find solutions and neglect the course of the problem? If so, how?

- 6. Tell me about your preferred approach and WHY?

Leadership questions

- 7. How has coaching impacted your personal leadership effectiveness?
- 8. Can you please give me a before and after example of how coaching has impacted your personal leadership.
- 9. Is there anything that I haven't asked that you would like to share regarding your coaching experience?

Closure

Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me and for sharing your journey. As indicated earlier the information that I have collected is purely for research purposes only.

Interview Procedure: (Adapted from Jacob and Ferguson, 2012)

APPENDIX C

MMBEC RESEARCH INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COACHES.

Good day (name)

I am Ivy Ntombi Ramarou. I am conducting research for the purpose of completing a Master's degree at Wits Business School. The research title is **“The perceived effectiveness of alternative Executive Coaching approaches on personal leadership of executives in South African banks”**. I am conducting a qualitative study and I will be interviewing 11 Executives and 4 coaches from various banks in South Africa.

As indicated in the consent form that you have signed, your participation is voluntary, and the duration of the interview will be between 45 minutes to an hour. In order to make sure that I capture what you say correctly I will be making use of a voice recording device. I would like to assure you that the interview will remain confidential and the information will solely be used for the purposes of research. At this stage I would like to check if you are comfortable with all the information that has been shared with you before we proceed?

Questions

Icebreaker question.

Can you please share your career background in terms of when your coaching career started?

Coaching related questions.

1. Can you tell me about your preferred coaching approach? how have you applied it while coaching executives in South African banks.
2. Tell me about a time when you applied ontological coaching approach? How was it received?
3. Which techniques do you use to ensure congruency between your clients' language, emotions, and body?

4. Tell me about a time when you applied cognitive behavioural coaching? What was the issue? and which techniques did you use?
5. Tell me about a time when you applied solution focused coaching? What was the issue? and which techniques did you use?
6. Which coaching approach have you seen yielding desired results? What exact feedback have you received regarding this approach.

Closure

Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me and for sharing your journey. As indicated earlier the information that I have collected is purely for research purposes only.

Interview Procedure: (Adapted from Jacob and Ferguson, 2012)

APPENDIX D

Consistency table: research questions, propositions, data collection and data analysis

RQ #	Research Question	Prop #	Proposition	Data collection detail	Data analysis method
1	How executive coaching approaches are perceived by South African executives in banks?	1,2,3	Proposition 1 - Ontological coaching approach seeks to find the congruency between language, body, moods, and emotions to assist clients to achieve their coaching goals.	Interview guide questions Question 1,2, 3a, and Question 3b.	Thematic analysis
			Proposition 2 - Cognitive behavioural coaching enables the executive to understand behavioural and cognitive shortcomings that hinders them from achieving their goals.	Question 4	Thematic analysis
			Proposition 3 - Solution focused coaching is concerned with finding real results by focussing on the future rather than looking into the current or the past situation for answers.	Question 5	Thematic analysis
2	How coaching impacts the executive's personal leadership effectiveness?	4	Hypothesis 4 - Personal leadership effectiveness can be achieved through coaching.	Question 7 and Question 8	Thematic analysis