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The effectiveness of executive coaching in enhancing leadership development in a State-Owned Company in South Africa

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Supervisor: Elona Hlatshwayo

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

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ABSTRACT

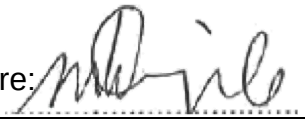
This study's primary purpose was to explore the views of the executives' and senior managers' experiences of the executive coaching process and how this has enhanced their leadership development in a South African State Owned Company (SOC). Additionally, it explored the purpose of the Human Resources Talent and Transformation Department for embarking on the coaching programme, and the tools it uses to measure the executive coaching effectiveness. The study assumed a qualitative design, using semi-structured interviews with eight previously coached executives, senior managers, and two HR Talent managers. The study applied thematic analysis to analyse the interviews, and then identified common themes across coached executives and HR Talent managers.

Based on the literature review and study findings, there are six elements which are key to the coaching process: (1) choosing a coach, (2) relationship with coach, (3) coaching environment, (4) setting goals, (5) assessment process, and (6) organisational support. The study submitted that the executives viewed coaching as a process having a positive impact in their work and personal journeys. To achieve these outcomes, the coaches must show trust and confidentiality, empathy, create a safe environment, and skills. The coachees must be willing to be open, and committed to the coaching process. The study suggests that there is no universal measure of executive coaching effectiveness. One of the study recommendations is that the HR Talent must establish the evaluation method to provide a correct measure of executive coaching effectiveness. The findings provide value to other SOCs seeking to embark on coaching or currently running the coaching programme. The coaching community (coaches, coachees, and established accredited coaching bodies) may also find this study beneficial in understanding the complexity of the subject matter.

KEY WORDS – executive coaching, coaching process, coaching effectiveness, leadership development**.**

DECLARATION

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

Name: Nonhlanhla Maureen Khanyile Signature: 

Signed at Ferndale, Randburg

On the 17 day of June 2021

DEDICATION

I firstly, dedicate this study to God Almighty, my unseen partner and the source of my strength. He has graced me with the ability and courage to endure and overcome.

Secondly, I dedicate the study to my colleagues and friends who gave me support throughout to ensure that my research was successful. I genuinely appreciate your willingness and encouragement.

Lastly, I dedicate this study to my family, who have always shown interest in my education. Thank you for your support, love, and encouragement.

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To my supervisor, Elona Hlatshwayo, who was always available to guide me and providing insight into my study. Thank you for your continuous support and direction, which pushed me to finish my research/study under challenging times. I will always be grateful.

To my coach, Helen, thank you for offering a listening ear to me and encouragement, which helped me focus on the finishing line. Your wisdom and support made a significant impact on my research journey.

To the respondents who took part in this study. Thank you for taking time from your busy schedules and willingness to participate in the research and open up to I about your private coaching experience.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

COMENSA – Coaches and Mentors of South Africa

GCE – Group Chief Executive

HR/L&D – Human Resources, Learning and Development

IFC – International Coaching Federation

ODs – Operation Divisions

ROI – Return on Investment

SOEs – State Owned Enterprises

SOCs – State Owned Companies

TCC – Transnet Corporate Centre

TFR – Transnet Freight Rail

TNPA – Transnet National Port Authority

VUCA – Volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

This qualitative study aimed to explore the views of previously coached executives and senior managers on their executive coaching experiences concerning leadership development in a South African State Owned Company. Further, it explored how the human resource talent and transformation managers (HR Talent managers) measured the coaching outcomes of the executives and senior managers after they had received executive coaching. The HR Talent managers were included in this study because they procure and oversee the executive coaching programme, and the researcher expected them to have in-depth knowledge concerning the executive coaching effectiveness.

1.2 Context of the study

Organisations from various industries are operating in a vibrant and ever-evolving world to stay well-informed about the markets and industry developments. Organisations and executives must ensure that sustainable learning and self-development become a critical element of the individual and organisation's plan (De Vries, 2008). Accordingly, executive coaching has been widely accepted by many organisations as a method for leadership growth; as such, the demand for coaching interventions has grown rapidly (Ely et al., 2010). In their survey, Grover and Furnham (2016) observed an increase in the coaching fees, which was in proportion to the growth in the number of coaching clients; as such, the coaches had to put in more coaching hours to meet the demand from clients. Besides being costly, most organisations are investing in executive coaching to improve, amongst others, self-awareness, performance, and authentic leadership. According to Kombarakaran, Yang, Baker, and Fernandes (2008), executive coaching supports coachees in accomplishing a high degree of performance and, similarly, is a useful tool for enhancing leadership, hence the executive coaching programme operates as an underlying strategy for people development. Even though the organisation

might initiate coaching through the Human Resource Talent and Transformation managers (HR Talent), the coaching experience remains more personal as the engagement is between the coach and client. In some instances, the organisation provides coaching to its leadership to build resilience, team dynamics, internal relationships and performance enhancement (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018). The providers of executive coaching are coaching organisations and/or professionals with accredited and highly competent executive coaches, and such engagement has a high financial cost for the organisation. According to Ely et al. (2010), the style of coaching leadership is unique, as well as tailor-made, according to the leader's specific requirements. Thus, coaches need a distinct set of capabilities to deal with diversified clients' needs, and such services do not come cheaply. Osatuke, Yanovsky, and Ramsel (2017) confirmed that companies inject significant time and/or resources towards executive coaching. In a study conducted by the Harvard Business School in 2009, Coutu and Kauffman (2009) submitted that the duration for a coaching engagement can range between seven and 12 months with an average cost to the company of $500 per coaching session. The recent survey conducted by Terblanche, Myburgh, and Passmore (2019) for Africa, indicated that the hourly rate in Africa for most coaches ranges between R500.00 and R2 999.00 per coaching session and this rate could even go higher where coaching is funded by the organisation, in which such rate might increase to R7,000 per coaching session. Despite the increasing demand of executive coaching by numerous organisations, there is still limited proof about the coaching influence on the coached leaders and its organisation (Joo, 2005). Accordingly, the organisation and its coached leaders want to see their experience of executive coaching yield positive outcomes.

The State Owned Companies (SOCs) play a critical role in South Africa in assisting the government to meet its mandate for ensuring sound economic growth. The government has either a 100% shareholding in the SOCs or partial ownership, and the government uses such SOCs as vehicles to provide crucial services to the public, such as water, sanitation, electricity supply, energy and

transportation systems and infrastructure (Mashamaite & Raseala, 2019). Accordingly, these entities are perceived to be the financial backbone of the South African Government. However, the SOCs' performance has worsened after poor corporate governance, and, for this reason, these public entities are surrounded by negative publicity. Walters and Vorster (2019, p. 3), indicated that the "systematic corruption and the capturing of part of the State and some privileged persons has resulted in a material loss of the accountability in governance". Consequently, the SOCs' leadership is perceived to be corrupt, following the news about the state capture. As a result, the organisations continue to lose critical talents to the private sector due to fear, insecurities, and on-going suspension of some of the top leadership. The SOCs can no longer afford the market-related salary increases and/or incentive bonuses as part of the strategy to keep the crucial talent from joining the private sector. As such, some of the SOCs are facing closure because of bad leadership. There have been various examples of the SOCs having been involved in the state capture, amongst others, Transnet, Eskom, South African Airways, Passenger Rail and SABC (Bracking, 2018). Such SOCs reduced public confidence and increased spending, and they are now employing executive coaching to improve leadership skills.

1.3 Research problem

The effect of state capture in the SOCs has resulted in compromised reputations, damaged confidence and loss of prospects (Merten, 2019). According to Pillay and Jones (2020), the public entities (such as SOCs) lack leadership with morals which are true, hence the reason for exposure to state capture. The authors explained moral leadership as impartial, honest and knowledgeable. Pillay and Jones (2020) suggested that to move forward in Africa, the SOCs should start by creating a culture that promotes anti-corruption conduct and activities, and develop leaders who are moral, effective, and considerate.

This study is relevant in this era of state capture as the SOCs are in the process of rebranding to regain the confidence of investors and other stakeholders. It aimed to establish if executive coaching can be effective in developing leadership skills for SOCs' leaders to empower them to be successful leaders. According to McGill, Clarke, and Sheffield (2019), executive coaching can play a vital role in assisting with the changes required and enhancing leadership development. The SOCs are incurring significant expenditure in procuring the services of executive coaching for their leaders. Generally, these companies are expecting executive coaching to benefit their leaders, not only in terms of changed behaviour, but for the coached leaders to have a positive contribution to the overall SOCs' performance. It would be beneficial to establish the tangible benefits experienced by the executives after receiving coaching so that the impact can be measured. Given the fact that SOCs are operating under financial constraints following the impact of state capture, it is crucial to evaluate the effectiveness of executive coaching if the organisation wants coaching to yield positive outcomes in the development process (MacKie, 2007).

1.4 Research objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To investigate how the executives and senior managers experienced the executive coaching process within a SOC in South Africa;
2. To identify how executive coaching enhanced the leadership skills of the executives and senior managers;
3. To articulate the essential components considered by HR Talent when designing the executive coaching programme; and
4. To explore HR talent's measurement of the effectiveness of executive coaching.

1.5 Research Questions

The study aimed to explore answers to the following questions:

1. What are executives' and senior managers' experiences of the coaching process?
2. How do executives and senior managers describe their leadership development as an executive coaching outcome?
3. How do HR Talent structure the executive coaching programme?
4. What do HR talent managers use to measure the effectiveness of executive coaching?

1.6 Significance of the study

The executive coaching field is expanding, and, as such, various organisations are exploiting it to keep up-to-date with their opponents in terms of enhancing their leadership capabilities (Ely et al., 2010). Fazel (2013) argued that the majority of companies supply coaching to their chief executives and directors. Additionally, high profile politicians and government officials have been added to the list of the consumers of executive coaching services (Fazel, 2013). With this significant investment in executive coaching, it is essential to perform a continuous assessment of whether or not the organisation is getting value from coaching services.

According to McDermott, Levenson, and Newton (2007), more research has been done regarding the additional value of executive coaching for the coached person, however, there is insufficient information of the value derived at organisational level. Gavin (2018) argued that where the coaching programme does not align with the organisational strategies, only the coached leader would obtain a direct coaching benefit, not the organisation. Hence, the study continues an effort to review how the HR talent managers measured the coaching outcomes relating to leadership development. Likewise, the study aimed to enable the leaders of the SOCs to consider assessing whether the executive coaching functioned as anticipated. In terms of De Meuse, Dai, and Lee (2009), there is no expert consensus regarding what encompasses effective coaching, therefore the study aimed to contribute to the body of knowledge in this regard.

The study furthermore contributes to the executive coaching community, researchers, coaches, leaders, and similar organisations wishing to understand the effect of executive coaching on leadership development.

1.7 Delimitations of the study

Elements below demarcate the research restrictions:

1. The study only includes the leaders working at a SOC in Johannesburg;
2. The study is limited to executives who have undergone coaching within the past 48 months (namely, between January 2016 and February 2020).

1.8 Definition of terms

The section discusses the functional definitions that are appropriate for this research study.

1.8.1 Coaching

Coaching helps the clients achieve rapid, improved, and maintainable effectiveness in their lives and careers through focused learning (Rogers, 2012).

According to Hermel-Stanescu (2015), coaching relates to the support of the client's conversation to the achievement of the client's discussion to accomplish the preferred outcomes and goals.

1.8.2 Executive coaching

"Executive coaching is a one-on-one development process formally contracted between a professional coach, an organisation and an individual client who has people management and/or team responsibility, to increase the clients' managerial or leadership performance, often using feedback processes and on-the-job action learning" (Rosemarin, Frisch, Robinson, Metzger, & Lee, 2011, p. 28). de Haan, Duckworth, Birch, and Jones (2013, p. 41) defined executive

coaching as a form of leadership development that takes place through a series of contracted one-on-one conversations with a qualified coach.

Bozer and Joo (2015) described executive coaching as a personalised relationship between a qualified coach and an executive (coachee) to enhance the coachee's behavioural change through self-knowledge and learning, thus adding value to individual and organisational performance.

1.8.3 Return on Investment

Lawrence and Whyte (2014) explained the return on investment (ROI) of coaching as a distinct calculation or method of interpreting the effects of coaching into economic significance.

ROI is a performance measure used to evaluate an investment's efficiency or compare the effectiveness of several different investments. ROI attempts to directly measure the amount of return on a particular investment, comparative to the investment cost (Chen, 2020).

1.8.4 Intervention

Midgley (2000) described intervention as determined action by an agent (namely, executive coach, therapist, amongst others) to generate transformation.

1.8.5 Coach/Coachee/ Client

Coach pertains to the person who offers one-on-one coaching. The coachee relates to the one receiving coaching (Joo , Sushko, & McLean, 2012).

Client solely refers to the individual pursuing progress and development through coaching (Rosemarin et al., 2011).

1.9 Assumptions

1. The study anticipated that participating candidates would provide honest answers concerning the coaching effectiveness along with the influence of the coaching intervention applied to them.
2. The study likewise assumed that the coached executives would remember their coaching experiences.
3. The study presupposed that the leadership capability could be a learnt capability, and, as such, could be communicated, and that the leaders could recall with accuracy the coaching interventions related to the leadership development.
4. The study estimated that all participants would be happy or keen to reveal the required information.

1.10 Structure of the report

The study is arranged into six chapters.

Chapter 1: This chapter provides the purpose for the study, background, and the broad outline of the study.

Chapter 2: This chapter is the literature review in which the key terms and concepts pertaining to the study are elaborated. The key terms for this study are executive coaching, leadership coaching outcomes, and effectiveness of the coaching process. At the end of the literature review, propositions are stated as possible answers to the research questions posed in Chapter 1.

Chapter 3: This chapter describes the methodology used for this study as well as the qualitative design, the instrument that was used to collect data, and the details of data analysis.

Chapter 4: This chapter reports and presents findings of the data that was collected and analysed.

Chapter 5: This chapter presents the interpretation of research findings based on the context of this study, and the literature review, as discussed in Chapter 2 and guides the discussion of the study outcomes.

Chapter 6: This chapter concludes the study, provides practical application and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an outline of the State-Owned Companies (SOCs) as they fund the executive coaching services. The chapter subsequently discusses the theory underpinning this study. Thereafter, it explores the coaching process, its components, the impact on the leadership coaching outcomes, and the measurement of the effectiveness of executive coaching. Lastly, this chapter further provides an overall summary of the literature.

2.2 Background of the State-Owned Companies

The State Owned Enterprises (SOE) are public entities that are controlled by the state and are not privately owned (Sokol, 2009). Sokol (2009) adopted the World Bank definition for SOEs, where it clarified SOEs as commercial entities owned or controlled by the government, and the majority of the income for such companies is generated mainly from the sales of goods and services. However, Pratuckchai and Patanapongse (2012) mentioned that SOEs are dissimilar from private companies in that their objective is primarily not to maximise profit nor to pursue profit to increase shareholders' worth (Sokol, 2009). The government utilises such SOCs as a mechanism of socio-economic expansion (Fourie, 2001). Madumi (2018) submitted that several established states regard the public segment as a powerful tool of fiscal progression and economically maintainable growth. The author contended that the SOCs in South Africa play a critical part in the state's activities as well as in providing services that are fundamental to the people of South Africa (Madumi, 2018). The government provides basic facilities to the population of South Africa, such as water, sanitation, electricity and transportation through the SOCs (Cheteni & Khamfula, 2018; Kauffman & Hodgetts, 2016; Madumi, 2018). Accordingly, the SOCs' role in South Africa is to provide essential services and foster development to improve the quality of life for South Africans.

2.3 Theoretical Foundation

Transformational learning theory is one of the underpinning theories that applies to executive coaching and was initiated by Mezirow (Gray, 2006). According to Gray (2006, p. 487), Mezirow described “transformational learning as the social development of reading and adopting a new or reviewed understanding of the significance of one's experience as the lead to action”. Later, Fazel (2013) described transformational learning theory as a method of implementing change in the coachee's perspectives. Gray (2006) indicated that transformational learning theory views the educator as taking accountability for stimulating critical self-reflection and assisting learners in taking action. Instead of understanding the learner’s experiences and utilising them as a source for conversation, the educator comes to inspire a critical analysis of these experiences and underlying assumptions as a procedure intended at transforming the learner’s viewpoint (Grant, 2006). Spence, Stout-Rostron, Van Reenen, and Glashoff (2019) contended that coaching involves a powerful reflective process that results in transformational learning and important change for coachees. Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007, p. 144) highlighted the three approaches which are crucial to transformational learning, namely, life experience, the type of critical reflection and the link between transformative learning and development. The authors indicated that transformational learning practice could start where the learner has an experience that cannot fit into a previous life structure. They described this occurrence as a "disorienting dilemma" that leads to critical reflection of the learner's experience that produced distress. It is the presence of challenges that will force the learner to participate in meditation, which is complemented by examining various options, and the outcome is growth (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 136). The transformation process is similar to the "Triple loop," which is a manner of reflection when facing a challenge (Johannessen et al., 2019; Yuthas, Dillard, & Rogers, 2004). As reported by Fazel (2013), coaching is an intervention particularly planned to generate transformation by introducing a coachee to new viewpoints or learning. Coaches utilise numerous tools that lead to perspective transformation

(Fazel, 2013). During the coaching engagement, the coach remains an enabler and assists the coachee in learning and growing. Accordingly, the coachee learns by obtaining, amongst others, skills, concepts, and understanding, and the competent coach will ask the right interrogative questions that induce new viewpoints and transformation in the coachee (Hermel-Stanescu, 2015). This type of learning is supported in the coaching intervention through tasks offered to a coachee by the coach and additionally inspiring and enabling the practice of extensive education, as indicated by Hermel-Stanescu (2015).

Sammut (2014, p. 49) highlighted six components of transformational learning as:

(i) **Experience:** In transformational learning theory, learners' experience is the foundation and focus of attention. The learners must identify the constraints of their view to move forward. Coaching likewise commences with individual experience, setting goals to reach, and inviting future experience. The coachees learn as they are gradually moving to their anticipated goal (Sammut, 2014).

(ii) **Critical reflection:** There are three forms of reflection: content (reflecting on what we observe, feel or sense), process (thinking on how we execute the task of perceiving), and premise (a consciousness of why we perceive). Learners use journals to convey their reflective experience. Coaching makes use of assessments and surveys to evaluate the coachee's willingness (Sammut, 2014).

(iii) **Dialogue**: This method is extremely private and revealing, and in coaching, it takes place during the coaching engagement (Sammut, 2014).

(iv) **Holistic orientation**: the nature of coaching is an agenda-driven learner-centred approach that permits coachees to learn in their favoured way (Sammut, 2014).

(v) **Awareness of the context:** According to Sammut (2014), this term refers to awareness of the surrounding factors.

(vi) **Authentic relationship**: In transformational learning theory, active learning requires relationships that are honest and purposeful. Real relations are the basis of coaching. The harmless and sacred atmosphere offers a physical space and emotional environment in which the coachee can be heard (Sammut, 2014).

Based on the analysis above, transformational learning theory's principles are similar to executive coaching, as the main objective of this approach requires an adult to learn and grow. However, Spence et al. (2019) stated that although coaching can be utilised efficiently for acquiring results that are appreciated by the coachee, the attainment of such may not always be accompanied by substantial learning. Active learning, which leads to transformation, is dependent on many factors, such as readiness, prior experience, and motivation of the learner. Likewise, the coach's attributes and the relationship between the coach and coachee play a crucial role in the success of executive coaching. Fazel (2013, p. 2346), indicated that the coaching relationship includes amongst others, "active listening and asking non-directive questions to facilitate coachee's learning and change". Fazel (2013) indicated that studies have revealed that the effective use of executive coaching will successfully translate knowledge to expertise and will bring about transformational learning.

2.4 The coaching process

Generally, the organisations will continue to invest in executive coaching if they believe that it works and assists them to meet their executives' needs. This study builds on various executive coaching studies from several authors (Albizu, Rekalde, Landeta, & Fernández-Ferrín, 2019; Bono, Purvanova, Towler, & Peterson, 2009; de Haan, Culpin, & Curd, 2011), who have made an effort to analyse important components of coaching effectiveness based on the coachee's opinions.

2.5 What is coaching?

According to Hermel-Stanescu (2015), coaching refers to the support of the coachee's discussion concerning the anticipated outcomes and objectives. Coaching supports the concept that development is person-centred and directed at the individual (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006). Furthermore, coaching aims at proactively addressing the individual's and the organisation's training desires (Ely et al., 2010; Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006). Ellinger and Kim (2014) indicated that coaching is considered as a process between the coach and coachee that is goal-driven, identifying the coachee's developmental requirements, and overcoming performance impairments, by exploring these with fresh options for the future. As indicated by Cox, Bachkirova, and Clutterbuck (2014), coaching can successfully retain corporate knowledge and preserve high achievers. Grover (2016) mentioned that within the organisational settings, coaching could be categorised as business, leadership or executive coaching, and so on. The varying terms of coaching might be a cause of misunderstanding of applied and conceptual theory that makes it challenging for practitioners in identifying the relevant literature to the study concerned. Given the fact that there is no clear distinction between the coaching practices, occasionally they are used interchangeably (Joo et al., 2012). This study's main focus is executive coaching.

2.5.1 Analysis of executive coaching

According to de Haan et al. (2013), executive coaching is viewed as a type of leadership improvement taking place through a string of one-to-one discussions between a client contracted with a competent coach. Sonesh et al. (2015) described executive coaching as an individualised connection where a coach and coachee team up to recognise and accomplish organisationally, skilfully, and individually positive progressive objectives. de Haan et al. (2011) highlighted that in the coaching process, leaders and managers present their issues from their organisation for discussion, with the purpose of exploring and bringing the same forward with the help of an executive coach. Executive

coaching does not guarantee to provide immediate, pre-made solutions but instead to afford learning and change (de Haan *et al.,* 2011). The authors submitted that for executive coaches to encourage learning and change actively, they might apply a series of interventions, for instance, listening, recapping, rephrasing, and providing feedback, et cetera (de Haan et al., 2011). Thus, executive coaching is active learning to transfer critical leadership and managerial skills, amongst others, visioning, intra-personal, and action planning skills (Joo et al., 2012; Sherman & Freas, 2004). Therefore, executive coaching aims to provide more time for the executives to look into the mirror in place of staring out of the window (Joo et al., 2012). Accordingly, executive coaching comprises interim engagement sessions between a coach and a manager to assist in improving leadership efficiency by increasing the level of self-awareness and the practice of new behaviours (Kombarakaran et al., 2008; Theeboom, Beersma, & van Vianen, 2014).

2.5.2 Characteristics of Executive coaching

Executive coaching has the following unique features to distinguish it from other disciplines, like psychology:

2.5.2.1 “Transparency – open and observable.

2.5.2.2. Shared responsibility - the coach leads the process, and the coachee drives the change.

2.5.2.3 Facilitative style - the coach assists the coachee in identifying options while reducing being directive.

2.5.2.4 Client-focused narrative – the coachee’s stories and perceptions govern the coaching conversations.

2.5.2.6 Organisation funded – engagements support commitment from the organisation. The organisation pays for the executive coaching engagements on behalf of its executives.

2.5.2.7 Work-related goals – the coach and coachee must agree on individual goals aligned with the organisation's goals (Toterhi & Recardo, 2016).

2.5.2.8 Non-hierarchical relationship – shared interest in a coach–coachee developmental partnership.

2.5.2.9 Limited confidentiality – the coach-coachee discussions are confidential, however, the process is transparent and developmental feedback is communicated to the organisation" (Frisch, Lee, Metzger, Robinson, & Rosemarin, 2011, p. 32).

2.5.3 Key outcomes of executive coaching

The earlier literature mentioned one of the coaching outcomes being the ability of the coach to succeed in helping the coachee to set goals and attain such goals (Frisch et al., 2011; Smither, London, Flautt, Vargas, & Kucine, 2003). Other benefits likely to be experienced by both coachee and organisation comprises enhancement interpersonal dynamics and teamwork (Hagen & Gavrilova Aguilar, 2012). The findings from various previous studies outlined the overall executive coaching benefits to include enhanced self-awareness and confidence (Gatling, Castelli, & Cole, 2013; Grant, 2014; Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005). In some instances, the coachees would experience increased motivation levels as a result of the coaching (Sonesh et al., 2015). According to Blackman, Moscardo, and Gray (2016), the findings submitted that the coachees might experience increased job satisfaction, coping mechanisms, and leadership and management as coaching outcomes. Other studies showed that executive coaching could convey the outcome from the coachees' work to their families. Such individuals would experience improved family obligation after being coached (Blackman et al., 2016; MacIntyre, 2020). The literature confirmed that coachees would experience various coaching outcomes, and such benefits depend significantly on the reason for the individual to attend coaching.

2.5.4 Critical aspects of executive coaching

Various literature has identified elements essential to executive coaching's success, including matching, entry and contracting, the coaching relationship, goal setting, self-reflection, and feedback as crucial to the success of coaching. (Ellis, Ganzach, Castle, & Sekely, 2010; Gallimore, Gilbert, & Nater, 2014; Gregory, Beck, & Carr, 2011; Smither et al., 2003). Each element is discussed below:

Matching – According to Joo (2005), finding a compatible match between the coach and coachee is crucial in achieving successful coaching outcomes. Joo (2005) further argued that a good match should be coupled with an excellent coach-client relationship to yield a successful coaching outcome. Regarding the coachee sent for coaching by the employer, the Human Resource or Learning Development (HR/L&D) provides the coachee with information for two or three coaches from the pool of approved coaches (Boyce, Jackson, & Neal, 2010; Toterhi & Recardo, 2016). HR L&D then inform the coaches and highlight potential areas for attention, the coachee then arranges the pre-coaching session with each coach and informs HR L&D of selection (Toterhi & Recardo, 2016). Consequently, Bozer and Joo (2015) confirmed that selecting and matching the coach to the client becomes crucial in ensuring coaching effectiveness.

Entry and contracting – At this stage, the coach and coachee discuss what each party brings to the coaching engagement. The parties will have a conversation setting coaching boundaries concerning each party's responsibility in the coaching engagement. Additionally, the coach and coachee discuss the overall results and the expected outcomes the coachee hopes to achieve from the coaching intervention (Stout-Rostron, 2014). Contracting with the parties to the executive coaching engagement is useful for regulating outcomes as well as agreeing on the progress review and the reporting of the coaching progress (Burger & van Coller-Peter, 2019).

The coaching relationship - Leedham (2005, p. 40) identified four critical factors required for the effective coaching relationship: “the skills of the coach (such as, listening, questioning, providing clear feedback, building rapport, and giving support)”. The personal coach’s attributes (namely, knowledge, experience, credentials, being inspirational, and having confidence in the coachee’s potential). The coachee’s skill has substantial influence in facilitating the effective coaching process (Bozer, Sarros, & Santora, 2014b). The coaching process incorporates a clear framework and discipline, being challenging mentally and stretching. The coach should have the ability to create a conducive environment that will allow the coachee to be vulnerable and freely share strictly confidential information in order to think and reflect on their situation (DeNisi & Kluger, 2000; Jowett, 2017; Leedham, 2005; Passmore, Brown, & Csigas, 2017). According to Hermel-Stanescu (2015), during the coaching sessions, the coach and coachee will connect if coaching is effective.

- **Trust** – Boyce et al. (2010) described trust in coaching as the shared assurance that aids the coachee’s readiness to be transparent, authentic, and helpless, and permits the coach to be compassionate, open-minded, and thought-provoking. As stated by Boyce et al. (2010), where there is a lack of collective trust in a coaching relationship, it reduces the level of satisfaction in the coaching engagement. Jones and Spooner (2006) submitted that the coaching relationship has its foundation on trust and shared esteem is key to the success of coaching outcomes. According to Rogers (2012), the coaching discussion requires a significant credibility from both the coach and the client. Rogers argued that generating and nourishing coaching surroundings on which their trust is built is the basis of the foundation that will offer new authority to the coaching engagement. The literature views trust as a critical feature of coaching that impacts coaching outcomes. Therefore, building and maintaining a trusting environment is key to the coaching process.

- **Rapport** – According to Boyce et al. (2010), rapport consists of the common understanding, arrangement, and liking between the coach and the coachee that permits each to appreciate, acknowledge, and have mutual respect. The actual connection between the coach and client originates from the genuine acceptance of the coach by the client. Such reception helps the client to feel appreciated and part of the coaching engagement (Rogers, 2012). In addition, Rogers (2012) argued that coaching works when it provides the organisations with the view to recognise that they are completely valued by the coach. Tompkins (2018) mentioned that one of the most vital parts of connections is creating confidence and becoming close to the coachee. Good rapport between the coach and the client has a good effect on the success of executive coaching; it therefore, means that both parties (a coach and client) have a critical role to play to ensure that the executive coaching is effective (Hermel-Stanescu, 2015; Jowett, 2017). Jowett (2017) argued that coaches and clients are sealed into a dyadic connection holding plenty of influence, and such dyad permits its participants to attain their personal and rapport objectives. Success and the efficiency of coaching rests with both the coach and the client and the bond the two parties cultivate (Jowett, 2017), and this is regarded as the capability to generate a safe, compassionate surrounding that yields enduring shared esteem and commitment (Tompkins, 2018).

- **Goal setting** - Rogers (2012) argued that goal setting is vital for both the coach and client as it sets the tone for the coaching process, in that unless the coach helps the client to identify goals, the coach might not be able to work with the client successfully. The same applies to the client, the procedure of goal setting, simplifies what, precisely, the client needs to benefit from the coaching session. As indicated by Hermel-Stanescu (2015), during the coaching session, the coachee drives a plan for the meeting. The coach assists the coachee to recognise his or her inherent or extrinsic capabilities required for the anticipated transformation and

development (Hermel-Stanescu, 2015). Sonesh et al. (2015) established that goal-setting was key to attaining positive coaching outcomes. Aguilar (2017) highlighted that no matter what goals the coachee presented during the coaching session, it is vital that the coachee must have an inherent motivation to pursue such set goals. Based on this discussion, the coachee will experience no change unless he or she provides goals that are clear and well-defined, plus the coachee can identify various action plans that will lead towards attaining such goals (Tompkins, 2018). The coach must ensure that the coachee promises to accomplish the agreed activities within a definite time. Accordingly, important to the coaching success is the inspiration, and supporting personal obligation of the coachee by the coach (Boyce et al., 2010; Tompkins, 2018).

- **Self-reflection** – Spence et al. (2019) stated that the majority of the participants recognised consistent meditation as a valued outcome. Gilbert and Trudel (2001) submitted that the features of effective coaches across the board is continuous on-going learning and reflection. Therefore, self-reflection permits both the coach and coachee to evaluate their actions and then take measures to improve where required.

- **Feedback** –amongst others, giving feedback to the coachee is one of the foundations in a coaching engagement (Albizu et al., 2019; Kombarakaran et al., 2008). Feedback encompasses the coach presenting the coachee with the outcomes acquired from the data accumulated from the latter's performance (Albizu et al., 2019). According to Joo (2005), coaching outcomes are dependent on how the coachee receives feedback from the coach. Additionally, Scoular (2011) submitted that the coaching relationships provide coachees with a chance to accept an unusual form of feedback from coaches, namely, authentic and neutral feedback. Furthermore, regular feedback is vital in terms of tracking the coaching progress (Frisch et al., 2011).

2.5.5 Executive coaching engagement

There are three key elements that support the effectiveness of the executive coaching engagement:

1. The coach – delivers the coaching framework, process expertise, motivation, and willingness;
2. The coachee – sets coaching goals and meets upon agreed deliverables; and
3. The organisation - sponsors the executive coaching engagement, provides support, and commitment (Bozer, Sarros, & Santora, 2014a; Toterhi & Recardo, 2016).

2.5.6 Parties in a coaching relationship

Hannafey and Vitulano (2013) submitted that the executive coaching engagement involves three parties: the coach, coachee, and the funding organisation. The agency relationship is thus at the centre of executive coaching in two stages, that is, the coach in relationship with the coachee, and the coach in association with the funding organisation (Hannafey & Vitulano, 2013). The agency relationship has, as its foundation, an extraordinary level of confidence and strict privacy, plus it enforces ethical and moral obligations upon the coach (Hannafey & Vitulano, 2013). Executive coaching involves a relationship between the coach and a coachee that is considered confidential and personal (Bozer et al., 2014a). As per the International Coaching Federation's (2007) ethical standards, the coach must maintain the strictest levels of confidentiality with all the parties as agreed upon in the coaching agreement. Therefore, the coach should not discuss the content of the coaching engagement with the HR talent managers before obtaining the coachee's permission. In this regard, the HR talent managers obtain feedback concerning the effectiveness of executive coaching both from the coach and the coached executive and senior manager, hence limited confidentiality (Frisch *et al.,* 2011).

2.5.7 Components of the coaching process

2.5.7.1 Coaching Competency Framework

Sherman and Freas (2004) explained coaching as a “the wild west” since there are no universally accepted standards. Accordingly, the competency framework may serve as a valuable guide. To support better understanding about skills and approaches used within today’s coaching profession, the International Coaching Federation (ICF) developed core competencies containing eleven competencies (refer to Table 1).

Table 1: ICF – Competency Framework – Revised November 2019

Setting the foundation	Co-creating the relationship	Communicating effectively	Facilitating learning and results
1. Meeting Ethical Guidelines and Professional Standards. 2. Establishing the Coaching Agreement	3. Establishing Trust and Intimacy with the Client 4.Coaching Presence	5. Active Listening 6. Powerful Questioning 7. Direct Communication	8. Creating Awareness 9. Designing Actions 10. Planning and Goal Setting 11. Managing Progress and Accountability

Various studies identified several stages of the coaching process (Blackman et al., 2016; Kombarakaran et al., 2008; Smither et al., 2003), and include the following:

1. Setting the Foundation

According to the International Coaching Federation (2017), the coach should understand and apply the ethical guidelines in all coaching situations. The coach must clearly explain the difference between coaching and counselling to the coachee and other support professions. The coach must refer the coachee to the relevant support profession, where the issue presented is outside the

coach's capabilities, thus setting boundaries is useful. The coach must comply with the coaching contract requirements. Additionally, the coach must establish if there is an active match between his/her coaching method and the prospective coachee's needs.

- **Assessing the coachee and the professional surroundings**

Establish the coachee's essential relationships with the stakeholders, sponsors, and in the coachee's organisation (for example, direct reports, line managers, talent management personnel, and coaching co-ordinators). Further, the coach assesses the need for coaching and the expected results. It is crucial to evaluate the organisation's abilities and willingness to support the coachee's development, as stated in the agreement with the sponsor (Frisch et al., 2011). As stated by Toterhi and Recardo (2016), the data collection is critical to understand the coachee's issues properly.

2. Co-creating the relationship

In building a relationship, the coach needs to have skills to be fully present while focusing on the coachee. Further, the coach must be transparent and have integrity when dealing with the coachee. In addition, the coach must understand and respect the individuality of coachees throughout the coaching engagement (Frisch *et al*., 2011). The International Coaching Federation (2017) requires coaches to have the ability to build an environment that is safe and supportive and yields on-going mutual respect and trust. Additionally, coaches must build a flexible environment to encourage change (Rosinski & Abbott, 2010).

- **Establish the trust relationship between the coach and coachee**

It has been noted that a great coach should be skilful in building rapport and trust with the coachee. The coach supports the relationship outcome through active listening, showing respect, and creating a safe environment (Leedham, 2005; Toterhi & Recardo, 2016). This step includes the collection of the

coachee's data, such as the coachee's experience and discusses the essential topic to be covered (Leedham, 2005).

3. Communicating effectively

The coach is expected to have great communication skills (such as active listening, powerful questioning and direct communication) (International Coaching Federation, 2017). According to Frisch et al. (2011), the coach must have the ability to ask the coachee challenging questions and based on the observations, provide useful feedback.

- **Giving response of the assessment to the coachee**

The coach provides feedback to the coachee and sponsors of the assessment conducted. The same applies to the coachee giving feedback about the coach (Frisch et al., 2011).

4. Facilitating Learning and Results

The coach must possess skills to enhance learning, such as, helping the coachee to discover new thoughts, define goals, and action steps required (International Coaching Federation, 2017).

- **Ascertain a progress plan and set clear goals**

According to the International Coaching Federation (ICF) (2017), the coach must be capable of establishing and keeping a coaching plan with the coachee. Furthermore, the coach must be able to identify accomplishments that are significant to the coachee. This step ensures that the coach, coachee, and the organisation are all in agreement with the primary objective of coaching (Toterhi & Recardo, 2016). According to Frisch et al. (2011), failure by one or more of the participants to fulfil a commitment to the coaching process will result in the misalignment of objectives.

- **Explore choices**

Give coachees a clear understanding of their strengths and weakness and the actions the coachee will take for resolving issues (Frisch et al., 2011).

- **Appraise the progress accomplished**

The stage where both the coach and coachee take time to reflect on the coaching engagement. The coachee will provide feedback on the coaching journey, and the coach will update the development plan concerning the progress made (Frisch et al., 2011).

2.5.8 Elements influencing effective executive coaching

de Haan et al. (2013) submitted that there are several factors that are expected to be of the utmost importance in accomplishing coaching effectiveness. It is necessary to understand the factors that influence effective coaching and the benefits thereof.

- **Organisational support**

Sherman (2004) argued that the three-party relationship between coach, coachee and the funding organisation (HR) is essential for executive coaching to succeed. As such, the selection of external coaches and the attributes of a coach, coachee characteristics and support from HR talent managers form the basis of effective executive coaching (Carey, Philippon, & Cummings, 2011; Joo, 2005). In addition, de Vries and Korotov (2010) stated that executive coaching, as an intervention, requires active engagement in the coaching programme from all the parties involved, namely, the top and the respective senior executives, so that the organisations teach leadership at all levels and all are aware of the future challenges. Gray, Ekinci, and Goregaokar (2011) suggested coachees should be committed to the coaching engagement.

- **Coachee attributes**

According to Jones, Woods, and Hutchinson (2014), elements such as dedication of the coachee to improvement, which includes coachee's attributes (amongst others, self-analysis, inquisitiveness, capability, eagerness to learn, boldness, having a drive to succeed and inspiration) are important. However, de Vries and Korotov (2010) stated that executive coaching as an intervention requires active involvement from the senior executives to be effective. The coach deals with various individuals, therefore the intervention would vary per the individual client and therefore are exclusive since the challenges brought into the coaching sessions are different (Osatuke et al., 2017). So, positive outcomes start with leaders who are truly inspired and committed to learn and/or change.

- **Coach attributes**

According to Kombarakaran et al. (2008), effective coaches are open-minded, empathetic, and communicate well with others. Dagley (2010) mentioned that an effective coach has the ability to endure professional pressure and to embrace the professional self. Gray et al. (2011) argued that the demographic profile of the coach, including an ethnic group, age, and accent, must be taken into account when selecting a coach. Furthermore, effective coaches have a high level of integrity, are competent and trustworthy, as well as maintaining clear limits of professional behaviour (Bozer et al., 2014b; Kombarakaran et al., 2008; O'Broin & Palmer, 2010). As indicated by Bozer et al. (2014b), executive coaching views the coach as an essential portion of a prosperous coaching partnership and a necessity for coaching success. Further, a good coach can help the coachee identify his or her blind spots and understand how other people around the coachee experience such blind spots (Stout-Rostron, 2014). In addition, Farver and Holt (2015) submitted that a coach should possess committed listening skills to promote trust in a coaching relationship. In terms of MacIntyre (2020), to be successful, an executive coach would plan his or her coaching sessions to interactively model skills, transition through personal and

organisational change, and support rapport within the organisation. It is reasonable to conclude that a coach having empathy, integrity, committed listening skills, and a high level of competency, will positively impact the coaching process's outcomes.

However, regardless of the discussion above, sometimes coaching engagements may fail. According to Kilburg (2000), factors like demotivated coachee, lack of empathy from the coach, too much or impractical expectations, are likely to affect coaching engagements negatively (Carey et al., 2011; de Haan et al., 2011).

2.5.9 Proposition 1

The executives and senior managers will share their experiences of the components of the coaching process.

2.6 Impact on leadership development

2.6.1 Leadership development

Winston and Patterson (2006, p. 7) described a leader as “one or more people who selects, equips, trains, and influences one or more follower(s) who have diverse gifts, abilities, and skills and focuses the follower(s) to the organisation’s mission and objectives causing the follower(s) to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted co-ordinated effort to achieve organisational mission and objectives”. Winston and Patterson (2006) argued that the leader will successfully pursue the followers to the extent that he/she seeks personal growth in terms of enhancing the leadership skills. Stout-Rostron (2014) listed the characteristics of a good leader as: self-insight, independent, visualisation ability, skill to encourage, moral honesty, and societal mindfulness. DeRue and Myers (2014) explained leadership development as the procedure to equip individuals and teams to participate in guiding and interpreting interlinkages successfully. In terms of Sadayappan (2019), leadership is learnt by organised training or mentoring that concludes in distinct

capabilities polished over numerous years of knowledge. According to Stout-Rostron (2014), organisations are now facing difficult challenges and rapid changes in industry, society and political surroundings. As a result of this, organisations expect leaders to rapidly adjust their expertise and capability to stay abreast of the changes as well as to ensure that leaders can cope in an ever-changing world (Stout-Rostron, 2014).

2.6.2 Leadership development outcomes

There are currently no generally established criteria for what comprises effectiveness of executive coaching (De Meuse et al., 2009; MacKie, 2007). Therefore, this study embraces the widely held opinion that effective executive coaching is that which yields positive results or influence for both executives and organisation (Kombarakaran et al., 2008; MacKie, 2007).

Dagley (2010) submitted that the great coaching outcomes are evident in behaviour change. Rogers (2012) argued that if there was no goal attained during coaching, one could not measure the victory of coaching nor would it be easy to get a valued response from the client. Michelman (2004) argued that attaining a clear goal alone will not guarantee coaching value, above all, the client must be keen to receive feedback and make positive change after that. According to Burger and van Coller-Peter (2019), setting goals, defining expectations, and agreeing on providing feedback regarding the coaching progress and a report of the results to the coach are essential to yielding successful coaching outcomes. In a study conducted by Bozer and Joo (2015), the outcomes showed that the features of the coachee (that is, learning goal orientation and developing self-motivation), coaching rapport (specifically, coach trustworthiness and observed matches), jointly contributed to the outcomes of executive coaching success. Furthermore, Athanasopoulou and Dopson (2018) mentioned that the support that the coached client is receiving from his/her organisation affects the executive coaching outcome. The authors confirmed that the results of coaching at a personal coachee level include, amongst others, enhanced self-awareness and self-reflection, improved

performance, enhanced leadership skills, clarity in purpose and meaning and higher motivation and commitment (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018).

2.6.3 Proposition 2

Executive coaching will improve the executives' and senior managers' leadership skills.

2.7 Purpose for executive coaching programme

The government uses the State-Owned Companies (SOCs), amongst others, to generate employment, social goals or capital formation (Madumi, 2018; Sokol, 2009). The SOCs offer employment to a significant number of employees in South Africa. Consequently, the SOCs' leaders have the responsibility to guide and inspire the employees to increase effectiveness and sustain the company's growth. The leaders regularly encounter difficult and global challenges, such as, rapid change, coping with the needs of the government, keeping abreast with the rivals, and meeting other stakeholders' objectives (Gentry, Eckert, Stawiski, & Zhao, 2016). As stated by Sarkar (2016), the rapid changes happening in the political, economic, social and technological spheres make the organisational domain progressively volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) and such changes require the leaders from Group Chief Executives (GCE) across all management levels to play a crucial role in ensuring that their organisations are answering the VUCA commercial setting's requirements (Sarkar, 2016). In response to VUCA challenges, the organisations have made a worldwide effort to prioritise leadership development, as well as to utilise coaching as one of the interventions (Deloitte, 2014; Petrie, 2011). To assist the leaders to survive in challenging environments, organisations use executive coaching as a form of leadership development intervention (Carey et al., 2011).

According to Grover and Furnham (2016), executive coaching assists the organisations in advancing individual, group, and organisational performance in several areas, for example, improving job fulfilment, personal interactions, management, and leadership skills. Executive coaching for the SOCs is

essential to the organisational leadership plan. As alluded to by Harvard Business (2018), the alignment of learning linkages to the organisations' strategic objectives results in excellent business performance. Further, supplying learning of great quality is crucial when the organisation is making an effort in building the desired skills for change and transformation (Harvard Business, 2018). To assist the leaders to survive in challenging environments, organisations use executive coaching as a form of leadership development intervention (Carey et al., 2011).

According to Stout-Rostron (2014), the organisation embarks on the coaching programme, amongst others, to enhance performance, improve communication, complexity management, and to assist executives transitioning into new roles or culture. Further, Theeboom et al. (2014) highlighted that coaching could benefit the organisation by improving the performance and well-being of employees. Consequently, the organisations utilise executive coaching as part of talent and leadership growth to prepare future leaders with the inspiration, means, and tools they need to succeed in their roles (MacIntyre, 2020).

2.7.1 Selection criteria for external coaching organisations

According to Feldman and Lankau (2005), the field of executive coaching still remains uncontrolled and the educational background of executive coaches differs significantly. In addition, there is no licence or title that is a prerequisite to practise as a coach. With the increased demand for executive coaching, more professionals are attracted to the field, and there is a risk that the purchasing organisations might be overwhelmed with the choice of coaches (Rojon, Bode, & McDowall, 2020). Consequently, the HR talent managers, as procurers of executive coaching, must exercise wisdom when selecting executive coaches to ensure that such coaches will assist the executives in achieving their coaching goals. As such, the HR and Talent managers play a critical role in ensuring executive coaching's success by providing the right executive coaches for the organisation (Carey et al*.,* 2011).

Leedham (2005, p. 32) identified the following six factors that the HR talent managers should take into account when selecting external coaches:

(i) Proof of having completed coaching related work before;
(ii) Personal competence and appropriate organisational involvement of the coach, as observed by the consumer;
(iii) Flexibility of the coaches and their organisation – the use of a variety of coaching models, tools and techniques, preparedness to work together with other coaching businesses and with a diversity of persons in a broad variety of circumstances;
(iv) Emphasis on delivering or enhancing business outcomes; and
(v) Cost efficiency – reasonable price to the extent it does not compromise the quality of service delivery.

A coach should also have qualified as a coach from a recognised accredited coaching programme. Furthermore, a coach must have parallel or subject matter expertise, and credible references are an added benefit. The coach must be individually and professionally successful (Toterhi & Recardo, 2016). A study conducted by Passmore et al. (2017) discovered that the coach's experience and professional qualification were essential elements considered by the coach's purchasers when selecting a coach. The findings from Rojon et al. (2020) found that the coach with positive referrals/recommendations and client feedback outweighed those coaches with harmful or no feedback/referrals (Rojon et al., 2020).

2.7.2 Proposition 3

There are vital components that HR Talent considers when designing the executive research programme.

2.8 Evaluation methods

The SOCs mostly use a 360-degree evaluation tool measure in the monitoring of the behavioural change of the leader. For example, if the leader had team

issues before attending coaching, the HR talent managers observe the noticeable improvement regarding his/her relationship with the team during coaching. Riggio (2008) confirmed that, with regards to behavioural change, HR place reliance on observation (from managers, colleagues, and direct reports) that the leader has revealed more or less tangible enhancement or is indicative of the directed leader conduct. According to Riggio (2008, p. 388), examples of the observations that report the improvement of the leader, include, amongst others, that the leader is "listening better, being more emphatic or doing a better job of empowering followers through effective delegation and/or participation in decision making". Consequently, as the organisation continues to invest a significant amount of money and time on executive coaching, developing its leaders, the organisation, through HR, it must be confident that the funding concerning leadership improvement yields a positive return (Riggio, 2008). Organisations use numerous measurement tools, including analysing pre-post 360 degrees for any shift in scores, reliance on self-reports from the coached employees, and assessment from colleagues or supervisors (Krupnik & Krupnik, 2020, Pandolfi, 2020). However, Boysen, Cherry, Amerie, and Takagawa (2018) admitted that coaching outcomes are measures of coaching success when they correspond well with the intention for the coaching intervention and the goals and organisation values.

2.8.1 ROI as a measure of the effectiveness of executive coaching

Academics have confirmed the radical growth of executive coaching but the concern was on the evaluation of the coaching efficacy which had fallen behind (De Meuse et al., 2009). Recent studies show that the coaching industry expenditure globally has grown to about $2 billion, as a result, assessing coaching results remains critical if coaching has to sustain its growth curve. As a result of the significant coaching investment, both the purchasers and the person receiving the coaching services have a need to value the time and money spent in the coaching interventions (Terblanche et al., 2019). De Meuse et al. (2009) submitted that some authors explored return on investment (ROI) and had established that ROI values fluctuate between 600% to 700%,

however, such results and investigations from numerous authors underlined that ROI might not be a suitable measure for estimating coaching outcomes in the organisational background as the coaching intervention itself, is a personalised and unique intervention (Ely et al., 2010; Grant, 2012; Grover & Furnham, 2016; Lawrence & Whyte, 2014).The findings in the study conducted by Lawrence and Whyte (2014) discovered that only 14% of the procurers of executive coaching interviewed were actually using ROI as a measure of the success of their coaching interventions. Additionally, the purchasers of executive coaching confirmed that other standards, such as staff commitment and retention, as more useful measures when valuing the efficiency of coaching (Lawrence & Whyte, 2014).

Furthermore, other authors mentioned that the ROI has its limitations in that it does not take into account the cost and time spent by the executive during the coaching engagement (Grover & Furnham, 2016; Lawrence & Whyte, 2014). Grant (2012) submitted that due to the significant value spent by organisations on executive coaching, it is required that the success of coaching interventions should be measured. However, Grant (2012) argued that financial ROI is a poor and weak evaluation of coaching effectiveness, as it ignores the prospective human benefits that executive coaching can provide.

2.8.2 Analysis of the Four Step Kirkpatrick model of training and evaluation

MacKie (2007) suggested that since there is scarce literature on the evaluation of coaching outcomes, it would appear reasonable to explore the way other training programmes have been measured. According to MacKie (2007, p. 313), Kirkpatrick (1967) recommended evaluation be performed at four key levels, namely, immediate reaction, learning, behaviour and results. As indicated by Grant (2012), level one emphasises the attendee's emotional state instead of evaluating training, level two is about appraising learning, level three is about assessing behavioural change, and level four concentrates on the outcome happening after the learning programme (Kirkpatrick, 1977; MacKie, 2007).

Grant (2012) stated that to understand the effect of the training programme thoroughly, the assessment should be done at all four levels. Further, the related expenses and benefits of the specific programme should be evaluated (Grant, 2012; Kirkpatrick, 1977). MacKie (2007) mentioned that the method has received disapproval as being unrealistic. Further, Mackie (2007) argued that more fulfilment with the training experience is an unreliable predictor of the transfer of learning into the place of work and no mediating variables are mentioned that may help or hinder the transfer of skills and knowledge transfer. The author submitted that the Kirkpatrick model could be used to evaluate coaching intervention (Figure 1). The method can be applied to assess the effectiveness of coaching concerning improved self-awareness, knowledge, and leadership skills. Furthermore, it can measure observable behavioural changes transferred to the workplace, and lastly, changes in coached individuals and organisational performance can be measured (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018; MacKie, 2007). However MacKie (2007) submitted that the characteristics of the coach, coachee, and the organisation should be taken into account when comparing executive coaching outcomes across various coaches and organisations. Also, the coaching activity's exact ingredients should be specified to determine the component that is effective in the coaching process.

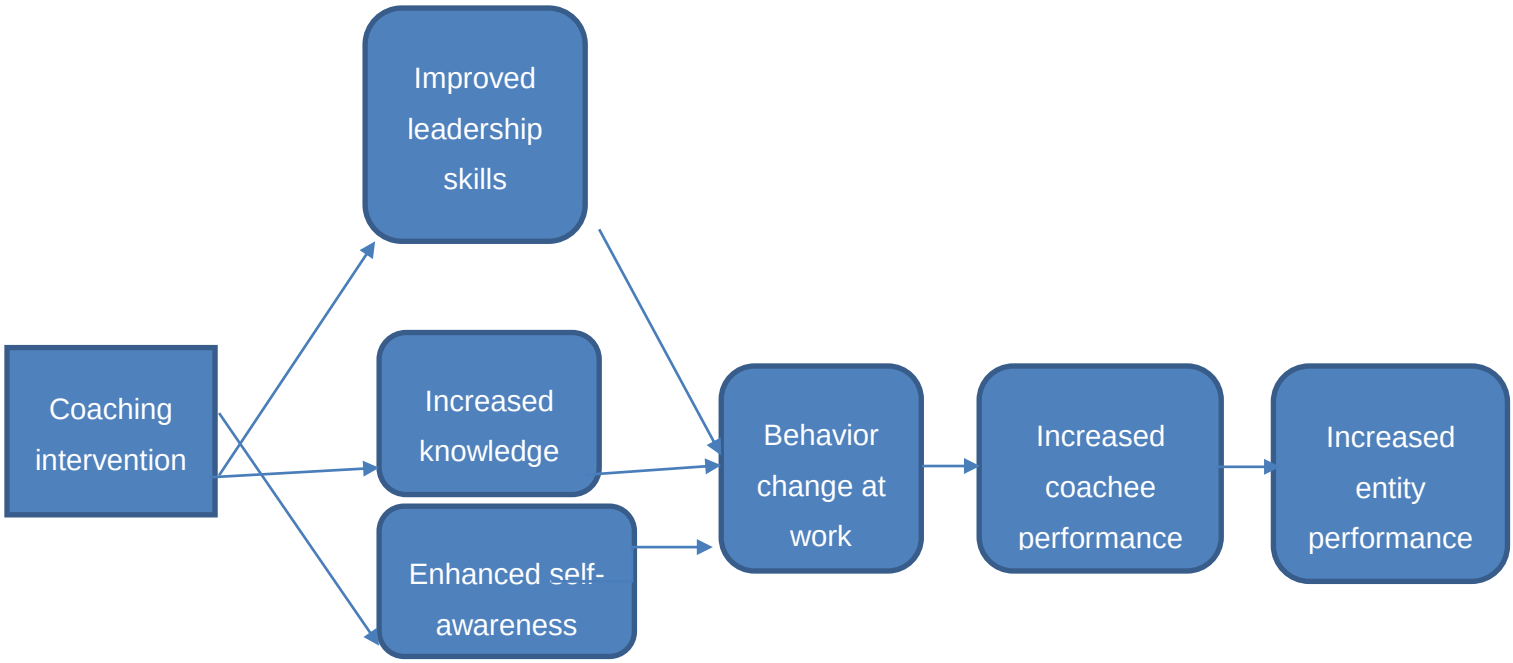


Figure 1: Training approach to coaching using the Kirkpatrick methodology

Source: Mackie (2007)

2.8.3 Proposition 4

There is no universal measure of the effectiveness of executive coaching.

2.9 Conclusion of Literature Review

This chapter has delivered an outline of the literature relating to the background of the SOCs, the definition of executive coaching, knowledge of the effectiveness of the coaching process, leadership coaching outcomes, the purpose of the coaching programme, and the measurement tools of effective coaching. The final objective of executive coaching stays unchanged: to make certain that the coaching process is significant, operative as well as creates outcomes – that is, enhances the client's behaviour and performance (Joo, 2005; Kilburg, 2000; Kombarakaran et al., 2008). The success of executive coaching is achieved jointly by the coach, client, and the funding organisation. If the parties to the coaching engagement follow the coaching process

successfully, this will lead to change and transformation (Fazel, 2013). The study discussed various components impacting the coaching process, including the attributes of a coach and coachee, matching, goal setting, and feedback. It is possible to achieve significant positive coaching benefits if the coachee perceives the coach as trustworthy, and the background and skills of the coach align with the coachee's expectancy (Kinsler, 2014).

In as much as the literature review has provided a solid foundation, however, the contextual setting of this literature is broad as there have not been specific references to the SOCs in South Africa. In this light, the study intended to use this literature to analyse the executive coaching effectiveness in developing the SOC's executives. Additionally, the literature review submitted that the organisations still have a challenge measuring executive coaching effectiveness as there is no universal measure at present. Therefore the study explored the measurement tools that the HR Talent used to measure the effectiveness of the executive coaching.

The research questions and corresponding propositions, as discussed in this chapter, are outlined in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Summarised Consistency table: research questions and propositions

RQ #	State Research Question	State Proposition
1	What are executives' and senior managers' experiences of the coaching process?	The executives shared their experiences of components of the coaching process
2	How do executives and senior managers describe leadership development as an executive coaching outcome?	Executive coaching improved the executives' and senior managers' leadership skills.
3	How do HR Talent structure the executive coaching programme?	There are vital components that HR Talent considers when designing the executive research programme.
4	What do HR talent managers use to measure the effectiveness of executive coaching?	There is no universal measure of the effectiveness of executive coaching.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides details of the research methodology, including the research paradigm, research design, data collection methods, population and sample, the research instrument, procedure for data collection, data analysis, and the interpretation methods applied in this study.

It further discusses trustworthiness, limitations of the study, and ethical considerations of the study.

3.1 Research approach

The study aimed to analyse if executive coaching provided to executives achieved its intended purpose in enhancing leadership development. To achieve the goal of the study, the data was collected using semi-structured interviews. The study thus adopted a qualitative research method.

3.2 Research design

The research design was qualitative in nature. Qualitative research aims to apprehend the meanings human beings have created concerning their world and experience; it is therefore inductive (Almalki, 2016). According to Queirós, Faria, and Almeida (2017), qualitative research has no concern with the statistical representation but with an in-depth understanding of the problem at hand. This method focuses on obtaining people's stories articulated in any platform of discussion, such as interviews (Grossoehme, 2014). Qualitative research is thus interested with features of truth that could not be measured, aiming at the comprehension and illustration of the underlying forces of social affairs (Queirós et al., 2017). Grossoehme (2014) further stated that qualitative research mostly works with written versions of the transcriptions of the individual conversations or focus group discussions in seeking to know the meaning of experience in a study sample. As indicated by Coyle and Tickoo (2007), the qualitative research is inductive with small samples, the method considers the researcher as the research instrument, and words and not

numbers are the data. As the researcher was directly involved in collecting data, the qualitative research's effectiveness relied on the researcher's skills and the quality of the interview guide used to collect data. Ponterotto (2005) submitted that the constructivist-interpretivism paradigm forms the basis of the qualitative research as it emphasises the need to understand the participants' lived experience. As described by Balbi (2008, p. 16), “constructivism is an epistemological premise grounded on the assertion that, in the act of knowing, it is the human mind that actively gives meaning and order to the reality to which it is responding”. This study's objective was to explore the executives' experiences of executive coaching to establish its impact on leadership development, so in this study more weight was placed on the participants' views. Constructivism forms the basis of the qualitative research, which draws from the naturalistic methods of collecting and analysing data to afford a comprehensive understanding of people’s experience and the meaning attached to them (Yilmaz, 2013).

Amongst others, the qualitative method was appropriate for this study as it offers more data regarding real-life situations (Eyisi, 2016). The one-on-one semi-structured interview was the principal means of collecting data to permit the participants’ prospects for the comprehensive narrative and description of their thinking and experiences to the researcher (Denscombe, 2008). Accordingly, conducting interviews provided an opportunity for the researcher to collect comprehensive and subjective information (Rahman, 2017). The researcher made participants feel at ease during the interview by requesting them to convey their stories. Further, the semi-structured interview method allowed the researcher to seek clarity and ask follow-up questions for deeper understanding. In addition, the method allowed a researcher to repeat or put such a question more understandably if the participants could not understand the interview question, which helped eliminate any misunderstanding (Kumar, 2011). Therefore, the qualitative research method encouraged participants to be free and honest as they established what the study expected of them (Eyisi, 2016). According to Qu and Dumay (2011), the study depended somewhat on

the participants' judgement of the circumstances being studied. The researcher is a trained coach, and during the interview, she explained the purpose of the discussion to the participants as assisting in meeting the master's degree requirement. By sharing such information with the participants, the researcher built trust and rapport with the participants, making it easier for the participants to share their experience of the coaching process and executive coaching effectiveness with no fear of being judged (Bernard, 2011).

However, the qualitative research worked because the researcher collected data from HR talent managers the sponsors of executive coaching services, and as such, they would receive feedback from the coaches and coached executives regarding the coaching sessions. The executives' and senior managers' interviews focused on their experience of the coaching process. Consequently, conducting interviews with the participants helped the researcher gain a broad and all-inclusive understanding of how they experienced the coaching process.

3.3 Population and sample

3.3.1 Population

The study's population comprised executives and senior management who had undergone coaching within a SOC. In addition, the population included HR talent managers who are the sponsors of executive coaching services. Since the HR talent managers are directly overseeing the executive coaching services, the researcher expected them to provide in-depth knowledge regarding executive coaching effectiveness and the measurement thereof.

Furthermore, for the purpose of this research, the management were SOC employees classified as Level D (senior managers), Level C (executives) and Level B and Chief financial officers (namely, executives).

The senior and executive managers included for this study were based in Johannesburg and the study was further limited to those who were at Transnet

Corporate Centre (TCC), Transnet Freight Rail (TFR) and Transnet Port Terminal (TNPA). These executives were previously coached by external executive coaches sponsored by the organisation. This study excluded senior and executive managers who were coached through the Executive Education programme as it would be difficult to assess which intervention was successful. The study excluded executives without coaching experience and the HR talent managers not overseeing executive coaching. The researcher believed that such managers would not be able to provide adequate responses to the research questions.

3.3.2 Sample and sampling method

The sample for this research included coached executive and senior managers and HR talent managers. As stated by Kumar (2011, p. 189), “the primary consideration in purposive sampling is your judgement as to who can provide the best information to achieve the best objective for your study”. The sample was drawn purposively from the population of the coached executives, and HR talent managers comprised the pre-planned selection of participants based on the attributes that the participant had. According to Johnson, Adkins, and Chauvin (2020), the sampling design in qualitative research is done non-randomly but often purposively to contain the most suitable participants who are most appropriate for responding to the research questions. In this study, a non-random purposive sample was selected as the executives and senior managers were selected with a particular purpose in mind, namely, to respond to research questions as a result of understanding or involvement in the executive coaching process (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). The researcher selected the HR talent managers for this study because they oversee the company’s executive coaching programme. As such, they possess a unique, in-depth knowledge of executive coaching services because of their experience with communicating with both the coaches and coached executives, consequently, they are the right participants to respond to the research interview questions (El-Kiki, 2007; Schindler, 2019). The HR talent department has four executive managers who oversee executive coaching in Johannesburg.

The participating executives were from Level B and senior managers from Levels C – D, and these are the sub-groups to which the study applied purposive sampling method. This sampling technique was appropriate for this study as it afforded an extremely representative sample (Sharma, 2017).

The sample size comprised sixteen participants selected according to predetermined criteria relevant to this study's research objectives (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). According to Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe, and Young (2018, p. 18), in qualitative research, “the sample tends to be small in order to support the depth of case oriented analyses that is fundamental to this mode of inquiry”. The intended participants were the executives and senior managers who had received coaching within the organisation and the HR talent managers who are the executive coaching programme's custodian. The elected participants were selected based on their perceived experience of the executive coaching process to participate in this study (Schindler, 2019). Furthermore, the study acknowledged that the selected participants were likely to be richer with data or insight than others, and thus more appropriate and worthwhile in attaining the research purpose and responding to questions at hand (Johnson et al., 2020; Vasileiou et al., 2018).

The sub-groups are listed in Table 2 below and are based on the list of coached executives supplied by the HR Talent department. Although the cultural, gender and race allocation are not specified in the study, given the issue of diversity in the South African organisation, the researcher ensured that the sample was as diverse as possible.

Table 3: Profile of respondents (by position or context not name)

Description of respondent type, e.g. Manager, Union representative, student	Coached executives	Custodian of coaching
Respondent – 1 –Level B	X	
Respondent – 2 –Level B	X	
Respondent – 3 –Level B	X	
Respondent – 4 –Level A	X	
Respondent – 5 –Level B	X	
Respondent – 6 –Level B	X	
Respondent – 7 –Level B	X	
Respondent – 8 –Level B	X	
Respondent – 9 –Level B	X	
Respondent – 10 -Level B	X	
Respondent – 11–Level B	X	
Respondent – 12 –Level D	X	
Respondent – 13–Level B	X	
Respondent – 14–Level B		X
Respondent – 15–Level B		X
Respondent – 16–Level B	X	
TOTAL number of respondents	14	2

3.4 The research instrument

The study used an interview guide to collect qualitative data. According to Suzuki, Ahluwalia, Arora, and Mattis (2007), in qualitative research, the data that the interviewer produces depends entirely on the sources from which the researcher draws the data and the tools employed to collect such data. The interviewer interviewed the external coach, as a pilot to test the questions, using the primary questions on the interview guides. The interview took about 30 minutes to complete, and the interviewer used Microsoft Teams to record such interview. Additionally, the interviewer submitted the revised interview guides to the supervisor for final review which permitted the interviewer to refine and change the interview questions before conducting the actual interviews with the participants (Schindler, 2019). The interview guide contained standardised

questions to guide the interview structure and ensure complete coverage of the research questions. The study excluded questions requiring information that is considered sensitive and not beneficial to the study, protected participants' privacy, and avoided questions that might harm the participants (Kumar, 2011). Accordingly, the interview schedule excluded questions that relate to gender and level of education. The interview guides are included as Appendix B.

3.5 Procedure for data collection

The study used an interview guide as the research instrument, and as such, it comprised a clear set of instructions. According to Suzuki et al. (2007), the qualitative research interview is where direct communication between the researcher and participant results in the construction of knowledge. Therefore, the study sought facts and understanding using semi-structured interviews. Additionally, the semi-structured interviewing allowed both the interviewer and participants to follow new clues (Bernard, 2011). In view of that, the semi-structured interview was more flexible, and it allowed the researcher to change the questions' order and use probing questions to follow each interviewer's unique aspects (Whitley & Kite, 2013). As indicated by Queirós et al. (2017), one of the benefits of conducting interviews is that they are rapid and easy to repeat.

The study had two sets of interview guides, one for the coached executives and senior managers, and the second one for the HR talent managers. Such incorporation of data sets enhanced the study by offering diverse data collection to explain conflicting views of a phenomenon of concern. Furthermore, it helps disprove where one set of data nullifies a proposition made by another (Noble & Heale, 2019). In addition, semi-structured interviewing was appropriate for this study as the participants included executives and senior managers who are familiar with the productive use of their time. Furthermore, the selected participants were equally consistent and shared acute likenesses connected to the research questions (DiCicco - Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

After receiving the approval letter to conduct the research within the organisation, the interviewer requested a list of all the executives and senior managers who had participated in the organisation's coaching programme. The interviewer then approached the HR talent managers and the General Manager: Talent and Transformation to participate in an interview. Suzuki et al. (2007) submitted that useful data collection depends on several factors, the relationship between the researcher and participant, sampling criteria, subjectivity vs. objectivity of the interviewer, language and communication, culture shock, and ethical consideration. English was the primary medium of communication to conduct interviews.

The list from HR Talent comprised sixteen executives who had previously received coaching, and the majority of these executives occupied a GM position (namely, Level B) within their respective operating divisions. There were two senior managers, one level C and other Level D. The researcher sent an email to all the participants on the list inviting them to participate in the study. There were three attachments to each participant's email: (1) a letter explaining the purpose of the study, and to confirm the anonymity of the interview; (2) the respondent's consent letter; and (3) the approval letter from the participant's organisation. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic regulation, the researcher suggested virtual interviews using the Microsoft Teams meetings instead of face-to-face interviews. Two weeks after the initial invitation to the participants, the researcher sent email reminders to each participant. All interviews were conducted through Microsoft Teams at times agreed to between the interviewer and participant. The interviewer requested oral permission from each participant to record the interview discussion at the beginning of the meeting. After that, the interviewer recorded the interview sessions using a voice recorder, Microsoft Teams, as well as a smart phone to record the interviews. The interview guide for the executives and senior managers consisted of eight questions, and most questions had sub-questions. However, the researcher only asked sub-questions provided that the participant's response to the primary question had not covered a specific area of interest. Furthermore, the researcher asked all

participants the same questions in a similar sequence (Guest et al., 2006). Two HR talent managers participated in the second interview data set. The interview discussion with each participant took between 30 minutes to an hour to complete (DiCicco - Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The interview guide for the HR talent managers comprised 10 questions, and some of the questions had sub-questions. The total interviews comprised of eight coached executives and two HR Talent managers. Interview guides are attached as Appendix B.

3.6 Data analysis and interpretation

The interviewer used the services of a transcriber to assist with transcribing the interview discussions into a transcript. The researcher made prior arrangements with the transcriber to deliver the interview participants' recordings saved to an external drive to the transcriber. Subsequently, the researcher read through the transcribed data on several occasions to become familiar with it. Sundler, Lindberg, Nilsson, and Palmér (2019) submitted that the researcher needs to attain understanding of the data through unbiased reading. In some instances, the researcher had to listen to the specific recording where the transcriber could not hear properly and fill in the missing information. After that, the researcher sent the transcribed data to the respective respondents to confirm accuracy and completeness. However, most of the respondents took time in forwarding their confirmation, and the researcher had to send follow-up emails in this regard. Even after sending emailing reminders, most respondents did not confirm their recording transcript due to the organisation's political nature. The codebook was created and tested before use (Kumar, 2011). Subsequently, the researcher used thematic analysis, to analyse the responses line by line to identify themes per the response and allocate a code to each item. The thematic analysis assisted in detecting, analysing and reporting themes in data. According to Javadi and Zarea (2016), thematic analysis is a method for extracting connotations and ideas from data and including identifying, scrutinising, and recording patterns and themes. Therefore, thematic analysis assisted in noting patterns and trends in the core themes identified, as well as counting the

number of times a theme occurred. Johnson and Christensen (2013) stated that noting occurrences can assist in detecting significant themes in the data, and such themes helped with responding to the research questions (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). Sundler et al. (2019) submitted that themes begin to surface from patterns. Finally, the research report was formulated. Given the fact that the analysis of data was limited to the response from the participants, semantic theme analysis was appropriate for this study. Further, Javadi and Zarea (2016, p. 36) indicated that in semantic theme analysis, data is described simply for displaying patterns present in the data and organised in the forms of content, summarised, or interpreted meanings. The researcher kept the original copies of recorded conversations in various safe storage places (namely, external drive, computer hard drive, and on document) and will destroy such records after receiving research report results from the University of the Witwatersrand.

3.7 Trustworthiness

According to Javadi and Zarea (2016), trustworthiness and authenticity comprise four criteria, namely, credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. For this study to be trustworthy, it should meet all the requirements for those criteria. The researcher requested permission to record the interviews before the start of each interview session. Additionally, the researcher emailed the respective transcribed recordings to each participant for review. The study ensured that the interview questions were understandable, intensive, and sustained by the theoretical context (Johnson et al., 2020). Through piloting, the researcher achieved this objective by asking to interview the external coach and obtaining final comments from the researcher's supervisor (Kumar, 2011; Schindler, 2019). To ensure the integrity of data analysis, the researcher used Atlas.ti 8 to code the transcribed recordings. Furthermore, the study used two data sources (namely, data from coached executives and HR talent managers) (Johnson et al., 2020).

3.7.1 Transferability

The study provided detailed theoretical facts to enable the readers to establish if the study results apply to their situation or other settings, and this achieved transferability. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Johnson et al., 2020; Kumar, 2011), Further, the researcher kept copies of the interview recordings and transcribed data in a safe storage. Additionally, the researcher kept copies of code and code group's reports from Atlas.ti 8 software.

3.7.2 Credibility

The researcher disclosed the findings of the study to the coached executives, senior managers, and HR talent managers for endorsement, comparison, support, and consent. The parties discussed and resolved any disagreement before submitting the final report to the university (Kumar, 2011). Given that the interviewer collected two data sets (namely, HR talent managers, executives, and senior managers), such data triangulation was intended to ensure credibility (Noble & Heale, 2019).

3.7.3 Dependability

According to Yilmaz (2013, p. 320), the study has dependability if the process of selecting, justifying and applying research strategies, procedures and methods is clearly explained and its effectiveness evaluated by the researcher and confirmed by an auditor, which is called the "audit trail".

Consequently, the researcher provided details of her role in the study, copies of the recorded transcripts, details of the interviews, the basis on which participants were selected and the focal point of the study. Further, the study included details in respect of the research design, paradigm, and approach (Johnson et al., 2020). Additionally, the review contains details of a specific population and sample and also made recommendations for future research arising from this study.

3.7.4 Confirmability

The researcher asked the participants to confirm the transcribed recordings' content. The purpose of this process was to ensure that the researcher did not misinterpret their responses and that it was still the same information gathered from their initial recorded responses (Johnson et al., 2020).

3.8 Limitations of the study

- The executives and senior managers might not have remember the details of their coaching experience.
- Furthermore, the results of the study could not be replicated, because the researcher played a key role in the collection, therefore, individual experience was likely to impact the observations (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2015).
- During the interview, the network was unstable; therefore, the transcribed documents might have had missing phrases or terms.
- The study was limited in its scope as it only entailed executives and senior managers previously coached as well as HR talent managers who were custodians of executive coaching. Accordingly, the study was a representation based on a purposive sample at a given point in time.

3.9 Ethical considerations

The interviewer obtained ethical clearance from Wits Business School's Graduate Studies Committee upon approval of the research proposal. Refer to Appendix D for the ethical clearance letter. Further, the interviewer submitted a written request to the GM: HR Talent and Transformation for approval to conduct the study within the chosen SOC. This submission included as an attachment an abridged copy of the approved research proposal and ethical clearance. Subsequently, the organisation granted approval. Refer to Annexure E. The interviewer sent an email to each participant, including a respondent letter that explained the study's purpose and consideration of the participant's

anonymity and confidentiality of their information and the findings' reporting (Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi, & Cheraghi, 2014).

The interviewer requested verbal permission from each participant to record the sessions before commencing the interview. Thereafter, the interviewer used an external transcriber to transcribe the recording. The transcriber understood the importance of maintaining participants' confidentiality.

CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents the results of the four propositions as outlined in Chapter 2. It presents outcomes from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the coached executives and senior managers and the HR talent managers. The study sought to explore the executives' and senior managers' experiences of the executive coaching process. Furthermore, it sought to establish the essential elements that HR Talent took into account when embarking on a coaching programme and measuring the effectiveness of the coaching process. The findings sought to respond to the following research questions:

a. What are executives' and senior managers' experiences of the coaching process?
b. How do executives and senior managers describe leadership development as an executive coaching outcome?
c. How do HR Talent structure the executive coaching programme?
d. What do HR talent managers use to measure the effectiveness of executive coaching?

To gain deeper and more personal understanding of the respondents' views and experiences, the researcher conducted ten semi-structured interviews: eight interviews with the coached executives and senior managers and two interviews with the HR talent managers who are custodians of the executive coaching programme. The researcher interviewed the two HR talent managers after finishing the interviews with the eight executives. The participants' response rate was equally promising because ten out of sixteen participants were interviewed. The list obtained from the HR Talent department, comprised sixteen participants, and two of the sixteen participants were exiting the organisation; thus, they were not willing to participate in the interview. The researcher reached saturation after interviewing eight participants. When the

respondents shared their coaching process experiences, they were all unique to their individual experiences. The researcher used Atlas.ti (version 8) qualitative data software to code the data from the transcribed interviews. Bazeley and Jackson (2013) submitted that software is a means of providing tools to support rather than drive analysis. As such, the researcher coded the transcribed interview data on Atlas.ti software. Further, the analysis of ten transcripts consisted of open coding, where two hundred and fourteen codes were initially allocated and then later grouped into eleven code groups (see Appendix C). These were further grouped into four themes, therefore, this chapter focuses on presenting these four themes and the details of such themes. Refer to Appendix D for the summary of findings of the semi-structured interviews.

To continue ensuring that no form of harm would be caused to the participants during data collection and reporting of findings, since only two HR talent managers took part in the interviews, the study continued to protect the identity of the participants by ensuring that direct quotations from respondents made during the meeting are not part of the study report (Greenwood, 2016; Grossoehme, 2014).

The table below presents the profile of the participants interviewed. The interview guides are attached as Appendix B.

Table 4: Profile of participants interviewed

Respondent Pseudonym	Job grade
Respondent 1	Level B
Respondent 2	Level B
Respondent 4	Level A
Respondent 5	Level B
Respondent 7	Level B
Respondent 8	Level B
Respondent 10	Level B
Respondent 13	Level B
Respondent 14	Level C
Respondent 15	Level C

4.2 Results pertaining to Proposition 1: The executives and senior managers will share their experiences of components of the coaching process

In this section, the findings from the interviews are discussed, starting with the chosen participants' response rate, followed by the theme and sub-themes emerging from the respondent's. Participants' quotations support the description of the theme. As stated by Di Maddaloni and Davis (2018), the qualitative analysis led to answer one research question: what are the executives' and senior managers' experiences of the coaching process?

4.2.1 Overall coaching process experience and reflecting back to the sessions

In replying to the semi-structured interview questions, the respondents offered their views of the overall coaching process experiences. Participants expressed their initial concerns about the coaching process because they knew that the process required them to open up and expose their secrets to a stranger and had fears that the coach would discuss the conversation with another person.

The respondents reported that trust and total confidentiality from a coach were critical to them.

"what was key to me is absolute confidentiality from their part and absolute openness from my part" (R1).

"As I said, you need to be open and you need to allow your coach to go in areas you don't necessarily want them to go into, and not many people are open to that" (R13).

The respondents used various terms below to describe their overall impression of the coaching process experience. Participants expressed their coaching process experience as a non-judgemental process.

"… coaching exercise did help me … you know, from a different perspective, from an independent view, to not judging, knowing that that person's not judging you, or has anything against you, but is there to help you when you highlight your weaknesses. So I took them positively and worked on them" (R7).

Other respondents reported that they see the coaching process as a lifelong journey, and that it also gives you confidence.

"...I think coaching is a lifelong journey because all of the coaching sessions that I had were contextual. Every time you deal with something different in your life" (R5)

When the respondents were reflecting on the sessions, they used terms such as painful exercise/process, makes you reflect on self, and gives insights into blind spots, whereas others said it is a rewarding/positive experience.

"..it's a painful exercise because it makes you or for instance, the first thing that I was hoping would happen is that I would sit down there and then the guy tells me what he knows. It's the other way around. They ask you to think and say, to reflect on how you do things, which is a painful way of creating an awareness

around how you affect other people and especially how you manage people" (R1).

"…I don't think we're all perfect in everything, we might claim to be because you don't really see your blind spots, but the coaching exercise to me did highlight them. I think it makes me a better leader and a better executive and manager to my team, and also to my colleagues around" (R7)

Furthermore, participants expressed their coaching process experience as an eye opener, creating self-awareness, and found it interesting as it gave them practical advice.

***"I** think it was an eye opener, almost a surprise, I was not really expecting a lot but it talked to pace and all..." (R1).*

"…it was a very refreshing experience and it allowed me to get a second opinion from someone who sits outside of the process that I was dealing with" (R2).

However, some respondents had mixed feelings about coaching; as much as most reported positive experiences, there was some negative experience regarding the coaching process.

"So I think, yes, I've had mixed responses or mixed experiences, I've had both coaches who didn't really help for me at a particular point in time, and I had coaches who helped me get through certain things. So it has been quite divided, my coaching experience" (R13).

There were nine sub-themes which emerged from the coaching experience theme. The findings of these sub-themes are presented below:

4.2.2 Coaching environment

Most participants indicated that the coaching environment plays a crucial role in the success of the coaching process. The participants mentioned that some of the coaching sessions took place outside the office environment. Furthermore,

the participants indicated that the coaching environment creates a safe space to talk about anything. Additionally, the respondents indicated that the coaching environment provides time to quiet their minds.

"the environment within which these discussions take place is also important. If this have to happen in a office environment only probably it would not achieved the outcome. Sometimes I would go to her office, sometimes she would come to mine, sometimes we went to a restaurant or to an open space and just sit there. We changed location and environment. I felt that also had an impact" (R8).

"okay, fine, they've allowed us the space to engage and talk and try and work through this together utilise the space, basically. So it was not a compliance issue almost for us, it was something that we both knew was going to be beneficial to both. That created a space and I took advantage of that" (R4).

"…be able to just not even speak your mind but actually that time to quiet your mind and think for yourself, it then became evident that, you know, how much what you go through at work you take home" (R10).

Other participants reported that because their coaches stayed in a different province, coaching sessions were virtual. As such, the coaching environment was refreshing and exciting.

"I think it was a very good experience. Interestingly enough, I actually only had a virtual experience, so the coach was in KZN. Two years ago Skype was probably the exception, so we probably connected virtually, it wasn't really the same as having someone in the room, but when you consider two years ago, that was not the norm then. Now, looking back, I think today it would be an accepted norm to use virtual settings" (R2).

4.2.3 Choosing a coach

All respondents reported that they received a list of profiles from which to select their coaches from HR Talent. They considered the coaches' background and experience to decide on the coach to choose. At the same time, others reported

that they selected the coach based on their coaching style, as mentioned in their profiles.

“they give a list of coaches and their CVs so that you can collect a coach who you think is more qualified and skilled to be able to coach you, which I think is good as it will give you that opportunity to make that choice” (R8).

“and we looked at their approach, how they approached coaching and what their background is and what their experience is, and I chose based for that specific reason. Depending who was available and then we chose which one we want to go with” (R4).

After selecting three coaches they wanted to see, the respondents reported that HR Talent would organise a chemistry session between the coach and coachee. Most respondents said that the chemistry session is critical in establishing the coach and coachee's initial connection. Other respondents stated that the organisation conducted speed dating to encourage a relationship between the coach and coachee.

“who you choose basically to go with, is absolutely critical.. so, I think that initial selection is absolutely critical to align with the things that you really want to address” (R4).

“I like the way the organisation does the allocation of coaches, like speed dating, where you connect with the coaches, to see if you can gel with them. I think that was a good strategy of selecting coaches because the bio profiles do nothing, you say, okay, this one and this one, but the minute you meet them and you can engage with them, you suddenly realise whether it’s going to work or not” (R13).

4.2.4 Different coaches had different approach/style of coaching

The respondents indicated that they experienced various approaches and styles from different coaches, such as all-round coaching, extended to their team members and personal lives. Some respondents expressed that the coach

spoke to the line manager, and they found such arrangement unique and worked just fine. Further, other participants reported that some coaches used pictures to provide more clarity during the coaching sessions. Additional respondents stated that some coaches had a structured process in which such coaches came up with proper methodologies. That brought the coachees comfort, knowing that coaches had a plan. Furthermore, some of the participants reported that coaches made them read articles, discussed those articles, and sent emails to formalise such discussion.

"session with my team so she met them and interviewed them as well, she met with my wife, we had dinner together. So it was all round coaching, she could see all round, because this was about the leadership capability and where I should sharpen up on my leadership possibilities" (R8).

"coach's approach, is that he was very structured. He came in with proper methodologies, with proper time settings, he was very structured and kept me to those timings. For me, who is not necessarily as structured a person that was actually good because it forced me to ensure I reallocate time to actually sit with him, and all of these things. So from a process perspective, I think one of the success factors was actually that it was structured" (R5).

4.2.5 Setting of goals

Different participants had different coaching goals. Some were broad, others were specific to their development areas. In some instances, the participants reported that the goals were relating to the new leadership roles, communication skills, and assisting them in dealing with complex situations.

"the reason I was so hungry for it was because of my challenges at the time within the role I was leading, and all that, and the organisation called the dynamics. So I needed help around leadership and I had to say, is there something wrong, is it about me, as an individual, is it about my skill, is it about my competence, all this, so I had all these questions without the answers or the right ones. I didn't want to answer these questions myself, I needed somebody

to help me answer them, to give the right answers. So the first one really helped a lot" (R7).

"the organisation was going for quite some time now, has been going through quite a tumultuous period, and therefore for executive and I'm sure for every level, it was really tough. So I really was grateful for the opportunity from a timing perspective, because it just then afforded me that independent person that I could bounce things off, because you don't really think clearly" (R10).

"coaching was designed specifically to fix how I relate to people, tone down a bit. I wanted to tone down the perceptions of being in control, and, number one, let others have the space to be able to express themselves, expressing themselves, not talking, but doing, letting other people get on with their deliverables. I wanted to master one thing, that is being able to manage through others. That's the thing that I was wanting to learn" (R1).

4.2.6 Relationship with coach

The respondents expressed the importance of the relationship between the coach and the coachee. Further, they felt that it was critical to have a rapport in order to benefit from the coaching process.

"it was very key in the sense that I think there needs to be some kind of rapport between a coach and a coachee, and I think you get chemistry, almost, or you don't, and I think you need to be able to, as a coach, and a coachee, say, I have chemistry or I don't" (R5).

Another respondent benefited beyond the coaching goals, as some respondents expressed appreciation in that it has impacted even their personal lives.

"So that was a benefit. That's another positive side of this coaching. It went beyond me, beyond what even my wife expected" (R7).

Furthermore, some respondents indicated that their coaches had experience, understanding, and empathy. They went above and beyond their call of duty in assisting them to achieve their goal.

"So he had empathy, understanding and experience. He could say to me, there was a time when I was going through a similar situation, and this is how we dealt with it" (R2)

"vested interest that the coach had, and she really went the extra mile in terms of getting me unstuck, she didn't let go, and I think because of her vested interest, it sort of pushes you as the coachee or the client also because here's someone who's got nothing to benefit out of this and is pushing, and you are in it, you know. So my relationship with my coach was excellent, and I think that was the secret to the success" (R10).

The respondents also reported that the relationship with their coaches was open, honest, and trustworthy. As a result, the respondents could open up and expose themselves to a coach and allowed themselves to be vulnerable.

"Really positively. Because of this level of trust, if you want, we were in the journey together so there was nothing, the feedback, no matter what it was, was always going to be used constructively, and I think once that is out of the way, then you are able to take that feedback and actually work with it, because of the trust, because of the trust" (R10).

"I knew that by the time I want coaching I had to really, really expose myself, talk about myself a lot, and not edit where I would have" (R1).

"allowed me to have honest conversations about my fears and challenges I experience as a human being and a leader. It was the first time that I could talk about the fact that I felt bullied by those two ladies who reported to me. I never spoke out loud about it" (R5).

Accordingly, the respondents stated that it was easy to communicate with their coaches as they felt safe with their secrets.

"…and he took a lot of interest in what I was doing, I think that made it a lot easier to communicate with him" (R4).

"the relationship that I wanted to establish, that I pushed through with the person was that, there'd be no boundaries, I will tell them everything. If they detect a weakness, or I detect a weakness in myself, I wouldn't worry that it's going to go elsewhere" (R1).

Further respondents reported that their coaches were good listeners, warm and approachable. The coaches took an interest in their work and kept them accountable. Furthermore, the respondents stated that the coaches became the pillar of their strength, as their relationship was unique and valuable.

"coach was very warm, he was very approachable, he listened, he understood, he gave good advice. What I enjoyed was he listened and when he did, he was able to give me suggestions that were practical" (R2).

"it became my pillar of strength, and through the organisation I only realised afterwards because I wanted to extend and I think they did extend by something like four sessions." (R10).

"that worked very well, it was something unique. It was positive. It added a lot of value." (R7).

Lastly, some of the respondents submitted that they had a good relationship with their coaches because the two parties complemented each other.

"we complemented each other well. I enjoyed this coaching process quite a lot because he really challenged my thinking, he was invested, etc. so it was good for me." (R5).

4.2.7 Assessment process

Different respondents reported that they experienced various assessment methods ranging from having an action plan document, completing standard questionnaires, contract progress tracking, and schedule.

“there was always an action plan that we had documented and sent to one another.” (R2).

“There was a contract that is signed and we did progress tracking against it.” (R13).

Additional respondents indicated that they had feedback sessions with their coaches, while a few had quarterly reviews/reports. In some instances, the respondents submitted that they used the rating system to rate the coach's services.

“she would then give me feedback to say, okay, this is what I picked up and this is where I think you should be sharpening up and this is where I think you're doing well. So that was the experience that I had with her. So I would say it was an excellent experience” (R8).

“obviously the coach keeps checking in, how do you feel we’re going, can I get feedback? If that is what you call assessment, there was continuous assessment I think every quarter” (R13)

4.2.8 Organisational support

All respondents reported that HR played a crucial role in that the organisation paid for coaching through HR, provided a list of coaches to the coachees, and set the ball in motion. Furthermore, all respondents reported that they received support from the organisation, which included affording time and paying for their coaching sessions.

“the organisation was paying for it, financially, and in terms of time, obviously it was putting the parameters and that workshop was initially to clarify the parameters or the scope of the executive coaching and guiding you to say, we’ll have this. Even though it’s organised by the organisation, I think that to me was a positive, the support from the organisation” (R7).

“HR specifically, not much because it was obviously part of this process, so they allocated coaches for us, as part of the process, but it wasn’t really them, it was more the performance agency that was their partner that does it” (R5).

Other respondents confirmed that HR involvement was purely limited to administration work and from the process perspective. All the respondents stated that HR was mainly responsible for arranging the coaching process, and the respondents seldom gave HR feedback.

“HR more involved from a process perspective than anything else, when I need to have an extended or when the coach needed to submit her hours for payment, that type of thing, but in terms of following up on how it was going that was very scant.” (R10).

There was an interesting finding where the sample preferred to do the coaching process independently of the organisational support in the form of line managers. In contrast, other respondents reported that they appreciated the participation of the line manager during the coaching process. However, most respondents confirmed that their line managers were not involved in the coaching process.

“What was more interesting to me, I don't know whether any other coaches did that, he had to talk to my line manager, that worked very well, it was something unique. It was positive. It added a lot of value.” (R7)

“one of the things he said at some stage was that if I wanted to have a combined session with me, a line manager, I can do it, but the relationship wasn’t perfect but it wasn’t the main issue I was dealing with. They didn’t get involved at all, to be honest.” (R5)

“Unfortunately, between the coach and I, we never had a session with my line manager, so that too I think was a weakness in the process. We’d gone through the coaching, he had planned to have a session with my line manager, and somehow, we were just not able to get hold of the line manager.” (R2)

Additional insights

The findings revealed some weaknesses in the coaching process as well as suggestions from the respondents. The findings revealed that there was no proper close-out done by HR Talent with the respective coachees. Some respondents mentioned that it is crucial for the organisation to confirm from them if there was "value received in the process". All respondents expressed that there is no immediate evaluation of the coaching process between HR Talent and the coached executives, and as such they felt like it's a "tick box" exercise.

"it would be important to have closed out that session, either with HR facilitating it or with my line manager." (R2).

"Then at the end they do what you do so that they are able to improve the offering, just get an idea of what worked, what didn't work, almost immediately, not two years later." (R1).

To improve the process, the respondents mentioned that amongst others, the HR Talent should explore different kinds of coaching, make coaching compulsory and should start from the bottom.

"I think that HR could explore the different types of coaching that you could have, because it's not a one size fits all, which is I think what we have done as an organisation, we've taken a one size fits all." (R10).

"I think coaching then should become almost compulsory because there's new things that they can definitely benefit from having individual support to guide through this process." (R13).

4.3 Results pertaining to Proposition 2: Executive coaching will improve the executives' and senior manages' leadership skills

The respondents' experiences of various leadership skills are presented below. The interview guide question for describing the leadership skills was question 6: How has executive coaching impacted your leadership development? Question 6 has three sub-questions, and the respondents were required to answer such questions only where the initial response needed a follow-up response. Additionally, there were general questions 7 and 8, in which the researcher asked the respondent for any additional information not yet covered.

In responding to the interview questions, the respondents indicated that they experienced different leadership skills as a result of couching outcomes. Some respondents mentioned that the coaching helped them to enhance skills such as listening, problem solving, active listening skills and team dynamics.

"the decision making is a skill, listening is a skill, identifying root causes for problems is a skill, that you do not necessarily get out of the blue. So I have learned all these things and also understanding the teams, how you resolve issues, team dynamics, other skill how you are going to resolve a one to issue vis-à-vis a team dynamic vis-à-vis how you behave yourself on an open platform. So those were the things that she was hovering on and I would say those are the skills that I improved on" (R8).

"around that whole mindfulness and that whole experience of active listening, is to let things play out and also to be able to determine when you are the height of tension, what is yours to respond to and what is not yours to respond to, and I think that has been really, really empowering" (R10).

Furthermore, respondents mentioned that their awareness level was improved which is a crucial skill for the leaders. Other respondents stated that coaching

helped them to be more empathetic. Additionally, the respondents admitted that, through coaching, they learned conflict management.

"Skills, let's call it attitudes. Empathy. The ability to feel for others and also I think it's empathy and self-awareness. Creating an awareness around how you affect other people and especially how you manage people that level of awareness is key, actually, it's quite important that you are aware of the impact you have on others, and keep trying to fix that side of things..." (R1).

"Most of my goals were around how you make your voice heard, how you deal with complex situations, how you deal with internal politics. So we started crafting ways and means around those areas, conflict management, etc. That's where most of my coaching goals were, and some of those I still apply today when I meet with individuals who fit the criteria of what we had tried to develop." (R2).

Some respondents reported that coaching helped them to be accountable and to keep people responsible by learning to put boundaries in place. Furthermore, the respondents indicated that they learned to set boundaries and to give people space /ownership.

"Accountability, being accountable to myself and the organisation, and keeping people accountable." (R5).

"Number one, let others have the space to be able to express themselves, expressing themselves, not talking, but doing, letting other people get on with their deliverables. I'm enjoying it a bit more, I'm enjoying life. It enables you to know that you are required to always try. If I can say one thing, it makes you realise that people are important, how people feel and how people believe is linked, and the ability to give people ownership, which is key." (R1).

The respondents reported that coaching helped them stay within themselves, let things play out, thereby enabling them to cope with workplace changes. Most participants highlighted the environment within the organisation was chaotic; as

such, coaching assisted them in coping and managing such an environment. In addition, some participants stated that coaching further helped with refining and perfecting their coping mechanism skills, and as such, it significantly improved their professional journey. Furthermore, the respondents mentioned that after coaching they became more mindful of situations around them. As a result, they learned to lead by example, and that coaching had become part of them; and that they now live it.

"It became a holistic sort of aid or assistance to me, because I suddenly saw things that I wasn't seeing before. Then the third one was specifically if that was … because it then makes you very mindful and if that was the case that I was taking my pent-up stress, anxiety, etc. home, can you imagine what the team was experiencing?" (R10).

"I lead by example. I always have that but maybe applying sometimes, you might not apply it the way you're supposed to, so that's where the coaching helped me, to know how I then apply this principle of leading by example" (R7).

4.4 Results pertaining to Proposition 3: Vital components that HR Talent consider when designing the executive coaching programme

The interview guide questions where the HR Talent described their vital components when designing the executive coaching programme is included in questions 1-5.

Proposition 3 as described in Chapter 2: There are vital components that HR Talent consider when designing the executive coaching programme.

In responding to the interview questions, the researcher presents the findings of the four sub-themes emerged in proposition 3 of this study.

4.4.1 Purpose and sustainability of the programme

The respondents declared that amongst other things, the organisation embarks on the coaching programme to enhance the executives' leadership skills and to align leaders with organisational values and mandates and to ensure that they live it.

Furthermore, the respondents reported that the other reasons that the organisation entered into the coaching programme was to improve the individuals' leadership skills, to on-board the new employees into the company as well as to help the executives transition into a new role. In addition, the respondents stated that in some instances, the executives are sent for coaching as part of an employee's development upon request from the line manager.

With regards to the key stakeholders, the respondents reported that the head of talent management, Operation divisions ("ODs") talent managers, People Officers, HR Talent and transformation department and the Group Executive Officer are all stakeholders.

The respondents further confirmed that HR does not get directly involved in the coaching process but only manages the procurement process, provides the infrastructure required for coaching, and assists with allocating additional coaching sessions.

4.4.2 Selection of service providers and coaches

With regards to the selection of service providers, the respondents indicated that they first follow the procurement process in ensuring that the organisation brings in a suitable pool of executive coaches. However, the respondents reported that they provide procurement with all the requirements from the executive coaching programme. Furthermore, the respondents mentioned that they get input from the ODs regarding the development of the programme. The respondents further confirmed that they have no involvement in the

programme's finance part because such responsibility lies with procurement to look for a competitive rate.

Furthermore, the respondents submitted that they select coaches / service providers who are members of the coaching bodies, such as Coaches and Mentors of South Africa (COMENSA), and such providers/coaches must have national reach. Additionally, the respondents expressed that coaches should have the ability to provide on-line coaching sessions to executives who cannot attend face-to-face sessions. Further, the respondents stated that when providing input for technical valuation, they ensure that the pool includes coaches with experience in coaching in a corporate setting world.

Additionally, the respondents argued that upon selecting the service providers/coaches, they look at the coaching hours, experience, particularly experience similar to the coachee. Furthermore, the respondents focus on the background and knowledge of the coaches.

4.4.3 Criteria for selecting executives for coaching

The respondents mentioned that three channels are used for nominating the executives and senior managers to attend coaching. The respondents submitted that the raters would select most of the executives through the talent conference, in some cases. Furthermore, the respondents indicated that in some instances, line managers, group/chief executives nominate the executives to attend coaching during the annual talent conference. The respondents further submitted that the number of raters would rate the executives on 360-degree feedback and leadership competencies, and such raters would nominate the executive for executive coaching.

Lastly, the respondents stated that the line managers would nominate executives to attend coaching out of the talent conference process. In other circumstances, the individual himself or herself would proactively request coaching from the HR Talent department.

4.4.4 Chemistry sessions

The respondents emphasised the importance of chemistry sessions between the coachee and the coach to establish a connection. Accordingly, the respondents submitted that HR provides the coach profiles to the executives for selection. The respondents further stated that either HR Talent or the service providers would email the coaches' curricula vitae (CVs) to the executives for review. Furthermore, the respondents confirmed that they do not influence who the executives choose as a coach.

The respondents reported that to ensure that the executives have the right coach, the executives would select about three coaches and thereafter have a one-on-one session with those coaches.

4.5 Results pertaining to Proposition 4: Measuring coaching effectiveness

In responding to proposition 4, the interview guide for HR Talent contained questions 6-10, in which the respondents were requested to share their experience regarding measuring coaching effectiveness. Questions 6-9 were the main questions addressing the research question, and question 9 was concerning sustainability, whereas problem 10 was for additional insight.

Proposition 4 as described in Chapter 2: There is no universal measure of the effectiveness of executive coaching.

The findings of the two sub-themes are outlined below.

4.5.1 Expected coaching outcomes

The respondents indicated that they expected executives to have better engagement and coping mechanisms.

The respondents stated that in some instances, they expect executives to display improved performance after being coached and to ensure that such executives grow in their capacity.

The respondents also reported that the executives must have the ability to communicate with people both inside or outside the organisation and therefore executives would attend coaching to enhance their inter-personal skills.

4.5.2 Measuring coaching effectiveness

The respondents stated that they rely on the coached individuals' feedback regarding their personal growth together with the line managers' observation report. Further, the respondents submitted that they have achieved very good outcomes from both reports.

The respondents indicated that in some cases, they would observe both individual and organisational improved performance. Furthermore, the respondents confirmed that they would notice a positive change in the behaviour of the coached executives.

The respondents further mentioned that they perform a random review of quarterly reports for individuals. Further, the respondents submitted that they also receive reports from the service providers. Additionally, the respondents indicated that they inspect the 360 degrees scores to identify any shift associated with identified developmental areas after the individual has received coaching.

4.6 Summary of the findings

In summarising the findings of this chapter, it is key to relate these findings to the main research questions.

Question 1: What is the executives' and senior managers' experiences of the coaching process?

The executives and senior managers' narratives outlined their personal experiences with the coaching process. In summary, the respondents expressed the coaching process as:

- Non-judgemental;
- Supporting behavioural change;
- Creating self-awareness;
- Identifying blind spots; and
- Coaching is perceived as a lifelong journey.

The respondents further argued that the coaching experience was personal; the coach–coachee relationship was crucial in the coaching process' success and the personal developmental journey that the executives went through. Other elements emerged such as choosing a coach, the importance of the coaching environment, setting goals, and the relationship with a coach, the assessment process and the coaching process all contributed towards them experiencing a rewarding and positive coaching experience.

Question 2: How do executives and senior managers describe leadership development as an executive coaching outcome?

As previously mentioned, the coaching experience was personal, thus the benefits received by the respondents from the coaching process were due to self-reflection. All the respondents submitted that their leadership development is a journey that started with self-awareness, followed by mindfulness, and ended with behavioural/attitude change. In summary, all the respondents confirmed that coaching enhanced their leadership effectiveness.

Question 3: How does HR Talent structure the executive coaching programme?

The respondents confirmed the reasons for embarking upon coaching was to:

- assist the executives in enhancing their leadership skills;

- assist the individuals in aligning with organisational values and mandate;
- help executives in transitioning to a new role;
- help the new employees when on-boarding the organisation; and
- assist the executives in coping with any changes in the organisation.

Furthermore, the respondents consider the following elements when selecting the service providers: suitability of the coaches' calibre, national representation, membership of the recognised coaching body, background experience of the coaches, coaching hours, and understanding of job requirements. Regarding the selection of executives for coaching, the respondents indicated that the talent conference raters and line managers nominate the executive. In some cases, the individual would request coaching outside the talent conference process.

Like the coached respondents, the HR Talent respondents highlighted that the coach-coachee relationship is key to the success of the coaching process. The study established that HR Talent provides administrative support in respect of coaching.

Question 4: What do HR Talent use to measure the effectiveness of executive coaching?

The respondents reported that HR Talent relies on the line manager's observation regarding any change on the coached executive based on the discussion. Furthermore, the respondents said they sometimes perform a random review of the coached executives' quarterly reports or shift in the 360 degrees result. In summary, the respondents mentioned that overall, the coaching outcomes were positive.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses and interprets the findings presented in Chapter 4 for the themes that emerged.

The discussion of each proposition's outcomes is presented below together with an analysis of the findings from the literature review.

5.2 Discussion pertaining to Proposition 1: The executives and senior managers will share the components of the coaching process experience

5.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Coaching process experience and reflecting back to the sessions

The study revealed that the executive coaching process depends on many factors to be meaningful and fulfilling to the participants. The respondents highlighted some of the characteristics as key for a coaching programme to be successful, emphasising some elements that both coach and coachee and the designers of coaching programmes need to consider in a company or organisation.

From the findings, the respondents noted the initial fear that they had to overcome before embarking upon a coaching process. They particularly expressed the fear of exposing themselves to a stranger.

The coachees need to share their thoughts willingly and to trust that the coach would not tell anyone about what was said during the sessions. Total confidentiality on behalf of the coach is of paramount importance to someone considering the coaching process. The coaches should display professionalism during the coaching sessions to alleviate the coachees' fears. Learning to reflect during coaching is critical because it allows coachees to gain awareness

as to how they do things, and to acknowledge their blind spots. There is a need for the process to be transparent in order to allow coachees to open up about themselves and that the coach would listen without judging them.

These findings are consistent with the previous research findings in which it is submitted that the coach must create and retain trust, exercise confidentiality, and stay non-judgemental throughout the coaching sessions (Ely et al., 2010). Scoular (2011, p. 62), the client has to trust the coach to the extent that they feel able to open up, disclose sensitive information, and try and explore new things". Compared to Rogers (2012), the author argued that a coaching discussion requires a high level of trust and openness from both parties (namely, coach and coachee). Furthermore, Rogers (2012) stated that coachees require trust that the coach will not gossip or give up any coachees' many confidences during the coaching discussions. Similar to a study by Hermel-Stanescu (2015), the findings submitted that transparency and objectivity are essential to building the trust between coach and coachee for forthcoming practical coaching sessions. Farver and Holt (2015) stated that coachees felt at ease sharing their feelings, goals, and fears with their leadership coach. Furthermore, Aguilar (2017) submitted that the coachees require an outsider who is unbiased, with whom they can talk confidentially. Accordingly, the findings of this study confirm that the coaches should ensure absolute confidentiality and a non-judgemental attitude during the coaching engagement, and such behaviour would ensure complete openness from the coachees, leading to the effectiveness of executive coaching. However, HR talent needs to enforce accountability upon the executives and senior managers selected for coaching to attend all the coaching sessions. Failure to do this would render the executive coaching ineffective.

The key elements of the coaching process from the findings are discussed below.

5.2.2 Sub-theme 2 – Coaching environment

The study showed that the environment within which the coaching sessions are held is one of the key building blocks that leads to a positive coaching experience. Most coachees reported that they would prefer the coaching sessions to occur outside their work environment in order to avoid any distractions. So, the findings revealed that the coaching sessions should occur in a neutral and relaxed environment in order to achieve the intended outcomes. People find open spaces or over lunch at a restaurant more comfortable and relaxing for holding coaching sessions. It is important to create a safe environment, which will protect the coachees, as they allow themselves to be vulnerable during the coaching sessions.

Similar to the study by Rosinski and Abbott (2010), which suggested that coaches must avoid routine, which the coachees perceive as dull. Instead, to support coaching efficiency through adaptability and improvement, the coaches should ensure access to a flexible coaching environment. The literature further highlighted that a coach must possess skills to create an atmosphere that freely allows coachees to discuss their intimate and delicate issues, and create a mental space where the coachee can reflect on their position and make time to discuss their frame of mind in this safe environment (Leedham, 2005). Additionally, Jones, Woods, and Guillaume (2016) argued that the secrecy, non-judgemental view, and privacy of the coaching session offers a safe environment for the coachee to reflect on their responses and work on refining areas of weakness.

Based on the discussion, it is clear that the coaching environment plays a vital role in the success of the coaching process. The literature and findings for this study confirmed the importance of the coaching environment. A conducive coaching environment that is safe, supportive, and friendly brings the best out of coachees. Therefore, the coaches must continue to create a safe and trustworthy environment to take coaching forward.

5.2.3 Sub-theme 3 – Choosing a coach

Based on the findings, all the respondents articulated that they were nominated by the organisation to attend coaching. The HR Talent department responsible for coaching services provided a list of coaches, including their profile and CVs, to the executives nominated for coaching. The executives were supplied with three to four coaches' profiles in order to choose a preferred coach. The findings identified chemistry sessions as the first step in the coaching process to ensure a perfect fit between the coach and coachee.

Coaching is a one-on-one engagement between the coach and the coachee; therefore, there should be a connection between the two parties (Boyce et al., 2010). From the findings, the respondents identified that a coachee must have a chemistry session with the preferred coaches to select the right coach to benefit from the coaching discussions by ensuring that such a coach can address the coachee's individual needs. The findings confirm the literature where Wycherley and Cox (2008) indicated that choosing and matching coaches with coachees is regarded as a vital aspect in the ultimate success of coaching rapport. Similarly, Gehlert, Ressler, Anderson, and Swanson (2013) stated that matching the coach and coachee is the first important step in the coaching process.

From the findings, executives identified various factors that are important when selecting a coach, including the coach's background and experience, credibility, style, trust, and industry understanding. These findings support the literature where Joo (2005) submitted that the coach's educational background is likely to outline the scope and style of coaching. Likewise, Gray et al. (2011) argued that coaches require an understanding of the industry and an awareness of strategy, organisational communication, and corporate principles. The findings further displayed that the coaching style becomes crucial if coachees are dealing with projects requiring specialised skills. Some of the respondents mentioned that they were dealing with specialised projects requiring an international coach's skills. The findings supports the literature where Hermel-Stanescu (2015) stated

that upon choosing a coach, the coachee has to consider the personality preference to build an effective relationship best.

In summary, the findings and literature show similarities regarding the process to follow when choosing a coach. The findings and the literature support the coach's background/experience, coaching style and industry knowledge as important factors to take into account when choosing a coach. It is evident from the findings and literature that the executives do not have much flexibility in choosing a coach where the organisations are funding coaching. Their choice would be limited to the list of three or four coaches received from the HR Talent managers. There was no in-depth follow up question to establish from the participants whether or not the list was adequate. However, the findings confirmed that this process seems to be working well because the executives could find a good fit. As the organisations are responsible for administering the sessions, it might be helpful to engage the executives about why HR Talent thinks such coaches meet the requirement before giving them the list of preferred coaches. This process will assist in eliminating possible comebacks in case the executive was unable to gel with the provided list. A mismatch between the coach and coachee would render the coaching process ineffective.

5.2.4 Sub-theme 4 - Relationship with coach

The findings indicated that the coaching relationship is critical in a coaching process as the process entails the conversation between a coach and a coachee. Failure to build a relationship might render the coaching process ineffective. The findings are in agreement with the literature where Sonesh et al. (2015) highlighted that relationship building becomes crucial in coaching as it adds to the mutual goal-setting and greater commitment in working on a coaching assignment.

The findings further revealed a need for a coachee to have a positive rapport with the coach for the coaching process to be effective. The study showed that a relationship is fulfilling when the coachees can open up and easily talk to their

coaches. All respondents expressed that they only opened up after having trust and confidence in a coach. These findings agree with the literature where it indicated that where a coach-coachee relationship should rest on trust and openness for sustainability (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007). Similarly, developing and nurturing rapport, creating and preserving trust, and motivating commitment are primary processes of a coach-coachee relationship (Boyce et al., 2010; Ely et al., 2010). The coachees could develop trust because of the coaches' perceived expertise and credentials. Likewise, other findings from prior studies submitted that coaches' trustworthiness in their qualifications and skills influences trust (Boyce et al., 2010; Terblanche & Heyns, 2020). According to Toterhi and Recardo (2016), an excellent coach can create rapport and trust with a coachee by engaging in active listening, displaying admiration, and making a safe and comfortable environment for coachees to communicate their concerns to the coach.

The current findings revealed the attributes that a coach should possess to have a good coaching relationship, including openness, honesty, and trust. Most participants placed more emphasis on the coaches' ability to be empathetic, warm and approachable, understanding, and created a safe space to talk. This aligns with the view of Dagley (2010) who established that factors such as empathy and respect, increasing trust, creating rapport, creating safety, and listening skills contributed to the quality of the coaching. The findings further show similarity with the literature where Gray et al. (2011) argued that emotional qualities, such as displaying empathy, listening, motivating, and trust are essential in coaching. The findings further support the literature where the authors argued that trust permits the coachee to be open, truthful, and vulnerable while allowing the coach to be supportive, non-judgemental, and challenging (Boyce et al., 2010; Joo, 2005; Tompkins, 2018).

In summary, the findings and the literature submit that a good coach-coachee relationship is crucial to the success of the coaching process. Based on the literature and findings, trust and rapport between the coach and coachee form the basis of an excellent coaching relationship (Boyce et al., 2010; Ely et al.,

2010, Terblanche & Heyns, 2020). Thus, it is essential that the coaches maintain open communication, protect the coaching sessions' confidentiality, and put this in high regard. When there is a lack of trust and transparency, this might fundamentally affect the quality and effectiveness of the coaching process negatively. The coaches must show empathy by being warm, approachable, and understanding. Such behaviour allows the coachees to feel safe with the coaches and let the coachees open up to the coach, thereby causing the coachees to feel safe, and that would yield a positive coaching experience.

Therefore, as displayed above, the findings support the literature.

5.2.5 Sub-theme 5 – Setting of goals

The findings showed that coaches use various methods to help coachees identify individual goals. Due to the individualised nature of the coaching process, the findings revealed that each coachee brought different goals for discussion to a coaching session. It is interesting to note that coachees' goals were work-specific while others were broader to personal growth. In some instances, some coachees expressed that they attended coaching to learn how to talk to an expert and communicate well with people. Some coachees reportedly needed coaching for career shifts, while others attended coaching to help them transition into new positions. The study showed that all respondents indicated that generally, goal setting offered guidance and focus to the coaching process, and this supports the view of Rogers (2012, p. 109) who submitted that the goal-setting process simplifies what exactly the coachees need and desire to get out of coaching. The literature further revealed that where there is clarity, the coachees are encouraged, and that is when the entire process of change begins (Rogers, 2012).

The findings further displayed that at each coaching session, the coaches re-contracted with coachees to enable the coachees to review coaching goals to track the progress made and identify any changes to the original plans. Similar to the prior study by De Meuse et al. (2009), they highlighted that coaches

confirmed that the coaching session's focus naturally changes throughout an engagement; accordingly, it is essential to continue discussing coaching goals with coachees. According to Lee and Frisch (2015), the word 'contracting' is used to define setting the goals of the engagement. The findings are aligned with the literature where Grover and Furnham (2016) indicated that coaching goals and results vary from meeting to meeting, from individual to individual, and during the coaching appointment. The findings and literature suggested that the goal-setting process is successful when the coaches can help coachees identify their goals and obtain clarity on what they want to gain from the coaching (Stout-Rostron, 2014). Accordingly, coachees would experience no change without clearly defined goals, and identifying actions to achieve these goals (Tompkins, 2018). The analysis of the findings discovered that all the respondents reported that the coachees' goals were perfectly aligned with the organisation goals. These findings are similar to the literature where Pandolfi (2020) argued that where the organisation is funding the executive coaching services, the coaching goals must be connected to the organisational objectives.

In summary, the study confirmed that what is in the literature and the findings are the same. For the effective coaching process, the coaches should have the ability to assist the coachees in clarifying their coaching goals. The coaches are encouraged to use various methods to take the coaching forward, including standard templates, questionnaires, exchange of emails, and one-on-one discussion with the respective coachee to track the goal-setting progress.

The findings therefore support the literature as demonstrated above.

5.2.6 Sub-theme 6 - Assessment process

The analysis of the findings highlighted that the coaches have various methods they use to track the coaching progress. For instance, some coaches have a documented action plan to keep track of progress against it. Other coaches make use of a standard questionnaire for coachees to rate their progress. In

some instances, the coaches request their coachees to evaluate their coaching services in assessing whether the coaches helped them achieve their goals. The analysis of the findings further showed that the coaches prepared a report used to track the progress of each coaching goal, and the coach presented such report at the close-out meeting or quarterly, when the coaching agreement is longer. From the findings, most respondents reported that coaches used the debriefing sessions to provide feedback concerning their goals, and it worked for them.

These findings are aligned with the literature by Rogers (2012) who submitted that the process of coaching starts with an assessment of where the coachee currently stands. In the same way, Stout-Rostron (2014) mentioned that some coaches perform assessments before, during, and after coaching, and might use various assessment instruments such as 360 degrees, interviews, questionnaires, etc. The findings highlighted that the coaches provided honest, unbiased, and constructive feedback to the coachees, and the coachees would be receptive to feedback because of trust in their coaches. These findings confirm the literature by Scoular (2011) who highlighted that coaching relationships offer coachees an opportunity to receive from coaches an unusual form of feedback, namely, honest feedback which is free from the influence of superiority, politics, the past, and expectations.

In summary, the positive response obtained from the respondents regarding the assessment implied that the assessment process was beneficial in terms of tracking coaching progress. Based on the discussion, the findings support literature that recommended that providing feedback to the coachees, amongst others, is one of the foundations in a coaching process (Joo, 2005, Kombarakaran et al., 2008, Albizu *et al*., 2019). Therefore, the literature and the findings of this study suggest that coaches need to perform regular assessments and give continuous feedback to the coachees to ensure that the coaching process remains effective.

5.2.7 Sub-theme 7 – Organisational support

The analysis of the findings showed that the organisation provided support to the executives through the HR Talent department. The findings further revealed that the organisation initiates coaching for its employees and accordingly, funds coaching for its nominated coached executives. The findings confirm the literature by Pandolfi (2020), who supported that the organisational sponsors play an essential role in executive coaching; first, they fund the coaching sessions and have the ability to and interest in navigating the coaching goals closer to the organisational objectives. Furthermore, the findings discovered that coaching is part of the organisation's leadership programme, and this implies that the organisation takes an interest in its leaders' well-being. This is similar to the literature by Athanasopoulou and Dopson (2018), who argued that incorporating coaching into leadership programmes might indicate that the organisation is committed to and supportive of the coachees' development.

Regarding the HR Talent department involvement in the coaching process, the findings highlighted that it provides administrative support, such as arranging the chemistry sessions between the executive and preferred candidate coaches and settling the coaching bills. The findings further revealed that the HR Talent department is responsible for the procurement process, including providing technical evaluation input concerning choosing the organisation's executive coaching service provider/coaches. The findings are similar to the previous literature, which specified that the organisation paying for coaching for its executives is responsible for choosing the external coaches (Carey et al., 2011). The analysis of the findings discovered that most respondents reported minimal and/or no support from their line manager during the coaching process. However, a few respondents highlighted that their line managers were tracking their coaching progress through the Individual Development Plan (IDP) as the coaching is feeding into the IDP. The findings showed that a few respondents identified a need for their line managers' better involvement in the coaching process, and these support the literature by Kombarakaran et al. (2008). The previous literature by Baron and Morin (2010) recommended that supervisor's

support might strengthen the alleged worth of the coaching process and thus inspire the coachees' effort to improve.

The study and the literature submit that all executives had organisational support, namely, the organisation initiated and funded the coaching process. However there was an unexpected finding on the issue around the line management involvement in the coaching process. Most respondents indicated that they preferred the line management not to be involved, whereas the best practice said they should be. These findings are a bit divergent and it is critical that HR Talent should be alert to such issues. It appears that the lack of trust is not only with the line managers but the lack of confidence within the organisation's system and culture of the SOCs. The coaches need to emphasise the confidentiality of the coaching sessions and show alignment between the coachee and the line manager by ensuring that both parties are in the same meeting. In that way, this would promote transparency because the coachee will hear whatever the manager says in the meeting. Therefore, there needs to be a review of this lack of trust within the system itself, not just in the coaching process. It seems like the lack of confidence in the system has permeated the whole operation, including the coaching process. Where there is a low level of trust, the executives will not embrace the coaching process. Boyce *et al* (2010) submitted that the lack of shared trust would reduce the satisfaction level in a coaching contract. Further, Frisch *et al.* (2011) mentioned that where there is joint trust, this would promote transparency and ensures that the organisation is aware of the developmental feedback concerning the coaching process.

5.2.8 Additional insight

From the findings, it is crucial for HR Talent and coachees to have close-out sessions immediately after the coaching process in order to get feedback and evaluate the process. There is a need for the HR Talent department to create a different perception of coaching. In most instances, employees are selected for

coaching due to a perceived deficiency in being able to manage their work, therefore it is important to change perceptions about executive coaching in organisations. Coaching should be perceived to be necessary for all executives, not only for those who have gaps or who are problematic. Such change will motivate more employees to attend coaching.

It is essential to note the challenges of virtual coaching, including network issues and erratic communication, which may negatively affect the coaching process.

Based on the discussion, the overall coaching process was refreshing and satisfying. The process was non-judgmental, confidential, and open, which contributed to effective coaching. Having the right coach whom the executives would trust produces a good coaching relationship. An environment that is safe, supportive, and trustworthy would contribute to a good coaching relationship.

5.3 Discussion pertaining to Proposition 2: Executive coaching will improve the executives' and senior managers' leadership skills

The findings revealed that all the respondents reported positive outcomes of the coaching process; they spoke of personal growth in line with being effective managers, especially when it comes to people management and organisational change management. The findings further submitted that some of the enhanced skills were leadership and interpersonal skills, including communication and active listening skills, which one of the executives who had struggled to introduce a new concept in the organisation, said they helped him manage the whole process effectively. When it comes to conflict management, the findings revealed that most respondents spoke of how they were empowered by the skill of active listening and mindfulness to "think ahead and let things play out without interfering."

This is similar to the literature by Joo (2005) who stated that executive coaching allows the executives to improve leadership expertise alongside interpersonal skills and become increasingly competent in leading teams. This is in line with the literature by Boysen et al. (2018) who stated that coachees articulated various reasons for attending coaching, including managing change, organisational and team improvement, transitions, and on-boarding career management.

Team management and the principle of leading by example could be another major learning area in which coachees are struggling to lead the team. One of the effective skills in enhancing teamwork is conflict resolution. Other coachees may learn to cease micro-management; namely, to give people space, allowing them to get on with their deliverables without interference. The findings further revealed that during the coaching process, the coachees could learn to keep people accountable, for instance, knowing to put boundaries in place so that friendship would not interfere with work deliverables.

A previous study done by De Meuse et al. (2009) submitted that the organisations and coachees should evaluate coaching intervention against the objectives the coaching intended to achieve and use executive coaching to improve their executives' leadership skills.

The findings' analysis reported that all respondents experienced positive leadership outcomes, enhanced self-awareness, accountability, coping mechanisms, listening skills, conflict management, resilient management, and empathy. Furthermore, the respondents said that coaching made them aware of how they affect others around them, adding that they lived what they learned. These findings support the literature by Bozer and Jones (2018) where the findings revealed the coachee's coaching outcomes, including enhanced self-awareness, increased job performance, and improved work affective commitment. Other literature reported outcomes of coaching including skill, improved confidence, better communication skills, and problem solving skills et

cetera (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Grover & Furnham, 2016; Jones et al., 2016; Kombarakaran et al., 2008; Pandolfi, 2020; Theeboom et al., 2014).

Overall, the respondents lauded the executive coaching process as a process that had a positive impact on them, personally, and as managers. They found themselves practicing and applying what they learned long after the coaching process ended. When the coaching process is successful, the coaching relationship is trustworthy, with a good rapport between the coach and coachee. In that case, the coachees will have a positive coaching experience and acquire the desired leadership skills. The study confirmed that what was in the literature and findings are similar. Therefore the sample confirmed that the coaching process, amongst others, led to improved behavioural skills like self-awareness and empathy, making them aware of how they affect others around them, adding that they lived what they learned. Also, the coaching process led to enhanced interpersonal skills, such as active listening. It is fair to conclude that the executive coaching process can impact them positively both personally and as managers. Further, the study confirmed that executive coaching could have a long-term impact on the coachees; for example, the sample reported that they found themselves practicing and applying what they learned even after the coaching process ended.

5.4 Discussion pertaining to Proposition 3: There are vital components that HR Talent consider when designing the executive coaching programme

The HR talent managers who participated in this study gave some insight into the purpose of the coaching programme within the organisation. Furthermore, they shared their experience on the method used for choosing the service providers/external coaches and the criteria of nominating executives and senior managers for coaching. These are outlined below:

5.4.1 Sub-theme 1 – Purpose and sustainability of the programme

Based on the findings, the programme's overall purpose is to enhance the executives' leadership skills and assist individuals moving into new roles within the organisation and those joining the organisation for the first time. Furthermore, the findings noted that the organisation's values and its mandate drive the purpose of embarking on executive coaching.

The findings highlighted a need for the HR Talent department to send executives to coaching in order to align their values to organisational values and live by such values. The findings further reported that whenever changes occur in the organisation, it is crucial to send executives to coaching in order to manage that change effectively. Similar to the literature, the organisation utilises coaching as a vital element of their leadership development programme (Blackman et al., 2016; De Haan & Duckworth, 2013; Gettman, Edinger, & Wouters, 2019). The prior study by Stout-Rostron (2014) mentioned that if the organisation equips leaders with the right training and managerial leadership support, such leaders may rise above the challenging circumstances and will be able to make a giant step from managerial responsibilities to those of a leader. The literature by Longenecker and Yonker (2017) submitted that coaching employees and assisting them in nurturing the necessary skills to respond to the change are essential leadership requirements. Similarly, organisations purchase coaching services mainly for personal development, career advancement, managing change, transitions, and leadership improvement (Van der veen, Reid, & Cunningham, 2020).

The findings articulated the key stakeholders for the coaching services which include the procurement department, the head of Talent management, Exco talent management, the group chief executive (GCE), and People’s management office. According to Van der veen et al. (2020), the vital stakeholders, such as the chief executive officer (CEO) or human resources, generally support the coaching process. The findings support the literature by Pandolfi (2020) who submitted that executive coaching consists of three main

stakeholders making a triangular relationship, namely, the executive (coachee), coach and organisation stakeholders (for example, line manager, HR, and others).

Regarding sustainability, the findings revealed that an organisation needs to allocate more budget for coaching to ensure that more employees attend coaching. Additionally, the findings indicated that the HR Talent department would allow the previously coached executives to go back to coaching whenever changes happen in the organisation. Further, the findings expressed that it is necessary to hold people accountable once they attend coaching to ensure that people do not drop out of coaching because the engagement has cost implications. For instance, one of the reasons highlighted by the findings is either the executives could not find time to attend coaching or did not gel with the coach. Pandolfi (2020) highlighted that the primary reasons for coaching shortfalls or undesirable adverse effects are not allowing executives to attend the coaching sessions, not allocating sufficient budget to coaching, and not allowing learning transfer opportunities.

Therefore, the findings support the literature.

5.4.2 Sub-theme 2 – Selection of service providers/coaches

Based on the findings, the organisations go through a procurement process to tender for the executive coaching services. To ensure that the HR Talent department sources the right coaches for the organisation, the findings submitted that they would first look at the coach’s background and experience as part of the screening. According to the finding, the service providers need to demonstrate through their profiles that they have a suitable calibre of coaches qualified to coach employees at an executive level. Furthermore, it is also crucial that coaches must belong to a recognised coaching body, such as COMENSA. Additionally, the findings highlighted the requirement for coaches to have a national representation, adequate coaching hours, and the coaches'

profiles must include such details. Additionally, the study emphasised that coaches should have an understanding of what the job entails.

Compared to the previous study by Toterhi and Recardo (2016), the HR/L&D is responsible for selecting external coaches relative to the range of criteria and qualifications, experience, methodology, location, fee structure, and area of expertise. Contrary to this study's findings, the HR Talent department is not responsible for looking at the fee structure because that function lies with the procurement department. Compared to the previous study by Leedham (2005), the buyers believed it was essential to choose the right coach, namely, one who would fit into their organisation in terms of knowledge, experience, style and proficiency. Similar to Van der veen et al. (2020) who submitted that when organisations are purchasing coaching services, they give first preference to coaches belonging to professional bodies; however, they also regard credentials and experience as significant.

In conclusion, the findings and literature articulated the agreed selection criteria for the services providers/ coaches include:

- coach’s background and experience,
- accreditation to the recognised professional coaching body,
- adequate coaching hours,
- national representation,
- suitable calibre of coaches, and
- industry knowledge.

Seeing that the selection of the service providers goes through the procurement process, the organisation should ensure the submission of a clear technical scope that meets the business needs to procurement. Any gaps in the scope might render the evaluation process weak, and the organisation would

potentially select the wrong service provider with coaches not meeting the business requirement. Such may negatively impact the effectiveness of coaching.

5.4.3 Sub-theme 3 – Selection criteria for executives/senior managers and chemistry sessions

Based on the analysis of the findings, the executives are identified for coaching through the annual talent conferences where the 360 degrees ratings on the individual leadership competences are considered. In some cases, the study reported that the line manager outside the talent conference may request that an executive be coached. Furthermore, the individuals may identify a need for coaching and thus request that they undergo coaching. Lastly, where there is a need to improve leadership competencies for the relevant executives, such executives would be nominated for coaching. The literature argued that organisations feature individual performance when deciding on who gets to attend coaching. Furthermore, organisations generally choose leaders with high potential, and determine leaders and manager for coaching (Anderson, Frankovelgia, & Hernez-Broome, 2009).

Concerning the matching of coaches and coachees, the study highlighted the HR Talent department provides a list of coaches' profiles to the coachees to choose a preferred coach. To ensure that the process is free from bias, the HR Talent department does not choose coaches for coachees. Similar to the study by Toterhi and Recardo (2016), the HR/L&D affords coachees with contact details of two or three prospective coaches, and the HR/ L&D further informs coachees, emphasising the likely area of focus.

The process is transparent and gives the opportunity to the executives to attend coaching. The findings identified three ways the organisation use to choose executive for coaching including: (a) annual talent conference where the raters would choose the executive based on the 360 degrees leadership

competencies' rating, (b) upon the request of the line manager, and (c) the executive may request to attend coaching.

Based on the findings, due to the regulatory and political nature of the SOCs, the nomination of executives should take place in a talent conference forum which is beyond the requirements in other organisations.This finding is different to the literature as it applies specifically to the SOCs.

5.5 Discussion pertaining to Proposition 4: There is no universal measure of the effectiveness of executive coaching

5.5.1 Sub-theme 1- Expected coaching outcomes

The organisation naturally expects some transformation and improvement in individuals who have gone through the coaching process, their overall character, performance, and how they behave, even while still in the coaching process. Furthermore, the organisation expects them to demonstrate improved management skills, better workplace interpersonal relationships, and enhanced leadership and communication capabilities. Toterhi and Recardo (2016) submitted that the organisation should establish a coaching programme with transparent rules that explain the performance expectations of all those concerned and how it will address the limitations.

5.5.2 Sub-theme 2- Measurement of coaching effectiveness

The findings revealed that the HR Talent department uses various methods to measure the effectiveness of coaching. They place reliance on the expected coaching outcomes as the basis of measuring executive coaching effectiveness. The quarterly reports of the coaching process would provide some insight into what can be expected from coaching outcomes, especially when the individual does not commit to the process. In some instances, the HR Talent department would rely on the coachees' self-reports that they find value in the process such that they would request more sessions. This would be a

sign of a positive outcome. The leadership improvement efforts are assessed based on the perception of success, including the participants' opinions of whether they learned something or consider the leadership programme to have been effective (Boysen et al., 2018; Riggio, 2008). Additionally, the findings showed that the HR Talent department places reliance on the line manager's observation report of the coached individual regarding the change in the individual's performance or behaviour during and post-coaching and report back to the organisation's leaders. Furthermore, the study expressed that the HR Talent department would compare the pre and post 360 degrees rating scored of the coached executives to assess whether there has been a shift in the individual's developmental areas. In some instances, the findings stated that the HR Talent department would notice improved organisational performance in the coached executive's business area. These findings agree with literature which submitted that an organisation use various methods to evaluate coaching effectiveness such as reliance on the coached executive's self-report, line manager's observation that the coached leader has displayed substantial development or is exhibiting the intended leadership behaviour, and post coaching 360 degrees feedback (Leedham, 2005; MacKie, 2007; Riggio, 2008). The recent literature argued that the coachee's self-evaluation could be subject to prejudice in the outcome assessment as the coachee might misinterpret the results or find it necessary to express appreciation to the coach. The author recommended that organisations use a superior evaluation or 360-degree evaluation as it includes the views of colleagues and direct reports (Krupnik & Krupnik, 2020). Above all, the change in behaviour and enhanced performance that the individual demonstrates would prove that the coaching had a positive outcome. Based on findings of the study done by Boysen et al. (2018), coaching outcomes are signs of effective coaching when they fit well with the coaching intervention's purpose and organisation's objectives and values.

Similar to reported trends in literature, measuring executive coaching effectiveness, HR Talent places high reliance on methods such as executives' self-report, line manager's observation report of the coached executive,

quarterly reports, and pre- and post-coaching 360-degree performance score ratings (Leedham, 2005; MacKie, 2007; Riggio, 2008, Boysen et al., 2018, Krupnik & Krupnik, 2020). In addition, HR Talent is currently not using the Kirkpatrick model, as suggested by Mackie (2007), because the sample confirmed that the organisation does not perform an immediate evaluation of organisational coaching effectiveness. The HR Talent should perform continuous monitoring of the coachees and coaches to assess their level of performance.

Furthermore, none of the valuation methods used by HR Talent seems to point to ROI, which brings about a problem when ROI is in question. If this remains the case, then HR Talent might struggle to articulate the ROI of executive coaching in the long term. HR Talent must develop the measurement method that will allow them to provide an accurate measure of executive coaching effectiveness. It is reasonable to conclude that there is still no universal measure of executive coaching effectiveness.

5.6 Chapter Conclusion

This discussion chapter presents an overview of the research findings, gaps, differences, and variations concerning the literature theory and the exclusive benefits of executive coaching in increasing leadership abilities. It also highlights the purpose of the coaching programme and the measurement thereof.

In conclusion, the research questions have been answered as follows:

5.6.1 Research question 1 – What are executives' and senior managers' experiences of the coaching process?

The discussion highlighted various elements of the coaching process which include (i) choosing a coach, (ii) coaching environment, (iii) relationship with a coach, (iv) goal-setting, (v) assessment and feedback, and (vi) organisational

support. The absence of any of these elements might render executive coaching ineffective. The discussion of these elements is included in Chapter 5.2. There was an unexpected finding under the sub-theme organisational support.

5.6.2 Research question 2: How do executives and senior managers describe leadership development as an executive coaching outcome?

Chapter 5.3 presents the leadership skills acquired by the coached executives as a result of executive coaching.

5.6.3 Research question 3: How do HR Talent structure the executive coaching programme?

Chapter 4.3 presents the discussion of research question 3. The findings are supported by three sub-themes (i) purpose and sustainability of the programme, (ii) selection of service providers/coaches, and (iii) selection criteria for executives/senior managers and chemistry session. There was no new finding. The reasons provided are in line with the executives' intended coaching goals. The HR Talent department has a transparent process for selecting service providers/coaches and the executives' nomination, and the executives and senior managers held the same view.

5.6.4 Research question 4 – What do HR talent managers use to measure the effectiveness of executive coaching?

Chapter 5.5 presents a discussion of the findings for research question 4. Two sub-themes emerged, namely, (i) expected coaching outcomes, and (ii) measurement of coaching effectiveness. In summary, the findings discussed various tools the HR Talent department uses to measure executive coaching effectiveness; these various tools such as self-reports, line managers' observations, reviews of 360 degrees scorecards (pre- and post-coaching).

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The study aimed to analyse the executives' and senior managers' views about their executive coaching experiences concerning leadership development in a South African State Owned Company. The study participants were the State Owned Company's executives and senior managers who previously experienced executive coaching. This study addressed four research questions:

Question 1: What are executives' and senior manager's experiencies of the coaching process?

Question 2: How do executives and senior managers describe leadership development as an executive coaching outcome?

Question 3: How do HR Talent Structure the executive coaching program?

Question 4: What do HR Talent managers use to measure the effectiveness of executive coaching?

The conceptual framework of the study was built on transformational learning theory which was first introduced by Mezirow who stated that humans make senses of their lives through their experiences (Gray, 2006). Furthermore, transformational learning theory is centred on the constructivist viewpoint in that individuals use their lived experiences to generate new meaning (Cox, 2015; Merriam et al., 2007). Both arguments are essential to this study because the research focused on participants' insights and understandings on the effect of executive coaching's on leadership enhancement, especially how they interpreted those experiences and their description of the leadership skills as an outcome of coaching. Regarding the conclusion, the study re-visits the six components of transformative learning theory that includes experience, critical reflection, dialogue, holistic orientation, awareness of the context, and authentic relationship, and Chapter 2 discussed these elements in detail. Where

applicable, the research questions' conclusions take some of the transformation theory's elements into account.

Furthermore, this study's analysis explored the HR Talent managers' perception attempting to interpret the measurement of executive coaching effectiveness concerning the meaning conveyed by the respondents.

This chapter aims to present a summary of each research question followed by recommendations. The chapter later outlines the limitations of the study and presents suggestions for future research.

6.2 Conclusions regarding research question 1

The first research question is as follows: what are executives' and senior managers' experiences of the coaching process?

The findings and analysis of the study have been defined in the previous chapters. The results of the findings showed the following:

- The coaching process impacted the executives and senior managers positively, most importantly in the areas of increased confidence, self-awareness and mindfulness.

- The findings further highlighted that the process was non-judgemental and trustworthy. It allowed the executives and senior managers to open up and addressed a wide range of concerns, which in turn, provided them with the opportunity for self-reflection and improvement.

- It was notable from the findings that the respondents' coaching experience did not only have a bearing on them as leaders in the workplace but also as leaders in their personal lives outside of the office.

- The study also identified those elements which were key to the effectiveness of the coaching process. It would appear from the findings that the elements

discussed below have a considerable significance in the success or failure of the coaching process:

1. **Choosing a coach –** the findings emphasised the importance of selecting the right coach. This study suggest that coaches need to possess the knowledge of the coachees' industry, and be affiliated to a recognised coaching body like COMENSA. Further, the study mentioned the coach's background and experience and coaching style as the executives' criteria use when choosing their preferred coaches. Additionally, the findings identified that conducting a chemistry session between the coach and coachee is critical in ensuring a good match. The study's findings suggest that a suitable matching between the coach and coachee has a positive effect on the coaching relationship, which contributes positively to the success of the coaching process. The literature is clear that choosing a coach and matching are key elements that might enhance the coaching relationship (Gehlert et al., 2013; Joo, 2005; Wycherley & Cox, 2008).

2. **Relationship with coach** –The present study found that the coaches' capability to form the coaching alliance through their ability to create trust, commitment and rapport, was essential for the coaching process's success (for instance through creating a non-judgemental and safe relationship (Gray et al., 2011)). The study by Gan and Chong (2015) determined that rapport and commitment contributed to coaching effectiveness Furthermore, the study highlighted the executives' perceived coach's characteristics that led to a good coaching relationship, including: open and trustworthy, active listening, warm and approachable, experienced and understanding, and empathetic coach. In co-creating a relationship, the ICF competency framework requires a coach to establish trust and become intimate with the coachee. Trust becomes crucial in coaching to allow the coachee to receive constructive feedback from the coach. In addition, the study submitted that confidentiality and a coach who goes beyond the call of duty (namely,

extending to the coachee's personal life) contributed to the coachees' perception of trust and rapport with coachees. Furthermore, the framework requires a coach to possess good communication skills (namely, active listening, powerful questioning and direct communication). The ICF regards this competency as the ability to create an environment that is safe, supportive and produces ongoing mutual respect and trust (International Coaching Federation, 2017). This statement aligns to one of the components of the transformation learning theory where it stated that the coaching relationship must be open and focused (Sammut, 2014). Therefore, the current study confirms that the presence of the coaching relationship is key in the success of the coaching process, and this has already established by previous studies (Boyce et al., 2010; de Haan et al., 2011; de Haan, Grant, Burger, & Eriksson, 2016; Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007; Stout-Rostron, 2014).

3. **Coaching environment** - from the discussion, both physical and emotional environments were essential to ensure coaching effectiveness. In summary, the study revealed the coaches' ability to create a flexible environment for executives' coaching sessions. The study suggests that when coaches hold coaching sessions in various locations, preferably outside the workplace and in a relaxed place, it encourages the coachees' freedom and promotes openness. Additionally, the study supports the current literature which submitted that the coaching process afford the executives with time and opportunity to take part in the coach's discussions in a safe and intimate environment (International Coaching Federation, 2017; Sammut, 2014). This open communication provides a podium for executives to discuss a wide range of issues without fear that the coach would disclose their problems elsewhere.

4. **Setting goals** – The study displayed that the coaching goals change from sessions to sessions and they are individual and specific. This has already been confirmed in the previous literature (Grover & Furnham, 2016). Most of the participants reported experiencing a self-reflection

process which helped them to clarify their various goals. The findings found that during the goal setting, the coach facilitated the discussions through questioning techniques (Sammut, 2014). Based on the findings, the coaching process effectively helped the executives attain their intended individual goals, such as personal development, managing conflict, managing change, and transition and on-boarding new roles. The findings submitted that there was remarkable evidence of alignment between the executives' personal and organisational goals, and the literature has already established this point (Frisch et al., 2011; Toterhi & Recardo, 2016).

5. **Assessment and feedback –** the current study showed that the executives and senior managers identified feedback as vital in a coaching process. The findings expressed that most participants identified trust as a crucial element required in the feedback sessions Therefore, if there is the lack of trust, feedback will not work. Bozer et al. (2014a) emphasised the coach's trustworthiness being the prerequisite for coaching effectiveness. The findings further revealed that most respondents appreciated constant and regular feedback as it improves coachees' awareness, and provides clear direction to both the coach and coachee regarding the coachee's developmental plan. The findings stated coaching becomes effective where coaches utilise multi-source feedback. For example, most participants reported that their coaches would sometimes request them to complete the questionnaire, reports, and complete a standard template (i.e. for tracking progress) to evaluate their performance, and this fact has been determined by de Haan and Gannon (2016). Therefore, the findings for the current study are in agreement with the ICF competency framework which requires coachees to provide feedback on the coaching progress and the coach to up-date the progress plan in relation to the progress (International Coaching Federation, 2017).

6. **Organisational support –** the study sees the organisational support for executive coaching as positive in all circumstances, where such support comprises the entity's funding and the initiation of the coaching engagements. However, this study further submits that the extent of such support seems to be adequate regarding the organisation's support required by the executives. The literature by McKenna and Davis (2009) argued that the executives' interaction with the coach could offer adequate support during the coaching process to drive effective coaching outcomes; over such engagement, it will be practical for the coach to explain the assisting and obstructing forces in the executives' organisation. In summary, it would be reasonable to say that most executives and senior managers had received support from the organisation in the form of funding and the fact that the organisation nominated them to attend such coaching. Accordingly, support from line managers and the HR Talent department appeared to have minimal impact on the executive's and senior managers' perceived effectiveness of the coaching process. However, the study revealed that some executives are open to their line managers' participation to determine goals based on the developmental areas and reviewing progress collectively.

6.3 Conclusions regarding research question 2

The second research question is expressed as follows: How do executives and senior managers describe leadership development as an executive coaching outcome?

The findings showed that coaching process was effective and the outcome was transformational, as it improved various leadership and management skills, amongst others, leading by example, coping mechanisms, listening skills, and interpersonal skills. Other executives stated that their experience of the coaching process was holistic in that it improved the way they talk to others and

positively affects their daily lives (MacIntyre, 2020; Sammut, 2014). Most executives in the study reported that coaching helped them to manage themselves and others better. Therefore, the findings support the current literature that submits that the coachees acquired leadership skills, including increased awareness, empathy, mindfulness, accountability, and active listening as coaching outcomes. Accordingly, the findings maintain that the outcome of coaching is transformational learning (Fazel, 2013). Accordingly, the study's analysis of executive coaching's impact, particularly on leadership skills, suggests that executives' skills effectively improved due to coaching. The literature has already recognised the effect of coaching on the leadership development (Gehlert et al., 2013; Joo, 2005; Trevillion, 2018).

6.4 Conclusions regarding research question 3

The third question is stated as follows: How does the HR Talent structure the executive coaching programme?

The findings presented that the organisation has a successful executive coaching programme because it has a formal structure and is linked to the organisation’s values and mandate. Further, the study confirms the organisation's intention for sending its executives for coaching, including leadership development, managing change, assisting executives transitioning and on-boarding new roles. The previous literature has established this fact (Longenecker & Yonker, 2017; Van der veen et al., 2020).

The findings highlighted the importance of the proper screening of the service providers/coaches by the HR practitioners in ensuring that the organisation brings in the right and credible coaches to coach its executives. They use selection criteria such as proof of accreditation to a recognised coaching body, adequate coaching hours, evidence that the service provider has coaches located nationally, background and experience of coaches, and industry knowledge. The study reported that the HR Talent department is mainly responsible for screening the executive coaches and not choosing coaches for

executives. The previous literature has acknowledged this fact (Stout-Rostron, 2014).

The study additionally showed the nomination of the executives for coaching is linked to their individual development plan (IDP) and in some instances, to the leadership development programme, therefore, the process is transparent. The findings are in agreement with the outcome of various studies (MacIntyre, 2020; Toterhi & Recardo, 2016; Underhill, McAnally, & Koriath, 2007), except for the key difference concerning the use of the Talent conference forum by the SOCs to nominate the executives for coaching. As the talent conference forum stands out as a crucial platform used by SOCs to select executives, the researcher proposes that this is an essential element of facilitating the executive coaching programme.

6.5 Conclusions regarding research question 4

The fourth question is articulated as follows: What do HR Talent managers use to measure the effectiveness of executive coaching?

From the findings, the organisational various expected outcomes and the leadership skills outcomes achieved by the coached executives indicated that coaching was effective. Moreover, all the executives submitted that their personal and organisational goals were perfectly aligned. The findings agreed with the results as determined in the study by Boysen et al. (2018).

The findings from the study revealed HR practitioners may apply various methods in measuring executive coaching effectiveness. These methods include reliance on reports of coached executive's self-praise, line manager's observation to substantiate executives' reports and pre/post-coaching 360 degrees feedback to measure executive coaching effectiveness. This finding supports previous literature (Hannah, Avolio, Luthans, & Harms, 2008; Packard & Jones, 2015). The findings of this study regard the inclusion of the pre/post coaching 360 degrees feedback as more useful.

To the contrary, most executives identified weakness in the coaching process assessment from the organisational perspective. Some executives revealed that there has never been form of feedback given to the HR Talent department or their line managers concerning their coaching process experience after completing the coaching. The organisation needs to get feedback from its executives attending or have completed coaching to confirm the value of money received from executive coaching services. This study further touched on different evaluation models and methods obtained in the existing literature that may offer some direction to the HR practioners in advancing their understanding in terms of measuring the executive coaching outcomes. For example, the literature suggested that HR practioners, and coaches may use the Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick model to evaluate executive coaching outcome. According to Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006), the model comprises four levels of evaluating training outcomes which are explained below:

Level one- this level allows the coachees to share their feelings concerning the coaching process,

Level two – this is where the coachees reflect on their learnings,

Level three – assessment of coachees' behavioural changes as a result of coaching, and

Level four – this level focuses on the measurement of coaching outcomes.

The literature highlighted that the model would work well where the users have pre-coaching results in place (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006; Krupnik & Krupnik, 2020). The Kirkpatrick model could help HR practitioners monitor executive coaching effectiveness, mainly to minimise the number of executives dropping out from the process prematurely and use the model as a tracking tool.

6.6 Recommendations and/or Practical and Theoretical Implications

- **Other SOCs in South Africa** that are already running the executive coaching programme and those wishing to start the programme may profit from understanding the essential elements contributing to the coaching process's effectiveness and leadership coaching outcomes.

- **The HR practioners** intending to start the coaching programmes may benefit from the study in terms of understanding the purpose, and the items to take into account in sustaining the programme.

- **Organisational support –** the study revealed that though some executives do not see the need for the line manager's support during the coaching process, others were firmly in agreement with it and felt that it would be empowering if the line managers are part of the process. The study recommends that organisations looking to improve their executive coaching programmes' effectiveness must strive to incorporate a well-defined structure that will address the line managers' involvement and support of the coaching outcomes. It might be ideal for the HR practictioners to incorporate as part of orientation a request to executives to indicate in a questionnaire their preferred choice regarding the involvement of the line managers.

- **Evaluation of executive coaching effectiveness** – the study identified a weakness in the coaching process due to perceived lack of immediate assessment by the HR Talent department. The findings further highlighted that the HR Talent department has experienced a few instances where they were made aware that an executive had stopped attending coaching without reporting to them after the coaching process. The study recommends that the HR practitioners should consider incorporating a monitoring plan into the programme. The plan will prevent the HR practitioners waiting until the end of the process while giving support and encouragement when required. The HR practitioners should consider designing questionnaires to be completed by the coach and coachee to evaluate each other's progress during the

coaching engagement (Kombarakaran et al., 2008; Krupnik & Krupnik, 2020). Therefore, the study recommends that HR Talent establish the evaluation method to provide a correct measure of executive coaching effectiveness

- **Matching** – even though the study concluded that the chemistry sessions were successful, other executives suggested that further HR practitioner's involvement in assisting the executives in finding a good match might be necessary. The study recommends that HR practitioners should consider providing workshops and/or brainstorming sessions around the choices of coaches, and this should happen prior to chemistry sessions. Suppose the HR practitioners do not have the capacity or resources to enhance the chemistry sessions, they should consider bringing in a skilled person who could facilitate the matching sessions by ensuring that the executives' coaching needs match the coach's skills.

- **Inspire people to attend coaching** – the findings established that some executives perceived coaching as a tool to correct deficiencies, so some executives view it as a policing tool. This study recommends that organisations conduct awareness workshops to educate their employees about executive coaching and its intended benefits. HR practitioners should consider including some of the coached executives to participate in the workshop to share their coaching process experience with other employees. The change in approach might enhance the willingness and shift in those executives' mindset who view coaching negatively.

6.7 Suggestions for further research

The following suggestions are made for future research:

(i) The study is limited to coached executives and senior managers, and HR Talent managers in an SOC in South Africa. Further studies could

include coaches to obtain their perspective of coaching effectiveness within a SOC in South Africa.

(ii) The participants in the study was limited to executives and senior managers who are graded as Levels A to C. Future research could replicate the study with participants from middle to junior management (namely, Level D and E managers).

(iii) The current study did not explore how factors such as age, gender and race of the coach contribute to the coaching outcomes. Future study is required to determine if these factors are important when matching the coach and executives and their impact on the coaching process.

(iv) The characteristics of coachees contributing to the coaching process effectiveness could be investigated further.

(v) The study identified matching as crucial to coaching effectiveness. Future research could investigate attributes to be taken into account to ensure a good fit between coach and coachee.

6.8 Summary to research questions

It is evident from the study that the overall coaching process, as experienced by the coachees, was non-judgemental, reflective and resulted in the improvement of leadership skills. The elements, including (1) choosing a coach, (2) relationship with coach, (3) coach environment, (4) setting goals, (5) assessment, and (6) organisational support, were crucial to the success of the coaching process. Furthermore, coaches should demonstrate absolute confidentiality to the coachees and coachees to be entirely open to the coaches for the coaching process to be effective. In doing so, the effective process resulted in improving leadership skills. Figure 6.1 provides a summary of the combination of the executives' coaching process experiences, and the leadership skills experienced by the executives after receiving coaching.

Therefore, figure 6.1 represents a final outlook of the answers to the research questions one and two of the study. Figure 6.2 represents a final outlook of the answers to the research questions three and four of the study.

Figure 2: Essential elements of the coaching process and leadership development outcomes

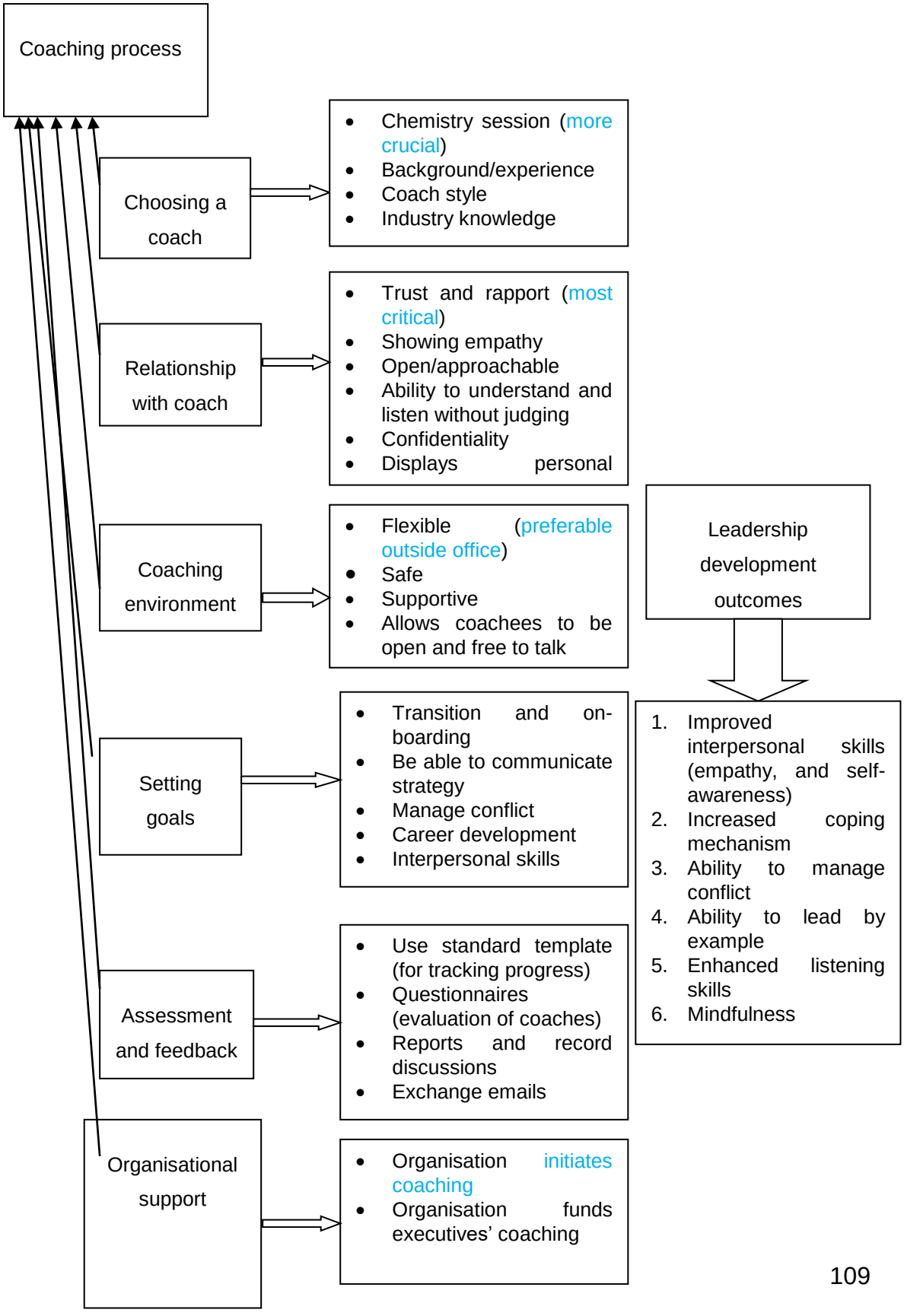
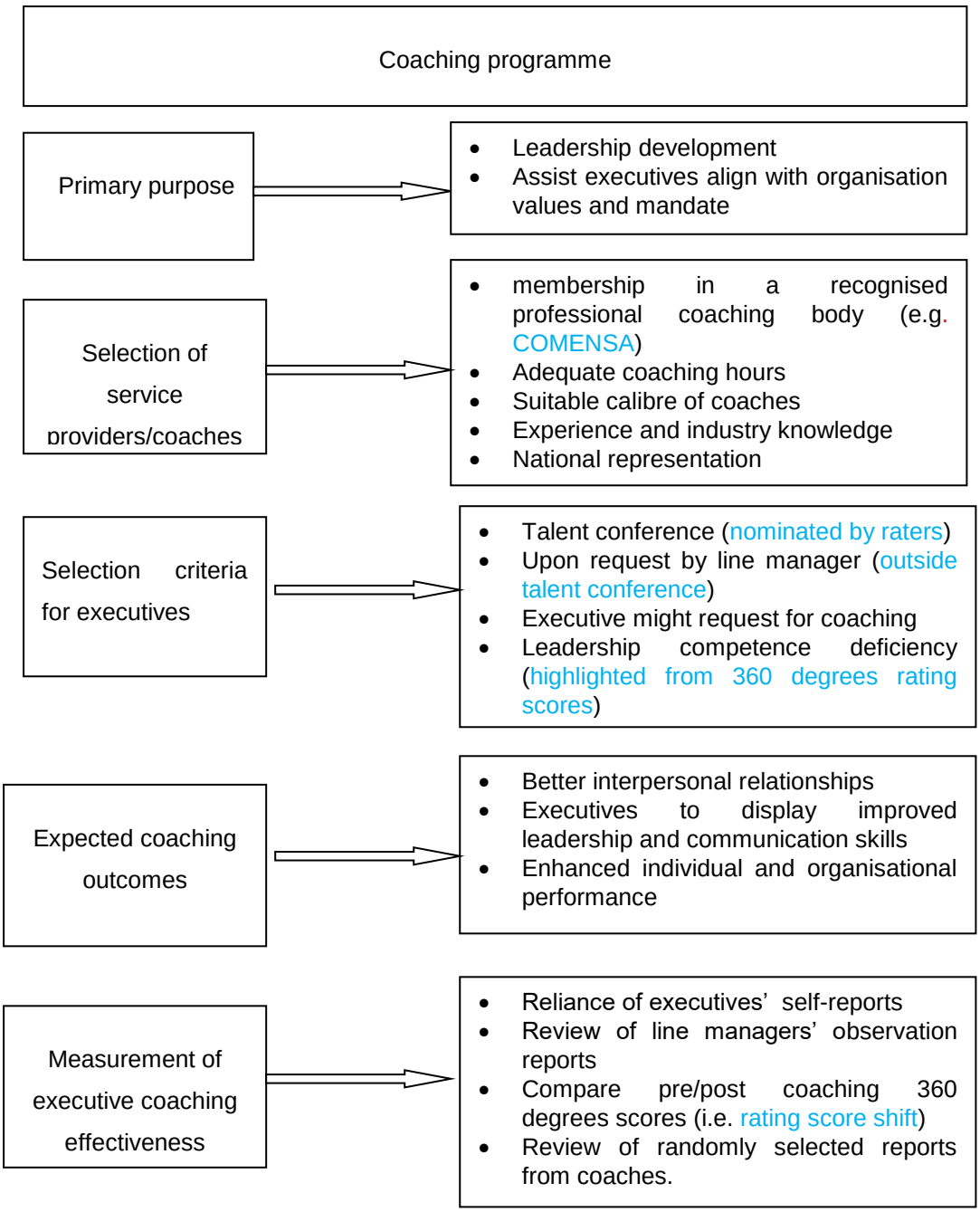


Figure 3: Purpose of the coaching program, and measurement of executive coaching effectiveness



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APPENDIX A – CONSENT FORM

Dear Respondent

My name is Nonhlanhla Khanyile. I am conducting research for the purpose of completing my Master in Management in Business and Executive Coaching (MMBEC) at WITS Business School.

The purpose of this study is to explore the effectiveness of executive coaching on leadership development in a State Owned Company in South Africa. With your participation in the research, I hope to learn more about leadership development as an outcome of executive coaching.

I invite you to participate in an interview. The interview will take approximately an hour, at a time and venue convenient for you. I request permission to record the interview discussion. Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to ask any question or discontinue at any point in time.

Your anonymity will be protected. The records from your participation may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that the research is done properly, including my academic supervisor/s. (All of these people are required to keep your identity confidential). I will keep all the interview information in a safe storage, and this will be destroyed after completion and marking of my research report.

The research have been approved by the WITS Business School. If you have any queries about the research, or would like a copy of the results, please contact the Research Office Manager at WITS Business School, Jennifer Mgolodela. Jennifer.mgolodela@wits.ac.za.

Kind regards

Nonhlanhla Khanyile

Consent to Participate

I……. have read and understood the information provided, and any questions I asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this study, understand that I may withdraw without prejudice at any time. I understand that the information which I provided is confidential and anonymous, and will only be used in the findings of the research.

Signed……

Date…….

APPENDIX B – INTERVIEW GUIDES – ACTUAL RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Executives and senior managers

1. How would you describe your experience of the coaching process?
2. Was your participation in the coaching process initiated by you or the organisation?
3. Did you set goals in your coaching session?
    - If so, how did you go about setting those goals?
    - How did you go about measuring the achievement of your goals?
    - How close were the coaching goals aligned with your own career goals?
4. How would you describe your relationship with your coach?
    - What were the key aspects of this relationship for you?
    - How did this relationship contribute to your overall coaching experience?
    - Did you have a feedback and assessment process during coaching?
    - If so, how did you experience the feedback and assessment process with your coach?
5. What support did you receive from the organisation?
    - How involved was your General Manager and/or HR in discussing the coaching progress and its outcomes?
    - What would you like to see in terms of support?
6. How has executive coaching impacted your leadership development?
    - How would you describe your leadership skills after receiving coaching?
    - Which specific leadership skills have you developed during the coaching process?
    - Do you feel that these skills have enhanced your effectiveness as a leader in the organisation?
7. Do you have any other insight and or suggestions on what the organisation/HR can do differently to improve the coaching process?
8. Is there anything else that you would like to share that I have not already asked you?

HR talent managers

1. What is the primary purpose for Transnet embarking on the executive coaching programme?
    - What is involved in the process of developing an executive coaching programme?
    - Who are the key stakeholders in the coaching programme?
2. How would you describe your experience in the selection of executive coaches?
    - What considerations does the HR Talent department make when selecting executive coaching suppliers/coaches?
    - What are the key elements that influence the selection of the external coaching suppliers/ coaches?
3. How were the executives / senior managers identified for executive coaching?
4. How were the coaches allocated to the executives and senior managers?
    - How important is coach-coachee matching?
5. What support did HR Talent give to the executives/senior managers during the coaching process?
6. What are expected outcomes of executive coaching?
7. How do HR Talent measure the effectiveness of executive coaching in relation to:
    - The leadership development of the individuals?; and
    - The organisational performance?
8. How would you describe the overall coaching outcomes for the coached individuals and for the organisation?
9. What does HR Talent do to sustain the leadership behaviour for the coached executives?
10. Is there anything else concerning the effectiveness of executive coaching in the organisation that you would like to add?

APPENDIX C – CODE MANAGER - Atlas.ti8

Code Manager		
	Code groups (Themes)	Codes
1	Coaching process experience	all round coaching
		based in Cape Town
		building empathy
		challenges with technology
		coach talking to wife
		coach used framing
		coaching environment
		coaching is a life long journey
		conduct yourself differently
		creates safe space to talk
		creates self-awareness
		emailing reading tasks
		eye opener/surprise
		gives you more confidence
		hampered communication
		interesting experience
		looked forward to sessions
		makes you over correct
		makes you reflect on self
		non-judgemental process
		painful exercise/ process
		re-contract at each session
		refreshing experience

2	Choosing a coach	able to be open with coach
		able to meet in person
		absolute confidentiality
		chose coach within organisation
		coach background/experience
		coach from outside SA
		coaching approach|style
		expose myself to coach
		feel safe with my secrets
		list of profiles to choose from
		older white person
		trust in coach
		understanding my industry
3	Relationship with coach	allowed me to be vulnerable
		beneficial rapport
		coach went an extra mile
		creates safe space to talk
		easier to communicate with him
		experience|understanding|empathy
		he took interest in my work
		kept me accountable
		listener|warm|approachable
		locked into his networks
		looked forward to sessions
		older than me
		ongoing relationship with coach
		open|honest|trust relationship
		pillar of strength
		sessions at golf course
		understanding my industry

		unique|added value
		we complimented each other
		wife had no suspicions
4	setting of goals	accountability
		broader goal
		career path|shift guidance
		challenge with leadership skills
		challenges with technology
		continuously measured
		dealing with complex situations
		focus on communication skills
		introducing a new concept
		keeping people accountable
		line manager input
		manage specialists in their field
		manage through others
		managing organisational change
		more satisfying
		perfect match with career|personal goals
		personal development areas
		running meetings
		set of milestones to achieve
		template for goals
		tone down control perceptions
		transitioning into new role

5	Assessment process	action plans
		be receptive to feedback
		check allocated time schedule
		debriefing sessions
		end of session questionnaire
		feedback received positively
		feedback sessions
		feedback with line manager
		missed assessment by teams
		prep sessions for difficult meetings
		quarterly reviews
		ratings with criteria
		re- contract at each session
		record of discussions
		signed contract for progress tracking
		written reports by coach
6	Organisational support	additional sessions request
		coachee must be willing
		coaching feeding into IDP
		did not see it necessary
		feedback with line manager
		GC talent process
		growth|career development
		had no Idea about coaching
		HR do admin outside coaching content
		HR manages procurement process
		HR only provide infrastructure
		HR set the ball in motion
		I would like to be part of the journey

		I would like to get update from direct report
		initiated by organisation
		missed assessment by teams
		no need to involve line manager
		process was taken seriously
		tried to get line manager involved
		understanding people's different needs
		weakness in the process
7	enhanced leadership skills	able to communicate the strategy
		able to stay within myself
		active listening
		aware of impact on others
		becomes part of you
		being vulnerable in a good way
		building empathy
		coaching ability
		creates self-awareness
		gave me coping mechanism
		give people space|ownership
		improved|sharpened leadership
		interpersonal skills
		keeping people accountable
		leading by example
		learned conflict management
		let things play out
		listening skills
		manage through others
		people|team management

		problem solving skills
		put boundaries in place
		resilience management
		running meetings
		think ahead of the process
		tuned into people wrongly placed
		you become mindful
		you live it
8	purpose and sustainability of programme	developing the executives
		exco talent conference
		finding value in coaching
		involvement of procurement|other ODs
		key stakeholders
		leadership competencies
		line manager|employee request
		more budget into coaching
		need to hold people accountable
		organisational values and mandate
		other courses are provided
		people go back to programme
		people go back when organisational
		changes occur
		people stop sessions for other reasons
		programme development process
		to enhance leadership skills
		transitioning into new role

9	selection of service providers|coaches	chemistry sessions
		coach background|experience
		coaching body with national reach
		coaching hours|experience similar to coachee
		individuals ensure they have right coach
		list of profiles to choose from
		more budget into coaching
		procurement tender process
		suitable calibre of coaches
		understanding job requirements
10	measuring coaching effectiveness	accounts of personal growth
		expect better engagement|coping mechanism
		expects enhanced performance outcome
		expects improved intra|inter-relations
		finding value in coaching
		improved performance
		job satisfaction and change in behaviour
		line manager observations
		organisational performance
		review quarterly reports for individual outcomes
		review shift in the 360 degrees score
		review shift on developmental areas

11	recommendations|suggestions to HR	close out the process
		coach coachee connection critical compulsory
		do immediate evaluation
		encourage staff to go
		explore different types of coaching
		forced to go
		formal agreement
		formalise the process
		good base for culture change
		help with choosing a coach
		internal coaches|mentors
		make coaching attractive to naysayers
		make time available for coaching
		more budget into coaching
		More people should become coaches to get more value
		must be integral part of doing business
		provide refresher for coaching
		return on investment
		share cost with individuals
		some people don't believe in coaching
		start at the bottom

APPENDIX D – SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes	Study Proposition
Coaching process experience	Overall coaching experience	• non-judgemental process, • coaching is a life long journey, • gives you more confidence, • creates self-awareness,	P1: The executives will share their experiences of components of the coaching process
	Reflecting back to the sessions	• painful exercise/process, • makes you reflect on self, • you conduct yourself differently, • eye opener/surprise, • interesting experience, • makes you over-correct, • gave insights into blind spots, • gives practical advice, • refreshing experience, • rewarding/positive experience, • able to open up with coach, • absolute confidentiality, • expose myself with coach, • feel safe with my secrets, and • trust in coach	
	Coaching environment	• coaching environment, • creates safe space to talk,	

		• had unbiased view of me, • time to quiet your mind, • virtual experience, • emailing reading tasks, • challenges with technology, • hampered communication • looked forward to sessions	
	Choosing a coach	• able to be open with coach, • able to meet in person, • absolute confidentiality, • chose coach within organisation, • coach background/experience, • coach from outside SA, coaching, • approach|style, • expose myself to coach, • feel safe with my secrets, • list of profiles to choose from, • older white person, trust in coach, • understanding my industry	
	Setting of goals	• line manager input, • accountability, • broader goal, • career path shift guidance, • challenge with leadership skills, • dealing with complex situations,	

		• focus on communication skills, • introducing a new concept, • keeping people accountable, • manage specialists in their field, • manage through others, • managing organisational change, • people/team management, • personal development areas, • running meetings, • set of milestones to achieve, • tone down control perceptions, • transitioning into new role, • template for goals, • perfect match with career|personal goals	
	Assessment process	• ratings with criteria, • overcoming milestones, action plans, • check allocated time schedule, • end of session questionnaire, • feedback sessions, quarterly reviews/reports, • re- contract at each session, record of discussions, • signed contract for progress tracking, • written reports by coach	

	Relationship with coach	• allowed me to be vulnerable, • beneficial rapport, • coach went an extra mile, • creates safe space to talk, • easier to communicate with him, • he took interest in my work, • kept me accountable, • experience|understanding|empathylistener|warm|approachable, • locked into his networks, looked forward to sessions, • older than me, ongoing relationship with coach, • open|honest|trust relationship, • pillar of strength, sessions at golf course, • understanding my industry, • unique|added value, we complemented each other, • wife had no suspicions	
	Coaching approach/style	• all-round coaching, • coach talking to my wife, talk with line, • manager/team, • coach used framing, • structured process, • record of discussions, • prep session for difficult session,	

		• debriefing sessions	
	Organisational support	• coachee must be willing, • coaching feeding into IDP, • did not see it necessary, growth|careerdevelopment, • feedback with line manager, • had no Idea about coaching, • HR do admin outside coaching content, • HR manages procurement process, • HR only provide infrastructure, • HR set the ball in motion, • I would like to be part of the journey, • initiated by organisation, • missed assessment by teams, • no need to involve line manager, • process was taken seriously, • tried to get line manager involved, • understanding people's different needs, • weakness in the process, • additional sessions request	
Enhanced leadership skills		• able to communicate the strategy, • able to stay within myself, • active listening, aware of impact on others,	P2: Executive coaching will improve the executives' and senior managers' leadership skills

		• becomes part of you, being vulnerable in a good way, • building empathy, coaching ability, • creates self-awareness, • gave me coping mechanism, • give people space|ownership, • improved|sharpened leadership, • interpersonal skills, • keeping people accountable, • leading by example, • learned conflict management, • let things play out, • listening skills, • manage through others, • people|team management, • problem solving skills, • put boundaries in place, • resilience management, running meetings, • you become mindful, • you live it, • accountability	
Primary purpose of the programme	Purpose and sustainability of programme	• developing the executives, • to enhance leadership skills, • transitioning into a new role, • organisational changes occur,	P3: There are vital components that HR Talent considers when designing the executive coaching programme

		• organisational values and mandate, • finding value in coaching, • involvement of procurement|other ODs, • key stakeholders, • more budget into coaching, • need to hold people accountable, • other courses are provided, • people go back to programme, • people go back when people stop sessions for other reasons, • programme development process,	
	Selection of executives/senior managers	• exco talent conference, • line manager|employee request, • programme development process, • Talent conference, • leadership competencies, • GC talent process,	
	Selection of service providers|coaches	• coach background|experience, • coaching body with national reach, • coaching hours|experience similar to coachee, • more budget into coaching, • procurement tender process, • suitable calibre of	

		coaches, • understanding job requirements	
	Chemistry sessions	• help with choosing a coach, • list of profiles to choose from, • coach/coachee connection critical, • individuals ensure that they have right coach	
Measuring coaching effectiveness	Expected coaching outcomes	• expect better engagement/coping mechanism, • expect enhanced performance outcome, • expect improved intra/inter-relations	P4: There is no universal measure of the effectiveness of executive coaching.
	Measurement of coaching effectiveness	• accounts of personal growth, • finding value in coaching, • improved performance, job satisfaction and change in behaviour, • line manager observations, • organisational performance, • review quarterly reports for individual outcomes, • review shift in the 360 degrees score, • review shift on developmental areas.	
Additional insight	Suggestions/recommendations to HR	• close out the process, • coach coachee connection critical compulsory, • do immediate evaluation, • encourage staff to go,	

		• explore different types of coaching, • forced to go, formal agreement, • formalise the process, good base for culture change, • help with choosing a coach, • internal coaches|mentors, • make coaching attractive to naysayers, • make time available for coaching, • more budget into coaching, • More people should become coaches to get more value, • must be integral part of doing business, • provide refresher for coaching, return on investment, • some people do not believe in coaching, • start at the bottom	

APPENDIX E – ETHICS APPROVAL NOTIFICATION

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE **PROTOCOL NUMBER: WBS/BA1885749/356**

PROJECT TITLE The effectiveness of executive coaching in enhancing leadership development in a State-Owned Enterprise in South Africa

INVESTIGATOR	Ms Nonhlanhla Khanyile
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR	MM (Business & Executive Coaching)
DATE CONSIDERED	12 June 2020
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
RISK LEVEL	MINIMAL RISK
EXPIRY DATE	28 FEBRUARY 2021

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE 26 June 2020 **CHAIRPERSON** _____
(Dr MDJ Matshabaphala)

cc: Supervisor: Mrs Hlatshwayo

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

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

_____ 29 June 2020
Signature **Date**

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

APPENDIX F – PERMISSION LETTER FROM ORGANISATION



TRANSNET

7 August 2020
264 Pine Avenue
2 FernCourt
Ferndale
Randburg

nonhlanhla.khanyile@transnet.net

Dear Ms Nonhlanhla Khanyile

Re: Request for permission to conduct research at Transnet SOC Ltd

Your email of request for permission to conduct research at Transnet on "The effectiveness of executive coaching in enhancing leadership development in a State Owned Enterprise in South Africa" is acknowledged.

We duly note the conditions of the study for strict academic purposes, the results of the study will be submitted to Transnet, and the research will be confidential and that anonymity for both respondents and the organisation is guaranteed. Should you or WITS University want to publish the study in any other manner than the final assignment, Transnet will be approached for permission to do so.

Based on the above conditions, your request to conduct the research study in Transnet is granted. We are looking forward to the outcomes and recommendations of your study and the positive contributions towards the marketing strategy of Transnet.

Yours sincerely,

Ms Ogotlhe Sathekge
General Manager: Talent & Transformation
Date: 07/08/2020

Transnet SOC Ltd
Registration Number
1990/000900/30

2nd Floor
Waterfall Business Estate
9 Country Estate Drive
MIDRAND
1662

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www.transnet.net

Directors: Dr PS Molefe (Chairperson) PPJ Derby* (Group Chief Executive) LN Fikelepi ME Letlape DC Matshoga Adv OM Motaung Dr FS Mufamadi AP Ramatlakana GT Ramphaka LL von Zeuner MD Gregg-Macdonald* (Acting Group Chief Financial Officer)
*Executive

Acting Group Company Secretary: K Naicker

APPENDIX G – PROOF OF TITLE APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG

Private Bag 3 Wits, 2050
Fax: 0270865535224
Tel: 02711 7173582

Reference: Ms Jennifer Mgolodela
E-mail: jennifer.mgolodela@wits.ac.za

24 May 2020
Person No: 1885749
PAG

Miss NM Khanyile
P O Box 3709
Randburg
2125
South Africa

Dear Miss Nonhlanhla Khanyile

Master of Management: Approval of Title

We have pleasure in advising that your proposal entitled *The effectiveness of executive coaching in enhancing leadership development in a State Owned Enterprise in South Africa* has been approved. Please note that any amendments to this title have to be endorsed by the Faculty's higher degrees committee and formally approved.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Marike Bosman
Faculty Registrar
Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management

Appendix H – CONSISTENCY MATRIX

Research objective stated here							
Objectives	**Literature Review**	**Propositions**	**Research questions**	**Variables(Independent & Dependent)**	**Source of data**	**Type of data**	**A**
The study aimed to investigate how the executives and senior managers experienced the executive coaching process within an SOC in South Africa	Smither *et al*. (2003) Joo (2005) Ellis et al. (2010) Gregory *et al*. (2011) Rogers (2012) Gallimore *et al*. (2014) ICF (2017)	The executives and senior managers shared their experiences of components of the coaching process	What are executives' and senior managers' experiences of the coaching process?	N/A	Semi-structured interviews	Transcribed data	T a a A c s a t d
The study aimed Identify how executive coaching improved the leadership skills of the executives and senior managers;	Mackie (2007) Kombarakaran et al. (2008) Gehlert et al. (2013) Athanasopoulou & Dopson (2018) Van der veen et al. (2020)	Executive coaching improved the executives' and senior managers' leadership skills.	How do executives and senior managers describe leadership development as an executive coaching outcome?	N/A	Semi-structured interviews	Transcribed data	T a a A c s a t d
The study aimed to articulate the essential components considered by HR Talent when designing the executive coaching programme; and	Feldman & Lankau (2005) Stout-Rostron (2014) Toterhi &Recardo (2016) Passmore et al (2017) Van der veen et al. (2020)	There are vital components that HR Talent considers when designing the executive research programme.	How do HR Talent structure the executive coaching programme?	N/A	Semi-structured interviews	Transcribed data	T a a A c s a t d

The study aimed to Investigate HR talent's measurement of the effectiveness of executive coaching.	Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick (2006) Mackie (2007) Riggio (2008) Grant (2012) Terblanche *et al*. (2019)	There is no universal measure of the effectiveness of executive coaching.	What do HR talent managers use to measure the effectiveness of executive coaching?	N/A	Semi-structured interviews	Transcribed data	T a a A c s a t d