

Exploring the influence of mentorship on  
the career development of black  
executives: The mentees' perspective

22957376

A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business  
Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

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## **Declaration**

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

Student: **22957376**

Date: **1 November 2023**

## **Abstract**

This study explored the influence of mentorship on the career development of black executives in South Africa. The study aimed to explore how mentoring relationships influenced the career progression of black executives. In summary, the research objectives were, firstly, to identify how mentorship influenced the career development of black executives. Secondly, to understand how mentored black executives perform and navigate organisational culture, and thirdly, to identify and understand the qualities of effective mentors according to black executives in South Africa.

To answer these questions, a narrative inquiry qualitative research study was conducted. The study data was collected from 13 participants through semi-structured open-ended interview questions.

The study identified specific ways mentorship contributed to the advancement of black executives in their careers. Firstly, through advancing black executives' personal growth and leadership development. Secondly, through strategic career planning and networking, and thirdly, through enabling mentees with effective communication and leadership engagement abilities. Career development and mentorship fields are advanced by revealing insights into how mentorship impacted black executives. Future black leaders can use this study's findings to advance their career development through mentorship. Organisations in South Africa can leverage the findings of this study to drive the much-needed implementation of mentorship programs for their black middle managers. Furthermore, the study outlined the qualities of an effective mentor for black executives in South Africa. This should assist organisations in pairing mentors to mentees to ensure effective and successful mentoring relationships.

## **Keywords**

Black executives, Career development, Mentorship

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## List of Acronyms

DEL	Department of Employment and Labour
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
EE	Employment Equity
EAP	Economically Active Population
B-BBEE	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment

# **Chapter 1 Introduction to the Research Problem**

## **1.1 Introduction**

This research aims to explore ways in which mentorship has assisted black executives with their career progression. Despite South Africa having transitioned into a democracy, evidence continues to show that many organisations have struggled to representatively place black professionals in top-level positions (Department of Employment and Labour [DEL], 2022). Some scholars have suggested a lack of mentorship for black professionals as one of the contributing factors to this challenge (Iheduru-Anderson & Shingles, 2023). To this end, understanding the specific ways mentorship influenced the career advancement of black professionals would assist organisations as well as future black leaders in crafting fit-for-purpose interventions that will help drive black professionals into top leadership positions.

This research aims to explore how mentorship has influenced the career advancement of black executives in South Africa. The researcher explored the lived experiences of black mentees to gain insights into their perceptions of how mentorship played a role in advancing their careers. This study, therefore, provides insights into best practices for promoting black professionals into top-level positions through mentoring relationships.

This chapter provides an introduction to this study by first discussing the background and context, followed by the study's theoretical relevance and business rationale, and finally, the study's purpose statement and key objectives.

## **1.2 Background of the Study**

Although efforts have been made to address historical inequalities and promote diversity and inclusion, the underrepresentation of black executives within corporate leadership positions continues to be an issue, with only 17% African representation

in 2021 vs 63% White representation (DEL, 2022). The lack of black executives in top management hinders the country's progress towards promoting inclusive growth, as a supportive corporate environment is crucial in promoting inclusive growth (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2016). In South Africa, previously disadvantaged groups can access leadership positions through policies such as Employment Equity (EE) (Mayer et al., 2019). Although these efforts have been made, black executives remain underrepresented in top management positions (DEL, 2022).

Research suggests that mentorship is one of the most effective ways to facilitate career advancement and address this disparity (Bagdadli & Gianecchini 2019). However, there is limited research exploring how mentorship affects the career development of black executives in a uniquely South African context. Therefore, this research explores how mentorship played a role in the career progression of black professionals in a country where, historically, racial inequality has been a problem (Francis & Webster, 2019) and black executives continue to be underrepresented. Through exploring how mentorship influenced the career advancement of black executives, the researcher aims to address this gap in the literature and challenge in the corporate workplace.

### **1.3 Theoretical Relevance of the Study**

This study aims to address the research gap by investigating the influence of mentorship on the career development of black executives in South Africa. It has been widely recognised that mentoring provides guidance, support, and access to networks and resources to enhance career satisfaction (Forster & Hill, 2019). However, the dynamics of mentorship and its impact on the unique experiences and challenges black executives face in South Africa are relatively unexplored. This research problem arises from the need to understand the role and effectiveness of mentorship programs in promoting the career development of black executives within the South African corporate environment. Using the design of a narrative inquiry, the study identifies specific ways in which mentorship contributed to the advancement of black executives in their careers by examining the experiences, perceptions, and outcomes associated with mentorship as experienced by black executives.

This study provides valuable insights into the impact mentorship has had on the career development of black executives in South Africa. By revealing insights into how mentorship impacted the career development of black executives, the fields of career development and mentorship will be advanced.

Furthermore, this study adds further insights to the body of knowledge on transformational leadership theory. One of the four components of transformational leadership theory is *individualised consideration* (Waham et al., 2020). Individualised consideration refers to the ability of leaders to act as mentors (Waham et al., 2020). Through exploring mentorship from the perspective of mentees (black executives), this study shares insights into how black executives experienced mentorship. The researcher aims to build on the transformational leadership theory component of individualised considerations by sharing how mentees (black executives) were transformed into valuable resources for better performance as well as the impact on their leadership skills as a result of the mentoring relationships.

## **1.4 Business Relevance of the Study**

According to the 22nd Commission for Employment Equity annual report, black executives are underrepresented in major corporations in South Africa. In 2021, only 17% of the African Economically Active Population (EAP) occupied top management positions despite Africans accounting for more than 80% of South Africa's EAP (DEL, 2022). This raises a question – what needs to be done to assist skilled black individuals to advance their careers and enhance their opportunities of occupying top management or executive positions?

Research has found that organisations that understand and manage diversity at the leadership level can improve the performance and effectiveness of the organisation (Mazibuko & Govender, 2017). This is because, through diversity management, organisations can appreciate, innovate, and be creative to address diverse markets successfully (Mazibuko & Govender, 2017). As South Africa has a diverse population, improving the representation of black executives will benefit the business. Furthermore, a study by Hunt et al. (2015) found diverse leadership teams to be associated with better financial performance. In the South African context, diverse

leadership teams result in improvement in creativity and innovation and better financial prospects for organisations (Fourie, 2018). Furthermore, organisations with diverse leadership composition have higher Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) scores as management composition is one of the five criteria that is considered in the B-BBEE rating (Vilakazi & Bosiu, 2021)

According to Bagdadli and Gianecchini (2019), mentorship as an organisational career management practice can influence the career success of individuals through developmental career and social capital theories. The researcher aims to explore the influence of mentorship on the career development of black executives.

## **1.5 Purpose Statement**

Through this research on exploring the influence of mentorship on the career development of black executives in South Africa, the researcher aims to identify and evaluate how mentoring relationships have influenced the career progression of black executives. In successfully doing so, the researcher aims to encourage future black leaders to leverage mentorship as a career development and personal growth tool. The researcher aims to assist organisations with addressing the business challenge of a few black leaders in top-level management positions.

This research work seeks to add valuable insights into how mentorship impacts the career development of black executives in a uniquely South African context. Knowledge generated can benefit organisations, government agencies, and other stakeholders interested in promoting diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunities for black executives.

## **1.6 Research Objectives**

This explorative research aimed to gain an understanding of how mentorship influenced the career development of black executives in South Africa.

In summary, the research objectives were:

- To identify how mentorship influenced the career development of black executives.
- To understand how mentored black executives perform and navigate organisational culture.
- According to black executives in South Africa, identify and understand the qualities of effective mentors.

## **1.7 Scope of the Research**

The scope of this research includes black executives of South African companies across various industries. The participants were based in Gauteng province, South Africa.

The study was limited to black executives who have had a mentor or mentors at some point in their careers. In the context of this study, black executives refer to black African leaders occupying top-level positions in a South African organisation. The definition of this study population group thus aligns with the DEL on population group classifications.

## **1.8 Chapter Summary**

This research aims to investigate the impact of mentorship on the career progression of black executives in South Africa, a country where racial inequality remains a significant issue. Despite transitioning into a democracy, many organisations struggle to place black professionals in top-level positions, with a lack of mentorship being a contributing factor. Understanding the specific ways mentorship influenced the career advancement of black professionals would help organisations and future black leaders create tailored interventions to drive black professionals into top leadership positions.

The study explores the lived experiences of black mentees to gain insights into their perceptions of how mentorship played a role in advancing their careers. The research



provides insights into best practices for promoting black professionals into top-level positions through mentoring relationships.

The theoretical relevance of the study is that this research aims to address the research gap by investigating the influence of mentorship on the career development of black executives in South Africa. It also contributes to the body of knowledge on transformational leadership theory by exploring how mentees (black executives) experienced mentorship and how it transformed them into valuable resources for better performance and leadership skills.

The 22nd Commission for Employment Equity annual report highlights the underrepresentation of black executives in major corporations in South Africa. In 2021, only 17% of the African EAP occupied top management positions. This highlights the need for strategies to assist skilled black individuals in advancing their careers and enhancing their opportunities in top management positions. Research shows that diverse leadership teams can improve organisational performance and effectiveness, leading to better financial performance and creativity. In South Africa, diverse leadership composition results in higher B-BBEE scores.

This research aims to explore the influence of mentorship on the career development of black executives in South Africa, aiming to identify and evaluate how mentoring relationships have influenced their career progression. The research aims to help organisations address the business challenges of a few black leaders in top-level management positions and contribute to promoting diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunities for black executives.

## **1.9 Outline of the Study**

In exploring the influence of mentorship on the career development of black executives, the researcher structured the document as follows:

- In **Chapter One**, the context of this study has been introduced. An introduction to this study was outlined by first discussing the background and context, followed by the study's theoretical relevance and business rationale.

Finally, the study's purpose statement, key objectives, and scope have also been discussed.

- In **Chapter Two**, the existing literature was reviewed. This chapter sheds light on the state of academic literature in relation to the research topic.
- In **Chapter Three**, the research objectives are outlined in the form of research questions to be investigated.
- **Chapter Four** outlines the research methodology, covering research design, philosophy, methodological choice, limitations, sampling, data collection methods and analysis.
- In **Chapter Five**, the findings/results of this research are presented according to each research question highlighted in Chapter 3
- In **Chapter Six**, the findings/results presented in Chapter 5 are discussed and compared with the literature review outlined in Chapter 2.
- In **Chapter Seven**, the researcher summarises the findings and presents a conclusion and recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter 2      Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Chapter 1 of this document outlines this study's background and context, theoretical, and business relevance comprehensively. This chapter aims to build on that by offering an overview of the current state of play regarding mentorship and career development literature. Chapter 2 discusses the main constructs of this study as follows: firstly, mentorship will be discussed. Secondly, career development will be discussed, and finally, the attributes of effective mentors will be discussed.

Mentorship has been recognised as a useful tool in influencing career development (Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021). Researchers have studied mentorship in terms of its power to strengthen women in leadership roles (Turner-Moffatt, 2019), various forms of mentorships such as formal, informal, leadership development programs, succession planning, and internal mentoring programs (Steele, 2016) as well as the motives, relationships dynamics, and outcomes of mentoring (Scheepers & Mahlangu, 2022).

Mentorship has been found to assist mentees with employee productivity, leadership skills and organisational culture (Stewart & Harrison, 2016). In his study on the factors contributing to the lack of top-level positions for black professionals, Myres (2013) identified 'access to mentors' as one of the factors contributing to this challenge. However, there has been relatively little literature published on the impact of mentorship on the career development of black executives in the context of South Africa. This study builds on the existing literature by contributing towards closing this gap.

### **2.2 Barriers to Career Progression of Black Managers**

Detailed examination of barriers to career progression of black managers by Mayiya et al. (2019) showed that there are several factors that contribute to the barriers that

black African middle managers face in seeking promotion, including "a lack of exposure to senior management duties, a lack of support from colleagues, existing ownership structures, as well as biased performance appraisal systems" (Mayiya et al., 2019, p. 144). Other studies, such as the one by Spaul (2013), have always emphasised the lack of access to quality education as the reason for black managers' lack of career progression in South Africa. On the other hand, other studies, such as the one by Myers (2013), identified 'access to mentors' as one of the factors contributing to black managers' lack of career progression. This view was supported by Cross et al. (2019), who argued that lack of or inadequate mentoring resulted in limited career development opportunities (Cross et al., 2019). These studies suggest that the issue of mentorship continues to grow in importance and relevance. As such, there is merit in looking at it from the perspectives of black executives' lived experiences in the context of South Africa.

## **2.3 Definition of Mentorship**

Mentorship relationship is a way for a more experienced or knowledgeable person (mentor) to assist a less experienced or knowledgeable individual (mentee) in achieving the goals they have set for themselves in their personal or professional life by providing guidance, support, and feedback (Burgess et al., 2018). This relationship is characterised by mutual trust, respect and open communication and is often viewed as a key mechanism for promoting career success, personal growth, and wellbeing (Jefford et al., 2021).

## **2.4 Formal and Informal Mentorship**

Mentorship between a mentor and mentee can happen in different setups, including formal and informal setups (Mohtady et al., 2019). Recent research has explored the characteristics and outcomes of mentorship relationships in these different settings.

In formal mentorship programs, mentorship is typically structured and administered by the organisation. For example, a study by Fowler et al. (2021) found that formal mentorship programs were associated with higher levels of job satisfaction and

career commitment among employees. The authors suggest that formal programs may provide employees with clear expectations and resources for mentorship, leading to more effective mentorship relationships and the willingness to stay longer within the organisation (Fowler et al., 2021).

In contrast, informal mentorship relationships are typically initiated and maintained by the mentee or by informal networks within the organisation (Mohtady et al., 2019). This form of mentorship can be very beneficial for mentees' job performance as they can ask questions and gain knowledge that is directly relevant to their job duties and past experiences (Stewart & Harrison, 2016).

It is worth noting that the effectiveness of mentorship relationships may also depend on a variety of factors beyond the formal or informal setting. For example, a study by Estrada et al. (2018) found that the quality of the mentorship relationship was a key factor in predicting outcomes, regardless of whether the mentorship was formal or informal. The literature suggests that formal and informal mentorship relationships can effectively advance career success. However, the effectiveness of these relationships may depend on factors such as the quality of the mentorship relationship and the specific needs and goals of the mentees.

## **2.5 Recent Theories on Mentorship**

Recent research on mentorship has led to the development of new theories and models that have enhanced our understanding of mentorship. Below are some of the recent theories on mentorship.

### **2.5.1 Relational Mentoring**

A key component of this model is the importance of building strong, mutually beneficial relationships between mentors and mentees. Relational mentoring involves more than just sharing knowledge and advice; it involves building trust, providing emotional support, and creating a sense of community between the mentor and mentee (Ragins, 2016). Relational mentoring can lead to positive outcomes for

both mentors and mentees, including increased job satisfaction, career success, and personal growth (Ragins, 2016).

### **2.5.2 Protégé Proactivity**

According to this theory, mentees who seek and use their mentors' guidance and advice are more likely to benefit from mentorship. Furthermore, research has found that protege proactivity is positively correlated with career success and job satisfaction and that mentor support was crucial in fostering protege proactivity (Hu et al., 2008).

### **2.5.3 Critical Mentoring**

This model emphasises the role of mentorship in promoting social justice and equity. Critical mentoring involves challenging the status quo and working to address systemic inequalities and injustices (Weiston, 2015). The importance of diversity, inclusion, and representation within corporate leadership positions has grown in recent years (Lutchman et al., 2020). Although there has been some progress in addressing historical inequalities in South Africa, there are still significant barriers for black executives seeking to advance their careers (OECD, 2016). Critical mentoring may provide a focused solution that addresses this challenge.

An investigation into the influence of mentorship on the career development of black executives can be conducted using critical mentoring theory as a primary lens. Through this theoretical framework, organisations can gain insights into how mentorship programs can encourage inclusivity, be equitable, and be effective in assisting black executives to advance into top-level positions in their careers.

## **2.6 Benefits of Mentorship**

In their study on career satisfaction and advancement, Costa and Smith (2023) alluded to their participants acknowledging that their career growths were hugely

impacted by mentors who assisted with the task of exploring their career opportunities. This is further supported by Chang et al. (2022), who concluded that mentoring programs have resulted in career planning benefits across various industries for mentees. Mentorship continues to play a key role in enabling mentees to make great career choices, leveraging the advice and experiences of their mentors (Shuler et al., 2021). This is unsurprising as mentors are expected to assist mentees with much-needed self-reflection and support that will clear any blockages that may prevent them from achieving their professional goals (Robinson et al., 2017).

An individual's professional development is enhanced greatly as a result of the knowledge, skills, and experience of a mentor that comes into play during the career planning process (Gurnani et al., 2022). Developing a career plan and advancing professionally has been made easier through mentoring (Cross et al., 2019).

Existing research frequently attributes the leadership development of mentees to successful mentorship relationships (Costa & Smith, 2023). It has been suggested that Mentoring helps high-potential leaders grow and develop, contributing to the organisation's bottom line (Engelhardt et al., 2023). The study of nurse leader mentorship by Vitale (2018) asserts that participants enhanced their leadership skills through mentorship, which resulted in both personal and professional growth.

This view is supported by Robinson et al. (2017), who argue that the mentorship process is a vital ingredient in instilling transformational leadership. According to Cross et al. (2017), Mentoring relationships were key to women's leadership development as they enhanced their confidence, assertiveness, and ability to tackle work challenges.

Prior studies have found that mentorship assists mentees with expanding their circle of network by exposing them to other colleagues and/or peers that mentees would otherwise not be able to have access to (Shuler et al., 2021). The findings of Rosser et al. (2023) showcase that participants involved in mentorship programs benefited, among other things, through their enhanced ability and readiness to network with both peers and those in higher positions. According to Engelhardt et al. (2023), one of the key benefits of being mentored is the ability to build a network of guides, advisers, and supporters. This view is supported by Robinson et al. (2017), who asserted that by leveraging the mentor's own network, the mentee can bolster their own network.

According to Deris et al. (2021), one of the benefits of mentoring relationships is the encouragement, support, and motivation of mentees to improve their communication skills. The guidance and encouragement of an experienced mentor can assist mentees in achieving more than they otherwise could (Deris et al., 2021). This is further supported by Engelhardt et al. (2023), who asserted that learning to conduct meetings and to deal with difficult clients and colleagues with tact. Respect is no easy feat, but with the help of a seasoned mentor, they can be made a lot easier.

Mentorship has been recognised as an important tool for promoting employee productivity and facilitating the successful navigation of organisational culture (Stewart & Harrison, 2016). Recent research has explored the impact mentorship has on productivity and job satisfaction. In their study on mentorship in the health profession, Henry-Noel et al. (2019) found that mentors provided guidance and support, which assisted mentees with increased success through enhanced productivity and job satisfaction. This view is supported in the study by Chang et al. (2022), who found that mentoring programs have benefited both mentees and the organisation through improvement in job performance. One of the participants in a study by Costa and Smith (2023) alluded to improved performance attributable to mentorship as a result of enhanced career satisfaction. Engelhardt et al. (2023) have stressed the importance of learning from someone more experienced, regardless of the profession one is in. When one has a mentor, one can draw on both one's own and the mentor's experience. This can help avoid potential pitfalls (Engelhardt et al., 2023).

Mentors and their mentoring role models tend to share similar business characteristics, opinions, and corporate behaviours. Mentors strive to establish themselves as role models in order to promote ethical behaviour (Robinson et al., 2017). According to Ekron et al. (2023), one of the responsibilities of mentors was assisting mentees with character-building and mental wellbeing. This view was supported in a study by Rosser et al. (2023), who asserted that mentoring programs offer a variety of benefits, such as the elimination of traditional assumptions and prejudices. They also assist mentees in understanding their own cultures and practices and the improvement of core values (Rosser et al., 2023). Mentorship relationships assist mentees in building relationships, feeling safe, and feeling welcomed, enabling them to establish connections which assist them in navigating the organisational culture (Costa & Smith, 2023).



## **2.7 Definition of Career Development**

Career development is the process of acquiring new skills, experiences, and roles over the course of a career, as well as adapting to changes in work environments and expectations (Niati et al., 2021). Research suggests that developing one's career can result in increased job satisfaction, motivation, engagement, and better financial outcomes (Wickramaratne, 2020). Investing in career development can lead to improved performance, retention, innovation, and employer branding for organisations (Sheraz et al., 2019).

## **2.8 Theories on Career Development**

In the past few decades, research on career advancement has led to the development of new theories and models that have helped us gain a deeper understanding of the factors that affect career advancement in the workplace.

### **2.8.1 Protean Career Theory**

According to this theory, individuals are, to a large extent, responsible for managing their careers and adapting to changing work environments (Hall & Doiron, 2018). This theory is mainly driven by a focus on self-direction, ongoing learning, and the quest for personal fulfilment (Hall & Doiron, 2018).

### **2.8.2 Career Boundarylessness**

This career development model emphasises the significance of breaking down traditional career boundaries and exploring a range of work experiences (Guan et al., 2019). Studies assert that one can transcend career boundaries by developing a broad range of skills and experiences, seeking new challenges, and embracing career transitions. Furthermore, individuals with a boundaryless career orientation are more likely to experience career success and adaptability (Guan et al., 2019).

### **2.8.3 Career Crafting**

According to this theory, individuals can shape their careers by seeking out opportunities and tailoring their job roles to align with their values, strengths, and interests (De Vos et al., 2019). In order to craft a career, one must identify meaningful work, pursue developmental opportunities, and cultivate supportive networks (De Vos et al., 2019).

### **2.8.4 Social Cognitive Career Theory**

A key element of this model is the importance of social factors, such as self-efficacy and social support, in shaping career development and success (Lent & Brown, 2019). In this career development theory, people with strong social support networks and who believe in their ability to succeed are more likely to achieve their career goals (Lent & Brown, 2019).

## **2.9 Relationship Between Mentorship and Career Development**

Mentorship has been recognised as an important part of career development as it provides individuals with guidance, support, and advancement opportunities (Forster & Hill, 2019). Mentees reported that they were more successful at obtaining promotions and were more satisfied with their jobs. In addition, they felt greater self-assurance than those without mentors (Burgess et al., 2018).

Another way mentorship has had an impact on career development is through enabling career satisfaction and engagement (Goodyear & Goodyear, 2018). Other researchers suggest that mentorship may assist individuals in developing a sense of belonging and purpose in their work, which in turn can contribute to positive outcomes such as career progression (Dey et al., 2021).

In another study, Wu et al. (2019) assert that in order for mentorship relationships to effectively impact career development, a number of factors must be considered,

including the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship, the alignment of mentorship goals with individual needs, and the organisational context.

Recent work demonstrated that mentorship programs were perceived to be the ideal tools for enhancing the skills of participants, enhancing their career prospects, and helping them to feel satisfied with their work environment, and all these have aided mentees' career development prospects (Malicay, 2023). This argument is similar to the one by Pollard et al. (2021), who asserted that several mentorship programs (regardless of form) have reported career development successes over and above personal satisfaction.

Findings from several studies have detailed examination of mentorship's impact on career development and showed that mentorship has the potential to positively influence career development. However, this relationship is under-studied in the context of South African black executives. This research sheds light on a gap by exploring black executives' lived experiences and perceptions on the influence of mentoring relationships on their career trajectories.

## **2.10 Attributes of Effective Mentors**

Prior studies have found that the characteristic of a mentor goes a long way in impacting the quality of mentorship relationships (Deng & Turner, 2023). Deng and Turner (2023) further asserted that individual characteristics such as personality traits and the experience of the mentor affect the mentoring relationship. This view is supported by Ekron et al. (2023), who demonstrated that characteristics such as good people skills, trustworthiness and honesty are key for an effective mentorship relationship. On the other hand, Cross et al. (2019) stressed the importance of mentor availability, adding that mentors should be willing and have time to respond to mentees needs (Cross et al., 2019). Other scholars, such as Robinson et al. (2017), alluded to the importance of listening skills in making mentoring relationships successful. Furthermore, they argue that to be effective, a mentoring relationship requires a commitment to the relationship by both mentor and mentee (Robinson et al., 2017).

To ensure a commitment to mentoring relationships, scholars such as Shuler et al. (2021) suggested that contracts or memorandum of understanding should be in place for mentoring relationships. These contracts should contain guidance on how both parties should conduct themselves, i.e., willingness to listen, to be open, and to be respectful and support each other (Shuler et al., 2021). According to Chang et al. (2022), mentoring programs require a great deal of time. As such, organisations should recognise that by providing protected time when appropriate, doing so will enhance the commitment of both parties. Steelman et al. (2023) cautioned that as a result of their core values, mentors can also pose obstacles to successful mentoring relationships.

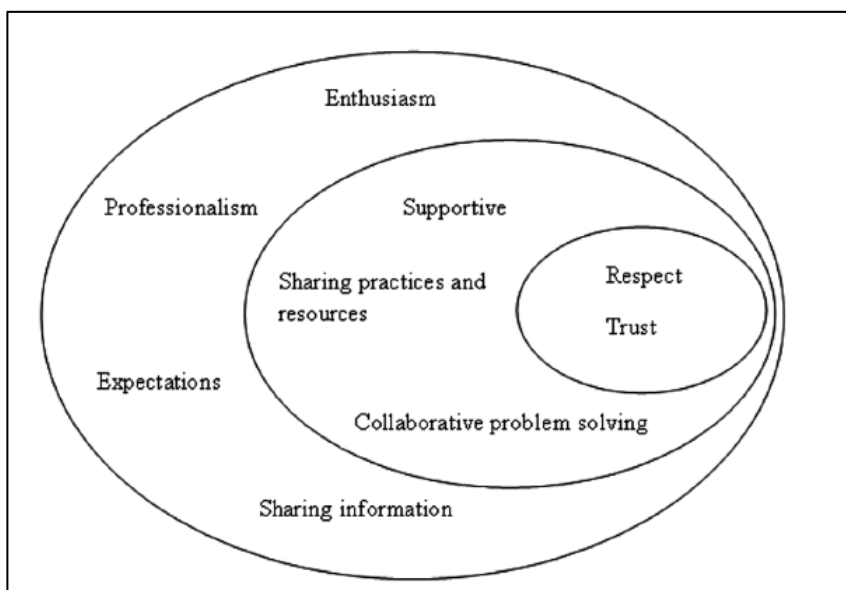
## 2.11 Pellegrin's Four Bad Mentors

Other scholars, such as Steelman et al. (2023), have suggested that some mentors' personal traits are not suitable for effective mentoring relationships. Becoming a great mentor takes patience, hard work, and practice, just as any worthwhile endeavour would require (Steeleman et al., 2023). This view has long been shared by Pellegrin (2006). Pellegrin (2006) alluded to the following four types of bad mentors that mentees should seek to avoid.

- **The uncommitted phony** – These mentors are often distracted, appear insincere and are not honest in dealing with mentees.
- **The perfectionist-turned-tyrant** – Mentees may first consider them an ideal match. However, they will soon expect perfection and consistently raise expectations to near-impossible levels. This mentoring relationship will quickly become strained.

- **The insecure egocentric** – This mentoring relationship becomes predominantly about the mentor and, as such, will fail to accomplish the desired goals of the mentee.
- **The begrudger** – This mentor is extremely proud of their work and is very self-righteous. Mentors like these tend to provide their mentees with fragmented and unhelpful information about their work

Other studies, such as the one by Hudson and Hudson (2018), emphasised the reciprocity of the mentoring relationship between a mentor and a mentee to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the relationship. Their work resulted in a grounded theory model, which basically shows fundamental ways a mentor can help in creating and sustaining this key relationship. When mentors and mentees work together in order to build positive mentoring relationships, both will benefit from it (Hudson & Hudson, 2018). In order for a mentoring relationship to be successful, there is a need to trust each other and share values and norms such as the ones reflected in Figure 2.1, which shows the Hudson and Hudson grounded theory model.



**Figure 2.1: Forming and sustaining the mentor-mentee relationship**

Source: (Hudson & Hudson, 2018, p. 17).

## 2.12 Chapter Summary

This study aims to provide an overview of the current state of play regarding mentorship and career development literature, focusing on the impact of mentorship on the career development of black executives in South Africa. Mentorship is recognised as a valuable tool in influencing career development, with various forms of mentorships, such as formal and informal leadership development programs, succession planning, and internal mentoring programs. It has been found to assist mentees with employee productivity, leadership skills, and organisational culture.

Barriers to the career progression of black managers include “lack of exposure to senior management duties, lack of support from colleagues, existing ownership structures, and biased performance appraisal systems” (Mayiya et al., 2019, p. 144). Access to mentors is also identified as a factor contributing to this challenge.

Mentorship can occur in formal and informal settings, with formal programs typically structured and administered by the organisation. In contrast, informal relationships are initiated and maintained by the mentee or by informal networks within the organisation. The effectiveness of these relationships may depend on factors beyond the formal or informal setting, such as the quality of the mentorship relationship and the specific needs and goals of the mentees.

Recent theories on mentorship include relational mentoring, protégé proactivity, and critical mentoring. Relational mentoring emphasises building strong, mutually beneficial relationships between mentors and mentees, leading to positive outcomes such as increased job satisfaction, career success, and personal growth. Protégé proactivity is positively correlated with career success and job satisfaction, and mentor support is crucial in fostering it. Critical mentoring, which challenges the status quo and addresses systemic inequalities, may provide a focused solution for black executives seeking to advance their careers. This study contributes to the understanding of mentorship and career development in South Africa, highlighting the importance of mentorship in promoting career success and personal growth.

Mentorship is crucial in strategic career planning, leadership development, networking, effective communication, productivity, organisational culture, and character-building. Research has shown that mentors assist mentees in exploring their career opportunities, making tremendous career choices, and leveraging the

advice and experiences of their mentors. This self-reflection and support help clear any blockages that may prevent mentees from achieving their professional goals.

Mentorship also contributes to leadership development, as it helps high-potential leaders grow and develop, contributing to the organisation's bottom line. Mentoring relationships are critical to women's leadership development, as they enhance their confidence, assertiveness, and ability to tackle work challenges.

Mentorship also helps mentees expand their network circle by exposing them to other colleagues and peers that they would otherwise not have access to. This leads to an enhanced ability and readiness to network with both peers and those in higher positions. Mentorship also impacts practical communication skills, as experienced mentors can encourage, support, and motivate mentees to improve their communication skills. This can help mentees achieve more than they otherwise could.

Mentorship also impacts organisational culture, as mentors and their role models share similar business characteristics, opinions, and corporate behaviours. Mentors aim to establish themselves as role models to promote ethical behaviour and assist mentees with character-building and mental wellbeing.

Career development is the process of acquiring new skills, experiences, and roles throughout a career, as well as adapting to changes in work environments and expectations. Research suggests that developing one's career can result in increased job satisfaction, motivation, engagement, and better financial outcomes.

New theories and models have emerged in recent decades to understand better the factors that affect career advancement in the workplace. The Protectean Career Theory emphasises the importance of individuals managing their careers and adapting to changing work environments. It emphasises self-direction, ongoing learning, and personal fulfilment. The Career Boundarylessness theory emphasises breaking down traditional career boundaries and exploring various work experiences. Career crafting involves seeking out opportunities and tailoring job roles to align with one's values, strengths, and interests. Social Cognitive Career Theory highlights the importance of social factors, such as self-efficacy and social support, in shaping career development and success.

Influential mentors have been found to have characteristics such as good people skills, trustworthiness, honesty, availability, listening skills, and commitment to the relationship. To ensure commitment, contracts or memorandums of understanding should be in place for mentoring relationships, containing guidance on how both parties should conduct themselves. Organisations should recognise that providing protected time when appropriate enhances the commitment of both parties. However, some mentors may pose obstacles due to their core values.

Pellegrin's four bad mentors include uncommitted phoney, perfectionist-turned-tyrant, insecure egocentric, and begrudger. Hudson and Hudson (2018) emphasise the reciprocity of the mentoring relationship between a mentor and a mentee to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the relationship. Trust, shared values, and norms are essential for a successful mentoring relationship.

Finally, mentorship is essential to career development, providing guidance, support, and advancement opportunities. It has been shown to enhance skills and career prospects and contribute to positive outcomes such as career progression. However, the relationship between mentorship and career development is under-studied in the context of South African black executives, necessitating this study.



## **Chapter 3      Research Questions**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The research aimed to explore the influence of mentorship on the career advancement of black executives. To this end, the research identified key objectives to be achieved to gain insights and understanding of the stories and lived experiences of black executives who have been mentored at some point in their careers. The identified objectives led to the key research questions to be investigated. This chapter outlines the research questions investigated in this research.

### **3.2 Research Questions**

This research seeks to answer the following three sub-questions.

#### **3.2.1 Research Question One**

**How has mentorship influenced the career development of black executives?**

This research question's main objective was to establish how mentorship influenced black executives' career development. The interview questions posed to participants required them to narrate how mentorship impacted their own career development. The open-ended questions allowed the researcher to understand the impact mentorship had on the participants' professional growth and career advancement.

Research suggests that mentorship has been recognised as an important part of career development as it provides guidance, support, and advancement opportunities for mentees (Forster & Hill, 2019). This research question aims to zoom

into this influence from the perspective of black executives in the context of South Africa.

### **3.2.2 Research Question Two**

**How do mentored black executives perform and navigate organisational culture?**

This research question's main objective was to establish how mentorship impacted black executives' own performance and the impact it had on how they navigated organisational culture. The researcher sought to explore whether their mentorship relationships impacted black executives' work performance. The open-ended questions allowed the researcher to understand the impact mentorship had on work performance and organisational culture.

Literature indicates that mentorship assisted mentees in building relationships, feeling safe, and feeling welcomed, enabling them to establish connections, which assisted them in navigating the organisational culture better (Costa & Smith, 2013). Was this the reflection of the lived experiences of South African black executives?

### **3.2.3 Research Question Three**

**What are the qualities of an effective mentor, according to black executives?**

This research question's main objective was to establish the key elements that make a mentor more effective in supporting the career advancement of black executives. The open-ended interview questions allowed the researcher to understand the key elements that make mentors more effective in supporting the career progression of black executives.

Literature has found that the characteristic of a mentor goes a long way in impacting the quality of mentorship relationships (Deng & Turner, 2023). Scholars such as Robinson et al. (2017) alluded to the importance of listening skills in making mentoring relationships successful. Furthermore, they argue that to be effective, a mentoring relationship requires a commitment to the relationship by both mentor and mentee (Robinson et al., 2017). Some questions arise from this: Do South African black executives share these views? Are there more qualities that go into making effective mentors from the perspective of South African black executives?

### **3.3 Chapter Summary**

This research explored the impact of mentorship on the career advancement of black executives in South Africa. The research focused on three sub-questions:

- 1) How has mentorship influenced the career development of black executives?
- 2) How does mentorship impact black executives' performance and organisational culture?
- 3) What qualities make an effective mentor, according to black executives?

Research suggests that mentorship provides guidance, support, and advancement opportunities for mentees. This research aims to understand the lived experiences of South African black executives and the qualities that make them influential mentors. The study also seeks to understand the qualities of a mentor, such as listening skills and commitment to the relationship. The research aims to gain insights into the experiences and perspectives of black executives in navigating organisational culture.

## **Chapter 4      Research Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The research aim of this study was to explore the influence of mentorship on the career development of black executives in South Africa. The researcher aimed to identify and evaluate how mentoring relationships influenced the career progression of black executives.

This chapter provides a blueprint that involves a set of decisions regarding the research strategy and methodological choices that led to the final research product (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). The chapter outlines the research design and methodology the researcher followed in conducting this study. This section, therefore, presents the ways in which this study was conducted, including the methods the researcher used (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

### **4.2 Research Philosophy**

The researcher adopted an interpretivism philosophy. According to this philosophy, there is not a single, absolute reality; rather, there are many realities as experienced by individuals and groups and influenced by their unique experiences of a phenomenon (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). This was the most suitable research philosophical approach as it allowed interpretation of the participants' lived experiences and perceptions on the influence of mentorship in their career development. Interpretivism philosophy allowed the researcher to explore the experiences and perspectives of the study's participants (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

### **4.3 Research Approach**

The study took an inductive approach. This was the most suitable approach to a topic where there was not much prior understanding. The researcher made use of the data collected through semi-structured interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of how mentorship influenced the career development of black executives (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The researcher used a bottom-up approach to formulate themes, compared findings to existing literature, and then reached a conclusion.

### **4.4 Research Strategy**

In this study, the researcher adopted a narrative inquiry research strategy. The study focused on black executives' own individual experiences. The researcher gained an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of mentorship from black executives' perspectives. Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research method that focuses on examining and interpreting people's stories and experiences (Mertova & Webster, 2019).

### **4.5 Research Method**

A mono-method qualitative approach was used in this study. The researcher sought to gain an in-depth and detailed understanding of mentorship's influence on black executives' career development. This research was based on the assumption that the world is complex and cannot only be reduced to a set of variables or quantifiable measures (Mertens, 2019). The researcher sought to explore the participants' experiences and perspectives, so quantitative data was not appropriate. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data.

The researcher employed a qualitative method and gained an understanding of the participants' perspectives by collecting and analysing data from the interviews (Taherdoost, 2022).

## **4.6 Time Horizon**

The research was cross-sectional in nature. Single data collection was used and deemed sufficient in addressing the research questions. According to Saunders and Lewis (2018), a qualitative research study can be cross-sectional. This study was a snapshot of research done at a particular time. All the interviews were conducted once with each participant over the period of two months, from August through to September.

## **4.7 Research Scope**

The scope of this research included black executives in South African companies across various industries. The participants were based in Gauteng province, South Africa. The study was limited to black executives who have had a mentor or mentors at some point in their careers. In the context of this study, black executives refer to black African leaders occupying top-level positions in a South African organisation.

## **4.8 Techniques and Procedures**

The researcher collected data from participants by means of semi-structured interviews. This method enabled the researcher to gather data using semi-structured questions. The researcher zoomed in on specific points and asked further probing questions (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). This approach allowed for a balance between structure and flexibility and allowed the participants to express their thoughts and experiences in their own words (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Data was stored electronically without any identifiers, and the researcher reported only aggregated information.

## **4.9 Target Population**

The target population in this research was black executives of any South African organisation. The researcher ensured that black executives who had a mentor or mentors at some point in their careers were participants of the study. In the context of this study, black executives refer to black African leaders occupying top-level positions in a South African organisation. The research was limited to black executives in organisations based in Gauteng province, South Africa. This approach to a target population aligned with Saunders and Lewis (2018), who referred to a population as a "complete set of group members which may include individuals, organisations, or places" (p. 138).

## **4.10 Level and Unit of Analysis**

For this research, the level and unit of analysis were one and the same, namely, individual black executives. Black executives were the focus of this investigation, and the study was focused on how mentorship influenced the career development of these black executives. This unit of analysis in the research was the level at which the study was conducted and the data was analysed (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

Black executives who participated in mentoring programs as individuals were interviewed, shared their lived experiences and perspectives and informed the outcomes of this study. By taking this approach, the researcher examined how mentorship impacted the career development of these black executives in a nuanced way and considered the unique challenges and opportunities faced by black executives in South Africa.

## **4.11 Sampling Methods and Size**

For this study, the researcher made use of purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method that enabled the researcher to invite participants who met the criteria of black executives and, secondly, individuals who

have had a mentor in their career journey. The researcher gathered in-depth information that is relevant to the study's main objectives from participants who met the level of unit analysis criteria (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). The researcher identified potential study participants through various means; this included referrals from an expert (professional mentor). The researcher obtained a permission letter from the professional mentor who provided recommendations for participants in the study. The mentor obtained prior consent from the participants he referred to the researcher. The permission letter obtained from a professional mentor is included in this document (refer to Appendix 5).

Furthermore, the researcher also made use of snowball sampling. Snowball sampling allowed the researcher to obtain more participants from initial participants who recommended other participants (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Targeted recruitment through the researcher's personal networks was also used to obtain participants. An invitation letter was sent via email to all participants identified. The invite included the consent letter and a brief description of the study. Participants were asked to choose their preferred form of interview (physical vs virtual). All the participants opted for virtual/online interviews. Participants were asked for recording permission at the beginning of the interviews. Signed consent forms were obtained from participants.

Thirteen interviews were conducted. The researcher reached saturation in interview number 12 as no additional new information was forthcoming (Guest et al., 2006). The researcher proceeded with the 13<sup>th</sup> interview as it was already scheduled. The last interview also reaffirmed the saturation state. The number of participants in this study is consistent with the view shared by Boddy (2006), who asserted that, typically, 12-16 participants have been found to be sufficient. However, in this study, the researcher aimed for saturation rather than a targeted number of participants (Guest et al., 2006).

## **4.12 Measurement Instrument**

The interview guide was the key measurement instrument in this research; see Table 4.1 for mapping research questions to interview questions. According to Saunders



and Lewis (2018), interviews are a common qualitative method in which a researcher conducts face-to-face or virtual conversations with research participants to obtain information about their research (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The researcher used semi-structured interview questions to ensure that, firstly, there is standardisation in the interviews being conducted and, secondly, that enough in-depth information about the research is being collected (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

**Table 4.1: Mapping of research questions to interview questions**

Research Question (RQ)	Interview Questions
How has mentorship influenced black executive's career development?	<p>Can you describe some of the key ways in which your mentor(s) supported your career development? What specific guidance, advice, or opportunities did they provide?</p> <p>Did your mentors help you navigate any unique challenges or barriers that you faced as a black executive in South Africa? If so, could you provide some examples?</p> <p>How did your mentorship experiences contribute to your professional growth and advancement? Are there any specific achievements or milestones that you attribute to your mentorship relationships?</p> <p>How would you describe the impact of mentorship on your self-confidence, leadership abilities, and overall career trajectory?</p>
How do mentored black executives perform and navigate organisational culture?	<p>How has being mentored impacted your performance at work?</p> <p>How has being mentored impacted how you show up at work?</p>
What are the key qualities that make a mentor more effective, according to black executives?	<p>In your opinion, what are the key qualities or characteristics that make a mentor effective in supporting the career development of black executives?</p>

## **4.13 Data Gathering Process**

The methodological choice for this research is the qualitative method. The most used data-gathering processes for qualitative research are participant observation, interviews, and focus groups (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). For this research, the interview process was used to gather data. The interviews were conducted virtually based on the preferences of the research participants. The online interviews were conducted using Zoom or Teams platforms, depending on the participant's choice.

When conducting qualitative research, data collection is mostly unstructured and flexible (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). However, in this research, the researcher used semi-structured interviews, which allowed for in-depth probing and follow-ups depending on the participant's responses. Sufficient time was given for each interview, and all interview sessions were recorded.

The researcher scheduled interviews well beforehand, allowing participants enough time to plan and secure the session slot. The total duration of all interview sessions was 418 min. The longest interview lasted for 55 min, while the shortest interview was 18 minutes. The average interview time was 32 minutes. Information about the research and the purpose (research overview) was sent to each participant before the interview session. The willingness of the participants to partake in the study was sought through the consent form prior to the session. Data was stored electronically without any identifiers, and only aggregated information was reported.

To maintain confidentiality, integrity, accessibility and ease of dissemination of collected data, the following methods of storing data were employed, namely: 1) secure digital storage (all digital data, including audio recordings and transcriptions, were stored securely on a password-protected computer and on secured cloud drive). 2) Back-ups (regular backups were performed to ensure redundancy and prevent data loss in the event of hardware failures or accidental deletions).

## **4.14 Analysis Approach**

As the research was qualitative, data was in the form of texts (transcripts and notes) and non-text, such as recorded audio. Audio recordings of interviews were

transcribed using Otter.ai to convert spoken/recorded language into written text. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data. Thematic analysis refers to a method of analysing data to check for repeated themes and patterns (Braun & Clarke 2006). Analysis of data was conducted using coding, i.e., assigning codes to understand the meaning of the data and generate knowledge from the data collected (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Firstly, individual codes were assigned to discrete segments of the interview transcripts, capturing specific ideas, concepts, or recurring patterns. Secondly, the researcher grouped codes organically based on the similarity of characteristics, concepts, or references to related aspects rather than treating them in isolation (Saldana, 2016).

Using this approach allowed the researcher to explore the participants' perspectives, experiences, and insight regarding mentorship and its influence on black executives' career development.

In summary, the researcher's data analysis process involved the following steps:

**Familiarisation:** To comprehensively understand the data and identify preliminary patterns and themes, the researcher read and re-read the interview transcripts multiple times.

**Coding:** In the next step, the transcribed data (which was now in Microsoft Word) was coded. This process involved categorising and labelling meaningful texts (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Research objectives were represented by specific passages of texts that were coded according to key concepts, ideas, or themes (Saldana, 2016).

**Theme development:** A theme was developed by grouping codes together based on their similarities and patterns based on the coded segments, which identified commonalities, differences, and relationships (Saldana, 2016). The key findings and insights concerning the influence of mentorship on black executives' career development were presented in these themes.

**Reporting:** In the last step of data analysis, the researcher summarised the main findings in a clear and concise manner. This was done through writing narrative descriptions, providing illustrations, and presenting diagrams. Data was reported

without identifiers, and only aggregated information was reported (refer to Chapter 5 of this document).

#### **4.15 Quality Control**

Quality control in qualitative research should ensure two concepts: validity and reliability (Stiles, 1993). Validity refers to how trustworthy the interpretation of data is, and reliability refers to the trustworthiness of data (Stiles, 1993). To ensure validity and reliability, the researcher ensured the following: firstly, sufficient engagement - Interviews were conducted with enough time (average interview time of 32 minutes), and the researcher ensured that discussions were not rushed. Secondly, the researcher used notes and audio recordings – the researcher did not rely on memory when analysing data. Thirdly, member checking – the researcher verified data with participants to ensure alignment of meaning. Finally, transcription – the researcher transcribed recorded audio into written texts for analysis.

#### **4.16 Research Limitations**

Participants in this study were all based in Gauteng province, South Africa. Black executives in different parts of the country or even outside South Africa may have faced different challenges and experiences, which might potentially lead to different perceptions about mentoring relationships. Granted, the limited geographic scope of this study might limit its generalisability; however, this research was qualitative with the aim of contributing to theory development.

The research was cross-sectional in nature. Single data collection was used, and although deemed sufficient in addressing the research questions, insights provided by research participants may change over time. It may be useful if longitudinal studies can be undertaken to examine the long-term effects of mentorship on the career development of black executives. A longitudinal study may provide a deeper understanding of how mentorship influences career advancement over time.

All the interviews with research participants were conducted virtually. There is a possibility that non-verbal cues such as body language and facial expressions, which are essential for understanding the interviewee's personality, may be more difficult to discern during a virtual interview.

## **4.17 Ethical Considerations**

The researcher was granted ethical clearance from the GIBS Ethics Committee before commencing the interview process. A participant consent letter and interview guide were submitted as part of the ethical clearance process. The researcher obtained a permission letter from the professional mentor who provided recommendations for participants in the study. The professional mentor obtained prior consent from the participants he referred to the researcher. The permission letter obtained from the professional mentor is included in this document (refer to Appendix 5). Once ethical clearance was granted (refer to Appendix 4), the researcher began gathering data.

All participants were assured that the data would be kept confidential (refer to Appendix 2 for the letter to participants and informed consent). Data was reported without identifiers, and only aggregated information was reported.

## **4.18 Chapter Summary**

This study aimed to explore the influence of mentorship on the career development of black executives in South Africa. The researcher adopted an interpretivism philosophy, which allowed for the interpretation of participants' experiences and perceptions on the influence of mentorship on their career progression. The research approach was inductive, using data collected through semi-structured interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of how mentorship influenced the career progression of black executives.

The research strategy was a narrative inquiry, focusing on black executives' experiences and perspectives. A mono-method qualitative approach was used,

focusing on the examination and interpretation of people's stories and experiences. The time horizon was cross-sectional, with interviews conducted once with each participant over two months from August through to September 2023.

The scope of the research included black executives in South African companies across various industries based in Gauteng province, South Africa. The study was limited to black executives who have had a mentor or mentors at some point in their careers. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, allowing for a balance between structure and flexibility.

The target population was black executives of any South African organisation, ensuring they had a mentor or mentor at some point in their careers. The level and unit of analysis were individual black executives, and the study examined how mentorship impacted the career development of these black executives in a nuanced way, considering the unique challenges and opportunities faced by black executives in South Africa.

This study utilised purposive sampling and snowball sampling to gather in-depth information about the career development of black executives. The researcher identified potential participants through referrals from professional mentors and obtained permission letters from them. Snowball sampling allowed for more participants from initial participants who recommended others, while targeted recruitment through personal networks was also used. Thirteen interviews were conducted, with the researcher reaching saturation in interview number 12 as no additional information was forthcoming.

The interview guide was the critical measurement instrument, using semi-structured questions to ensure standardisation and in-depth information collection. The research questions included how mentorship influenced black executive's career development, how mentors helped navigate unique challenges, how mentorship experiences contributed to professional growth and advancement, and the impact of mentorship on self-confidence, leadership abilities, and overall career trajectory.

The data-gathering process was qualitative, using participant observation, interviews, and focus groups. Interviews were conducted virtually or online, with a total duration of 418 minutes. Participants were informed about the research and the purpose before the interview session, and consent was sought through a consent

form. Data was stored electronically without any identifiers, and secure digital storage was employed to maintain confidentiality, integrity, accessibility, and ease of dissemination.

The research used a qualitative approach to analyse data from interviews and non-text materials. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and themes, while coding was used to understand the meaning of the collected information. The researcher read and re-read the interview transcripts multiple times to understand the data. The transcribed data was coded, categorising and labelling meaningful texts. A theme was developed by grouping codes together based on their similarities and patterns, identifying commonalities, differences, and relationships. The key findings and insights concerning the influence of mentorship on black executives' career development were presented in these themes.

Quality control was ensured through sufficient engagement, the use of notes and audio recordings, member checking, and transcription. The study's limitations include its cross-sectional nature, the use of single data collection, and the virtual nature of the interviews. The researcher was granted ethical clearance from the GIBS Ethics Committee and obtained permission from a professional mentor who provided recommendations. Data was reported without identifiers, and only aggregated information was reported. The study's limitations include the limited geographic scope, the use of single data collection, and the potential for non-verbal cues to be difficult to discern during virtual interviews.

## **Chapter 5      Research Findings**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings from the interviews conducted. These findings are presented according to the research questions and relevant themes identified during the research. In this study, the researcher explored how mentorship influenced the career development of black executives. To preserve the anonymity of the participants, the findings are disclosed in a manner that maintains their confidentiality.

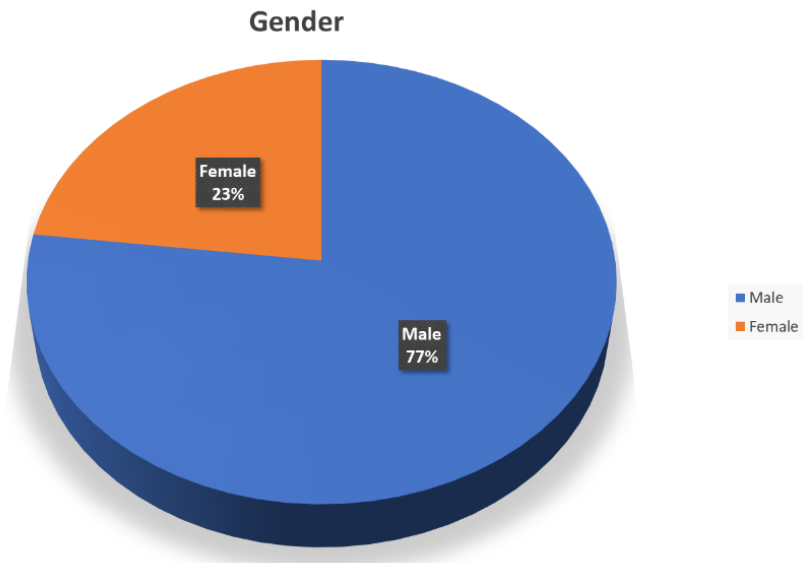
### **5.2 Sample Description**

A total of 13 semi-structured interviews were conducted. All interviews were conducted virtually, as preferred by the participants. Of the 13 participants interviewed, 10 were males, and 3 were females, see Figure 5.1. All participants met the 'black South African executives' criteria, and they occupied senior roles within their organisations across various industries (i.e., financial services, retail, education, and telecommunications) (see Table 5.1 and Figure 5.2).

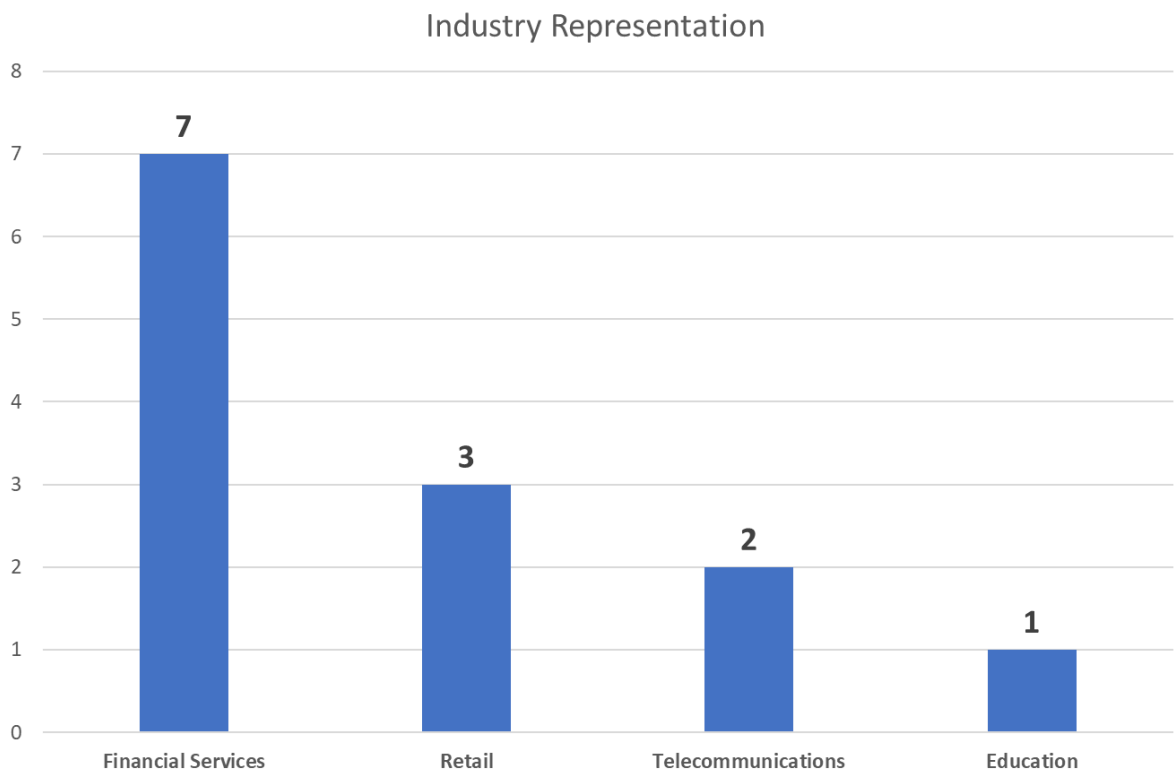


**Table 5.1: Participant details**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Meeting date</b>	<b>Meeting type</b>
<b>1</b>	Female	Senior Development Manager	Financial services	14 Aug @17:30 -18:30	Virtual
<b>2</b>	Male	Executive Regional Head	Financial services	22 Aug @12:00 -13:00	Virtual
<b>3</b>	Female	Head compliance	Financial services	22 Aug @15:00 -16:00	Virtual
<b>4</b>	Male	Head: Business Development Strategy	Financial services	24 Aug @12:00 -13:00	Virtual
<b>5</b>	Male	Senior Product Owner	Telecommunications	26 Aug @10:00 -11:00	Virtual
<b>6</b>	Male	Vice President: Supply Chain	Retail	28 Aug @10:30 -11:30	Virtual
<b>7</b>	Male	Director	Education	28 Aug @11:30 -12:30	Virtual
<b>8</b>	Female	Senior Manager: Channel Observations	Financial services	28 Aug @12:30 -13:30	Virtual
<b>9</b>	Male	Head: Base Management and Segmentation	Telecommunications	28 Aug @18:15 -19:15	Virtual
<b>10</b>	Male	Chief product officer	Financial services	05 Sep @14:30 -15:30	Virtual
<b>11</b>	Male	CFO: CIB Corporate Functions	Financial services	06 Sep @09:00 -10:00	Virtual
<b>12</b>	Male	Vice President: People Partner	Retail	11 Sep @11:00 -12:00	Virtual
<b>13</b>	Male	Vice Preident: Operations	Retail	12 Sep @11:00 -12:00	Virtual



**Figure 5.1: Percentage of participants by gender split**



**Figure 5.2: Count of industries represented by participants**

The total duration of interviews conducted was 418 minutes and 8 seconds; see Table 5.2. The longest interview lasted 55 minutes and 10 seconds, while the shortest

was 18 minutes and 5 seconds. The average time across all interviews was 32 minutes and 20 seconds.

**Table 5.2: Interview summary in numbers**

Item	Quantity
Total number of interviews conducted	13
Total duration of interviews	418 min and 8 sec
Longest interview time	55 min and 10 sec
Shortest interview time	18 min and 5 sec
Average interview time	32 min and 20 sec

### 5.3 Presentation of Research Findings

This section examines research findings that provide an understanding of how mentorship impacted black executives' career development in South Africa. The presentation of results follows a structured flow closely aligned with the research questions posed at the beginning. By aligning results with research questions, the researcher intends to convey insights gained from this study in a clear and coherent manner.

As a result of this coding approach, significant, interconnected ideas were captured within the dataset, allowing the development of overarching themes. Interactions between codes and interview content led to the themes emerging quite naturally. The resulting themes accurately reflected the participants' input as captured in the data, providing a deeper understanding of their experiences and perspectives.

Table 5.3 shows codes that were generated from interview transcripts. After analysing the codes, the researcher organised similar codes into several themes that emerged from the data. Table 5.2 reflects the emergent codes as they were bucketed into themes.

**Table 5.3: Codes and theme**

Codes	Themes
<p>Leadership skills</p> <p>Personal development (i.e., executive presence)</p> <p>Stretching and challenging oneself</p> <p>Boosting self-confidence</p> <p>Sounding board for ideas</p> <p>Fighting off imposter syndrome</p> <p>Self-governance</p> <p>Challenging the status quo</p> <p>Presentation skills</p> <p>Self-awareness and self-growth</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THEME ONE:</b> <b>Mentorship for Personal Growth and Leadership Development</b></p>
<p>Career goal setting</p> <p>Exposure to key people in the organisation</p> <p>Negotiating meaningful responsibilities</p> <p>Assessing developmental gaps</p> <p>Navigating corporate politics</p> <p>Relationship building and networking</p> <p>Navigating leadership challenges</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THEME TWO:</b> <b>Strategic Career Advancement and Networking</b></p>
<p>Effective communication</p> <p>Team engagement and management</p> <p>Conflict management</p> <p>How to engage effectively using body language</p> <p>Being responsive, especially with emails</p> <p>Management and strategic thinking</p> <p>Using one's voice in the room</p> <p>Public speaking</p> <p>Courageous conversations with peers and superiors</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THEME THREE:</b> <b>Effective Communication and Leadership Engagement</b></p>

Codes	Themes
<p>Culture-wise – positive impact on relating to others</p> <p>Personal branding - wake up and show up</p> <p>How to engage with leadership</p> <p>Lessons about the unspoken rules</p> <p>To think and behave like a leader</p> <p>Ability to be more tactful</p> <p>How I interact with my team</p> <p>Positively based on the feedback received</p> <p>My mentor helped me live the culture</p> <p>Consistency of my behaviour - How I show up every day became deliberate</p> <p>Learned to be authentic</p> <p>A balance between arrogance and too humble</p> <p>Executive presence</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THEME FOUR: Navigating Organisational Dynamics and Culture Through Mentorship</b></p>
<p>Positive impact on performance</p> <p>Ability to challenge the status quo</p> <p>More positive outlook</p> <p>Awareness of stakeholder engagement</p> <p>By appreciating feedback</p> <p>Helped me learn to ask questions to understand</p> <p>Insights into strategic discussions within the organisation</p> <p>Positively, through an increased level of confidence</p> <p>Positively through how to position strategy and how to execute</p> <p>How to lead a meeting</p> <p>Encouragement during challenging times</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THEME FIVE: Improving Work Performance Through Mentorship</b></p>

Codes	Themes
Empathy Personal connection Ability to listen Open minded Trust Sincerity Caring Authenticity Honesty Transparency Integrity Respect	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THEME SIX: Personality traits</b></p>
Industry knowledge Knowledge of the company Relevant experience Well connected Someone who can influence your network Someone who has walked the journey Mentor should help you navigate networks	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THEME SEVEN: Knowledge and Experience</b></p>

#### **5.4 Research Question 1: How has mentorship impacted black executives' career development?**

The research question's objective was to establish how mentorship impacted black executives' career advancement. The interview questions posed to participants required them to narrate how mentorship impacted their own career development. The open-ended questions allowed the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact mentorship has on the professional growth and career advancement of the participants. When analysing the interview transcripts, the

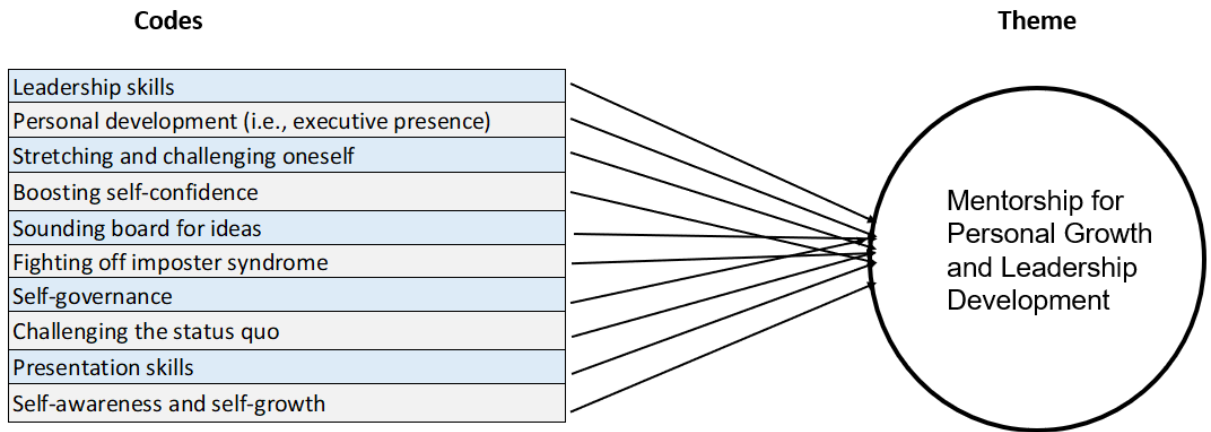
researcher identified three themes and 26 codes that provided insights into research question 1, see Table 5.4.

**Table 5.4: Themes relating to mentorship impact on career development**

<b>Theme No.</b>	<b>Theme description</b>	<b>No. of codes</b>	<b>Interview reference</b>
<b>1</b>	Mentorship for personal growth and leadership development	10	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13
<b>2</b>	Strategic career advancement and networking	7	2,3,4,5,6,9,10,11,12,13
<b>3</b>	Effective communication and leadership engagement	9	1,2,3,4,5,6,8,10,13

### **5.4.1 Mentorship for Personal Growth and Leadership Development**

All in all, ten codes emerged from the interviews, and the researcher was able to group these into the theme "Mentorship for personal growth and leadership development", see Figure 5.3. Most of the participants interviewed mentioned that mentorship assisted them with improving their leadership skills, boosting their self-confidence, stretching and challenging themselves to improve and do better, and having a sounding board for ideas.



**Figure 5.3: Theme one**

Participant 5 felt that being mentored assisted him by improving his self-confidence. Through the mentorship process, he felt that he was not even afraid of making mistakes.

*"Where mentorship helps is that you expand that self-confidence to say, now I'm not just relying on myself. But if things can go wrong, I've got somebody else who can help to advise me. So, where I now sit is that my self-confidence has been boosted even more because I now know that if I falter, it's not the end of the world. There are people that I can tend to, who can give me advice as to how to rectify a situation" – Participant 5*

Participant 1 felt that having a mentor made her feel challenged enough to keep seeking new opportunities for growth.

*"One of the things that he (Mentor) always challenged me on is never to sit in one place for too long. You may be in the same department, but don't do the same thing for too long. You should be able to challenge your thinking, challenge where you want to be, and challenge yourself in many ways" – Participant 1*

Participant 8 credited his enhanced self-governance skills to the mentorship process.



*"The impact is huge in that, you know, you are not only being mentored on operational stuff, you are also being mentored on self-governance, you know, being a leader is not easy. It's not only about operational requirements, but it is also about managing people, and it's also about building relationships". – Participant 8*

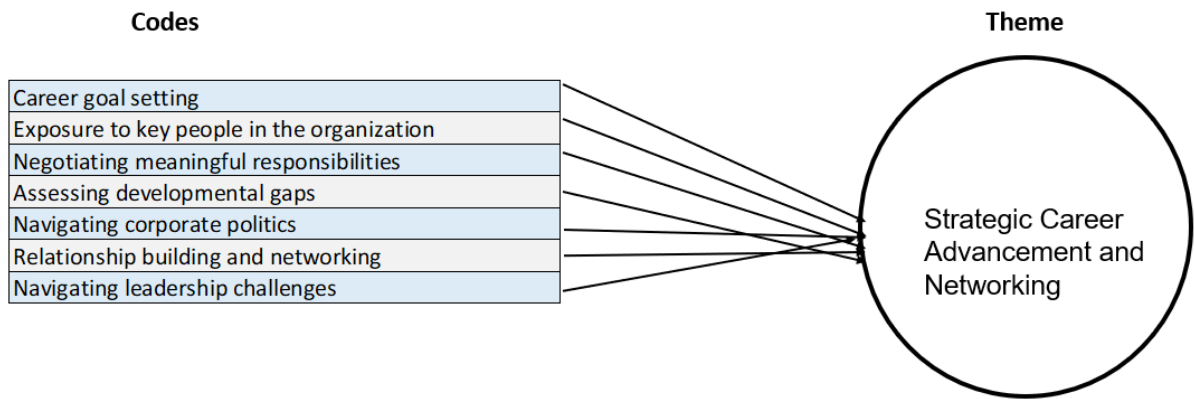
Most of the research participants interviewed mentioned that mentorship assisted them by providing someone who could be a sounding board for ideas. As black executives, they felt that they did not always have that form of support within their immediate family or even within their circle of friends.

*"As a black executive, you don't have a lot of reference points and a lot of people to talk to, whether in your immediate family circle or beyond that and to have someone that you can always approach and talk to in a safe space helps you navigate the challenges because, without it, you sort of feel that you need to do more to achieve more. But with someone that is invested in your guidance, it helps you know, face the challenges with a bit of ease" – Participant 7*

*"If you're driven, and you want to apply for a certain position. You'll never know if you are ready or not. You know, so what mentorship also helps is that you have a sounding board of someone that tells you cool, I think you'd be fine in that position, but this is what you need to think of, or No, I think it's too early, but this is what you need to do between now and then in order for you to be ready for that position" – Participant 6*

#### **5.4.2 Strategic Career Advancement and Networking**

Seven codes emerged from the interviews, and the researcher was able to group these into the theme "Strategic career advancement and networking", see Figure 5.4. Most of the participants interviewed mentioned that mentorship assisted them with career goal setting, relationship building and networking, and assessing developmental gaps.



**Figure 5.4: Theme two**

Participant 2 felt that he was able to engage in career goal-setting through the process of mentorship. This allowed him to focus on short-term and long-term goals for his career.

*"Where someone (Mentor) asks you to sit down and start thinking about your next steps in different time horizons? What's next for you in a year's time? What's next for you in three years' time? What happened to you in five years' time? What are those long-term aspirations? So, we had discussions around that? – Participant 2*

Participant 10 credited his ability to unlock meaningful networks to his mentor.

*"The benefit of connecting with a specific individual (through my mentor) was that it allowed me to, to open up relationships that helped me down the line in my career" – Participant 10*

Participant 12 alluded to his mentor playing a key role in closing his developmental gaps.

*"He (my mentor) knew my development and gaps. And, of course, we then aligned as to what are the things that I need to do and focus on closing those particular gaps. – Participant 12*

### 5.4.3 Effective Communication and Leadership Engagement

Nine codes emerged from the interviews, and the researcher was able to group these into the theme "Effective communication and leadership engagement", see Figure 5.5. Most of the participants interviewed mentioned that mentorship assisted them with effective communication, team engagement, and the ability to handle courageous conversations.

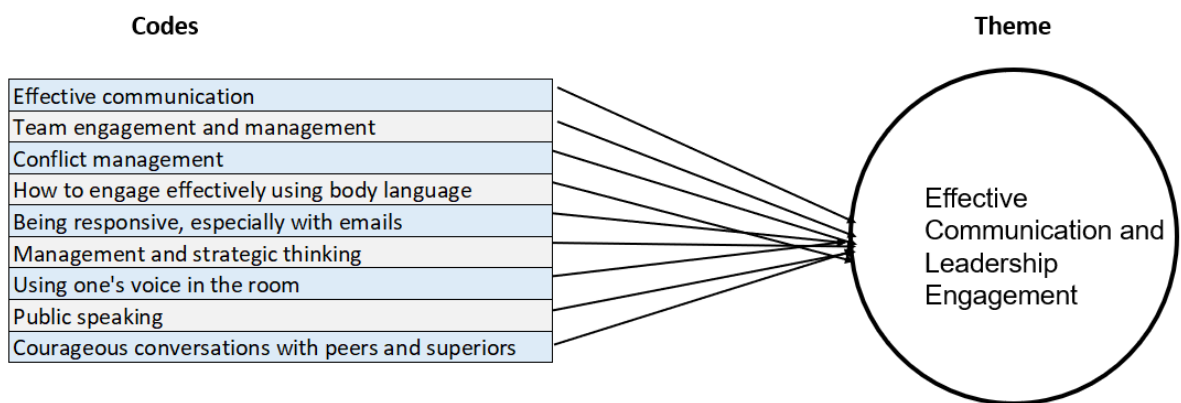


Figure 5.5: Theme three

Participant 3 felt that he could engage better with the leadership because of the mentorship process. His executive presence was enhanced through the engagements he had with his mentor.

*"We also ended up dealing with things like executive presence in some of these mentorship discussions on a personal level, so you know, how do you project yourself? How do you dress for the office? You know, how do you manage and engage with teams?" – Participant 2*

Participant 12 praised his mentor for his ability to engage publicly and comfortably engage in courageous conversations.

*"When in a public stage, how to address people in a public stage. The most important one was how to deal with crucial conversations; it (mentorship) boosted that" – Participant 12*

Participant 6 believed that through the mentorship process, he was able to learn to speak up whenever he felt the need to put his points forward.

*"The challenge that my mentor put out to me was that I should never ever let my voice not be heard because I've got something unique to offer" – Participant 6*

## **5.5 Research question 2: How do mentored black executives perform, and how do they navigate organisational culture?**

This research question's main objective was to establish how mentorship impacted black executives' own performance and the impact it had on how they navigated organisational culture. The researcher sought to explore whether black executives' work performance was impacted by their mentorship relationships. The open-ended questions allowed the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact mentorship has on work performance and organisational culture. When analysing the interview transcripts, the researcher identified two themes and 24 codes that provided insights into research question 2, see Table 5.5.

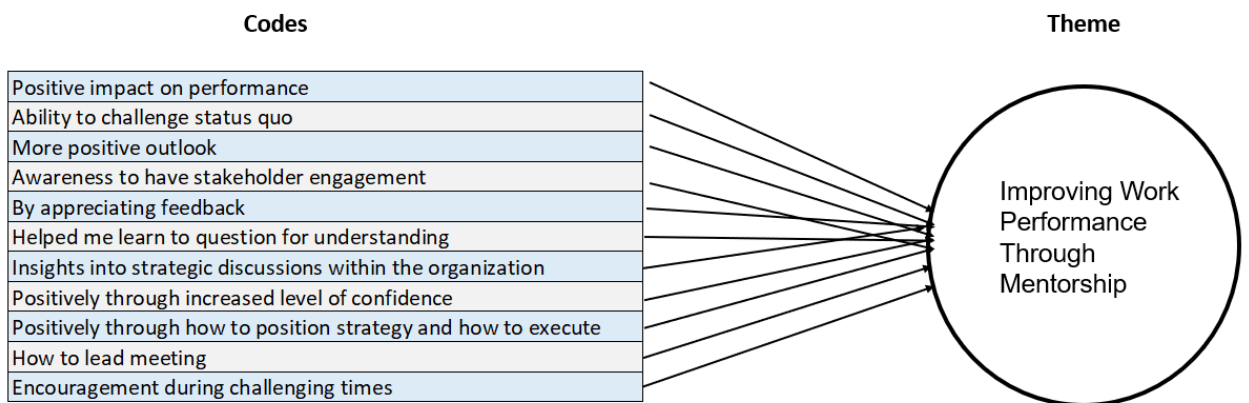
**Table 5.5: Themes relating to mentorship impact on work performance and culture**

<b>Theme No.</b>	<b>Theme description</b>	<b>No. of codes</b>	<b>Interview reference</b>
<b>4</b>	Improving work performance through mentorship	11	1,3,5,6,7,8,10,12,

Theme No.	Theme description	No. of codes	Interview reference
5	Navigating Organisational Dynamics and Culture through Mentorship	13	2,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,13

### 5.5.1 Improving Work Performance Through Mentorship

Eleven codes emerged from the interviews, and the researcher was able to group these into the theme "improving work performance through mentorship", see Figure 5.6. Most of the participants interviewed mentioned that through mentorship, they were able to improve their own work performance as mentorship helped them learn to question for understanding. Others said through mentorship, they were able to learn how to challenge the status quo, which led to being more impactful. Other participants were of the view that by learning how to appreciate feedback (through mentorship), their own work performance improved.



**Figure 5.6: Theme four**

Participant 5 felt that it was through the mentorship process that his own work performance improved. Now that he is not afraid of asking questions, he engages with others better, and that has helped him perform better.

*"So, mentorship has taught me to say if you don't know the answer, go find the people to engage with rather than pretending you know" – Participant 5*

Participant 1 felt that her work performance was boosted by her ability to challenge the status quo.

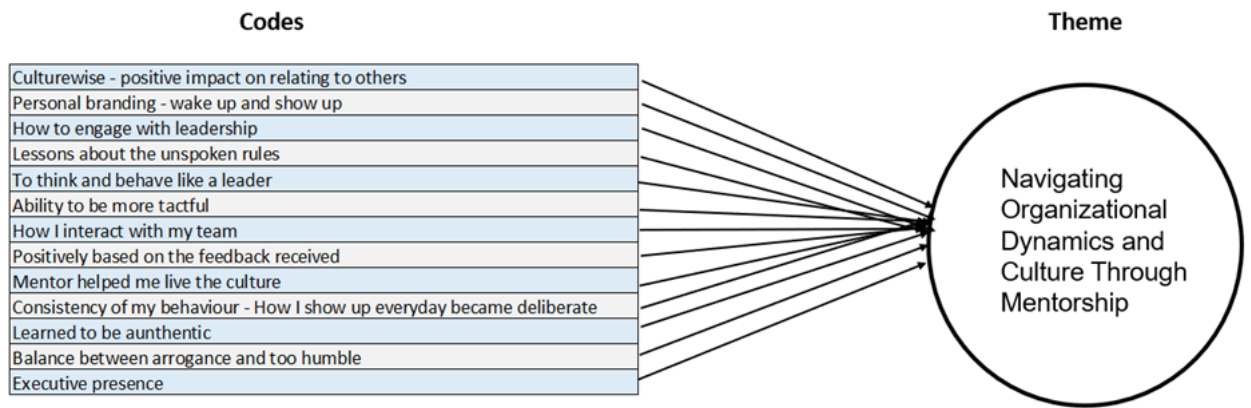
*"I must say positively, you know, ever since I've actually had that mentorship, oh, I have increased my performance, and I've been able to challenge the status quo" – Participant 1*

Participant 5 felt that her work performance was enhanced by her ability to handle feedback, which resulted from his mentorship process.

*"And if anything, mentoring has taught me to be comfortable with a feedback loop. So whenever I deal with anybody, whether they're people who are in the team that are reporting to me, or whether I report to somebody else, I always welcome critical feedback" - Participant 5*

## **5.5.2 Navigating Organisational Dynamics and Culture Through Mentorship**

Thirteen codes emerged from the interviews, and the researcher was able to group these into the theme "Navigating organisational dynamics and culture through mentorship", see Figure 5.6. Most of the participants interviewed mentioned that through mentorship, they were able to navigate the organisational culture much better as they improved their personal branding (how they show up every day). Other participants were of the view that mentorship helped them interact better with the team. Other participants alluded to having learned to be authentic through their mentorship relationships, and this assisted them with navigating organisational dynamics and culture much better.



**Figure 5.7: Theme five**

Participant 8 felt that he had his mentor to be thankful for his improved personal brand awareness. Her personal brand has improved how he relates to others in the organisation.

*"I had a theme that my mentor used to teach me; it was my motto all the time when I met with him, and I still use it – It is wake up and show up. Your brand is of utmost importance. Protect your brand as the leader because that's what people are going to think of when they hear your name" – Participant 8*

Participant 9 felt that as a result of his mentorship journey, he learned how to handle disappointments, which has improved the team dynamics in the organisation.

*"The way I interact with my team, how I vocalise my expectations for my team, to say, look, guys, I expect this, how I handle disappointment from my team, and how I handle me disappointing my team, sometimes you want to deliver for the team, but the environment just doesn't allow. So, handling both the team disappointing you and you disappointing the team was kind of very critical. So, I think I learned that particularly from the mentorship to say, this is how we handle those in a way that the team moves forward" – Participant 9*

Participant 7 felt that because of the mentorship process, he was able to learn how to be authentic, which has improved how he navigates organisational dynamics.

*"Through the process of mentorship, I realised that my uniqueness is the contribution that I'm making to debates. Through the journey of understanding that, you know, you can only be yourself, and the more you show up as yourself, the better you are as a contributor to the debates. And over time, my fellow team members appreciated my unique contribution because it was only me that could bring it from that lens. So, the large contribution that led to the need for me to be authentic not to try to be like someone or to try to fit in, was that it was through my unique lens that I was able to contribute in that manner. And sometimes that's how you get you to get hired because you see things from your own unique perspective" - Participant 7*

## **5.6 Research question 3: What makes a mentor more effective, according to black executives?**

This research question main objective was to establish the key elements that make a mentor more effective in supporting the career advancement of black executives. The open-ended questions allowed the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the key elements that make a mentor more effective. When analysing the interview transcripts, the researcher identified two themes and 19 codes that provided insights into research question 3, see Table 5.6.

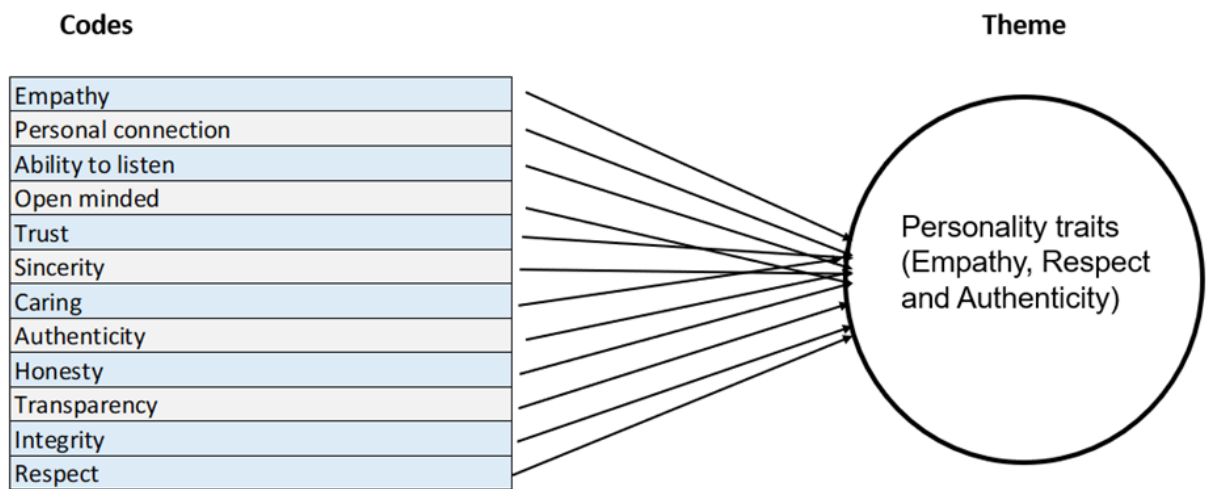
**Table 5.6: Themes relating to elements that make a mentor more effective**

<b>Theme No.</b>	<b>Theme description</b>	<b>No. of codes</b>	<b>Interview reference</b>
<b>6</b>	Personality traits	12	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,12,13
<b>7</b>	Knowledge and experience	7	1,2,6,7,8,9,11



### 5.6.1 Personality Traits

Twelve codes emerged from the interviews, and the researcher was able to group these into the theme "Personality traits", see Figure 5.8. Most of the participants interviewed mentioned that for a mentor to be more effective in supporting the career advancements of a black executive, personality traits such as honesty, respect, good listening skills, and authenticity are key.



**Figure 5.8: Theme six**

Participant 3 felt that an effective mentor is one who is a good listener. He believes that the ability to listen is key to a successful mentorship relationship.

*"I think for me, if you want to be a mentor, you must also be a good listener. You must also be able to dedicate the time. I think it goes both ways. If you don't have the time and you're not a good listener, don't be a mentor and don't be mentored because then it's a waste of time". – Participant 3*

Participant 9 felt that to be an effective mentor, one needs to be trustworthy. He believes that sincerity and confidentiality are crucial for a successful mentorship relationship.

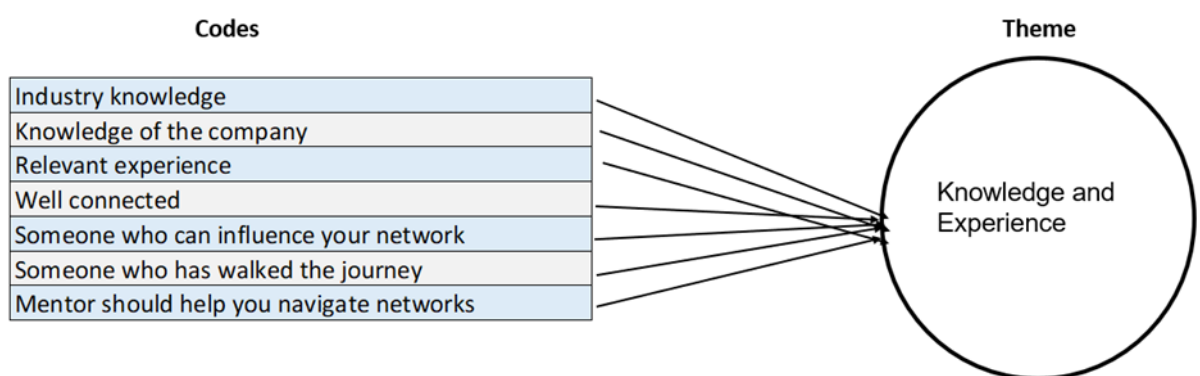
*"I think a mentor needs to be sincere because you and the mentor are sharing quite a bit. Then there needs to be trust that whatever you hear from the mentor, that might be sensitive, and whatever you say, that might be sensitive will remain within the confidence of the discussion". – Participant 9*

Honesty and balanced feedback were key critical for any successful mentorship relationship, according to Participant 4.

*"I find the one thing that's critically important as a mentor to a mentee is giving honest and balanced feedback". – Participant 4*

## 5.6.2 Knowledge and Experience

Seven codes emerged from the interviews, and the researcher was able to group these into the theme "Knowledge and experience", see Figure 5.9. Most of the participants interviewed mentioned that for a mentor to be more effective in supporting the career advancements of a black executive, qualities such as a mentor's experience and industry knowledge are key.



**Figure 5.9: Theme seven**

Most participants believed that an experienced mentor is key to a successful mentorship relationship.

*"A mentor that has certainly walked the journey, in my view, is the right mentor because he or she will guide you also based on his or her experience" – Participant 8*

*"Relevant experience. And in this case, I'm referring to experience aligned to the things that you wanted to resolve and understand". – Participant 7*

*"Because the whole point is to gain from the experience of your mentor". – Participant 9*

## **5.7 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the findings from 13 semi-structured interviews conducted with black South African executives. The interviews were conducted virtually, with ten males and three females. The participants were all in senior roles within their organisations across various industries. The total duration of the interviews was 418 minutes and 8 seconds, with the longest interview lasting 55 minutes and 10 seconds and the shortest being 18 minutes and 5 seconds. The average interview time was 32 minutes and 20 seconds.

The research findings provide an understanding of how mentorship impacted black executives' career development in South Africa. The coding approach allowed for the development of overarching themes, which accurately reflected the participants' input, providing a deeper understanding of their experiences and perspectives. The themes emerged from the data, including leadership skills, career goal setting, networking, strategic career advancement, effective communication, team engagement, conflict management, management and strategic thinking, and cultural-wise relating to others.

The study also explores the positive impact of mentorship on organisational dynamics and culture, improving work performance and fostering empathy, personal connection, open-mindedness, trust, honesty, integrity, respect, personality traits, industry knowledge, relevant experience, and well-connected individuals.

The research question aimed to explore the impact of mentorship on the career development of black executives. The interview transcripts revealed three themes

and 26 codes that provided insights into the impact of mentorship on professional growth and career advancement. The most common themes were "Mentorship for personal growth and leadership development," strategic career advancement and networking, and effective communication and leadership engagement.

Mentorship was found to assist in improving leadership skills, boosting self-confidence, stretching and challenging oneself, and having a sounding board for ideas. Participants felt that mentorship helped them expand their self-confidence, feel challenged, and seek new growth opportunities. They also credited their enhanced self-governance skills to the mentorship process.

Mentorship also provided a safe space for ideas, which was essential for black executives who often had limited support within their immediate family or circle of friends. This support helped them navigate challenges with ease and prepare for new positions. Mentorship is a crucial factor in the career development of black executives.

The study focuses on the impact of mentorship on black executives' performance and organisational culture. The research identified seven themes and 24 codes that provided insights into these themes. The themes included strategic career advancement, effective communication and leadership engagement, and improving work performance through mentorship.

The majority of participants mentioned that mentorship helped them with career goal setting, relationship building, networking, and assessing developmental gaps. They felt that mentorship allowed them to focus on short-term and long-term goals for their careers. Mentorship also helped them with effective communication, team engagement, and handling courageous conversations.

The research question aimed to establish how mentorship impacted black executives' performance and how it had an effect on how they navigated organisational culture. The open-ended questions allowed the researcher to understand the impact mentorship has on work performance, organisational dynamics and culture.

The study found that mentorship improved work performance by helping participants learn to question for understanding, challenge the status quo, and appreciate

feedback. Participants felt that their ability to handle feedback and questions for understanding led to better performance. Mentorship plays a crucial role in the success of black executives, as it helps them navigate organisational dynamics and culture, improve their performance, and enhance their overall performance.

The study focuses on the role of mentorship in navigating organisational dynamics and culture. Participants were interviewed and identified thirteen codes that grouped into the theme "Navigating organisational dynamics and culture through mentorship". Most participants mentioned that mentorship improved their branding, interaction with the team, and authenticity. They learned how to handle disappointments, which improved team dynamics.

The research question aimed to establish the key elements that make a mentor more effective in supporting the career advancement of black executives. Personality traits such as honesty, respect, good listening skills, and authenticity were identified as key. Participants also believed that an effective mentor should be a good listener, trustworthy, and give honest and balanced feedback.

Knowledge and experience were also identified as key factors for successful mentorship relationships. Most participants believed that an experienced mentor was crucial for a successful mentorship relationship, as they would guide the mentee based on their experience. The study found that a mentor who has walked the journey is the right mentor, as they guide the mentee based on their own experiences. The study highlights the importance of mentorship in navigating organisational dynamics and culture and the role of personality traits, knowledge, and experience in fostering effective mentorship relationships. By understanding these essential elements, mentors can better support black executives' career advancement and contribute to their teams' overall success.

## **Chapter 6      Discussion of Results**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The researcher aimed to explore and show how mentorship influenced the career development of black executives. The research aim was achieved by unpacking three research questions with 13 participants interviewed. The three research questions were: 1) how has mentorship advanced black executives' career development? 2) How do mentored black executives perform and navigate organisational culture? 3) What are the qualities of an effective mentor according to black executives?

This chapter discusses the key findings of the research presented in Chapter 5. The findings and discussions herein flow according to the research questions as outlined in Chapter 5. The researcher delves into the implications and conclusions by juxtaposing the findings of each research question with the literature review presented in Chapter 2.

### **6.2 Discussion of Results: Research Question 1**

#### **How has mentorship advanced black executives' career development?**

Research question one's main objective was to establish how mentorship impacted black executives' career advancement. The open-ended interview questions posed to participants invited them to narrate how mentorship impacted their own career development. The findings of this research on this question are presented in Chapter 5, Table 5.4. The findings suggest that mentorship has advanced the careers of participants through 1) advancing black executives' personal growth and leadership development, 2) strategic career advancements and networking, and 3) enabling effective communication and leadership engagements.

Thirteen participants interviewed alluded to their personal growth and leadership development being aided by their mentors. An important theme emerging from the data relating to this research question is how mentorship has supported the personal and leadership development of black executives by enhancing their confidence, self-awareness, and leadership skills and providing a sounding board for ideas.

The findings in this research are consistent with the findings of Engelhart et al. (2023), who suggest that mentoring helps leaders to grow and develop. Similar sentiments were shared by Cross et al. (2017), whose research indicated that mentoring relationships were key to the leadership development of their participants as it enhanced their confidence and assertiveness.

Ten of the participants interviewed mentioned that mentoring relationship has assisted them with strategic career advancement and networking. This emergent theme from the data focused on mentoring as an important means of assisting black executives to advance their careers in a strategic manner. In order to achieve this, mentorship emphasised the importance of setting career goals, relationship building, and assessing developmental gaps that mentees need to address in order to be successful. These findings are consistent with the findings of Shuler et al. (2021), who suggested that mentorship assisted mentees with expanding their circle of network by exposing them to other colleagues and peers. This view is supported by Robinson et al. (2017), who asserted that by leveraging the mentor's own network, mentees can bolster their own network.

The findings of this research indicated that most black executives benefited from their mentorship through strategic career planning. This finding is consistent with the results of the study by Costa and Smith (2023), whose findings indicated that participants in their research acknowledged that their career growths were hugely impacted by mentors who assisted with the task of exploring their career opportunities. Similar findings were shared by Chang et al. (2022), who concluded that mentoring programs have resulted in career planning benefits across various industries for mentees. It is apparent from this study and literature that mentorship continues to play a key role in enabling mentees to make great career choices by leveraging the advice and experiences of their mentors, a view also shared by Shuler et al. (2021).

Other studies, such as that of Forster and Hill (2019), shared similar findings regarding mentorship's impact on career development. They argued that mentorship has been recognised as an important part of career development as it provides guidance, support, and advancement opportunities for mentees. These research findings agree with other studies, particularly Malicay (2023), who also asserted that mentorship programs were perceived to be the ideal tools for enhancing the skills of participants, enhancing their career prospects, and helping them feel satisfied with their work environment. All these have aided mentees' career development prospects.

Nine of the participants interviewed mentioned that mentorship assisted them with enhancing their communication skills and leadership engagements. This emergent theme emphasised mentorship's role in enhancing better communication and leadership engagement for black executives. It also covered the ability to handle courageous conversations, which is vital for effective interpersonal relationships and leadership engagement. This finding is consistent with the study by Deris et al. (2021), which found that one of the benefits of mentoring relationships is the encouragement, support, and motivation of mentees to improve their communication skills. This is further supported by Engelhardt et al. (2023), who asserted that learning to conduct meetings and to deal with difficult clients and colleagues with tact. Respect is no easy feat, but with the help of a seasoned mentor, it can be made a lot easier.

This study's findings for research question one led to the development of three themes that spoke directly to how black executives advanced their career prospects by leveraging their mentorship relationships. As discussed above, all three themes are in alignment with prior study findings by other scholars, as outlined in Chapter 2. The researcher, thus, reaffirms the importance of mentorship in advancing career development, especially for future black leaders. Future black executives can benefit from mentorship through improved personal growth and leadership development. They can also increase their circle of the network as well as improve their communication skills and leadership engagements through their mentoring relationships.



## 6.3 Discussion of Results: Research Question 2

### **How do mentored black executives perform and navigate organisational culture?**

Research question two's main objective was to establish how mentorship impacted black executives' own performance and the impact it had on how they navigated organisational culture. The findings of this research on this question are presented in Chapter 5, Table 5.5. These research findings suggest that mentoring relationships have led to the improvement of work performance for black executives. Furthermore, these research findings suggest that mentorship has led to black executives being able to navigate organisational culture much better.

The research data aligned to research question 2 led to the emergent theme that suggested that mentorship assisted black executives in understanding the complexities of organisational dynamics and culture. This research data further indicated how mentoring can impact mentees' understanding of corporate cultures and shape the interactions mentees have with colleagues and the culture of the organisation as a whole. Nine participants interviewed mentioned that through mentorship, they were able to navigate the organisational culture much better as they improved their personal branding (how they show up every day). Other participants were of the view that mentorship assisted them in interacting better with the team.

There are similarities between the findings of this study and the study by Costa and Smith (2023), who suggested that mentorship relationships assisted mentees in building relationships, feeling safe, and feeling welcomed, enabling them to establish connections which assisted them in navigating the organisational culture (Costa & Smith, 2013). Other studies revealed similar findings. Rosser et al. (2023) suggested that mentoring relationships assisted mentees in understanding their own cultures and practices and the improvement of core values. These benefits went a long way in assisting black executives to navigate the organisational culture much better (Rosser et al., 2023). Mentees and their mentoring role models tend to share similar business characteristics, opinions, and corporate behaviours. Mentors strive to establish themselves as role models in order to promote ethical behaviour (Robinson et al., 2017).

Eight participants interviewed mentioned that being mentored assisted them with improving their own work performance. These findings on work performance improvement are consistent with the findings of Henry-Noel et al. (2019), who indicated, through their study, that mentors provided guidance and support, which assisted mentees with increased success through enhanced productivity and job satisfaction. Engelhardt et al. (2023) have stressed the importance of learning from someone more experienced, regardless of the profession one is in. It is apparent from both this study and the literature that being mentored offers mentees the opportunity to positively impact their own work performance.

Other scholars have recognised mentorship's positive impact on work performance through its ability to enhance career satisfaction. Costa and Smith (2023) alluded to improved performance attributable to mentorship as a result of enhanced career satisfaction. The findings in this study affirm a positive impact on work performance; however, the participants in this study alluded to work performance being boosted by the ability to challenge the status quo. Other participants in this study mentioned that mentoring assisted them by eliminating their fear of asking questions, which led to improved work performance.

These findings indicate that many participants have experienced improvement in their own work performance, albeit for different reasons. The road to all the reasons mentioned led to the mentorship process having played a key role in bringing about enhanced productivity in the workspace.

## **6.4 Discussion of Results: Research Question 3**

### **What are the qualities of an effective mentor according to black executives?**

Research question three's main objective was to establish the key elements that make a mentor more effective in supporting the career advancement of black executives. The open-ended questions allowed the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the key elements that make a mentor more effective. The findings of this research on this question are presented in Chapter 5,

Table 5.6. These research findings suggest that two key themes are critical for a mentor to be effective. First, the mentor's own personality traits, and second, the mentor's knowledge and experience.

A theme of personal traits centred on the qualities of empathy and authenticity that make mentors effective at supporting the career development of black executives. As a result of this theme, mentors and mentees need to establish a genuine and empathetic connection in order to succeed. Moreover, the mentor-mentee relationship should be characterised by trust, honesty, sincerity, and a supportive environment where career development can take place. Most of the participants interviewed mentioned that for a mentor to be more effective in supporting the career advancements of a black executive, these personality traits are key.

These findings are consistent with the findings of Deng and Turner (2023), who found that the characteristic of a mentor goes a long way in impacting the quality of mentorship relationships. This view is supported by Ekron et al. (2023), who demonstrated that characteristics such as good people skills, trustworthiness and honesty are key for an effective mentorship relationship.

Other scholars, such as Cross et al. (2019), stressed the importance of mentor availability, asserting that mentors should be willing and have time to respond to mentees' needs (Cross et al., 2019). Only three participants in this study alluded to the concept of a mentor's availability as a key factor. Participant 3, in particular, felt strongly about the mentor's availability, emphasising the importance of dedicating time to the mentoring relationship.

Contrary to the findings of this research, other scholars suggested that contracts or memorandum of understanding should be in place for mentoring relationships to ensure that there is a commitment to mentoring relationships (Shuler et al., 2021). The concept of a memorandum of understanding did not feature in the data of this research, although other participants (i.e., Participant 3) did emphasise the importance of mentoring relationships. According to Shuler et al. (2021), these contracts should contain matters such as guidance on how both parties should conduct themselves, i.e., willingness to listen, be open, be respectful, and support each other. According to Chang et al. (2022), mentoring programs require a great deal of time. As such, organisations should recognise that providing protected time when appropriate will enhance both parties' commitment (Chang et al., 2022).

Although the findings of this research revealed the admired positive personality traits that make mentors effective, other scholars also focused on the bad traits that result in bad mentors, with Steelman et al. (2023) emphasising that some mentors' personal traits are not suitable for effective mentoring relationships as it takes patience, hard work, and practice in order to become a great mentor. These concepts of bad mentors have long attracted scholar's attention, with studies by Pellegrin (2006) identifying four types of bad mentors, namely, 1) the uncommitted phoney (often distracted, appears insincere and is not honest in dealing with mentees, 2) The perfectionist-turned-tyrant (consistently raise expectations to near impossible levels, straining the mentoring relationship), 3) The insecure egocentric (mentoring relationship becomes predominantly about the mentor and as such fails to accomplish the desired goals of the mentee), and 4) The begrudger (this mentor is extremely proud of their work and is very self-righteous. Mentors like these tend to provide their mentees with fragmented and unhelpful information about their work).

It is apparent from both this study and the literature that the personality traits of a mentor are key to a successful mentoring relationship. Most importantly, personality traits such as empathy, honesty, respect, good listening skills, etc, are vital for a mentor to be effective. Also equally important is avoiding being a bad mentor and not falling into the trap of what Pellegrini (2006) referred to as the four bad mentor types.

Seven participants interviewed mentioned that the knowledge and relevant experience of the mentors are key to successful mentoring relationships. These participants felt that for a mentor to be more effective in supporting the career advancements of a black executive, qualities such as a mentor's experience and industry knowledge are key. This emergent theme demonstrates the importance of mentors having relevant experience in the industry and the company, as well as the ability to leverage their network for the benefit of their mentees. The theme also emphasised the importance of mentorship by guiding mentees through their career journeys using the mentor's own experiences as a guide.

This finding is consistent with the findings of Shuler et al. (2021), who asserted that Mentorship continues to play a key role in enabling mentees to make great career choices by leveraging the advice and experiences of their mentors. Other scholars shared similar findings regarding the mentor's experience, with Gurnani et al. (2022), who indicated that mentees' professional development is greatly enhanced due to

the knowledge, skills, and experience of a mentor that comes into play during the career planning process. Deng and Turner (2023) also highlighted the experience of the mentor as key to the benefit of a mentoring relationship.

It is apparent from this study and from the literature that the knowledge and experience of the mentors are crucial in bringing about effective and successful mentoring relationships. Participant 9 in this study put it rather succinctly when they mentioned that the whole point of a mentorship relationship is to gain from the experience and knowledge of one's mentor.

## **6.5 Model Development**

Figure 6.1 is a diagrammatic presentation of how mentorship influenced career development according to black executives interviewed in this study. The diagram shows that black executives benefited from their mentoring relationships through personal growth and leadership development, strategic career advancement and networking, and enhanced communication and leadership engagement skills. These enabled the mentees to improve their work performance and navigate the organisational culture more effectively. Participants have emphasised that these mentorship outcomes have been key to their success in reaching top-level positions. Furthermore, these outcomes were underpinned by the qualities of mentors, namely – personality traits (such as honesty, respect, good listening skills, and authenticity) and knowledge and experience of the mentor.

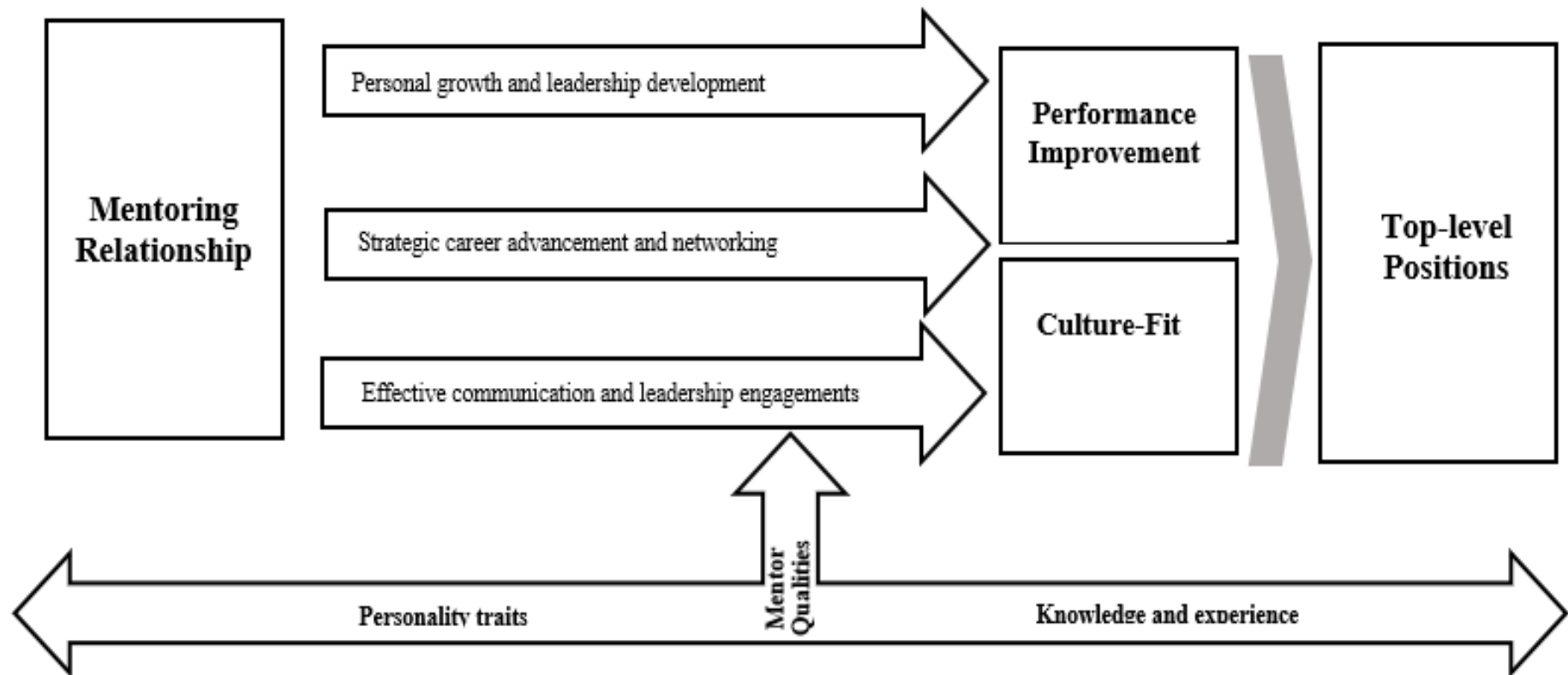


Figure 6.1: Diagrammatic presentation of how mentorship influenced the career development of black executives

## 6.6 Chapter Summary

The research aimed to explore the impact of mentorship on the career development of black executives. It involved 13 participants who were interviewed and asked three questions: 1) how has mentorship advanced black executives' career development? 2) How do mentored black executives perform and navigate organisational culture? 3) What are the qualities of an effective mentor according to black executives?

The findings suggest that mentorship has advanced the careers of participants through personal growth and leadership development, strategic career advancements and networking, and enabling effective communication and leadership engagements. Mentors have been instrumental in enhancing confidence, self-awareness, and leadership skills, providing a sounding board for ideas. Mentorship also assists in strategic career planning, enabling mentees to make significant career choices by leveraging their mentors' advice and experiences.

Mentorship also enhances black executives' communication skills and leadership engagement, allowing them to handle courageous conversations and deal with demanding clients and colleagues tactfully. This is consistent with previous studies, such as Costa and Smith (2023), Chang et al. (2022), and Malicay (2023). Mentorship plays a crucial role in advancing career development, especially for future black leaders. By leveraging mentorship relationships, black executives can improve their personal growth, leadership development, network expansion, and communication skills. The qualities of an effective mentor are essential for fostering a supportive and productive work environment.

Research question two aimed to explore the impact of mentorship on black executives' performance and organisational culture. The findings suggest that mentorship has improved work performance and facilitated better navigation of organisational culture. Mentors assist mentees in understanding the complexities of organisational dynamics and culture, shaping their interactions with colleagues and the organisation as a whole. Mentors also help mentees build relationships and feel safe and welcome, enabling them to navigate the organisation's culture.

Eight participants reported that being mentored helped them improve their work performance, consistent with previous studies. Mentors provide guidance and

support, leading to increased success through enhanced productivity and job satisfaction. Mentors also enhance career satisfaction, with some participants citing the ability to challenge the status quo and eliminate fear of asking questions as crucial factors.

Research question three aimed to identify the qualities of an effective mentor for black executives. The key themes were the mentor's personality traits and their knowledge and experience. Personal traits such as empathy, authenticity, trust, honesty, sincerity, and a supportive environment were considered essential for mentorship success. Mentor availability was also a key factor, with three participants emphasising the importance of dedicating time to the mentoring relationship. Mentorship has significantly impacted the career advancement of black executives, enhancing their productivity and fostering a supportive environment for career development.

This research highlights the importance of mentoring relationships and the need for contracts or memorandums of understanding to ensure commitment. Positive personality traits such as empathy, honesty, respect, and good listening skills are crucial for effective mentoring. However, some scholars argue that some mentors' traits are unsuitable for effective mentoring relationships, and it takes patience, hard work, and practice to become great mentors.

Mentors' knowledge and relevant experience are also essential for successful mentoring relationships. Mentors should have relevant industry knowledge and leverage their network for the benefit of their mentees. The goal of a mentorship relationship is to gain from the experience and knowledge of one's mentor.

The study found that mentoring influenced the career development of black executives through personal growth, leadership development, strategic career advancement, networking, and enhanced communication and leadership engagement skills. These outcomes enabled mentees to improve their work performance and navigate the organisational culture more effectively. The qualities of mentors, such as personality traits, knowledge, and experience, are underpinned by these outcomes. Overall, mentoring relationships play a crucial role in enabling mentees to make significant career choices and achieve top-level positions.



## **Chapter 7      Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **7.1 Introduction**

The objective of this chapter is to summarise the key research findings in relation to the research aims and research questions, as well as the value and contribution thereof. It also reviews the limitations of the study and proposes opportunities for future research.

This study set out to explore the influence of mentorship on the career development of black executives in the South African context. The importance of this study stemmed from the prevalence of underrepresentation of black executives in top positions of major corporations in South Africa (DEL, 2022). This research investigated the influence of mentorship on the career development of the few black executives who made it to the top positions.

The key research questions were:

- 1)      How has mentorship advanced black executives' career development?
- 2)      How do mentored black executives perform and navigate organisational culture?
- 3)      What are the qualities of an effective mentor according to black executives in South Africa?

To answer these questions, mono-method qualitative research was used, and the researcher was able to gain an in-depth and detailed understanding of mentorship's influence on black executives' career development. The study has shown that mentorship played a role in advancing the careers of black executives.

## **7.2 Summary of Literature Review**

The existing literature provides valuable insights into the role of mentorship in the development of mentees' careers. Mentorship has been shown to improve career progression and advancement in numerous studies. Increasing network access, increasing job satisfaction, improving self-confidence, and understanding organisational dynamics have been associated with these mentoring relationships. Furthermore, mentees can benefit from mentorship by gaining guidance, support, and sponsorship to help them with challenges they may face in their careers.

There are still gaps in knowledge that need to be explored further. Most research on mentorship focuses on its benefits. However, more research is needed to determine how black executives access and benefit from mentorship opportunities since they face specific challenges and barriers. Furthermore, more qualitative studies should be conducted to explore how mentorship impacts black executives' career trajectories and experiences over time. To address this knowledge gap, further research is needed, including an examination of the specific challenges faced by black executives in mentorship and career development, as well as an understanding of the lived experiences of black executives in this regard. This was the area that the researcher focused on in this study.

## **7.3 Main Findings**

### **7.3.1 How has mentorship influenced the career development of black executives?**

The research findings suggest that mentorship has advanced the careers of black executives through:

#### *1) advancing black executives' personal growth and leadership development*

Evidence in this study indicated that mentoring relationships enabled this through, among other things, providing mentees with mentors who became sounding boards for career-related ideas, enhancing their confidence, and improving their leadership skills.

## *2) through strategic career advancements and networking*

The study has shown that mentors emphasised the importance of setting career goals, relationship building, and assessing developmental gaps of mentees through the mentorship process.

## *3) enabling effective communication and leadership engagements*

Evidence in the study showed that mentors played a role in enhancing black executives' communication skills and leadership engagement abilities.

### **7.3.2 How do mentored black executives perform and navigate organisational culture?**

The research findings illustrated that mentoring relationships led to an improvement in work performance for black executives. Furthermore, research findings suggested that mentorship resulted in black executives navigating organisational culture much better. Evidence in the study suggested that mentors assisted black executives in understanding the complexities of organisational dynamics and culture. The research findings indicated that mentors positively impacted mentees' understanding of corporate culture and shaped their interactions with colleagues and the culture of the organisation.

Evidence in the study further indicated that mentors assisted black executives with improving work performance. Findings suggested several ways that led to improvement in mentees' work performance, namely, 1) mentors assisted them with learning to question for understanding, 2) mentees mentioned that through mentorship, they were able to learn how to challenge the status quo, which led to them being more impactful at work, and 3) by learning how to appreciate feedback (through mentorship) mentees were able to improve work performance. These findings indicated that black executives experienced an improvement in work performance, albeit for different reasons.

### **7.3.3 What are the qualities of an effective mentor, according to black executives in South Africa?**

The research findings to this research question suggest that for mentors to be effective, two key themes are critical. Firstly, the mentor's own personality traits, and secondly, the mentor's knowledge and experience. Evidence in the research indicated that qualities such as trust, honesty, sincerity, and authenticity are central to personality traits. Black executives interviewed in the study suggested that for mentors to be more effective in supporting the career advancements of black executives, these personality traits are essential.

Furthermore, evidence in the study indicated that for mentors to be more effective in supporting the career advancements of black executives, the mentor's experience and industry knowledge are vital. Findings in this study have shown the importance of mentors having relevant experience in the industry and/or the company of mentees, as this enables mentees to leverage their networks and guidance through their career journeys using the mentor's own experiences.

## **7.4 Recommendations**

### **7.4.1 Theoretical Perspective**

This study provided valuable insights into the impact mentorship has had on the career development of black executives in South Africa. The study identified specific ways in which mentorship contributed to the advancement of black executives in their careers. Firstly, through advancing black executives' personal growth and leadership development. Secondly, through strategic career planning and networking. Thirdly, through enabling effective communication and leadership engagements. Future black leaders can use this study's findings to advance their career development by leveraging mentorship.

The study built on the transformational leadership theory component of individualised considerations by sharing how mentees (black executives) were transformed into valuable resources for better performance as well as the positive impact on their

leadership skills because of their mentoring relationships. The fields of career development, mentorship and transformational leadership have been advanced.

### **7.4.2 In Practice**

Organisations in South Africa can leverage the findings of this study to drive the much-needed implementation of mentorship programs for their black middle managers. Despite the efficacy of mentorship, there are not many programs. This study suggests that there should be more mentorship programs. The findings of this study have shown that black executives benefited from their mentoring relationships. Implementing formal mentorship programs will assist businesses in their noble efforts towards closing the gap of black executives in top-level positions in corporate South Africa. Furthermore, the study outlined the qualities of an effective mentor for black executives in South Africa. This should assist organisations in paring mentors to mentees to ensure effective and successful mentoring relationships.

## **7.5 Limitations of the Study**

Participants in this study were all based in Gauteng province, South Africa. Black executives in different parts of the country or even outside South Africa may have faced different challenges and experiences, which might potentially lead to different perceptions about mentoring relationships. Granted, the limited geographic scope of this study might limit its generalisability; however, this research was qualitative and sought to contribute to a better understanding of the lived experiences of black executives as it relates to mentorship.

The research was cross-sectional in nature. Single data collection was used, and although deemed sufficient in addressing the research questions, insights provided by research participants may change over time. It may be useful if longitudinal studies can be undertaken to examine the long-term effects of mentorship on the career development of black executives. A longitudinal study may provide a deeper understanding of how mentorship influences career advancement over time.

All the interviews with research participants were conducted virtually. There is a possibility that non-verbal cues such as body language and facial expressions, which are essential for understanding the interviewee's personality, may be more difficult to discern during a virtual interview.

## **7.6 Recommendations for Future Studies**

The researcher makes the following recommendations for future research.

It may be useful if longitudinal studies can be undertaken to examine the long-term effects of mentorship on the career development of black executives in order to gain a deeper understanding of how mentorship influences career advancement over time.

Researchers in the future can analyse the effectiveness of mentoring across various industries or sectors within South Africa so that they may determine whether mentorship has a varying impact across professions and industries.

A future study could examine at what stage in one's professional life mentorship impacts career progression most. For example, a future study could examine the impact of mentorship on the career development of mentees at both early career and mid-career stages, as well as senior executive levels.

## **7.7 Concluding Remarks**

This study set out to explore the influence of mentorship on the career development of black executives in South Africa. Through conducting a qualitative study and analysing data from 13 black executives, the researcher was able to show evidence that suggested that mentorship influenced the careers of black executives through 1) advancing black executives' personal growth and leadership development, 2) strategic career advancements and networking, and 3) through enhancing effective communication and leadership engagements.

Furthermore, research findings suggest that mentoring relationships have led to the improvement of work performance for black executives and have enabled mentees to navigate organisational culture much better. The study findings also suggested that two key themes are critical for a mentor to be effective. Firstly, the mentor's own personality traits, and secondly, the mentor's knowledge and experience are essential in making mentoring relationships more effective.

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## List of Appendices

- Appendix 1 : Interview Schedule
- Appendix 2 : Letter to Participants & Informed Consent
- Appendix 3 : Consistency Matrix
- Appendix 4 : Ethical Clearance Approval
- Appendix 5 : Permission from Participating Coaching Firm

## Appendix 1: Interview Schedule

**Research topic:** Exploring the influence of mentorship on the career development of black executives: The mentees' perspective.

**Date:** <record date and time of interview>

**Question 1:** Please provide your current employment details (current role and industry).

**Question 2:** Have you participated in any formal mentorship programs during your career? If so, could you share your experiences and the duration of your involvement in these programs?

**Question 3:** How did you establish your mentorship relationships? Did you seek out mentors, or were you assigned mentors through organisational programs?

**Question 4:** Can you describe some key ways your mentor(s) supported your career development? What specific guidance, advice, or opportunities did they provide?

**Question 5:** Did your mentors help you navigate any unique challenges or barriers that you faced as a black executive in South Africa? If so, could you provide some examples?

**Question 6:** How did your mentorship experiences contribute to your professional growth and advancement? Are there any specific achievements or milestones you attribute to your mentorship relationships?

**Question 7:** How would you describe the impact of mentorship on your self-confidence, leadership abilities, and overall career trajectory?

**Question 8:** How has being mentored impacted your performance at work?

**Question 9:** How has being mentored impacted how you show up at work?

**Question 10:** In your opinion, what are the key qualities or characteristics that make a mentor effective in supporting the career development of black executives?

**Question 11:** Have you had any experiences with informal mentorship? If so, how have those relationships influenced your career development, and how do they differ from formal mentorship programs?

**Question 12:** What recommendations or suggestions would you offer to organisations looking to establish or enhance mentorship programs for black executives in South Africa? How can such programs be more effective and impactful?

**Question 13:** Are there any additional insights or experiences you would like to share regarding the influence of mentorship on your career development?

## Appendix 2: Letter to Participants & Informed Consent

I am currently a student at the University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science and completing my research in partial fulfilment of an MBA.

I am researching the **influence of mentorship on the career development of black executives in South Africa**. I am conducting this study to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact mentorship has on the professional growth and career advancement of black executives within the context of South Africa.

Our interview is expected to last about an hour and will help us understand how mentorship has influenced the career development of black executives in South Africa. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw without penalty. All data will be reported without identifiers, and the information shared during the interview shall be treated with utmost confidentiality.

If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or me. Our details are provided below.

Researcher name: Lefty Theka

Email: LivhuTheka@gmail.com

Research Supervisor Name: Rhys Johnstone

Email: JohnstoneR@gibs.co.za

Participant Name: .....

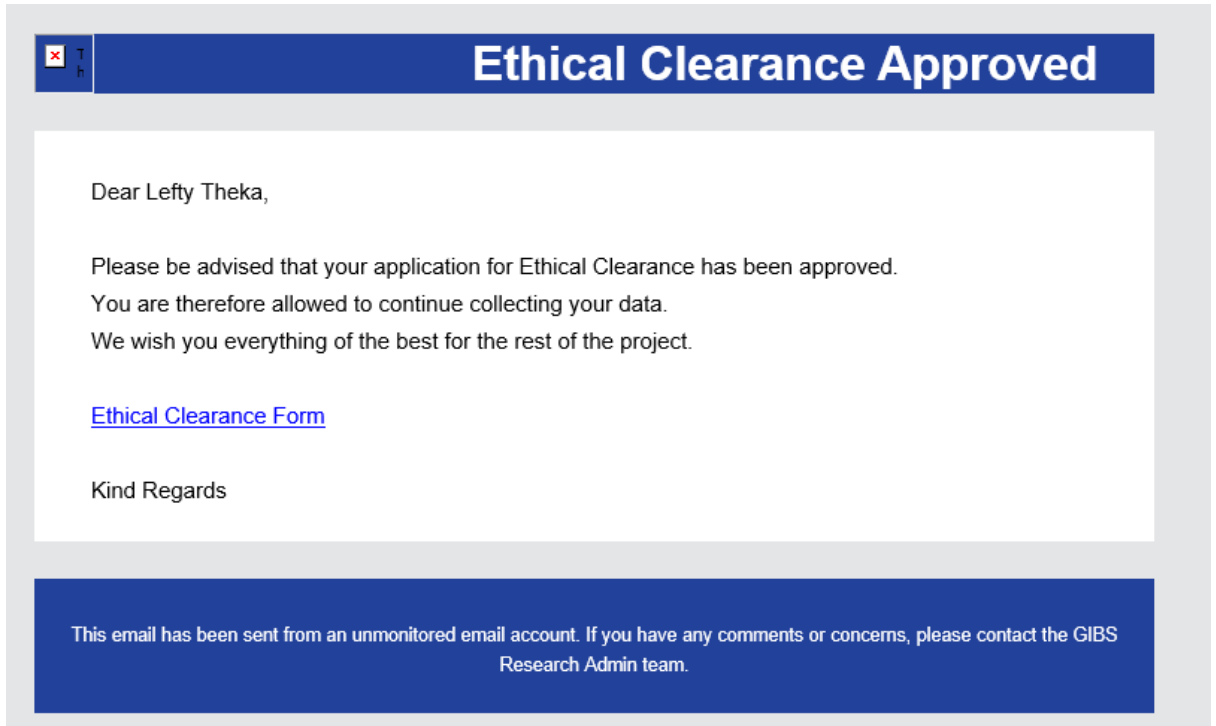
Signature .....

## Appendix 3: Consistency Matrix

**RESEARCH TITLE: Exploring the influence of mentorship on the career development of black executives: The mentees' perspective**

Research Questions	Literature Review	Data Collection Tool	Analysis
1. How has mentorship influenced the career development of black executives?	Costa and Smith, 2023 Chang et al., 2022 Shuler et al., 2021 Robinson et al., 2017 Gurnani et al., 2022 Cross et al., 2019 Engelhardt et al., 2023 Vitali, 2018 Rosser et al., 2023 Deris et al., 2021 Forster and Hill, 2019 Burgess, 2018	Interview guide: Questions 4,5,6,7	Content analysis on open-ended questions
2. How do mentored black executives perform and navigate organisational culture?	Stewart & Harrison, 2016 Henry-Noel et al, 2019 Chang et al., 2022 Costa and Smith, 2023 Engelhardt et al., 2023 Ekron et al., 2023 Rosser et al., 2023	Interview guide: Questions 8, 9	Content analysis on open-ended questions
3. What are the qualities of an effective mentor according to black executives?	Stewart & Harrison, 2016 Shuler et al., 2021 Steelman et al. 2023 Pellegrin, 2006 Hudson and Hudson, 2018	Interview guide: Question 10	Content analysis on open-ended questions

## Appendix 4: Ethical Clearance Approval



The image shows a screenshot of an email. At the top, there is a blue header bar with a small icon on the left and the text "Ethical Clearance Approved" in white. Below the header is a white main content area. The text in the email reads: "Dear Lefty Theka," followed by "Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved. You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data. We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project." There is a blue hyperlink labeled "Ethical Clearance Form". Below this is the text "Kind Regards". At the bottom of the email, there is a blue footer bar with white text that reads: "This email has been sent from an unmonitored email account. If you have any comments or concerns, please contact the GIBS Research Admin team."

Dear Lefty Theka,

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.  
You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.  
We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

[Ethical Clearance Form](#)

Kind Regards

This email has been sent from an unmonitored email account. If you have any comments or concerns, please contact the GIBS Research Admin team.

## Appendix 5: Permission from Participating Coaching Firm

# DMMLC

David Munslow Leadership Coaching  
P O Box 130682  
BRYANSTON 2021  
Cell: + 27 82 900 0145  
Tel and Fax: + 27 11 706 4411  
Email: [munslow.coach@tiscali.co.za](mailto:munslow.coach@tiscali.co.za)

22 July 2023

Dear Livhuhani Theka

Re: Recommendation of Potential Participants for Research Study on "Exploring the Influence of Mentorship on Career Development of Black Executives"

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for your research study on the influence of mentorship on the career development of black executives. As a professional mentor with extensive experience in guiding and supporting individuals in their career journeys, I am thrilled to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in this critical area.

I am more than willing to provide a recommended list of individuals I have mentored, who I believe could be potential participants for your study. Each of these individuals has benefited from mentorship in their careers and can provide valuable insights into the role it played in their development as black executives. They come from various industries and possess diverse skill sets, enriching the perspectives that your study aims to explore.

Once again, I applaud your dedication to exploring this essential aspect of career development, and I am confident that your research will make a meaningful contribution to the field of mentorship and executive career advancement.

I wish you all the best in your research endeavour.

Yours Sincerely  
