Career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies

of freelance workers in a gig economy

Nicol Mullins

24209288

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ABSTRACT

The fourth industrial revolution has contributed to the rise of the "gig worker" or freelancer. The new economy, also known as the gig economy, provides an opportunity for freelance agents to conduct work as non-permanent employees. Growth in the gig economy is expected to continue in the near future, with more permanent employees adopting this way of work.

The academic literature has not adequately explored what the career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies are that are required to be successful in this gig economy. This study aims to identify the required attitudes, behaviours and competencies to be successful. The study was based on the career self-management model developed by Lent and Brown (2013), based on social cognitive career theory.

Qualitative, exploratory, inductive research methods were applied in order to gain insights into career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies. A total of 15 semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with freelancers. Each interview was analysed by means of thematic content analysis, averaging 25 minutes per interview. Interviews were transcribed, coded and thematic analysis was applied to answer the research questions.

The key findings confirmed career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies that have been identified through the theory and a review of literature. The contribution made by this study is that attitudes, behaviours and competencies as a collective are essential, they are interlinked and connected; success is not possible without all three constructs being fulfilled. It provided context to potential freelancers, whether this is a career-path they would like to embrace.

The researcher proposed a framework that depicts the interlinked and connected nature of career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies. The researcher proposed that the framework is applied to other models or frameworks to draw on several aspects of academic studies. A limitation of the study was that success was not measured. The findings from this research add to the existing literature in the field of vocational behaviour.

KEYWORDS

Freelancers, freelance workers, attitudes, behaviours, competencies, technical competencies, social competencies, gig economy, new economy.

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.

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Nicol Mullins

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1 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1 Introduction

This study explores the career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies, both social and technical, that are required to be successful in the new economy. Through this exploratory study, the researcher outlines that it is not only the constructs in isolation that are key but the interlinked and connected nature thereof. With this knowledge and understanding, it may assist freelancers to be successful in the new economy.

1.2 Description of the problem

Much has been written about the future of work from the perspective of organisations and how they are adapting to the changing environment, but less so from the perspective of the freelance worker. Kuhn (2016) notes that freelance workers, or freelancing, is a category that is altogether an understudied field within industrial and organisational psychology. What has been outlined as the new economy or world of work has already been embraced by more than one-fifth of workers in the United States, and the practice of working as freelancers is predicted to grow (Petriglieri, Ashford, & Wrzesniewski, 2019). It is known that the world around us is changing; what is not known is what career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies are required to be successful in this new economy (Hirschi, 2018). It is not only crucial for freelancers to be aware of what it might take to be successful in the new economy, but also for organisations to be aware what to look out for (Ashford et al., 2018).

Ashford, Caza and Reid (2018, p. 24) posited that, in an ever-changing world, "theories risk becoming far less practical". This research study aimed to practically uncover the career-related attitudinal characteristics, behaviours and competencies, both social and technical, that are required to be successful in the new economy (Hirschi, 2018). Theories applied today were developed with a different era in mind, and how to work, by whom and where work has done has fundamentally shifted (Ashford, George, & Blatt, 2007). Ashford et al. (2018) posit that new theory is required and especially new research is required to uncover what individuals can do to be successful in this new way of working.

The rise of the gig economy has broadened the talent pool for organisations, but the determinants of success for freelancers working in the new economy need to be better understood (Ashford, Caza, & Reid, 2018). As much as the pool has been increased from which organisations may draw contract employees, it also poses a challenge to organisations seeking to attract, motivate and retain top talent who are willing to embrace this career-path (Rodrigues, Guest, Oliveira, & Alfes, 2015).

The professional career development and vocational psychology literature has, however, not identified the career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies required, which represent a gap in academic literature (Hirschi, 2018; Ashford et al., 2018).

1.3   The rationale for this research

Hirschi (2018, p. 192) states that "digitisation and automation might, therefore, be one of the most important issues to shape the future nature of career choices, career development, and career counselling". These technological changes bring about a volatile environment, not only for organisations, but also for individuals with new competencies to be gained (Mazilu, 2018). Mazilu (2018) posits that adapting to changes and embracing new learning environments are essential in order to thrive in the new economy.

Frey and Osborne (2017) estimated that 47% of jobs in the United States are susceptible to automation. In the context of the fourth industrial revolution, there are several roles that exist now which did not exist a decade ago. Roles such as Social Media Management, Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) Specialist, Application Developer, Uber Driver, Driverless Car Engineer, Podcast Producer and a Telemedicine Physician are examples (Keystone Academic Solutions, 2019). There might be many more unusual roles to come based on the exponential acceleration of technological developments (Schwab, 2017). Roles that will emerge, that may not require fulltime employment, but are better suited to freelance workers, willing to work on an ad-hoc basis as and when required, as noted by Kuhn (2016), remain understudied.

Not only is this research important and relevant to freelancers, but also to organisations. This research will benefit organisations so that they can understand better what the required career-related attitudes, behavioural characteristics and competencies are, and what freelancers need to demonstrate to contribute to career success. Knowing this may

be useful during the engagement process prior to freelancers being chosen.

The manner in which work is done has fundamentally shifted and will continue to do so. Within this context, this study answers the call to action by Hirschi (2018) to uncover which career behaviours, attitudes, and competencies are essential for success in the new economy and who is more or less likely to exhibit and develop these under certain conditions.

The research builds on the career self-management model developed by Lent and Brown (2013), with a specific focus on freelance workers and the career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies that are required to be successful in the new economy. The seminal work of Arthur (2014) and Hall (2004) outlining that boundaryless and protean career frameworks are still relevant and essential but may not take into consideration changing environments (Guan, Arthur, Khapova, Hall, & Lord, 2019).

More people might be displaced from their current roles based on the automation and digitisation of work (Schwab, 2017). These workers may embrace freelancing as a career choice; as such, it is vital to explore what the career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies are that may make freelancers successful. Success is defined in both objective and subjective manners and will be addressed in Chapter 2. The purpose of the study was not to determine what success means, although it is a critical positioning factor in discussion with interviewees.

There is no doubt that the fourth industrial revolution will have a significant impact on business and people alike, and that right now, there is a need for career research that will address several key areas relating to this new context (Hirschi, 2018). With the apparent increase in the reality of remote work, more agents may embrace freelance work which will lead them to make career choices based on, but not limited to, their development, growth, performance and goals. Lent (2018, p. 216) concludes that "those who provide career services also need to plan for and manage their own careers." This statement applies to freelancers uniformly in the context of career success.

1.4   Research problem

The aim of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of the career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies that are required by freelancers to be successful in the new economy. This research aims to determine:

1. How do career-related attitudinal characteristics demonstrated by freelance workers influence their success?
2. How do the career-related technical competencies that freelance workers acquire influence their success?
3. How do the career-related social competencies that freelance workers demonstrate influence their success?
4. How do the career-related behaviours of freelance workers influence their success?

This study applies the career self-management model, designed to complement social cognitive career theory (SCCT), as the basis for career-self management developed by Lent and Brown (2013). The researcher aimed to uncover what the career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies are that drive a freelancer's success. The insights have contributed to the development of a framework that outlines the interlinked relationship between attitudes, behaviours and competencies of freelance workers.

Therefore, the theoretical contribution made with this study is that attitudes, behaviours and competencies as a collective are important. They are interlinked and connected; success is not possible without all three constructs being dynamically fulfilled. Although each construct can stand alone, it is the combination of attitudes and behaviours through action and the development of competencies by that action that develops technical and social competence, which in turn impacts attitudes and behaviours.

The literature review in Chapter 2 focuses on the existing academic literature available on the known attitudes, behaviours and competencies that have been uncovered.

Understanding the 'ABC's of freelancing' will benefits potential and current freelancers as well as organisations who are open to this employee category. The researcher has developed a practical framework that outlines the interlinked and connected relationship

between the career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies that may contribute to being successful in the new economy.

Freelancing in South Africa may not be as developed as in other countries. Based on low levels of unemployment and our specific context – the emergence of the phenomenon may, however, provide opportunities for many. It may even mean that permanently employed people leave their employment, which in turn opens up opportunities for others to step into vacant positions. Little research has been conducted in the South African context.

1.5   Structure of this report

This chapter provided an overview of the introduction to the research report. It is known that the working world is changing; what is not known is what career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies are required to be successful in this new economy (Hirschi, 2018). It is not only crucial for freelancers to be aware of what it might take to be successful in the new economy, but also for organisations to be aware of what to look out for (Ashford et al., 2018).

This research paper follows the following order: Chapter 2 provides an overview of the existing literature as it relates to career-related success, attitudes, behaviour and competencies. Chapter 3 presents the research questions that formed the basis for the study. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the methodology applied during the research study. Chapter 5 present the results of the interviews conducted. Chapter 6 is the discussion of the results. Chapter 7 is the final chapter in this research report and outlines the linkages and interconnected nature of career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies, and in conclusion the limitations and future suggestions for research are provided.

2 CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section outlines the theoretical lens that was applied in the study and includes an overview of the academic literature related to the topic. The study aimed to contribute to the field of vocational behaviour and provide insights into the career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies that freelancers require to be successful in the new economy. This chapter forms the foundation to the research questions tha were aksed in this study. The concepts of the gig economy and new economy were used interchangeably in this study to outline the new way of working for organisations.

2.2 Social cognitive career theory

Ashford, Caza and Reid (2018, p. 24) posited that, in an ever-changing world, "theories risk becoming far less practical". In a changing world, it is thus important for research to continuously contribute in fields that are understudied. Hirschi (2018, p. 192) states that, "It seems clear that digitization and automation might therefore be one of the most important issues to shape the future nature of career choices, career development, and career counseling." The changing world is shaped by the fourth industrial revolution and the future of work; however, it seems that the academic literature in several fields, like vocational psychology, career studies and counselling, has placed a call to action to research this phenomenon in more detail (Barley, Bechky, & Milliken, 2017).

Self-employment unlocks the requirement for those who choose this career path to manage their careers. Hirschi (2018) suggests that Lent and Brown's (2013) career self-management model is essential for career self-cmanagement.

Social cognitive career theory (SCCT) developed by Lent et al. (1994) has its origin in the social cognitive theory developed by Bandura (1986). Lent, Brown and Hackett (1994, p. 79) outline that "general social cognitive theory, emphasises the means by which individuals exercise personal agency in the career development process, as well as extra-personal factors that enhance or constrain agency". SCCT is aimed at explaining three interrelated career development aspects: development of career interests, how education

decisions are made, and how career success is obtained (Lent & Brown, 2013).

SCCT can be applied to understanding why people choose certain career paths (Hirschi, 2018). Sheu and Bordon (2017) suggested based on their research of SCCT that high levels of self-efficacy with regard to requirements of a task to be accomplished play a major role in whether somebody would develop an interested in a particular field.

Social cognitive career theory suggests that career self-efficacy can "be both an antecedent and an outcome of success" (Spurk, Hirschi, & Dries, 2019, p. 9). Building on SCCT, Lent and Brown's (2013, p. 561) career self-management model presents itself in two parts, "proximal person and contextual influences", which impacts "on adaptive career behaviors and the outcomes of these behaviors." The career self-management model (CSMM) proposed by Lent and Brown in an effort to understand "career development across the lifespan, such as how people manage the tasks involved in career preparation, entry, adjustment, and change" (Ireland & Lent, 2018, p. 37). Figure 1 provides the CSMM which applies social cognitive career theory.
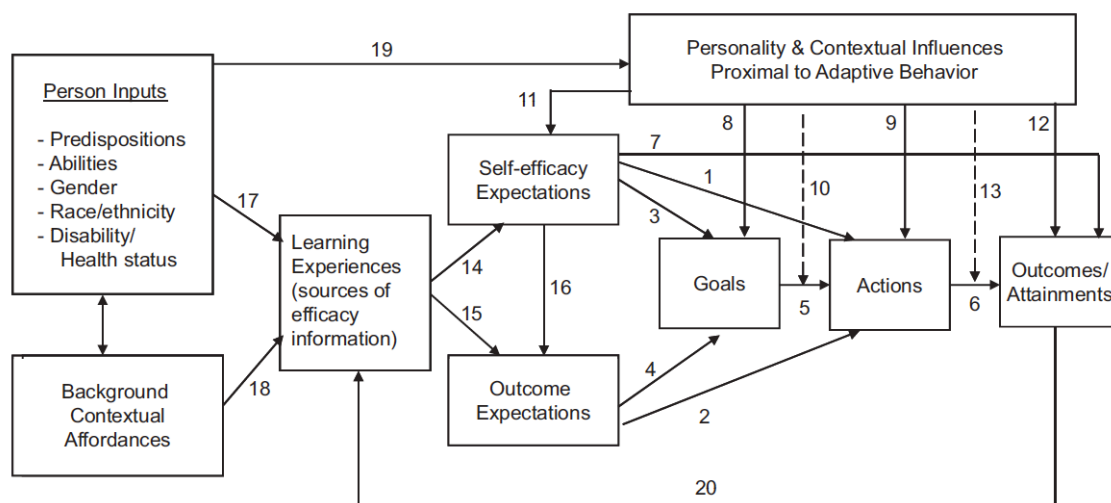
Figure 1: Social cognitive model for career self-management
Source: Lent & Brown. (2013).

The socio-cognitive variables of self-efficacy, outcome expectations and goals are defined in relation to career adaptive behaviours and their outcomes (Lent & Brown, 2013). SCCT suggest that that individuals are more likely to attempt a specific action or follow a behaviour if they deem they have the capabilities to be successful and that in doing so

they will achieve the desired outcomes (Lent & Brown, 2013). The CSSM focuses on goals, actions and outcomes, but neglects to incorporate the technical and social competencies that are required through the process and rather focus on adaptive behaviours. Path 20 suggested a feedback loop from outcomes to learning experiences, but the loop is not necessarily linear in nature and can firstly impact self-belief before reflection on learning experiences takes place. The model neglects to outline the connected and interlinked nature of each component. It suggest that there is one direction for the flow, which is not necessarily the case.

2.3   The future of work

The fourth industrial revolution has given rise in the prominence of what the future of work might entail (Teagarden, 2019). The manner in which work is being done has shifted from what it was 15 years ago, work now can be done remotely by non-permanent employees, and the question of how to keep up with the changing pace is asked ever more frequently (Clifton & Harter, 2019). The future of work centre on what work can be automated, who can do the work and where the work can be done and has recently shifted to the working landscape for people (Schwab, 2017). Much has been written in the popular media, with consulting houses focusing on the concept of the future of work. What is not known is what the career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies are that are required to be successful in the new economy (Hirschi, 2018).

Changes in the nature of work within the context of the fourth industrial revolution will impact the resourcing of organisations with a focus on their employees, direct or indirect (Hirschi, 2018). This means that organisations will have to continue to review their resourcing requirements. Technological advances which create ease of access to information facilitated through the internet as a platform, have given rise to the gig economy worker (Alkhatib, Bernstein, & Levi, 2017). On-demand services like Uber and Airbnb have changed the commercial landscape for doing business (Donovan, Bradley, & Shimabukuru, 2016). The changing environment, together with the establishment of digital platforms, have given rise to the gig economy, which provides broader access to talent, and organisations now have the opportunity to compete globally to drive growth (Manyika, Lund, Bughin, Robinson, Mischke, & Mahajan, 2016; Tarique & Schuler, 2010). Working freelance allows for flexible work arrangements, not only in the duration of the contract and working times but also for the location in which work is performed. Freelancing

undermines the notions of stability and security that were associated with employment.

Taking the media industry as an example: most jobs are now given to freelancers (Storey, Salaman, & Platman, 2005). This arrangement has given rise to greater flexibility, which comes in various forms such as location, the employer-employee relationship (communications), and when work is done (synchronisation) (Spreitzer, Cameron, & Garrett, 2017). The recognition that the growth in the employee categories may come from non-permanent employees is a possibility to be considered and recognised (Boudreau, Jesuthasan, & Creelman, 2015).

Regardless of the popular views held regarding which new roles will be created by future technological acceleration, there is one specific view that widespread unemployment is unlikely to become a reality in the new and near future (Arntz, Gregory, & Zierahn, 2016; Autor, 2015; Furman, 2016). There is, however, little doubt that new roles will be created, which results in the growing prevalence of independent gig work. This may have realisable economic benefits to a country's economy and allow for self-employment (Manyika et al., 2016). In the South African context, parallels cannot naturally be assumed between developed and emerging markets in terms of technological changes taking place (Chetty, 2018).

2.3.1 Automation of work

Schwab (2017) cites Brynjolfsson and McAfee's observations on the potential impact of the aforementioned changes to the labour market. Not only has the fourth industrial revolution been written about in the academic literature, but also it has enjoyed significant focus from business, governments and society (Hirschi, 2018). The fourth industrial revolution and the speed at which technology is progressing means that a state of disequilibrium can be reached even faster in the labour market, and that the individual's ability to adapt will improve (Schwab, 2017; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

2.3.2 The emergence of freelance work

The fourth industrial revolution centred on the automation and digitisation of work has thus far been covered at length in the literature (Hirschi, 2018; Ashford et al., 2018). As early as 1985, Charles Handy wrote about the shamrock organization, outlining that the ideal

manner of organising an workforce is to form a core of essential executives and workers, supported by outside contractors and part-time help (Handy, 2014). The concept of freelancing is not new, but has risen in popularity in the most recent years, based on technological advancements.

Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski (2019) pointed out that freelance work presents unique problems to those embracing this career choice. When formally employed, there were certain forms of protection offered in the form of economic security and career development, and this in exchange for the employees' time, talents and knowledge (Donovan et al., 2016; Cobb, 2015). Freelance workers, however, are faced with daily decisions centred on career development that consist of 1) intentional self-directed steps taken for career development, 2) career self-management over a lifetime, 3) creating a sense of meaning and personal identity with blurred boundaries between work and non-work, 4) social connection and securing work that will fulfil basic human needs in the absence of a traditional employer-based relationship (Hirschi, 2018).

2.3.3 Location of work

The researcher draws on the career definition of Van Maanen and Schein's seminal work (1977), that individuals are shaped by their holistic experience through life. Thus, not in isolation, but rather a collective of all the experiences that shape individuals, which might have been separate in nature, but, as a collective, form the individual (Arthur, 2014). Career development is driven by an individual's attitude, followed by their behaviour as well as external forces impacting individuals. These development decisions might be driven forward faster based on the technological advances experienced in the context of the fourth industrial revolution.

The word *adapt* comes from Latin, meaning to be able to fit together or to join. There are several other words that build on the root word *adapt* which are key for freelance workers (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). A state of harmony exists when the freelance worker adapts to the changing environment and positions their ability to meet the external requirements (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

The ability to identify and deal with career tasks that freelance workers might be confronted with are essential (Hirschi, 2018). Hirschi (2012) identified four career resources that can be drawn from to help deal with the career tasks freelance workers

might be faced with. The resources are psychological, career identity, and social and human capital resources, and it is in the development of these career resources that one might be able to deal with career tasks (Hirschi, 2012). Hirschi, Nagy, Baumeler, Johnston and Spurk (2018) built on the work done by Hirschi (2012) and identified 13 career resources within four career dimensions. The 13 career resources grouped within four career dimensions are as follows:

Table 1: Four key career resource dimensions and specific career resources

Career Resource Dimensions	Specific Career Resources
Human Capital	"occupational expertise"
	"job market knowledge"
	"soft skills"
Environmental	"career opportunities"
	"organizational career support"
	"job challenge"
	"social career support"
Motivational	"career involvement"
	"career confidence"
	"career clarity".
Career management behaviours	"Networking"
	"Career exploration learning"

Source: Hirschi et al. (2018, p. 20-21).

In conclusion, within the career management behaviours, Hirschi et al. (2018, p. 21) identifed "career networking" and "career exploration learning" as resources that are key across the four dimensions for the prediction of career success.

It is the utilisation across the dimensions, exploring the various resources that new tasks might be situated within, which naturally leads into the career-related attitudes, behaviours and career competencies that are required. No model is exhaustive, and the study aims to seek additional resources or factors within the dimensions that might be applicable to freelance workers (Hirschi et al., 2018).

2.4 Career success

Arthur, Khapova, and Wilderom (2005, p. 179) define success as "the accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in a person's work experiences over time". The literature suggests that there are objective and subjective measures of career success (Guan et al., 2019; Arthur et al., 2005).

Objective career success can be reflected in multiple ways and often reflected in perceived the status of a person, which is potentially indicated by a title, perceived earnings and skills and knowledge demonstrated as an individual (Arthur et al., 2005; Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005; Nicholson & De Waal-Andrews, 2005). Subjective career success is based on the views held by an individual of what success might mean. The attainment of success manifests in a better quality of life, balanced lifestyle, being in control of one's destiny and other forms of personal fulfilment, career and job satisfaction (Guan et al., 2019; Volmer & Spurk, 2011).

It is vital for freelancers to define what career success means, and what the steps are to be taken to attain their outlined vision of success. Their attitude to success will drive their behaviour, which in turn will continue to build their competencies enabled through their learning agility. The following section provides an overview of the existing literature on career-related attitudes.

2.5   Career-related attitudes

DeFillippi and Arthur (1994) introduced the boundaryless orientated career attitude, which highlighted the mobility orientation of employees. The concept of boundaryless career orientation was developed based on the changing environment in organisational settings (Volmer & Spurk, 2011). The broad idea of boundaryless careers was made popular by General Electric, Chief Executive Officer Jack Welch, who was driven to get things done and wanted employees to do what needed to be done. A boundaryless career is centred on the notion that career opportunities exist across organisational boundaries; that it transcends not only one single organisation, but that opportunities exist across multiple organisations (Arthur, 2014).

Freelance workers can truly be seen as an expansion of the definition of the boundaryless careers concept. Career development for freelancers is a reflection of self-imposed boundaries, in comparison to the boundaries imposed by organisations (Arthur, 2014). Freelancers work across organisational boundaries, but in this they need to take full responsibility for their career development, which reflects directly on their attitude towards personal growth. A boundaryless career attitude is defined as an attitude that navigates the changing work landscape by enacting a career characterised by different levels of

"both physical and psychological mobility" (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006, p. 23).

Freelancers are forced to take charge of their own careers, which in turn reflects a protean career orientation (Hall, 2004). Hall (2004, p. 1) refers to the Protean career attitude orientation "in which the person, not the organization, is in charge, where the persons core values are driving career decisions, and where the main success criteria are subjective (psychological success)." Freelancers who hold boundaryless and protean career attitudes are self-directed and manage their own careers (Guo, Wang, & Wang, 2019).

2.5.1 Risk Propensity

A shift in one's career-path exposes new entrants to a certain amount of career, financial and emotional risk. The propensity for risk-taking is outlined as one of four traits associated with self-employment (Van den Born and Van Witteloostuijn, 2013). As freelancers accept several kinds of risks; not only business, but also personal it can be argued that it takes an almost entrepreneur-like appetite for risk-taking to embrace this career-path (Lo Presti, Pluviano, & Briscoe, 2018).

Freelance work can truly be seen as an expansion of the definition of boundaryless careers concept, that career development is a reflection of self-imposed boundaries, rather than imposed boundaries by organisations, physical place of work and number of employers (Arthur, 2014). Freelancers work across organisational boundaries, but in this they need to take full responsibility for their career development, which reflects directly on their attitude towards personal growth. Freelancers are forced to take charge of their own careers, which in turn reflects a protean career orientation (Hall, 2004).

2.5.2 Self-Directed Learning

As famously stated by Alvin Toffler, the ability to learn, unlearn and relearn will be essential for the change of behaviour, exhibiting a growth mind-set. As freelancers are in charge of their careers, they need to take charge of their learning opportunities too. Learning agility refers to one's ability "to come up to speed quickly in one's understanding of a situation and to move across ideas flexibly in service of learning both within and across experiences" (DeRue, Ashford, & Myers, 2012, p. 262-263). An attitude that is open to embracing each unique environment and adapting to the circumstances is key to freelancers. This relates to their ability to be aware not only of self, and others, but also

situations. The ability to learn while working will also be key, adapting to changing environments and being open to different organisations (Eichinger & Lombardo, 2004).

2.5.3 Emotional Awareness

All workers experience emotions in their chosen career, but Petriglieri et al. (2019) suggest that freelancers experience a greater variety of emotions. The ebbs and flow of work, coupled with financial uncertainty, instability with regard to working relationships brings about a wide range of emotions that employed workers would not necessarily be exposed to in formal employment (Ashford et al., 2018).

Hall (2004, p. 6) outlines two meta-competencies that are essential to be protean: "adaptability and identity (self-awareness)". This will remain key in the gig economy. This is supported by Lent and Brown (2013) with regards to adaptable career behaviours that are required at different career periods. Hall (2004) further posits that it is the combination of the meta-competencies, and not one or the other, that is key for the protean career orientation. Hirschi (2018) outlines that there might, however, be more required from freelancers with regard to career-self management and the attitude of taking charge of career development will become more important. Being aware of one's emotions is crucial.

2.5.4 High Levels of Self-Efficacy and A Positive Attitude

Embracing a career task or role with high levels of self-efficacy plays a significant role in whether one would develop a particular interest in a field (Hirschi, 2018). Sheu and Bordon (2017) confirm this view as outlined by SCCT. With the uncertainty that accompanies taking the leap to freelancing, a high level of self-belief is vital. Fostering new relationships and creating meaningful connections with future employers requires a positive attitude, as first impressions count (Butler & Stoyanova Russell, 2018).

2.5.5 Mind-set

Boundaryless-career-orientated individuals navigate an ever-changing working environment by "physical and psychological movement" (Volmer & Spurk, 2011, p. 209). The physical movement can be seen working in different countries, locations and working for a multitude of clients. Psychological movement is adapting to various environmental requirements.

The focus is on multiple opportunities that exist and not the prerequisite for physical mobility and an adaptive mindset. The ability to accept remote work has expanded the definition to not only focus on opportunities where mobility is required, but those opportunities where the requirement for commuting falls away. The fourth industrial revolution, through embracing technological advances has done away with the need for the commuting of individuals by not having to be physically present (Schwab, 2017). The uniqueness of freelance workers that might be bringing together both protean and boundaryless career orientation requires additional research to determine if a career orientation might need to be developed (Arthur, 2014).

2.5.6   Working independently

The ability to work independently and make decisions has been noted to be vital in the freelancing context (Kyndt & Baert, 2015). Ashford, Caza, and Reid (2018) argue that a structural characteristic of freelancing is that work is mostly done independently. This phenomenon is based upon the various employment relationships (Arthur, 2014). When left to manage oneself, it takes shape in many forms, both in delivering work, but also managing one's career. The requirement for individuals to take charge and ownership of their career development is key in the context of a boundaryless career and freelance work (Arthur, 2014). The ability to work independently is key, as individuals are uniquely placed in time and space, shaped by different experiences that are unique to the individual's industry, history and skills set. Thus, a forward-thinking and adaptive mindset must be adopted, as these factors will be amplified in future. Multidisciplinary exposure and the fusion of experience and exposure across organisations will give rise to new possibilities (Arthur, 2014).

The protean career orientation introduced in 1976 posits that career development is driven by the individual rather than by the organisation (Hall, 2004). The individual's values and behaviours are driving career decision-making and the decisions taken are subjective, still influenced by their environment, but the notion of self-development is at the forefront of decision making (Hall, 2004). It is not the first time in history that technological advances and changes have driven career decisions. The introduction of the personal computer in the 1980s, for example, gave rise to research centred on organisational commitment (Hall, 2004). In the context of the fourth industrial revolution, it is now more than ever a smart

adaptation that the protean career orientation is relevant and applicable to freelance workers. The following section provides an overview of the existing literature on career-related competencies; the section will outline technical and social competence separately.

2.6 Career-related competencies

Given the need for self-development and the constant need to update one's skills and knowledge to keep up with technological change, career self-management is expected to play an ever-increasing role (Ireland & Lent, 2018; Hirschi, 2018). Kyndt and Baert (2015, p. 14) outline that "competencies have been defined as combined and integrated components of knowledge, skills, and attitudes." Career competencies is a term freelancers are likely to be confronted with several times during their career lifespans. Competencies are typically learned while fulfilling a task or in a work environment instead of through formal education.

2.6.1 Career-related technical competencies

2.6.1.1 Role and industry-related skills and knowledge

Technical career competencies relate to the ability to meet specific client requirements within a specific context (Kyndt & Baert, 2015). Three career competencies identified over time are knowing-how, knowing-why and knowing-whom (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994). Colakoglu (2011) builds on the three identified competencies and elaborated on their interpretation. Knowing-how is related to transferable competencies gained through experiences (Colakoglu, 2011). Knowing-why is driven by the individual needs of freelancers to align their work to their passion, combined with work experiences (Colakoglu, 2011). Not only are freelancers required to fulfil their role-specific or job-specific tasks, but also to shed light on the industry practices based on their exposure (Kyndt & Baert, 2015). Knowing-whom relates to the broader network that is built over time, leveraging relationships to help drive career success (Colakoglu, 2011). The three competencies can be tied back to role, industry and a broader knowledge-content requirement for freelancers. The ability to uncover the cause of problems to be resolved is key in the execution of work.

2.6.1.2 Breadth and depth coupled with asking effective questions

The shift from only doing work that freelancers are familiar with and exploring other opportunities may contribute to their sustainable careers (Heslin, Keating, & Ashford, 2019). Pfeffer (2018) states that there is no one golden approach to having a sustainable career. Ashford et al. (2018, p. 37) argue that "proactive behavior can cultivate role-breadth self-efficacy and lead employees to define their roles in a more flexible manner", by developing role breadth a freelancer will be able to broaden their service offering and add additional value to their clients.

This further contributes to the career self-management model freelancers are required to apply during their journey (Lent & Brown, 2013). Based on the career freelancers would like to progress, their career decision-making path can influence freelancers to take on work in a field of study that they want to gain knowledge (Ireland & Lent, 2018).

Developing breadth and depth, combined with role and industry knowledge, allows for pointed questions to be asked, which relates to the uncovering of potential cause issues.

2.7 Career-related social competencies

Communication between people typically occurs in one of two manners or combined, verbally and non-verbally. Communication channels consisting of verbal and non-verbal modes need to be viewed in their entirety to interpret the meaning of the message (Hall, Horgan, & Murphy, 2019). Social competence is defined as "the ability of individuals to interact successfully with each other within a certain position and context" (Lans, Blok, & Gulikers, 2015, p. 458). Work experiences are shaped by relationships formed during work experiences with a focus on social interactions (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). Given the changing environments experienced by freelancers, they have fewer stable environments when compared to traditional employees, and these relationships are fostered with an array of stakeholders (Petriglieri et al., 2019; Schwartz, 2018). Being able to communicate both verbally and non-verbally are keys to success in the future of work. Where freelancing occurs in a remote setting, most communication occurs through non-verbal communication, and effective verbal communication increases in importance. These are, however, not new challenges as they have been overcome based on online classroom learning already taken to mainstream learning (Moore, 2016). The difference between

verbal and non-verbal communication is that non-verbal communication is not linguistic (Burgoon, Guerrero, & Manusov, 2011).

2.7.1 Verbal communication

Verbal communication includes both spoken and written communication and is linguistically orientated (Burgoon et al., 2011). Verbal communication is vital in defining expectations, communicating expectations and agreeing on outcomes. The ability to articulate the value proposition as a freelancer is vital and contributes to their credibility. supplemented by their technical competence. In the context of the future of work, enabling remote work and the potential loss of face-to-face time between freelancers and clients, can be substituted by the use of online tools for communication (Diaz, Chiaburu, Zimmerman, & Boswell, 2012). It is also crucial to be able to conclude on contracting arrangements and that all contracts are not only verbal (Mathisen, 2019). Freelancers' ability to market themselves on online platforms requires them to write their online profile to assist in securing work (Hirschi, 2018).

There is little doubt that communication, both verbal and non-verbal, are essential to freelancer's success. How they are used in achieving success will differ. Work cross borders may bring a further cultural dimension into play. Verbal communication is often reinforced by non-verbal cues, which makes clearly written communication essential to create a common understanding of what is required (Burgoon et al., 2011).

Given the complexity of verbal and non-verbal communication and the infinite number of ways in which they can be combined, there are numerous insights still to be gained across theory and practice. Changes in their environment based on job needs might force them to adapt continuously and to develop based on the needs of the work environment (Hirschi, 2018).

2.7.2 Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication (NVC) is defined by Hall et al. (2019, p. 272) as "behavior of the face, body, or voice minus the linguistic content, in other words, everything but the words". Bonaccio, O'Reilly, O'Sullivan and Chiocchio (2016) note that NVC may be implicitly or explicitly noticed by the receiver of communication. Some cues are

changeable, like body language, and others not (Bonaccio et al., 2016). Burgoon et al. (2011) outline that NVC can be viewed as subjective and open to interpretation.

Arguably NVC may be related to all other forms of communication that do not take place verbally, but still in person. Working relationships are crucial for freelancers as they are dependent on relationships once formed to continue to secure work. Blustein et al. (2008) highlight the need for additional research to assist with furthering the field of study in determining what may enhance the experience of freelance workers with a focus on social needs. Changes in their environment based on job needs might force them to adapt continuously and develop based on the needs of the work environment (Hirschi, 2018).

Hall et al. (2019, p. 272) posit that it is "not quite correct to define NVC as everything but the words.". Communication is complex, and the process of information transfer, encoding and decoding of information is often influenced by various other factors, including the use of body language, which is seen as part of the speech integration system (Goldin-Meadow & Alibali, 2013).

Lans, Verhees and Verstegen (2016, p. 326) posit that the ability to interpret the non-verbal cues or behaviour were "directly related to a venture's financial success.". The researcher argues that, although career success is not often defined as financial success, financial success may be a contributing factor to career success. Understanding NVC behaviour and the importance thereof as a freelancer is critical in the journey of freelancing. The following section provides an overview of the existing literature on career-related behaviours.

2.8 Career-related behaviours

Ashford et al. (2018, p. 29) posit that the gig economy freelancers find themselves in is "one of action". Ever-changing working arrangements through different engagements require for the forming and disbanding of relationships. Freelancers may not all have the safety of a fixed working arrangement. Freelancers' career attitudes are a critical driver of outcomes of behaviour (Volmer & Spurk, 2011). Adaptive career behaviours relate to the individual's ability to adapt their behaviours to acquire skills, capabilities and competencies required in the 21st century (Savickas et al., 2009). The context of the fourth industrial revolution and rapid change models requires and emphasises unpredictability, adaptive

behaviours and flexibility.

2.8.1 Adaptable, accountable, approachable, flexible, reliable and resilient

It has been argued that the ability of a freelance worker to be successful in their career development is based on their ability to adapt to their social environment with the integration of career goals at the middle of all decisions taken (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). The ability of freelance workers to be in sync with their changing environment means that they continuously need to be able to adapt to this changing environment (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). The "interplay among adaptiveness, adaptability, adapting and adaptation" is critical for the freelance worker to potentially be successful in their career (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012, p. 663).

Delivery of work accepted by freelancers means that they are often entirely accountable for what needs to be delivered. Freelancers need to demonstrate various characteristics in the execution of their roles. Ashford et al. (2018) state that freelancers need to be accountable, approachable, flexible and reliable to name a few. As work is typically delivered by individual freelancers, they need to demonstrate all-rounder capabilities.

Through this, freelancers need to remain resilient (Ashford et al., 2018). Resilience has as its genesis events that occur which threaten a freelancer's potential existence, continuity and viability; yet through the lived experience the freelancer adapts and adaptation leads to a positive change (Masten, 2014). It is through this experience that freelancers grow and develop (Richardson, 2012).

Long-lasting exposure to continued emotionally draining experiences, coupled with the financial oscillation experienced by freelancers, may take its toll psychologically, especially as there are no other role players to assist in absorbing such experiences, as one would experience in an organisation (Kahn, Barton, Fisher, Heaphy, Reid, & Rouse, 2018). The effect on freelancers may either have an amplifying or diminishing effect on freelancers (Caza, Moss, & Vough, 2018). Resilience is built through persistence and functioning in times of adversity (Williams, Gruber, Sutcliffe, Shepherd, & Zhao, 2017). The challenge for freelancers is to deliver with that which they have, to form new skills out of existing skills, capabilities and knowledge, to apply bricolage and creativity within their context (Williams et al., 2017).

2.8.2 Resilience is forged by persistence

The ability to continue in the face of adversity with an unknown outcome requires freelancers to be persistent. There is no doubt that there will be ups and downs between contracts, but during quieter times freelancers can develop themselves (Ashford et al., 2018). Freelancers will need to be intentional around their development and not stagnate during slow periods (Petriglieri, 2011). As freelancers cannot depend on employers for skills development, it is up to themselves to provide the required training, upskilling, learning and development. The self-driven need for development and lack of monitoring from an external force for personal development requires persistence to build resilience (Ashford et al., 2018).

2.8.3 Ability to network and owning business development

In resource-constrained environments, freelancers need to apply bricolage to help assist in driving career success (Williams et al., 2017). The combination of challenging self to make something new with existing knowledge or complemented by working with others may be one of the keys to success for freelancers (Ashford et al., 2018). Hobfoll (2011) suggests that additional resources, both drawn from within and external sources, may assist in sustaining work in the long-term. Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, and Westman (2018, p. 104) posits that "individuals strive to obtain, retain, foster, and protect those things they centrally value.", for the protection of relationships, skills, and capabilities that may lead to positive outcomes and assist in bricolage.

Networking is one manner in which relationships can be formed. Freelancers who have been working in environments where networking has formed an integral part of work will embrace networking opportunities with greater ease in comparison with those who have not (Ashford et al., 2018). Networking is critical, as freelancers are responsible for sourcing new work. The full spectrum of business development requirements is placed on freelancers; they always need to sell themselves and seek new opportunities (Hennekam & Bennett, 2016). Gandini (2018) contributes that the constant evaluation being done by prospective clients can contribute to emotional stress. The need for appropriate levels of positive and confident self-presentation is vital for freelancers, once again potentially taking a psychological toll (Butler & Stoyanova Russell, 2018).

2.8.4 Working with teams

Traditionally, changing jobs meant a break in relationship with the organisation, but freelance workers, on the other hand, will need to be able to adapt to such changes faster, as this might happen more frequently than what the average traditional employee or worker may be used to (Hirschi, 2018). Ashford et al. (2018) argue that most work is done independently, but Hennekam and Bennett (2016) state that project work may also occur in teams. Both scenarios are a reality, which calls for freelancers to be able to work with teams, with others and independently. Fostering relationships in a team context are key, given various employment relationships being able to forge quick connections are vital.

2.8.5 Time management

Being left to one's own devices can potentially mean that much time spent is considered unproductive. Gig workers no longer faced with set working hours are responsible with managing their own working hours, which means freelancers are required to "exercising agency and proactivity" (Ashford et al., 2018, p. 30; Lehdonvirta, 2018). It is also over time that experiences are built, and sustained businesses are built; freelancers need to provide themselves with enough time to accomplish a successful career (DeRue et al., 2012). Value is added through time not only to businesses, but also individuals; generating returns takes time (Kyndt & Baert, 2015). Kahn et al. (2018, p. 6) argue that "relations among differentiated parts unfold over time, which itself becomes a key contributor or inhibitor of resilience." As such, freelancers need not only manage their time on tasks, but also set time frames to reap returns on their investments made in themselves. Managing one's time optimally might be a driver for success.

2.9 Sourcing of work in the digital economy

Savickas, Nota, Rossier, Dauwalder, Duarte, Guichard, Soresi, Van Esbroeck and Van Vianen (2009) cite that the fourth industrial revolution has opened up the playing field for remote work. The ability to connect through various platforms has not only enabled an environment of mass communication, but it has also done the same on an individual level. The automation and digitisation of work have brought a new social dimension to the individuals and career counsellors alike. Being a freelacners has brought non-linear progression, unpredictability in work arrangements and transitions between organisations

to take place more frequently for those embracing this career choice (Savickas et al., 2009).

Working in an environment where social connections or social connectivity and relationships are developed fulfils a basic human need (Blustein, Kenna, Gill, & DeVoy, 2008). The integration of work and family life in the context of a freelance worker emphasises the importance of working relationships (Blustein et al., 2008). A traditional work environment creates a platform for social connection to develop and the establishment of an identity can be formed within a working environment (Blustein et al., 2008). Working in isolation may impact one's performance, but may also impact one's psychological state of mind (Blustein et al., 2008). Savickas et al. (2009) state that career interventions in the 21st century for freelance workers require novel approaches. We know that human behaviours are not only influenced by individual behaviour, but also by the environment in which the individual operates, thus drawing on social, complex systems.

2.10 Conclusion

In the new economy with more workers potentially turning to freelancing as a career choice, it is essential that the career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies are uncovered that are key for career success. There are many aspects to being successful as a freelancer, high levels of self-efficacy, adopting a positive attitude, willingness to tak risk, following through with the right actions lead by a groth mind-set. However, existing literature reflects adequately each construct in isolation but falls short in linking each construct to the other (Ashford et al., 2019; Butler & Stoyanova Russell, 2018; Hennekam & Bennett, 2016; Hirschi, 2018, Kynd & Baert, 2015; Williams et al., 2017). Chapter 3 contains the four research questions that emerged from the literature review.

3   CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1   Introduction

This study set out to answer four research questions. Hirschi (2018) provided recommendations for future research, and, together with the literature reviewed, the following four research questions were identified. The aim of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of the career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies that are required by freelancers to be successful in the new economy.

3.2   Research question one: How do career-related attitudinal characteristics demonstrated by freelance workers influence their success?

Research question one aimed to identify what career-related attitudes freelance workers require to be successful. There are two main career attitude orientations that have been researched at length, the boundaryless and protean (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006; Hall, 2004).

A boundaryless career attitude is defined as an attitude that navigates the changing work landscape by enacting a career characterised by different levels of "both physical and psychological mobility" (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006, p. 23).

Hall (2004, p. 1) refers to the Protean career attitude orientation as one "in which the person, not the organization, is in charge, where the person's core values are driving career decisions, and where the main success criteria are subjective (psychological success)."

3.3   Research question two: How do the career-related technical competencies that freelance workers acquire, influence their success?

Research question two aimed to identify what career-related technical competencies freelance workers require to be successful. Career-related technical competencies vary from the chosen career and consist of technical knowledge required within a discipline or industry. Kyndt and Baert (2015, p. 14) outline that "competencies have been defined as combined and integrated components of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.". Technical competencies are those competencies specifically required to execute a specific task or a specific role.

3.4 Research question three: How do the career-related social competencies that freelance workers acquire, influence their success?

Research question three aimed to identify what career-related social competencies freelance workers require to be successful. Social competence is defined as "the ability of individuals to interact successfully with each other within a certain position and context" (Lans, Blok, & Gulikers, 2015, p. 458).

3.5 Research question four: How do the career-related behaviours of freelance workers influence their success?

Research question four aimed to identify what career-related behaviours freelance workers require to be successful. A behaviour in its simplest form can be outlined as the action, or the act of doing, by freelance workers. Lent and Brown (2013, p. 559) define career behaviours as "behaviors that people employ to help direct their own career (and educational) development, both under ordinary circumstances and when beset by stressful conditions."

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the four research questions that were intended to be addressed in this study. Through exploring the required attitudes, behaviours and competencies, it might bring some insight into what is required to be successful in the new economy. The following chapter presents the methodology used for the study.

4   CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1   Introduction

This chapter discusses the chosen research methodology that was utilised in this study. The literature review informed the research questions and the nature of the research questions informed the chosen methodology. This study adopted a qualitative exploratory approach as the chosen research design, and data sampling and analysis reinforced the selected research approach with quality assurance measures and ethical consideration also presented.

4.2   Choice of methodology

This exploratory research was conducted through a qualitative cross-sectional research design. Zikmund (2000, p. 102) describes exploratory and qualitative research as: "Initial research conducted to clarify and define the nature of the problem". Emphasised by Saunders and Lewis (2018), the need for exploratory research is required when new areas of the chosen field are to be uncovered. The researcher sought to understand the career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies required by freelance workers who are important for success, a topic which has not been adequately explored in the literature (Hirschi, 2018). The study is representative of the interviewees' views at a point in time, and as such, the study is cross-sectional (Saunders & Lewis, 2018; Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2013).

This study focused on the career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies of freelance workers, as the environment of each interviewee is unique and potentially complex. As it based on their lived experiences, qualitative research is best placed to delve deeper into the actions, behaviour, feelings and thoughts of interviewees, so as to uncover unexplored phenomena (Saunders & Lewis, 2018; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The approaches they take to deal with their career journeys may differ, and an interpretivist philosophy allows the freedom of interpretation needed for interviewees to explore their unique career journeys, lived experiences, interpretations and shared opinions (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

The researcher conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews to unlock new insights into the

required attitudes, behaviours and competencies that make freelance workers successful in the new economy. The outcome of the interviews was for the individual insights to be shared so that key themes could be identified through the data that were analysed (Jacobs & Furgerson, 2012).

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews. An interview guide was used as guidance during face-to-face interviews. The semi-structured interview guide allowed for individual views to be shared as insights were gathered from the interviewees (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The proposed interview guide was reviewed by an expert within the field of entrepreneurship, with proposed changes being adopted post their review. Through appropriate sampling, access to participants was made possible using the researcher's personal networks.

The research report takes an inductive approach, but the data analysis and emergence of themes based on the interviews with the interviewees enabled an inductive approach (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Themes arising through the interviews contribute to the vocational and behavioural field of study.

4.3   Population

The population identified as relevant for this study was freelance workers. This group might also be referred to as consultants, contractors, free agents, part-time employees, gig-economy workers or temporary, locum, contingent or on-demand workers (Alkhatib, Bernstein, & Levi, 2017; Bajwa, Knorr, Ruggiero, Gastaldo, & Zendel 2018; De Stefano, 2015; Donovan et al., 2016; Spreitzer et al., 2017; Storey et al., 2005; Zaino, 2004).

4.4   Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis was individuals who are freelance workers.

4.5   Sampling method and size

Purposive sampling was applied to ensure interviewees involved would yield potential new insights to the important career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies of

freelances workers (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Interviewees were accessed by the researcher's personal networks. The study was intended to be industry neutral. As interviews continued, the use of snowball sampling was applied to access two respondents, it happened that several interviewees were however from a similar industry or background (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The use of snowball sampling within the selection criteria specified assisted in obtaining an increased sample of interviewees (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The number of interviewees to be interviewed was not fixed at the onset but were estimated to be between 12 and 16 before saturation might be neared (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

The following sampling criteria were applied during the study:

The researcher set out to interview freelance workers who have work experience and are not formally employed by one organisation. The researcher therefore interviewed freelance workers who:

(A) have been working as a freelance worker for more than one year. Based on this working experience, it was expected that freelancers who have been freelancing for more than one year would better understand the potential vicissitudes in the journey of freelancing and as such, would more clearly be able to articulate what success might mean.

(B) are not formally employed by an entity, whether it be an organisation or another individual restricting their ability to work with, or for multiple stakeholders and organisations simultaneously.

Notes were taken during the analysis process to determine the number of new codes that were created after each interview, based on coding conducted in Atlas.Ti (Guest et al., 2006). The outcome thereof is displayed in Figure 2. Interviews three and ten were discarded as they did not comply with the sampling criteria. One interviewee was freelancing only for six months and as such did not meet the one-year threshold. A second interviewee claimed to be a freelancer, but throughout the interview it emerged that the interviewee was involved in several businesses and not as a freelancer, but rather as a coach to freelancers.

Saturation was demonstrated during the analysis of data by the number of new code groups that were created after analysing each interview. Guest et al. (2006) suggest that nearing saturation for additional insights serves as an indicator for when sufficient interviewees have been conducted, Figure 2.
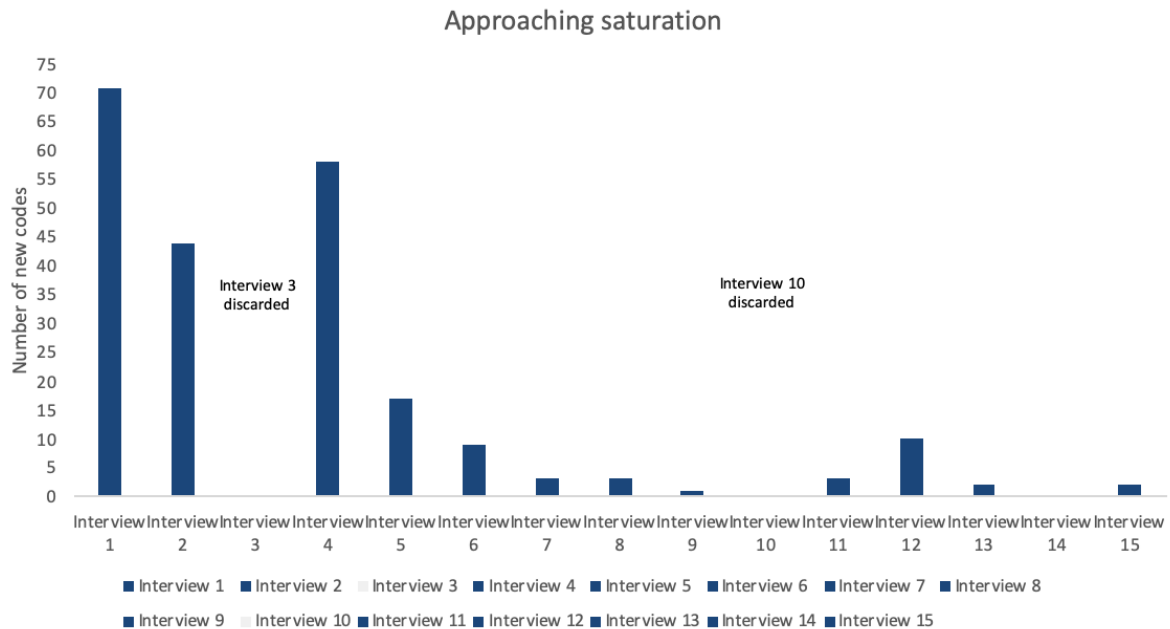
Figure 2: Number of new codes by interview

4.6 Interview guide

The researcher made use of a semi-structured interview guide during the face-to-face interviews, which appears in Appendix 3, to gather in-depth perspectives, gain insights and foster a deep understanding of the information gathered (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Jacob and Furgerson (2012) suggest asking open-ended questions during the interviews to allow interviewees to share their stories. It is essential for the respondent to feel comfortable and at ease, and it is recommended that the researcher also share some personal details to create context and establish a sense of trust (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

Jacob and Furgerson (2012) provide guidelines on interview protocols and suggest the use of a guide for the interview process. The guide assisted in providing structure to the interview process and ensuring consistency across all interviews. The purpose of the research and his particular interest, as well as the potential benefit to the respondent

(Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Flick (2011) further confirmed that a semi-structured interview approach allows for data analysis to compare the interviews with each other.

The semi-structured questionnaire was tested with an expert researcher and adjusted to answer the research questions outlined in Chapter 3. This research aimed to answer four specific research questions, as outlined in Chapter 3. Each of the research questions was derived from the reviewed literature that draws extensively from Hirschi (2018).

The questions asked during the face-to-face interviews explored the various aspects related to the research question. Interview Question 1 endeavours to uncover what success means to freelance workers in their career. The remainder of the research questions focused on and aimed to uncover the career-related attitudes, behaviours, technical competencies and social competencies that freelance workers might have that influence their success, as well as how work is secured (Hirschi, 2018).

Table 2: Research questions and interview question mapping

Research questions from Chapter 3	Interview questions
Research question 1: How do career-related attitudinal characteristics demonstrated by freelance workers influence their success?	Building on your definition of success, what are the feelings and beliefs you require to be successful as a freelance worker?
Research question 2: How do the career-related technical competencies that freelance workers acquire, influence their success?	What are the technical skills and knowledge you require to have to be successful?
Research question 3: How do the career-related social competencies that freelance workers acquire, influence their success?	What in your view are the social skills you require to be successful?
Research question 4: How do the career-related behaviours of freelance workers influence their success?	What would you say are the career behaviours and characteristics freelance workers should have to be successful?

Questions were used as a guide and asked in order, but interviewees tended to answer interchangeably, demonstrating the interlinked nature of attitudes, behaviours and

competencies (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

4.7   Data collection

Face-to-face interviews were set up with interviewees, by email and through telephonic conversations. The interview process utilised a semi-structured questionnaire. Data collection was undertaken over an eight-week period. The interviews ranged in time from 51 minutes, the longest, to 10 minutes, the shortest. Interviews on average lasted approximately 25 minutes. Interviews took place in several settings, mostly in quiet areas which were of mutual convenience to the interviewees and researcher (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

Prior to commencing with the interview, the researcher introduced himself and outlined the research and purpose thereof. The interviewees signed the letter of consent, ensuring data was gathered in an ethical manner (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The consent form used is presented in Appendix 1. Each interview was recorded with a voice-recording device, with permission from the interviewee.

Interviews were conducted in environments where noise disturbances were kept to a minimum and privacy was respected. The purpose of this is to minimise background noise and ensure clarity in recording and focus attention on the respondent (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Note-taking was limited in order for the researcher to be solely focused on the respondent. Jacob and Furgerson (2012) suggest that a heightened level of interest by the researcher may allow the interviewees to share in more depth, openly and freely, more than what has been anticipated. Interview techniques such as eye contact, listening, and genuine interest were utilised by the researcher. It was essential that freedom of responses was allowed, but the focus of the process was kept in mind, and the interview guide assisted in ensuring this (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

Upon the conclusion of each interview, the audio recordings were sent to a transcriber, this agreement appears in Appendix 5. Once the interviews were transcribed, the researcher reviewed each transcript as part of the quality control process to ensure the transcript was a true and accurate reflection of the interview. The transcripts then served as the basis for the data to be analysed (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

4.8 Analysis approach

Transcribed interviews were uploaded onto ATLAS.ti for data analysis, after quality control was applied. All the interviews were uploaded in the same order in which the interviews were conducted. In order to ensure recency and to extract the most from the coding and analysis of the data, coding took place as soon as the transcripts were reviewed and confirmed as accurate. Upon concluding three interviews, transcribing and coding them, a peer review of coding was done to ensure that a form of quality control was applied. Once completed and confirmed, the researcher resumed interviews, the transcribing of interviews and the coding thereof.

A structured approach was followed in the data coding process. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) provide three approaches to qualitative content analysis: a) conventional, b) direct, and c) summative. Conventional content analysis based on immersion in the data was best suited for this research to allow new insights to be uncovered and it supported the inductive nature of the study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggest that the interview and coding process is undertaken together with the interview process, as this might help inform interviews that are still to be conducted during the data collection process. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) suggest the researcher embrace the full dataset that will be gathered, reviewing the transcripts and identifying themes. Through this initial engagement with the data, the latter approach was followed in this study. After the review of the initial three interviews that were coded, the rest were analysed and coded.

After the interviews were coded, the researcher reflected on the assigned codes to ensure as much detail as possible was extracted. The researcher was aware that one review of the data would be lacking and several engagements with the transcribed data were required to embrace the collected data fully. This approach is supported by Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), who further suggest that continuous engagement with the data might present an opportunity for new themes to emerge. The researcher reviewed the coded data a second and third time to ensure codes assigned were exhaustive. Saldaña (2015) describes coding as a cyclical. Braun and Clark (2006) suggest multiple engagements with the data and that the analysis is iterative in nature.

The researcher aimed to uncover themes that will address the researched questions as outlined in Chapter 3. The identification of themes was critical in the analysis of the data,

and in answering the research questions. Braun and Clark (2006) provide six phases in the thematic analysis process. The below table has been adapted to reflect the process that the researcher followed. This process is summarised in Table 3. The constructed code groups are provided in Appendix 4.

Table 3: Adapted phases of thematic analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1. Immersion in the data set	Transcription of data followed by a continuous review thereof.
2. Coding of data	Identifying patterns and coding data through the use of codes. Once coded, consolidate coding where alignment is possible.
3. Determine overarching themes based on coding	Review coded data and collate into themes.
4. Review themes	Cross-check identified themes with codes that were generated in step two.
5. Refine themes through defining and naming overarching themes	Refine throughout the process and allocate correct naming to the themes through the thematic analysis of the data.
6. Writing findings from data gathered	Utilise gathered themes and relate back to the themes that were established through the research questions with the outcome to be reported in an academic format.

Source: Braun & Clark. (2006, p. 35).

4.9 Reliability and validity

Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spiers (2002, p. 17) argue that the process of research is "iterative rather than linear". The researcher had numerous engagements with the datasets before the thematic analysis was undertaken. Validity refers to the extent to which research measures what it intends to measure (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Morse et al. (2002, p. 18) outline that several verification strategies contribute to the reliability and validate of qualitative research, ranging from "methodological coherence", appropriate sampling, "collecting and analyzing data concurrently", "thinking theoretically" and "theory development". Within the field of qualitative research, validity is like integrity, character, and quality (Maxwell, 1992; Morse et al., 2002).

As suggested by Guest et al. (2006), saturation was approached based on the number of new code groups that were created. The deliberate theory development from the "micro perspectives" of the data to the "macro theoretical" understanding was an outcome of the research process rather than an adopted framework (Morse et al., 2002).

Reliability and validity of the questions are two critical criteria for the evaluation of the measurement (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Reliability outlines the base of departure for questions asked, with all participants being asked the same questions in the same or similar manner. The researcher ensured, through the use of an interview guide, that all interviewees were asked the same questions. When the interviewees required clarification on questions, the researcher provided this as succinctly and accurately as possible, to ensure reliability.

The validity of the instrument is centred on the purpose of the questions being asked. It was vital that the questions asked were relevant and valid to the research questions. As the study was exploratory and qualitative in nature, and the units of analysis were the interviewees, the standardisation of the interview guide was critical to remove potential biases that may have arisen from the process. The standardisation of the interview guide ensured a similar base of departure, which served as a guide for all the other interviews (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

4.10 Limitations

Qualitative research is subjective and, as such, subject to the influence of being affected by a number of biases (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Morse et al. (2002, p. 17) state that, "It is the researcher's creativity, sensitivity, flexibility and skill in using the verification strategies that determine the reliability and validity of the evolving study." Taking this into consideration, the outcome of the interviews is directly linked to the researcher's ability to embrace the process; the study was conducted by a novice researcher and therefore the research is limited by their experience and their potential bias. The semi-structured questionnaire aimed to mitigate this bias. The sampling method and geographic area in which the study took place serve as limiting factors to the specific study, because the sample was in no way representative of the population of freelance workers in South Africa.

One of the limitations of this qualitative study is that it is cross-sectional. As such defining success is subjective and the measurement thereof is not possible in this study, but rather just the perception. There are multiple other factors that contribute to the lived experiences of respondents, such as, environments, culture and history, which were not mitigated in the study. The researcher is not an expert in drafting questions, conducting interviews or analysing data, as such might have impacted the input, process and outputs of the research study (Agee, 2009). The researcher sought peer review of his work throughout the process, to remain as objective as possible.

The opinions, views and lived experiences will influence the input provided that will drive the outcome of the study and present various biases that will inform the results of the study. As the study is cross-sectional, it only provides a snapshot at a point in time, and this poses a limitation based on the current circumstances of the participants, which may change based on their unique circumstances. The sample size may not be representative of the views of all freelance workers and their lived experiences.

4.11 Ethical considerations

Before any research was undertaken, ethical clearance was obtained through the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria, Appendix 2. Interviewees were asked to sign a letter of informed consent, Appendix 1, at the onset of the interviews to protect their confidentiality and help to create an environment of openness and trust. The interviewees were anonymised for this report and the data will be stored without identifiers. The transcriber and editor signed a confidentiality forms to further protect the confidentiality of the interviewees, Appendix 5.

4.12 Conclusion

This section outlined the methodology that was applied in this study. The population, unit of analysis, sampling method and size, interview guide, data collection, analysis approach, reliability and validity and limitation were outlined in length. The following section will review the results of the interviews based on the thematic analysis that was undertaken.

5 CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the key findings of the analysis organised by research question and category that were identified during the data analysis. The results are set out to align with the research questions as per Chapter 3. The interview guide was aligned to the research questions.

5.2 Description of sample

The sample consisted of individuals who are self-employed and typically working alone in their own businesses as a service provider to other businesses. Interviewees were accessed through the researcher's personal network based on the identified sampling criteria. The researcher undertook interviews with different career disciplines in order to achieve maximum variation in the sample.

As the study was qualitative, the researcher interviewed 15 interviewees for the study and 13 of the 15 interviews were used in the data analysis. Two of the 15 interviews were discarded as they did not meet the sampling criteria, which emerged during the interviews.

Interviewees typically held the following self-declared titles: veterinarians, translators, information technology software engineers, coaches and developers of platforms for freelancer's platform, and freelance developers. Coaches were specifically chosen in order to obtain dual views of not only their own experiences, but also to validate what they gather from working with freelance workers. Of the 13 interviewees, six were female and seven male.

Table 4: Roles and number of interviewees

Roles	Number of interviews conducted	Number of interviews utilised in analysis.
Veterinarian	4	3
Coach	3	2
General professional freelancer (Accountant, Information Technology Specialist)	5	5
Journalist or Writer	3	3
Total	15	13

5.3 Results research question one

High, but not distorted, levels of self-belief are critical for freelance workers. Interviewees noted that the positive attitudes of freelancers were required to drive success. It was noted by seven interviewees that having the right attitude and high levels of self-efficacy is the way to start the journey. The next section will highlight the constructs that emerge from the data analysis, namely, high levels of self-efficacy, adopting a positive attitude, the propensity for risk-taking, working independently, working with others and in ambiguous environments, emotional awareness and a positive mindset.

5.3.1 High levels of self-efficacy

It was evident from the interviewees that high levels of self-efficacy were required as one of the attitudinal drivers for career success. Not only high levels of self-efficacy, but also believe in work being done.

I think intrinsically if you don't believe in yourself, please go back to the company that hired you…

I think delusional self-belief, especially in the beginning, to go like 'Ja, I am good enough, I can go do this'.

To be a freelancer, you have got to have a necessary self-belief, that gets you out of bed in the morning. I think attitudinally, a kind of a Pollyanna attitude is not a bad thing; I am probably sometimes hopelessly optimistic and hopelessly upbeat.

The ability to match the levels of self-belief with one's competencies are essential; an

optimistic approach was mentioned by several interviews. Healthy levels of self-doubt, introspection and reflection continuously are critical. An initial level of self-belief is what may serve as a trigger to embrace freelancing. Believing in what one does impact the behaviour towards that to which one is working. A sense of belief that the work that is being conducted is meaningful and impactful reinforces one's levels of self-belief.

It is possible to compare levels of self-belief with other freelance workers to gauge where they might be on the spectrum of self-belief. The researcher would argue that a healthy, realistic level of self-belief is vital; this may lead to a potential change in behaviour, which leads to the development of competencies.

Freelancers mindset naturally lead to the interviewees touching on having a positive attitude.

5.3.2   Adopting a positive attitude

The attitude of freelance workers serves as the genesis for their behaviour. It emerged through the interviews conducted that a positive attitude is essential to embrace a freelancing career. Where the researcher refers to attitude, they imply throughout, unless stated otherwise, a positive attitude. It was noted that with the amount of uncertainty that freelancers face, a positive attitude assists in moving to the next time horizon in terms of deliverables. The following quotes illustrate the insights around a positive attitude during the interviews conducted.

> So a positive mindset always, believe in yourself – that you can do it – and if you're religious then believe in your spirituality or religion. I think that can help as well.

> I am probably sometimes hopelessly optimistic and hopelessly upbeat.

> You get two camps; you get the Utopian camp and the Doom and Gloom camp. So, I prefer the positivity of the Utopian camp. So, you know, having a view that everything will be good, believing in things like abundance, for example, makes a huge difference, because it opens your mind to possibilities.

The views shared by the interviewees are significant and partly reflected a positive and optimistic attitude. Interviewees did share that life does, however, have its way of taking one on a journey. One interviewee noted that in their experience there are two camps: a positive camp referred to as the 'Utopian Camp' and the negative camp, referred to as the 'Doom and Gloom'. As with most things in life, a balance of positive and negative might help freelancers best navigate the vicissitudes of freelancing as a career choice.

The attitude of positivity is undoubtedly influenced by levels of self-belief, immediate, historical and potential prospects. The adage of 'Your attitude reflects your altitude', is clearly applicable to freelancers. An optimum balance of self-belief, positivity and humility is what emerged as what one seemingly should be striving towards.

5.3.3 The propensity for risk-taking

Interviewees noted that making the decision to become a freelancer, by default, is accepting a high level of uncertainty which then manifests itself in the acceptance of risk. Stepping out of your comfort zone coupled with the financial risks are but two aspects of risks that freelancers may experience. The risk-taking has its genesis in making the decision to freelance, which then manifests in the ability to secure work. Being able to conduct work will mean financial returns.

> You've got to realise that you are in it and terms of the risk outside of a typical corporate job are that you have no security net.

> So, I think having an appetite for risk is probably one of the things I would say you need.

There are different risks that one needs to be aware of most of which manifest in the uncertainty of the future, from a work point of view that will filter through to financial uncertainty and one's ability to source work is exceptionally important. The exposure to various risks will differ from freelancer to freelancer.

Interviewees noted that identifying risks is vital: determining the exposure levels and then adopting strategies to deal with the various risks that exist, financial, workwise and the strain it may place on a family. Risks once identified, can be accepted, mitigated,

transferred or reduced through various approaches. In an ideal world, this will occur before embracing a freelancing career, but unforeseen circumstances, like being retrenched, may arise that forces one to embrace such a career.

Abrupt life events may cause people to embrace freelancing, moving from the safety of a structured work environment to working independently or and in an unfamiliar environment.

5.3.4 Working independently, working with others and in ambiguous environments

Working independently, without guidance and support place high levels of accountability on freelancers to structure their work, their day and execute their tasks and deliver on projects. Interviewees noted that work is often unstructured and that one should execute independently. Work, however, does not always happen in isolation and most definitely takes place in different environments.

> So, you have to get used to working with a whole range of different people.

> You need to be able to realise that every day is not going to be the same. You are going to be exposed to different environments, different personnel daily.

Freelancing brings with it much freedom. Freedom to be in charge of one's own time in many respects seemed to be fulfilling to most freelancers, as remarked by interviewees. It was confirmed that complete freedom may, however, bring about distractions for some freelancers. Where work is for instance required to be done in as part of a group or working with other people.

Interviewees who are involved in more team or project work emphasised that the ability to quickly embrace the working environment and forming relationships with multiple different stakeholders is critical. Understanding where work will be done may also influence the ability to complete tasks. It may be that one's personality leans towards working alone, and performance may be impacted if the client's requirement is for work to be fulfilled in a group. Knowing self and one's preferences will assist in adapting to different situations. This then naturally leads to the next construct, namely, emotional awareness.

5.3.5 Emotional awareness

Emotional awareness manifests in different aspects, the ability to work in an uncertain environment, dealing with the ups and downs on several fronts, which impacts their emotional state, that links back to their levels of self-belief. The ability to be aware of one's emotions and the ability to deal with them is vital. The following quotes illustrate the emotional awareness construct:

> You must be able to handle that discomfort, not knowing when your next job will come through.

> Because this chosen way of life is going to slap you hard and frequently, and if that is more than you can handle as a personality you may be in the wrong field, or you may be in the wrong way of generating income.

> … uncertainty of paying your salary every month, the stress of keeping everybody happy when you've only got so much time, and you've got a family that you know, you've got to look after. So the stress can be overwhelming at times.

Interviewees shared that the emotional anxiety of not knowing when and from where their next payment was coming was one of many concerns they had. Two interviewees outlined that their financial position based on work delivered and the frequency thereof may mean either feast or famine. Dealing with financial uncertainty was emotionally draining. Some interviewees set monthly financial targets to help achieve their own monthly financial goals. Goals were sustaining some of their monthly expenses as a family, putting away enough money for retirement and paying for school fees. Placing these goals on oneself may help with driving performance, but can also cause emotional and work stress, especially in an environment where work is not guaranteed, where as an example they are not on a retainer, as was the case with some freelancers interviewed.

The ability of freelancers to recognise and deal with their emotions was noted as critical. The awareness of the ups and downs through the journey from a financial and work point of view is vital. The next step would be to be able to deal with emotions. Emotions impacts attitudes, which will manifest in different behaviours. Freelancers' ability to look for work manifests in behaviour which would be driven by levels of comfort or ability to take on

more work or to meet their financial commitments based on their personal view of being able to conduct the work.

Emotional awareness does not only stop with self but the awareness of others and the situation. This relates directly to the development of social competencies. This will be discussed in Section 5.6 of this chapter.

5.3.6 Positive mind-set

One's mindset emerged in several of the interviews. Self-belief stems from and filters through to one's mindset. The necessary mindset that emerged throughout the interviews is an open one and growth orientated, relating to various forms, not only to self but also towards the work that one is doing. The ability to be adaptable, willing to change, the ability to embrace feedback and having a problem-solving attitude are critical. The following quotes illustrate one's mind-set.

> So, you must be able to grow with your game as well, to be more adaptable – and adaptability is something you need to learn as much as possible.

> It's very much around gaining enough knowledge to be relevant, understand it, unpack so that it is real.

> I mean if you're not willing to grow and evolve, then you're not getting anywhere.

An open or growth-mindset may mean that they do not only know their specific area of expertise and industry but potentially across different fields and industries. Freelancers need to be on the constant lookout for broadening their mindset, being self-focused or career-focused. It may allow for a pivot point in their careers.

It is in comparing the different observations made by the interviewee's that mind-set as a construct. A positive mind-set spread across a spectrum of self-development, client work, future endeavours while also embracing self-development and work conducted for clients is essential. As a freelance worker, it may mean that they are a specialist and therefore assumed that they are at the forefront of industry-related norms, technological advancements and industry developments. These advancements may mean they will

need to be open to being curious and to be open to continuous learning. The ability to be adaptable in their approach, focused on different approaches, and open to feedback allows one to reflect, which allows one to realign one's self-belief.

5.3.7 Self-directed learning agility is an attitude.

Continuous self-directed learning emerged as a necessity in the field. Two distinctions were clear: in some professions, there are structured training and development, which is driven by industry-specific continuous professional development. In other professions, learning is entirely self-directed. Learning takes on various shapes, but there is no doubt that it is self-driven.

> But the education piece for me is no longer got to do with let's go do your seven-year course and get a qualification; it's very much around gaining enough knowledge to be relevant.

> I do a lot of reading; I listen to the news because you have to keep abreast of the news, of what is going on in the world, because that is going to affect or be discussed at some meeting or other.

> Oh yes, and then obviously there is CPD in my industry.

> And also if you advertise yourself as such, then you should be on top of the research that is the most current.

How knowledge is gained differs significantly from CPD development to watching the news. Learning seems to be both formal and informal, but self-driven. Learning seems to take place in the roles fulfilled by freelancers on a day-to-day basis, based on their exposure, but also behind a computer or other means of accessing learning and development material.

What is critical is to be up to date with industry knowledge and events and the broader business context, which can be obtained by watching the news, reading extensively and engaging with other professionals and industry experts. As mentioned above, as a freelance worker, it may mean that they are a specialist and therefore assumed that they

are at the forefront of industry-related norms, technological advancements and industry developments. It is an attitude of continuous learning that will help realise this perception.

This concludes the first research questions centred on career-related attitudes. Attitudes are mere thoughts and feelings without action. This leads to the next research question centred on career-related behaviours.

5.4   Results: research question two

Four predominant themes emerged based on the responses of Research Question 2. These were: role-specific technical competencies relating to the individual, the industry they worked in, the depth and breadth of their knowledge in various fields, and their ability to ask practical questions. The researcher will explore each of these themes below.

5.4.1   Role-specific competencies relating to the individual

There are definite role-, job- or task-specific competencies required in the fulfilment of work, for example, in the journalism industry. The knowledge gained for this may historically be obtained through further studies, experience or informal training. This entry-level education, experience or qualification also serves as an entry point for freelancers in their chosen fields. Freelancers need to demonstrate that they possess the technical knowledge required of them, but this is only a start. The following quotes illustrate the different takes interviewees had on technical competencies:

> So, first of all, as an accountant, you have to have certain qualifications.

> ...that is relevant to what you want to stand out for, and so you can get yourself a reputation as being an expert in your field.

> But the education piece for me is no longer got to do with let's go do your seven-year course and get a qualification; it's very much around gaining enough knowledge to be relevant.

It was noted that access to information is unparalleled in the lives we live today. One respondent stated that a seven-year degree is not required anymore, but rather just

acquiring enough knowledge. Access to information allows freelancers to gain enough to be relevant. This may apply in industries where regulatory bodies or associations do not necessarily govern specific requirements, in contrast with a field like medicine.

The extracts below reflect role-specific technical competencies shared by interviewees:

> Ja, I mean it's a broad question because I guess you are freelancing with a specific technical set of experience and qualifications. But if you take um … software development, for example, there is a fair amount of freelancing that happens in software development. It's going to be disruptive because people are starting to build artificial intelligence of developing software, and so predictive solutions.

> You do need your basic qualification, which is whatever field you specialised in, but then also to read up on the most recent articles, make sure you get practical exposure, surgical exposure – surgical cases is significant in our industry.

Not only a base level of knowledge, but the willingness to learn more, stay relevant and be at the edge of changes is essential. Access to information online, through a short course or in a more formal setting allows for freelancers to broaden their competencies. Much of the knowledge gained will also come from working experience and exposure to different scenarios.

The technical competencies are reinforced by learning agility, as outlined in the sections above—structured versus unstructured learning. Some freelancers required a specific knowledge base or skill set, whereas one specific interviewee considered themself to be a generalist. The knowledge that is required may be applied within an industry or across industries. The following section will explore industry knowledge and the role it plays within the freelancing context.

5.4.2   Industry knowledge and trends

Not only do freelancers require a set of skills and knowledge in a specific field of expertise, but it is assumed that they also have an understanding of the industry in which they operate, and can demonstrate knowledge of the industry. The following quotes outline a view of the industry knowledge requirements:

So, you have got to be seen in my industry, as dependable—and this is beside your technical skills like your language skills, your knowledge of the subject matter. So, you need to be seen as dependable; you need to be seen as somebody who does their research, somebody who does their preparation, who will go into the meeting and perform.

And that is often around their skills set, or it is often around the business space in general, or it is around international trends, or it actually has the labour law changed—and I need to go and find out what that looks like.

The ability to operate on an industry level seemingly provides a competitive advantage to freelancers. How much seems to be unclear and was not the focus of this study, but one interviewee remarked that, based on industry knowledge, he keeps on getting more referrals.

In other instances, a project may be so specific and related to the needs of a client, that no industry experience is required, but rather depth in terms of technical knowledge. The requirements of not only depth within a role, but also breadth leads us to the next construct.

5.4.3 Breadth and depth of knowledge in a broader context of business

The ability to offer more, to offer insights to clients, was remarked on as being essential by an interviewee. That might be the differentiating factor between being just the same and being extraordinary. This asks for freelancers to transcend their technical competencies and industry knowledge.

So, you have to be more…how can I say…Like an octopus or a renaissance man; you have to have skills and knowledge in almost every subject.

... and now all of a sudden I am faced with all these other things, you know things that could go wrong with SARS, for instance, issues that clients have and 'can you help me with this?' Ja! And then I sit and think 'well how am I going to fix this' you know? So a lot of…ja, a lot of just getting things done and figuring things out, and you know?

The ability to adapt to the requirements of clients is critical for freelancers. Not only to adapt to clients, but freelancers are also responsible in running their organisation, and they will need to know a little about a lot, to have both breadth and depth.

5.4.4   Asking effective questions

Getting to the heart of any problem allows for the uncovering of what needs to be solved. Contributing competencies to uncovering such problems lie in personal knowledge, paired with the knowledge of the client where the freelancer works or is conducting a project or piece of work. Industry knowledge would lead to targeted questions potentially being asked, coupled with additional depth and breadth insights drawn from work and other experience. Potentially, such experience is drawn from working with organisations in the same industry or different industries. The following quotes outline the ability to ask practical questions:

> So, for me, there are diagnostic skills so when I sit down with someone, I need to be able to have the skills to ask them the right questions to figure out what their problem or need is.

> So, there is that, and then also to ask questions that get people thinking. I don't personally subscribe to needing to suck up to people or be particularly helpful to them. But that's just my style …

The ability to ask effective questions, not only specific to freelancers field, but with a broader business context in mind is essential. This leads to the next section in this chapter which focuses on the social skills or competencies required by freelancer workers to be successful. It is the combination of technical knowledge and social skills that enables work to be secured. These competencies work hand in hand. Both can stand alone but are an incredible force when combined.

5.5 Results: Research Question 3

As with many things in life, it is not one single trait or characteristic that shapes a person, but rather a collective of traits or characteristics, brought together by a range of experiences. Social skills that emerged were both verbal and non-verbal skills, from the ability to communicate succinctly and clearly to the interpretation of body language. One specific skill that was clear is the ability to listen. The following quote is illustrative that it is a balance of several items:

> So obviously delivering quality work but also people do not refer an oke because he is a great designer; it is because he is a good guy, we can have a giggle, he is polite, he keeps on time, his pricing is obviously quite relevant as well.

> So, relationships are significant.

The following sections will delve deeper into verbal and non-verbal communication constructs that emerged during the interviews.

5.5.1 Social interaction skills—verbal and non-verbal communication

Verbal and non-verbal communication skills were clearly articulated in the interviews as forms of communication that freelancers should be aware of. Both are important, and this section discusses verbal and non-verbal skills separately as part of communication skills.

> ... so remaining calm verbally and a body language point of view is very very important, I think.

> ... is like you definitely need those social skills, both online and face to face.

5.5.1.1 Verbal communication

The ability to articulate, express and converse, and voice opinions and values, is essential in any relationship, whether working or personal. Quotes shared by interviewees shape the importance of both verbal and non-verbal communication. As a starting point, the researcher will review the insights provided on verbal communication first.

You definitely have to be able to communicate with people clearly.

You need to be able to demonstrate your value in a conversation.

And I think the other one skills that you will find is crucial is the public speaking; if you can command a room, whether it is a room of one or a room of 100, there is the much better chance you will be a successful anything.

The views expressed by interviewees reflect the various conversations that will take place in a work setting, whether with colleagues, peers, managers, direct reports or clients. Interviewees confirmed that freelancers need to be able to clearly articulate the value they will bring to the project. An interviewee remarked that open, honest and transparent conversations can be seen as the building blocks for any relationship that is worth developing and building. Communication is by no means one-directional; the ability to embrace feedback that is shared contributes to the growth of self. Listening is an equally important trait in freelancing; more of this will be outlined in the section below.

5.5.1.2 Non-verbal communication

Research has shown that non-verbal communication is as important as verbal communication. This relates to the behaviour of being approachable, easy to work with, and demonstrating an inviting body language. The section below explores quotes provided by interviewees, and it is supplemented with additional quotes under the theme of awareness, with a specific focus on situational awareness. The quotes below refer to non-verbal communication skills:

Always do not be too vociferous with your body language says me, especially when you are getting angry, I think you have got to try to keep things neutral really or else you...

Eye contact, always eye contact, sorry I am thinking which is why my eyes are going everywhere else, so I think always eye contact.

So, it is important to be able to communicate clearly with people and try to read them properly so that you interpret the situation and how to carry over the message.

It seemed from the interviews that non-verbal communication is as important as verbal communication, when working face-to-face. Freelancers noted that they need to be able to express their views, thoughts, opinions and values as well as they are able to listen to and absorb what others are conveying.

5.5.2 Ability to listen

Listening was another vital social competency that was mentioned by interviewees. Listening emerged as a construct during the interviews; the quotes below briefly outline the importance of listening. This theme ties in with the ability to ask practical questions, since knowledge coupled with listening skills allows for problems to be uncovered. Listening skills align with the ability to interpret verbal and non-verbal skills.

> ...taking the time to listen to their problems, making notes.

> You need to be able to demonstrate your value in a conversation. And the most effective way I have found of doing that is to be ready to be a good listener and then when the opportunity arises…

Although brief in length, the above quotes reflect the ability to identify problems through listening. This requires an ability to allow those with whom freelancers are dealing to share their views, thoughts, opinions and ideas, and then to use what has been shared to contribute meaningfully to the conversation.

Listening may potentially contribute to the most substantial weighting in conversations in terms of understanding that which the client requires assistance with—clarifying the exact need through asking practical questions and having meaningful conversations to get to a point where services might be offered, and engagements agreed. The inability to listen or understand the exact reason why a contract, work arrangement or project is not undertaken is vital. This serves as a feedback loop for freelancers and will allow them to reflect on how they can improve. Relationships are important for the feedback loop, listening is essential. This leads the researcher into the section based on relationship management.

5.5.3   Relationship management

Relationship management, as a theme, emerged from the definitions interviewees gave as to what success means, in answer to the first question they were asked, and from the answers they gave to the last question on how they secure work. The ability to balance working relationships with clients is critical, and there are different contributing factors to achieving such a balance. This section explores the insights shared on this specific theme.

> ...relationship management of your clients.

> But the value you get from speaking to other people, other freelancers, even people in corporates – friends that you know that are trusted – but also getting their input and seeing what is happening in the world. It's very important that the connection point with other people is very important.

Managing relationships throughout one's entire eco-system allows one to source work, embrace learning outside of one's comfort zone, learn from others and expand one's horizons. It potentially allows for the development of both breadth and depth in various fields or a field.

Relationship management directly links to one's ability to work with others and this section will be explored next.

5.5.4   Working with others

Working with others can potentially allow for growth and development occurring in various aspects — this section focuses on the people skills which fall within social skills in this section of the report.

> I mean it's very much you need people skills.

> I think it is what I mentioned before, basically being able to work with a whole range of different people from different backgrounds, and specifically in veterinary science, I feel it makes it easier sometimes just to reserve your judgement you know?

It is the acute awareness of working with others that may distinguish successful from unsuccessful relationships. Work may from time to time occur in isolation, but a complete project is seldom conducted in isolation. The ability to work as a freelancer with other people plays an integral role in the working relationship with others. The research would suggest that the items discussed in this specific section focusing on communication unfold in working with others, and in the ability to balance all elements of communication to enable success in working relationships.

The following section explores awareness of self, others and situations.

5.5.5 Awareness—self, others and situations

Awareness calls for a level of emotional maturity, sensing the environment, the ability to interpret, digest and then act on what has been experienced. This calls for the continuous awareness and development of emotional intelligence (EQ).

> I think there is a massive piece in terms of developing EQ.

The following section delves into three levels of awareness: self, others and situational awareness. In shaping their views of others and situations, requires freelancers to know themselves intimately.

5.5.5.1 Self-awareness

The following quotes provide an overview of what emerged during the interviews regarding self-awareness. In some instances, the self-awareness stems from dealing with others, in other instances from self. To be able to interpret how freelancers come across gives rise to the construct of self-awareness.

> I think firstly, it sounds like such a cliché, but you need to know yourself.

> …you need to know yourself, what work you enjoy, and what work you don't.

Self-awareness manifests in how others perceive one and as such, how the freelancers interpret that. It involves the ability to understand and create feedback loops, with alert

awareness. In many instances, work is done within a project team setting, with each party contributing to the overall output thereof. Freelancers need to be aware of their prejudices, heuristics, decision-making biases as well as body language.

In conclusion, self-awareness, with a specific focus on how others perceive freelancers is vital.

5.5.5.2 Awareness of others

Work as a freelancer is undertaken by working with and for other people. As such, being acutely aware of other people and their preferences, ways of working, likes and dislikes, is key. The following quotes provide an overview of awareness of others within a working context:

> You need to be able to think on your feet and you need to be able to be compassionate towards your colleagues as well and empathetic towards your colleagues that you are working with and your workers as such so when you are working with a young receptionist be aware that they are a young receptionist they are not going to be aware that you, of certain protocols and they may not have seen as many protocols as you may have necessarily seen, so you need to be able to put yourself in other people's shoes basically as well.

> So socialising, the ability to read people, to watch the body language – that's all been acquired.

> ...so you need to be able to put yourself in other people's shoes basically as well.

Being empathetic allows freelancers to show their ability to both understand and share the feelings of other people, as one interviewee explained. This level of awareness of other people allows freelancers to display empathy. Through demonstrating this behaviour, a trust relationship will be built, which in turn may allow for a deepened relationship to be built. Fostering a secure environment allows for communication to take place, and through socialising, a deepened relationship can be built.

5.5.5.3 Situational awareness

The ability to interpret a situation, to make inferences, deductions and form a point of view based on observations, is essential. The following quotes illustrate situational awareness, as uncovered during the interviews:

> I think assessing people in a conversation is important.

> I would look at the way people behave in meetings; I would look at some of their body languages and try and figure out whether I should proceed with working with them.

> You know it can often boil down to interesting little things—the chairman who walks around the boardroom table to greet you. Or the guy who stands resolutely on the other side of the table. You know, there is defensiveness, there is a barrier there that I sum up and kind of pack into my attitude immediately! I am a bit of a chameleon in interview situations; I have to be.

The following quote beautifully illustrates all components in one:

> So, you can't go in and be like a rhino in a china shop!

Awareness of organisational culture as regards to how things are done is vital. The ability for freelancers to get a grasp as quickly as possible on the working culture will stand them in good stead to be successful in the execution of their duties.

The researcher concludes that awareness as a construct can be compartmentalised into three areas, awareness of self, others and situations. This awareness refers to the emotional intelligence of freelancers to be able to reach conclusions on the items mentioned above.

5.6   Results: Research Question 4

5.6.1   The behaviours of freelancing—adaptable, accountable, approachable, flexible and reliable

Several behaviours or characteristics of freelancers emerged during the interviews. These almost seem like "'tick box" characteristics not only for freelancers, but other people too. The researcher does not explore the construct in much detail as they are constructs that are well known and thoroughly researched. The following constructs are, however, vital as a starting point and as such the researcher deemed it important to group them into one discussion point, and to outline these behaviours. Quotes have been provided for each construct to demonstrate how they were outlined during the interviews. Interviewees referred to these behaviours as a must.

The first construct to be provides is being adaptable. Freelancers need to be able to change based on circumstance and requirement of clients. Freelancers will be placed in various environment and their ability to adapt is key. The following quotes outline the responses from interviewees.

> So being able to adapt to different situations, I suppose. Adaptability is really important because you deal with a whole range of different races and cultures and clients.

> So, you must be able to grow with your game as well, to be more adaptable – and adaptability is something you need to learn as much as possible.

In addition to being adaptable, being accountable was also noted by interviewees. It was noted as vital to take accountability for work being delivered.

> So, if you are dependable and responsible, I think that is most important. And it is not to say you are not allowed to make mistakes, but owning up to that and accountability is important.

Interviewees outlined that being approachable is important. Being approachable allows for conversations to take place, which may result in additional work.

> You have got to be an approachable person.

55

Being flexible in addition to the above mentioned behaviours was also pointed out by interviewees as essential. Being flexible allowed freelancers to get work they might not have been awarded before. Flexibility does not only relate to work required, but other items, like working longer hours or going above and beyond.

As a freelancer, you have to be a bit more flexible.

Concluding the first set of outlined behaviours, being reliable and delivering on commitment was noted as essential

...friendly, open-minded, reliable, be aware of the different environments.

Interviewees noted that these behaviours are a fundamental starting point for freelancers. As outlined by the researcher, these constructs were not researched at length, but a failure to mention them in this report may have meant that they were not regarded as important; as such, the researcher deemed it important to note them, but not discuss them comprehensively.

5.6.2 Resilience

The ability to be resilient emerged several times during interviews. The ability to deal with the ups and downs of freelancing with regard to work, and the uncertainty as to when the next opportunity would arise, requires freelancers to be resilient The following quotes illustrate resilience:

So, I think one is definitely resilience.

In other words, to have the resilience to handle the cash flow and the rejections from business and those sorts of things.

The ability to adapt in the face of uncertainty, which brings with it certain stressors, is part of the freelancing life. Resilience, or being resilient, was mentioned 14 times during the interviews. Resilience ties into the construct of high levels of self-efficacy. Resilience is referred to in the context of dealing with the financial constraints but also dealing with busy and slow periods. The ability to absorb not only financial shocks but also feedback or

critiquing is vital.

5.6.3 Persistence

Resilience is shaped out of persistence. The ability to persist through whichever challenges freelancers may be faced with were identified as essential. Persistence was noted as the ability to overcome various challenges that were faced.

> That's part of the persistence.

> So, perseverance is massive.

It was noted that one's character will be developed and stretched, which requires persistence to continue on the journey. One interviewee mentioned that, the longer one is in an industry, the higher the levels of tolerance are. Interviewees persisted in their career journeys, and persistence also presented itself in the completion of tasks or projects and not necessarily only the overarching career requirement to continue. Interviewees connected persistence back to self-belief, the knowledge that they will be able to achieve what has been set out for them to achieve.

5.6.4 Ability to network

The ability to network emerged as a critical element within freelancing. This networking may be outside or within one's industry or field of expertise. Networking potentially opens up doors to other work engagements.

> However, there is a certain ability to network and to meet and talk to strangers that I think you probably need to do if you are in a freelance line of business where you will always need to get new clients.

> Other people would go out and network more, or I don't know… I don't, I am a loner, very much a loner.

> Networking is not just about getting work, but also ensuring that good people surround them. …who is going to make you level up.

Freelancers are not all networking magicians; the question would, however, then be, how is work sourced? Networking plays an integral role in securing work. The skill of networking seems to be vital in a freelancing career choice.

5.6.5 Business development

Freelancers are required to source their own work in most instances. They are a business entity, a service provider, and as such are responsible for the full spectrum of business development. The following quotes illustrate the ability to be ready, always, to do business development:

> Always look for new opportunities and when times are slow to build up your marketing.

> This very entrepreneurial proactiveness, and taking a little bit of risk in the way you are trying to look for opportunities and close it up.

Looking for opportunities is part of the freelancing responsibilities that may not suit all freelancers. The interconnectedness between sourcing work through word of mouth, and delivering on their reputation, are all forms part of business development.

5.6.6 Working with teams

Depending on the nature of freelancing, it may require working in teams with other people. Two interviewees, who frequently work with different teams, outlined the necessity of being open to working with a spectrum of people from various backgrounds:

> So, you have to get used to working with a whole range of different people.

> You also have to work with people of different cultures, different languages.

Although working with people from different cultures and backgrounds is not new in many organisations, freelancing may allow those who choose this career path to work across borderlines, offices and organisations. The ability to adapt to varying circumstances is key.

Knowing oneself in the whole process may assist in the ability to work with people from various backgrounds.

5.6.7 Time management

Using one's time effectively is vital. As freelancer workers are in most instances in control of how their typical day plays out, managing time is critical. What was interesting in the interviewees was how important punctuality is.

> So, the first thing is timekeeping, and that is not just missing deadlines, i.e.

> ...you have to be punctual.

Punctuality was noted as a critical component of freelancing, based on time being very important. Punctuality in terms of meeting deadlines, arriving on time for meetings, or using time to develop working material. As freelancers are in control of their time in most instances, managing it emerged as a critical component as a career-related behaviour.

5.7   Other considerations

A final comment that was revealed during the interviews was "being lucky." It was noted throughout that there is an interlinked relationship between attitudes, behaviours and competencies of freelancers. These items relate to concepts that are within the locus of control of freelancers. It was evident that the factor that may contribute to one's success that is not within the locus of control of freelancers is being lucky.

No doubt being a freelancer has its challenges, but it can be most fulfilling at times and brutal at others. As explained by one interviewee, it may be, during different periods, either "feast or famine."

5.8   Summary of findings

The directionally correct attitudes and behaviours as outlined above sets freelancers on their career path. An extrinsic factor, being lucky, also plays a role. It is the sum of their actions that shapes the experience of freelance workers. The experiences of freelance

helps to share where they are going. This interconnectedness between attitudes, behaviours and competencies was an outcome of the interviews.

This chapter covered the results of the interviews. It focused on discussing the four research questions, with two additional questions as backing and in closing. In Chapter 6, the results and research findings from this chapter will be discussed in detail, and in Chapter 7 a proposed framework will be outlined to illustrate the connectedness between the three constructs of attitudes, behaviours and competencies.

6   CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1   Introduction

Chapter 6 provided a discussion of the results set out in Chapter 5, which were based on the semi-structured interviews conducted, and the insights obtained through the literature review presented in Chapter 2. The results are discussed as they relate to each research question. The discussion is organised by themes that were derived from Chapter 5. Themes were derived by grouping code groups and linking the constructs together.

The first theme discussed is optimism as a career attitude for freelancers. Freelancers need to take charge of their careers and embrace self-directed learning. The self-directed learning leads to technical competencies around their role and industry knowledge. Both depth within their role and breadth across functional areas are essential. The technical competencies in isolation will be lacking if not connected with the social skills of freelancers. Social skills are essential to be successful as a freelancer, but awareness of the broader eco-system is vital. Freelancing takes persistence, persistence shapes resilience and requires freelancers to be adaptable. Networking allows for new relationships to be formed, relationships that are key for continued success as a freelancer.

The following sections review each research question. The research will outline how each construct influences the next. A summary is provided at the end of each section to indicate whether findings in this study, support, contradict or extend the existing literature. A brief summary is also provided in the opening paragraph of each section.

6.2   Discussion of Research Question 1

How do career-related attitudinal characteristics demonstrated by freelance workers influence their success?

Research Question 1 sought to understand what perceived career-related attitudinal characteristics freelancers demonstrate to influence their success. The research question is discussed based on the themes that were constructed through the analysis of the results. Existing literature supports attitudinal characteristics that were uncovered during

the interviews.

6.2.1 Optimism reflected through attitudes a key driver to success.

Hirschi (2018) stated that high levels of self-efficacy play a significant role in choosing a career field and enhance the development of particular interests within a field. Throughout the delivery of work to organisations, freelancers need to work independently. The construct of working independently is fundamental, as outlined by Kyndt and Baert (2015). Working independently signals that a healthy level of self-belief exists.

Self-belief re-enforces one's ability to be able to accomplish what is set out to be accomplished. Volmer and Spurk (2011) argue that navigating an unknown career world across psychical and psychological boundaries requires freelancers to inherently hold a healthy level of self-belief to drive success. The development of self-belief initially starts intrinsically with the decision to work as freelancers based on their competencies, which are then validated extrinsically by those who use their services.

The results from the interviews confirmed that the attitude of freelance workers drives success as the first step. Attitudes are the genesis of this journey. High, but not distorted levels of self-belief are critical, and the interviewees in this study outlined this as a key attitude. Healthy levels of self-efficacy, checked continuously with introspection and reflection, are critical. An appropriate initial level of self-belief is what may serve as a trigger to embrace freelancing, based on this research. Believing in what one does affects the behaviour towards that which one is working towards. A sense of belief that the work being conducted is meaningful and will have an impact reinforces one's levels of self-belief and one's commitment to organisations.

The combination of taking charge of one's career development, and working across boundaries, embodies the freelancer working life (Arthur, 2014). It is the attitude that drives behaviour, as Ashford et al. (2018, p. 29) noted the gig economy is "one of action", that success is enabled through behaviour. The attitude of positivity is undoubtedly influenced by levels of self-belief. Self-belief is rooted in the immediate, historical and potential prospects of what this career-path may hold. An optimum balance of self-belief, positivity and humility emerged as being what one should seemingly be striving to achieve.

The significance of self-belief coupled with a positive mind-set is found when comparing the different comments made by interviewees. Mind-set is a construct spread across a spectrum of self-development, client work and future endeavours (Volmer & Spurk, 2011). At the same time as embracing self-development and work conducted for clients, this combination may contribute to building a successful career. High levels of self-efficacy are required as a foundational building block for freelancers since one's mindset drives the willingness to learn. Attitude drives the call to action — a call to develop self and take charge.

Arguably, high levels of self-belief differ from freelancer to freelancer based on their subjective natures. The researcher would argue that it is possible to compare levels of self-belief with other freelance workers to gauge where they might be on the spectrum of self-belief, even if subjective. A learning opportunity does, however, present itself with other peers. Based on the interviews and analysis of the data in this study, the researcher would argue that a healthy, realistic level of self-belief is vital; this may lead to a potential change in behaviour, which leads to the development of competencies.

The data analysis conducted supports the existing literature. The following section will focus on the self-driven learning agility and development as conveyed by the interviewees in this study. It was, however, clearly noted that attitudes serve as the driving force to take action, a behaviour. Attitude without action will result in no forward momentum, as they are without a doubt interlinked and connected.

6.2.2 Self-driven learning agility and development in situations

Alvin Toffler's words tie together beautifully what is required by freelancers from a learning agility lens. DeRue et al. (2012) stated that the ability to understand situations, and flexibly move across ideas within, and experiences, are what define learning agility. The ability to bring together various aspects of one's career is essential to success.

Learning, as outlined in Chapter 5, is either structured or unstructured, and presents itself in various environments as outlined be the interviewees. As a freelancer, learning should never stop, and a higher burden is placed on freelancers where continuous professional development is not a requirement in their specific field. This drives the need self-directed learning to an even greater extent. Learning can, however, be done in various ways.

Access on the internet to learning material has allowed those who have access the ability to upskill themselves. The call to action is driven by the attitude of freelancers, which demonstrates the link between attitudes and building up competencies.

Each unique environment has been mentioned by interviewees as providing a learning opportunity. This ability to take advantage of learning opportunities relates to their ability to be aware not only of self, and others, but also situations.

What is critical is to be up to date with industry knowledge and events, and the broader business context. As mentioned above, as a freelance worker, it may mean that they have a specialisation and it is therefore assumed that they are at the forefront of industry-related norms, technological advancements and industry developments. It is an attitude of continuous learning that will help turn this perception into reality.

A positive attitude, growth mindset and high levels of self-efficacy are drivers for performance (Lent & Brown, 2013). A starting point for freelancers to achieve success is a growth or open mind-set. Mindset drives several other attitudes, which in turn drive behaviours and actions that are taken. The aligned career-related attitudes are the building blocks for a successful career. A growth mind-set may mean that freelancers are not only experts in their domain, but demonstrate capabilities across industries. When referring to mind-set, the researcher implies growth or open mindset, unless stated otherwise. As freelancers are in charge of their careers, they also need to take charge of their learning opportunities. The data analysis conducted supported existing literature.

6.2.3 Summary of the discussion of Research Question 1

Based on the analysis and presentation of results, the findings are supported by the existent literature. The findings suggests that the attitude of freelancers is the genesis of their behaviours and additional competency building. The researcher argues that the anchor of self-efficacy for freelancers should be well defined. There might be several items that drive freelancers to undertake this career-path. The drivers for deciding to become a freelance worker should be defined and acknowledged.

Freelancers should not be swept away in the up-cycles, or lose hope in the inevitable down cycles. Freelancers should focus on the broad vision that they have defined and

outlined for themselves. Advantage should be taken of those periods where operational requirements are not as demanding as during up-cycles, and they should be used productively. An attitude of continuous development is vital to increase the depth and breadth of expertise. This approach enables the development of self and allows for a broader scope of work to potentially be conducted. It will allow one to become more of an all-rounder in one's offering.

In choosing to work with freelancers, organisations should measure levels of self-belief through appropriate instruments. Through engagement with freelancers, organisations may better understand the level of comfort the freelancer has with work required as well as the attitude of the freelancer. The ability to secure work allows for technical competencies to develop in conjunction with the social component. This development needs, however, to be intentional. Research question two reflects on the technical competencies.

6.3   Discussion of Research Question 2

How do the career-related technical competencies that freelance workers acquire, influence their success?

Research Question 2 sought to understand what perceived career-related technical competencies freelancers acquire to influence their success. The research question is discussed based on the themes that were constructed through the analysis of the results. The attitudinal characteristics that were uncovered during the interviews is supported existing literature.

6.3.1   Role knowledge coupled with industry expertise contributes to freelancing success

The ability to meet client-specific requirements within a specific context reflects the technical competencies of freelancers (Kyndt & Baert, 2015). DeFillippi and Arthur (1994) identified three competencies: knowing-how, knowing-why and knowing-whom. Knowledge can, however, be obtained through various means such as structured learning through formal studies, or through experience and informal exposure.

As outlined above, Colakoglu (2011) elaborates on the three identified competencies. Knowing-how is related to transferable competencies gained through experience. It is not only a base level of knowledge, but involves the willingness to learn more, which ties in with self-directed learning agility. Much of the knowledge gained will also come from working experience and exposure to different scenarios. The technical competencies are reinforced by learning agility, as outlined in Section 5.4 above. Some freelancers required a specific knowledge base or skillset, whereas one specific interviewee thought himself to be a generalist. The knowledge that is required may be applied within an industry or across industries.

Not only are freelancers required to fulfil their role-specific or job-specific tasks, but also to shed light on industry practices based on their previous exposure (Kyndt & Baert, 2015). The ability to operate on an industry level seems to provide a competitive advantage to freelancers. How much ability is unclear and was not the focus of this study. A project may be so specific and so related to the needs of a client that no industry experience is required, but rather depth with regards to technical knowledge. The section outlined above supports existing literature.

6.3.2 Breadth and depth of knowledge may contribute to a sustainable career

Heslin, Keating and Ashford (2019) stated that exploring other opportunities apart from the work that freelancers are familiar with, may contribute to their sustainable careers. The ability to offer more, to offer insights to clients, might be the differentiating factor between being just the same and being extraordinary. This requires freelancers to transcend their technical competencies and industry knowledge, and embrace that with which they are less familiar to create both depth and breadth capabilities.

Pfeffer (2018) states that there is no one golden approach to a sustainable career state, but proactive efforts assist in cultivating role breadth. This allows freelancers to define their roles in a more flexible manner, allowing for value to be added to clients (Ashford et al., 2018). Since freelancers manage their own businesses, they will need to fulfil other duties outside their realms of expertise. This means that freelancers need to be open to learning and doing, because it is also through doing that competencies are built.

Ireland and Lent (2018) suggest that freelancers who would like to progress in their careers should take on work in a field where they are aiming to build their competencies. The section outlined above supports existing literature.

6.3.3 Summary of the discussion of Research Question 2

Based on the analysis and presentation of results, the findings support existing literature. It is the combination of technical knowledge and social skills that enables work to be sourced. These competencies work hand in hand. Both can stand alone but are an incredible force when combined.

Career success as a freelancer might mean having control of self and knowing what is expected of the person during the execution of their tasks. Two approaches referred to under this heading were the protean and boundaryless career orientation models, in the sense that some freelancers take charge of their careers and their ways of working, while others are open to work across a spectrum of organisations. Technical competencies are built over a sustained period. The incredible advantage of being a freelancer is the ability to take on work that will allow them to expand or grow their competencies in ways that will assist them in their future careers. There are only self-imposed boundaries, which is different to what employees might encounter within their organisations.

The more freelancers expand their foundations, the more insight and value will be provided to clients. Reference has been made to being an all-rounder, and this would not only apply to running their own organisations, but also to the provision of their services to organisations. The demonstration of depth can be considered the ticket to the game, but breadth will allow broader relationships to be established and other work to be delivered, contributing to a sustainable career.

6.4   Discussion of Research Question 3

How do the career-related social competencies that freelance workers acquire, influence their success?

Research Question 3 sought to understand what perceived career-related social competencies freelancers acquire that influence their success. The research question

sought to uncover career-related social competencies that are required to be successful as a freelancer in a gig economy.

6.4.1 Communication skills in the gig economy are vital

Freelancers are exposed to ever-changing work environments, and a wide range of relationships are required with varying stakeholders (Petriglieri et al., 2019; Schwartz, 2018). There is no doubt that communication is key in many aspects. Frequently, it is the catalyst for relationships to form between people. Relationships as a freelancer will form either through face-to-face or remote conversations. The working environment does not always allow for communication to be interpreted in its entirety for meaning to be extracted, as suggested by Hall, Horgan and Murphy (2019). Hence the ability to interpret meaning out of communication increases in difficulty.

The literature suggests that, based on the remote working environment, a high emphasis might be placed on verbal skills, in the absence of non-verbal cues. Freelancers need to be approachable, easy to work with and exude an inviting body language.

Communication through speaking with one another allows for productive interaction to take place, problems to be uncovered and work to be unpacked and progressed. Speaking may occur one-to-one, speaking to one another in a group setting, or in the form of public speaking. The ability to articulate, express and converse, and voice opinions and values, is essential in any relationship, whether working or personal.

Arguably, non-verbal communication (NVC) is as important as verbal communication. Although viewed as subjective and open to interpretation, it rounds out a message that is being delivered (Burgoon et al., 2011). Lans, Verhees and Verstegen (2016, p. 326) stated that the ability to interpret non-verbal cues was "directly related to a venture's financial success." Should freelancers want to position themselves for success, the researcher would argue, an understanding of NVC behaviour becomes critical in the journey of freelancing. Being able to apply as many communication channels as possible, or those best suited to the personal style of a freelancer, is essential.

The researcher argues that a freelancer needs to be able to express their views, thoughts, opinions and values just as well as they also listen and hear what others have to say.

Relationships are based on two-way communication; this is established through conversation, both verbal and non-verbal. Both are essential elements in interactions with others.

One specific skill that was clear is the ability to listen. The researcher would argue that listening may potentially contribute to the most substantial weighting in conversations in terms of understanding that which the client requires their assistance with—clarifying the exact need through asking practical questions and having meaningful conversations to get to a point where services might be offered, and engagements agreed. The inability to listen and understand the exact reason why a contract, work arrangement or project is not undertaken. Based on remote work, the ability to communicate effectively is essential.

Based on the analysis and presentation of results, the findings are in agreement with the existent literature. The ability to listen as a specific skill, is a skill not identified in existing literature.

6.4.2 Working in an eco-system—awareness of self, others and situations

Petriglieri et al. (2019) suggest that freelancers experience a greater variety of emotions. Ashford et al. (2018) elaborate on these varieties of emotion based on the ebb and flow of work when coupled with financial uncertainty, instability in regard to working relationships will bring about these emotions. Working with others can potentially allow for growth and development occurring in various aspects.

Not only is it important for freelancers to understand their own emotions, but also to be able to interpret those of others, and this might signal the difference between a thriving or dying relationship. This awareness is related to the EQ of freelancers and their ability to develop their EQ to be in tune with their surroundings, regardless of whether those surroundings are only the physical environment, or another person or a team setting.

6.4.3 Summary of the discussion of Research Question 3

Based on the analysis and presentation of results, the findings are supported by the existent literature. Listening as a social competency was a new construct that emerged through the interviews, which was not covered in the academic literature for freelancers.

The researcher found it interesting that writing and speaking skills, referred to herein as verbal communication, might be more important than the combination of verbal and non-verbal skills. Based on the understanding that much work can be done remotely, communication may take place using email or calls in most instances. Technologies like Skype and Zoom allow for video feeds, but based on time differentials this might not always be practical.

The ability of freelancers to communicate effectively while only applying one medium is essential. The researcher argues that writing skills are essential, but also language skills. This then begs the question, is English the acceptable global standard for all freelancers? Should organisations work with freelancers whose mother tongue is not English, a level of empathy should be applied.

It has been argued that the ability to identify the emotions of self and of others, and to decode situations, is essential. This calls for higher levels of EQ to be demonstrated by freelancers.

6.5   Discussion of Research Question 4

How do career-related behavioural characteristics demonstrated by freelance workers influence their success?

Research Question 4 sought to understand which perceived career-related behavioural characteristics freelancers demonstrate that influence their success. The research question sought to uncover career-related behaviours required for success as a freelancer in a gig economy.

6.5.1   Persistence shapes resilience—adapting in various circumstances

Freelancers find themselves in an economy that is "one of action" (Ashford et al., 2018, p. 29). This action relates to doing, being in the gig economy, and being busy, active and contributing to their career success. Through their action they demonstrate persistence, and persistence shapes resilience. Resilience as a construct is key for a continued working career as a freelancer, something which was revealed by many interviewees in this study. It was clear that the emotional rollercoaster that the interviewees experience

stretches them in regard to many aspects. This was supported in the literature by Kahn et al. (2018). Attitude is the driver for behaviour and is seen as a critical input for freelancers (Volmer & Spurk, 2011). Savickas et al. (2009) argued that adaptive career behaviours allow freelancers to build their competencies, which requires them to adapt within their environment. This ability to adapt contributes to shaping their resilience.

Interviewees confirmed that the uncertainty which results from this career-path introduces stressors into their lives, which they need to deal with on a continuing basis, and through dealing with this, persist in their careers. Through the ups and downs, interviewees noted that they take whatever time is available to build on their competencies or explore new fields.

Resilience, or being resilient, was mentioned 14 times during the interviews. Resilience ties into the construct of high levels of self-efficacy, which was referred to by the interviewees. Resilience is referred to in the interviews in terms of dealing with financial constraints, but also in terms of busy and slow periods. Ashford et al. (2018) suggest that the slow times provide an opportunity to build skills. It links back to time management, to being aware that there will be ups and downs that will need to be dealt with, and to being prepared. Intentional development of self is supported by Petriglieri (2011).

The interviewees, knowing that they are in charge of their own careers, were aware of the levels of self-development that need to take place. In conclusion, resilience as a construct is key for freelance workers. Arguably, freelancers should not confuse failure with continued resilience. As such, the freelancers should also define when they potentially need to shift in terms of their working arrangements. The data analysis conducted supports existing literature. Persistence builds resilience and is key for career success as a freelancer.

6.5.2 Networking a means to find connection, both personal and professional

Williams et al. (2017) proposed that freelancers need to apply bricolage to assist in driving career success. Being able to build a network within one's eco-system was clearly articulated by interviewees. The ability to build a network created the opportunity for freelancers to offer various solutions to their clients. This supports Hobfoll's (2011) argument that drawing on additional resources may assist in sustaining work in the long-

term. Interviewees also noted that this allows them to secure work from one another. Throughout the interviews that were conducted, interviewees noted that relationships were very important, that finding clients and making them happy was the order of the day. This is supported by the argument made by Hobfoll et al. (2018, p. 104) that individuals will "strive to obtain, retain, foster, and protect those things they centrally value."

The sourcing of work was the responsibility of most of the interviewees. The veterinarians, to an extent, were exempt from sourcing work that needed to be done, based on the fact that the practice where they worked was well established, but it was, however, important for them to maintain relationships with the clients where possible. Networking was deemed to be important within the internal circles of veterinarians so as to potentially assist them in dealing with some cases, and as such it was a critical element. This allowed for the development of relationships that were more than just professional and also personal.

Networking may come easier for some than others, based on their personality types, whether introvert or extrovert, and their willingness to network and their opportunity to network. It is, however, a central component of career success. The discusson above supports existing literature.

6.5.3 Summary of the discussion of Research Question 4

Based on the analysis and presentation of results, the findings are supported by the existent literature. Various behaviours support one another and reinforce outcomes.

A link emerged between behaviours and the building of competencies. As outlined above, attitude in the absence of action has no outcome. Behaviour drives competencies based on the action undertaken. It is the intentional drive which connects attitudes to behaviours that build competencies. Social competence is built with other people, while technical competencies may be built in isolation, or by working in teams or with other stakeholders.

6.6 Summary

Research questions one supports existing literature around the attitudinal characteristics that are required by freelancers in the gig economy. Technical and Social competencies, research questions two and three both support existing literature. It is however noted that

new information emerged around freelancer's ability to listen. Listening as a skill has not been outlined in the existing literature. Listening as a social skill thus builds on the existing literature and enriches the findings of this study. Finally research question four based on the behaviours required. The findings herein support the existing literature.

A link emerged based on the findings that attitudes, behaviours and competencies, whether social or technical are connected. There is a feedback loop that emerged from behaviours to attitudes and back to one's behaviour, influencing one's attitude and behaviour. One could argue that the competencies of freelancer workers allow them to build their levels of self-belief. Through comparing the constructs provided in this chapter to the existing literature, this chapter expands on the CSMM and the surrounding career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies that freelancer workers require to be successful. The CSMM does not cover the interlinked and connected attributes as discussed in this chapter. Attitudes, behaviours and competencies are interlinked and connected; this connection between the three constructs allows for incredible synergies to take shape. There is a feedback loop that emerged from behaviours. Arguably, competencies of freelancers in the study allow them to build their levels of self-belief, a key attitude.

This chapter covered the discussion of the results set out in Chapter 5. It focused on discussing the research questions asked, comparing and interpreting the feedback, and finally arguing why this is of relevance. In Chapter 6, the results and research findings from this chapter will be discussed in detail, and a proposed framework will be outlined to illustrate the connectedness between the three constructs, these being attitudes, behaviours and competencies, which will be presented in Chapter 7.

7   CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1   Introduction

Chapter 7 discusses the attitudes, behaviours and competencies framework titled "ABCs of freelancing". This framework was based on Lent and Brown's CSMM (2013) as outlined in Chapter 2. The framework emerged through a combination of the literature review undertaking in Chapter 2, and the results and discussion of the results in Chapters 5 and 6. Based on the findings and the developed framework, recommendations for freelancers and managers are presented, and ideas and recommendation for future research are suggested.

The study aimed to uncover the career-related attitudes, behaviours and competencies that are required to be successful in the gig economy. Through the thematic analysis undertaken, the following were identified, summarised by each of the research questions.

7.2   Conclusion of the results by research questions

Research Question 1: How do career-related attitudinal characteristics demonstrated by freelance workers influence their success? The following attitudinal characteristics were identified in the study.

Table 5: Career-related attitudes

High levels of self-efficacy	Working independently, working with others and in ambiguous environments
Adopting a positive attitude	Emotional awareness
The propensity for risk-taking	Positive mind-set

Research Question 2: How do the career-related technical competencies that freelance workers acquire, influence their success? The following technical competencies were identified in the study.

Table 6: Career-related technical competencies

Role-specific relating to the individual	Breadth and depth in a broader context of business
Industry knowledge and trends	Asking effective questions

Research Question 3: How do the career-related social competencies that freelance workers acquire, influence their success? The following social competencies were identified in the study. Social competencies consisted of verbal and non-verbal communication.

Table 7: Career-related social competencies

Verbal communication	
Non-verbal communication	
Ability to listen	Working with others
Relationship management	Awareness—self, others and situations

Research Question 4: How do the career-related behaviours of freelance workers influence their success? The following career-related behaviours were identified in the study.

Table 8: Career-related behaviours

Adaptable	Persistence
Accountable	Ability to network
Approachable	Business development
Flexible	Working with teams
Reliable	Time management
Resilience	

All the identified attitudes, behaviours and competencies, whether technical or social, were supported by existing literature. The following section will outline how the framework was developed by reviewing constructs in relation to one another.

7.3 A framework for understanding the interlinked connectedness of attitudes, behaviours and competencies

7.3.1 How the "ABCs of freelancing" framework was developed

The ABC of freelancing framework was developed through the analysis done, and the interpretation of all three constructs as a collective. Existent literature reflects adequately each construct in isolation but falls short in bringing it together as one.

7.3.2 The ABC of freelancing framework

The purpose of the framework is to help take the three elements that have been researched, namely attitudes, behaviours and competencies, and to place them into context with one another. The framework demonstrates the interlinked and connected manner in which ABCs integrate.
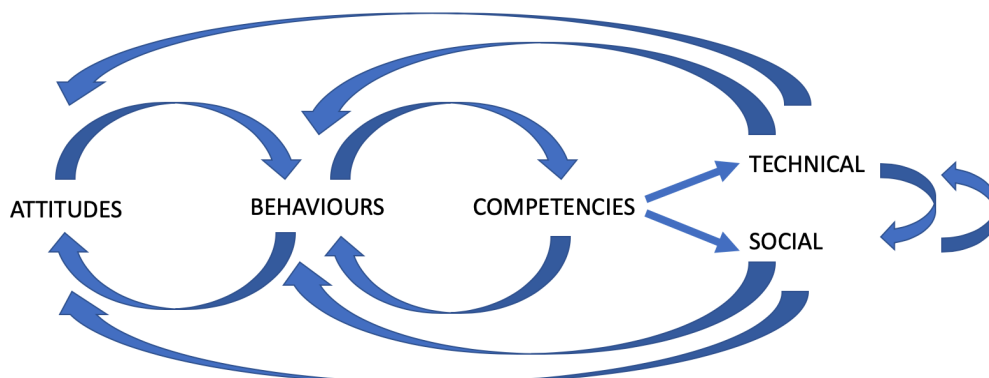
Figure 3: The ABCs of freelancing

7.3.3 Explanation of the ABC of freelancing framework

For ease of illustration of the framework, the researcher will use the building of a PowerPoint presentation as an oversimplified example. The example chosen may oversimplify the complex process required to build out competencies when compared to other fields of study, but it is still relevant for the example used.
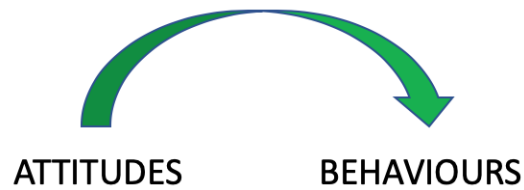
7.3.3.1 Attitudes and behaviours

Figure 4: Attitudes impacting behaviours

Attitudes as a standalone component reflect the feelings and beliefs held by freelancers. Hall's (2004) and Arthur's (2014) protean and boundaryless career orientation models beautifully combine what the career-related attitudes are that are required by freelancers. These attitudes are, by nature, subjective, and influenced by a myriad of factors, both intrinsic and extrinsic. As discussed in Chapter 5, some of the constructs that emerged were high levels of self-efficacy, adopting a positive attitude, the propensity for taking risks, working independently, working with and in ambiguous environments, emotional awareness, mind-set and self-directed learning agility as an attitude.

An attitude drives or influences individual behaviour, using self-belief as the attitudinal driver. A freelancer has the self-belief that they can fulfil specific tasks; this self-belief triggers their behaviour of doing a specific task or job and in this instance, building a PowerPoint presentation. The freelancers may or may not potentially be well versed in using PowerPoint. For the purposes of this example, we will assume the freelancers enlists the help of a third party to build the presentation.

The mere drive to do the task; whether completed or not, promotes a feedback loop towards the attitude either reinforcing a belief or diminishing the freelancer's beliefs. The crucial step between attitude and behaviour is an act of doing. An action triggers behaviour.
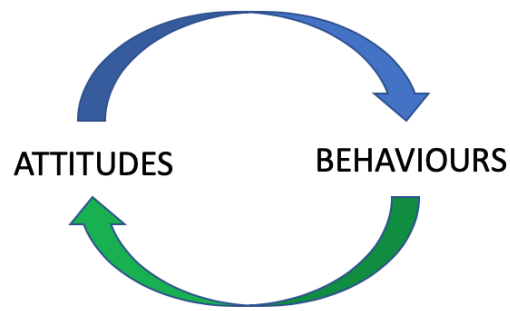
Figure 5: Feedback loop from behaviours to attitudes

The intertwined and abstract nature of attitudes makes it challenging to view them in isolation, and as such the researcher argues that a potential domino effect may take place when individual attitudes are reinforced or diminished, which in turn may trigger other attitudes to be reinforced either positively or negatively.

As an example, the first driver was self-belief to "create a PowerPoint presentation" with the help of a third party. A task was completed, and the level of self-belief increased. A follow-on attitude may be that the task can be completed independently, which did not happen prior to undertaking this task. The freelancers then set out to create their PowerPoint presentation and execute the specific task successfully and independently. As such, the attitudes reinforced through this action are an increased level of self-belief and the attitude that work can be conducted independently — an increase in either attitude, drives the behaviour.

Behaviours that reinforce individual attitudes should be repeated. However, where they diminish attitudes, a correction should be undertaken to rectify the behaviour. The effects hereof are not linear in nature, but must instead be viewed as a neutral network of interconnected, interlinked attitudes.

7.3.3.2 Behaviours and competencies

Behaviour as a standalone component refers to the behaviour of freelancers, which is triggered by their attitudes and executed by taking action. Repeated behaviour would build the freelancer's competencies, whether technical or social. For the purpose of this next explanation of the framework, the researcher views competencies, consisting of two elements, technical and social.
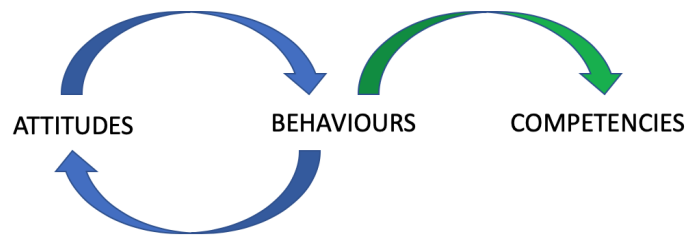
Figure 6: Behaviours influencing competencies

The behaviour in completing a specific project, in this instance the PowerPoint presentation, builds technical competence. Completion of the task influences the freelancer's behaviour towards a specific aspect, which in turn affects their attitude. In turn, asking for a third party to assist in creating a PowerPoint presentation reflects social competence. Behaviours relate to actions taken as an individual or while working with others.
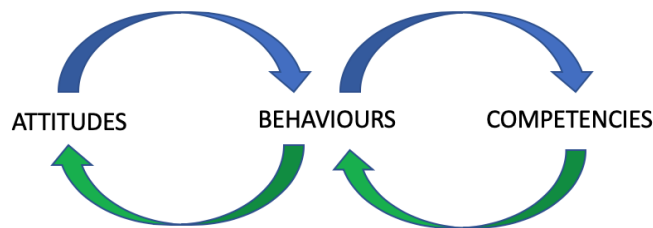

Figure 7: Feedback loop between competencies, behaviours and attitudes

It does occur that the development of competence directly affects freelancers' attitudes, increasing their levels of self-belief that they can create a PowerPoint presentation. Competencies, in turn, affect attitudes either directly or through behaviours, which in turn drive attitudes.
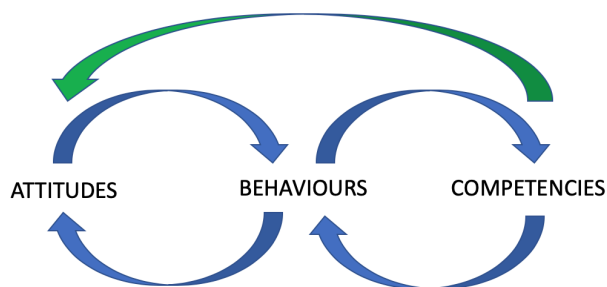
Figure 8: Impact of competencies on attitudes

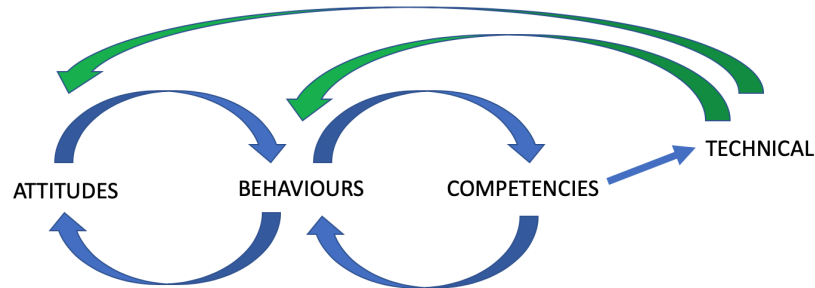### 7.3.3.3 Behaviours influencing technical competencies

Figure 9: Impact of technical competencies on attitudes and behaviours

Repetitive behaviours reinforced by attitudes drive a specific competence. This results in the development of that competency, which in turn may lead to that competency becoming a competitive advantage. When levels of self-belief increase, they unlock a behaviour of potentially sharing with others, which will lead to social competency development.

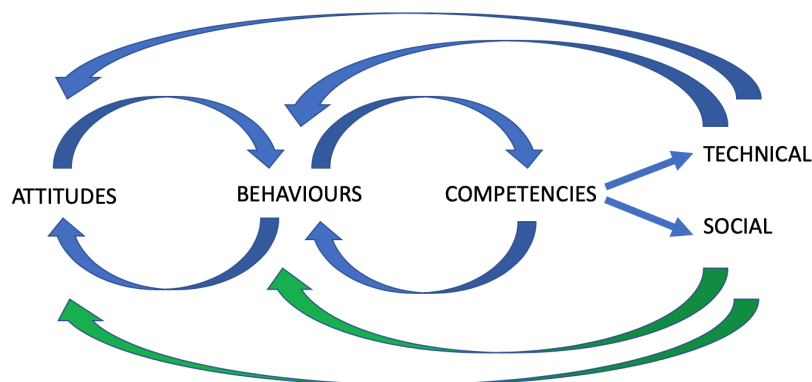### 7.3.3.4 Behaviours influencing social competencies

Figure 10: Impact of social competencies on attitudes and behaviours

Being more at ease with a specific technical competency may enable the freelancer to share their technical competence with others. The comfort of technical competence drives social competency. It can be argued that initially enlisting the help of another is in itself building social competence. This links back to the ability to network, as demonstrated in Chapter 5.

7.3.3.5 Relationship between technical and social competencies

It is potentially unnecessary to distinguish between technical and social competencies in terms of which should be developed first, but it is clear that both are required to be successful as a freelancer. They are interlinked and interdependent on one another as work is seldom fulfilled in isolation.
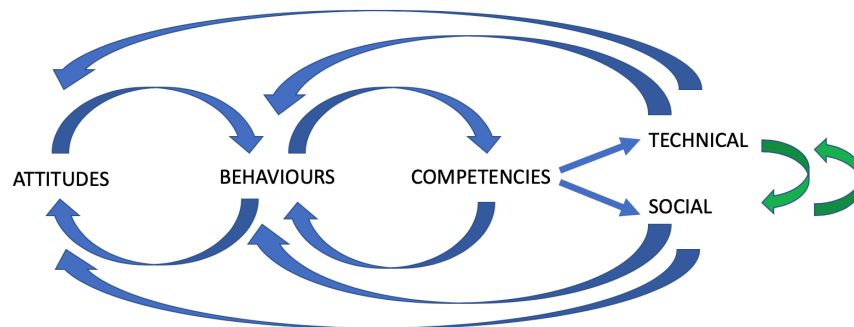

Figure 11: The relationship between technical and social competencies

Figure 11 provides the full view of the ABC freelancing framework when viewed as a collective. Although each item can stand alone, it is the combination of attitudes, behaviours through action, and the development of competencies by that action, that develops technical and social competence; which in turn affects attitudes and behaviours. The reinforcing loop that occurs drives career success. It is not items in isolation that lead to success, but the ability of freelancers to embrace all constructs, with a focus on action. The words of Ashford et al. (2018, p. 29) are profound, that gig economy freelancers find themselves in an economy which is "one of action", action being a behaviour.

The framework sought to outline factors that are within the control of individuals. The framework does not take into consideration external shocks that may influence attitudes, behaviours or competencies. The framework itself does not guarantee success but instead aims to better explain the interlinking and connectedness among the different elements outlined. Freelancers need to grasp that excellence in isolation will not result in success.

7.4 Recommendations for stakeholders

The researcher set out in this study to determine what the career attitudes, behaviours

and competencies are that are required to be successful as a freelance worker. The researcher has come to the conclusion that it is not attitudes, behaviours and competencies in isolation that will assist in achieving success, but the attitudes, behaviours and competencies as a whole that are important as an enabler for success.

7.4.1 Freelancers

It is essential that freelancers take a holistic view of their careers, and understand that high-levels of self-belief, without appropriate action-driving behaviour that develops competencies, is not enough, and in itself does not guarantee success. Freelancers should also not forget about "being lucky." Being lucky forms part of the existential factors that may also contribute to success as a freelancer, and these are totally outside the control of freelancers. Managers should look for all-rounder attributes, rather than focusing on one specific construct.

On the journey of freelancing, fear is inevitable, with the right mind-set failure will mean failing forward and learning from mistakes. There will be moments of fear in achieving the success defined by the freelancer, and freelancing will also bring pressures—these being the required performance to replicate success time and time again. Being active, having healthy levels of self-belief, and being courageous, will go a long way in overcoming the fear that may well be felt.

The framework demonstrates that action is essential. Steps need to be taken to move forward—freelancers need to craft a vision, which can serve as the beacon to where they are heading. Coherent guiding values for dealing with the essential challenges are essential, not necessarily in a written format, but in applying them to dealing with challenges. Freelancers should find their purpose, their sweet spot, which in itself is a journey.

On this journey, reputation is vital; as such, integrity is non-negotiable. There is no hiding behind a brand, firm or another group of people. The freelancer is the brand. Integrity is not only essential with regard to an outward focus, but also with regard to self. Freelancers should exhibit integrity levels that allow them to tackle or address whatever it is before it consumes their whole lives.

Be gentle and kind enough to self to know that success is not built overnight. Timing is

key. Freelancers need to ensure they get up one more time than the number of times they fall down. Happiness is a decision; success does not bring happiness. Happiness causes success. Freelancers should do the work that makes them happy, and that triggers happiness.

7.4.2 Managers

Managers should, when turning to freelancers for support on a specific project, also look at their contribution in a holistic manner. Technical expertise is the requirement to get the job done, but that is not the only element that will contribute to the successful conclusion of the project. As this study shows, there are several aspects, interlinked and connected, that contribute to success. Managers should take this into consideration when engaging freelancers. Managers should ensure they do the required background checks on freelancers, engaging with previous clients, and asking for references.

The framework provides a guide to asking questions around attitudes, behaviours and competencies for hiring managers. All important contributors to the career success of freelancers and success for freelancers may often mean the successful execution of a project or task which results in success for the employing organisation.

7.5   **Contribution of the study**

7.5.1 Theoretical contribution

As outlined in Chapter 2, SCCT suggests that high levels of self-efficacy can be "both an antecedent and outcome for career success" (Lent et al., 1994; Spurk et al., 2019, p. 9). Sheu and Bordon (2017) suggested, based on their research of SCCT, that high levels of self-efficacy with regard to the requirements of a task to be accomplished, play a major role as to whether somebody would develop an interest in a particular field. The CSMM developed by Lent and Brown (2013), which build on SCCT, presented itself in two parts, "proximal person and contextual influences" which has an impact "on adaptive career behaviors and the outcomes of these behaviors." The CSMM proposed by Lent and Brown (2013) focuses on understanding "career development across the lifespan, such as how people manage the tasks involved in career preparation, entry, adjustment, and change" (Ireland & Lent, 2018, p. 37). In freelancing this may all happen simultaneously; the link is

not solely back to evaluating learning experience, which in turn influences self-efficacy and outcome expectations.

7.5.2   Practical implications

It is important for freelancers to know that in many respects their work provides a feedback loop to them. In practice, a high level of self-efficacy as a standalone is not enough to be successful. It should be followed by behaviour, which over time builds additional competencies. Even though all the attitudes, behaviours and competencies were uncovered in existing literature, they were always discussed as separate constructs. Throughout the research process the researcher realised that it is not the constructs in isolation that are important, but rather the combination thereof. Based on this insight the researcher proposes the ABC of freelancing framework.

The contribution made by the researcher lies in the fact that it is not the three constructs in isolation, but rather the collective thereof, that contributes to career success. Existing literature discusses each construct in isolation, but the researcher did not find any source where it was discussed as a collective (Hirschi, 2018; Sheu and Bordon, 2017; Spurk, Hirschi, & Dries, 2019; Ireland & Lent, 2018; Lent & Brown, 2013).

7.6   Limitations of the study

The study, being cross-sectional, was not able to measure whether freelancers achieved success. Thus, the shared attitudes, behaviours and competencies as analysed in Chapter 5 are the lived experience of the interviewees. As qualitative research is subjective the research was influenced by a number of biases. The sampling method and geographic area in which the study took place serve as limiting factors to the specific study, because the sample was in no way representative of the population of freelance workers in South Africa. The South African market for sourcing work from online platforms may not be as developed as in other countries, and as such there are potential differences in the maturity of the working environment of freelancers.

7.7 Recommendations for future research

Future research may need to duplicate the study in another geographical area to determine if similar constructs are uncovered. Future research may also need to determine whether there are any potential gender biases with regard to embracing a freelancing career. Traditionally, men provided stability from a financial point of view, thus allowing women to embrace such a career. This study did not measure whether freelancers achieved success as defined by themselves.

Future studies, adopting a longitudinal approach, may measure whether success was achieved. Studies can be based on freelancers defining success, and its attainment being measured empirically. Researchers may want to determine what strain the freelancing career places on a family or support structure, taking into consideration the uncertainty it brings and oscillations in emotions. Future research may want to focus on the specific listening skills required by freelancers, and potential techniques used to amplify their ability to absorb information. Future research may also determine how a sense of community is fostered by freelancers, with co-working spaces being established to help achieve this. How do freelancers derive intangible social benefits from work? Future research may want to explore what opportunities open up within organisations, and who fills them when employees leave organisations to embrace a freelancing career.

7.8 Conclusion

The world around us is changing. Changes bring new opportunities which require workers to pivot in their careers. The protean and boundaryless career orientation models, combined, reflect the career orientation of freelancers. Hall and Arthur should be applauded for the seminal work they conducted, which has stood the test of time. As technological advancements shape our present, it is vital to uncover what the required attitudes, behaviours and competencies are that will be required. This will be a quest that is never-ending. As famously stated by Alvin Toffler, the ability to learn, unlearn and relearn will be vital in the 21st century. Individuals who want to embrace freelancing as a career choice, should embrace Alvin's words and foster a growth mind-set of continued learning and development, despite often experiencing challenging circumstances.

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9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1: Informed consent letter

To whom it may concern,

Nicol Mullins is currently a student at the University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science and completing of his research in partial fulfilment of an MBA. A requirement for the successful completion of the MBA is an original research project to be submitted. Nicol would like to perform his research in the field of vocational behaviour.

Nicol is conducting research on the career behaviours, technical and social competencies and career attitudes required by freelance in their careers. The semi-structured interviews would each take approximately 60 minutes to complete, and the interview would be recorded on an iPhone, and later transcribed into written documents. Any names would be kept anonymous in the research for confidentiality purposes. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without penalty.

By agreeing to an interview, you indicate that you voluntarily participate in this research. All data will be reported without identifiers. If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or me. Our details are provided below.

If there are any concerns regarding the research, or the veracity of any of the items mentioned above, please feel free to contact his research supervisor at the details below.

Details of the Student:	Details of the Research Supervisor:
Name & Surname: Mr. Nicol Mullins	Name & Surname: Dr Kerrin Myres
Student Number: 24209288	
Email: 24209288@mygibs.co.za	Email: myresk@gibs.co.za
Tel: +27 83 2828 999	Tel: +27 11 771 4000

Participant Name and Surname   _____

Signature   _____

Date   _____

9.2 Appendix 2: Ethical clearance

Gordon Institute of Business Science
University of Pretoria

04 July 2019

Mullins Nicol

Dear Nicol

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.

Please note that approval is granted based on the methodology and research instruments provided in the application. If there is any deviation change or addition to the research method or tools, a supplementary application for approval must be obtained

We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

Kind Regards

GIBS MBA Research Ethical Clearance Committee

9.3 **Appendix 3: Interview guide**

Interview Guide
July - August 2019

Introduction

- Introduce self, role

- Review the purpose of the study, explain the method of data capture and analysis

- Informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity

- Estimated completion time, benefits to respondent

Interview question 1

Please share with me how **you** would define career success as a freelance worker?

Interview question 2 / Research question 1

Building on your definition of success, what are the feelings and beliefs you require to be successful as a freelance worker?

- Prompts to be used, high levels of self-efficacy / self-belief, Work satisfaction professional commitment, feeling pride in a job well done, doing what is right for me, adaptive behaviours.

Interview question 3 / Research question 2

What are the technical skills / knowledge you require to have to be successful?

- Prompts to be used. Is there industry knowledge that you may need to be aware of on a continuous basis? How do you update your skills, knowledge and demonstrate an online presence of high quality and reliability of work, how do you go about doing this?

Interview question 4 / Research question 3

What in your view are the social skills you require to be successful?

- Prompts to be used. Verbal skills – Communication, Non-verbal body language, gestures and eye contact.

Interview question 5 / Research question 4

What would you say are the career behaviours/characteristic freelance workers should have to be successful?

- Prompts to be used as example behaviours – taking responsibility, passion, authenticity, focus, forward looking, persistence, multitasking, being dependable.

Interview question 6

How do you secure work?

Any other comments? Anything not asked?

Thank you

- Other prompts to be used throughout interview to gather additional information
- Please tell me more?
- Why would you say this is the case?
- Can you give me another example?
- How do you this?
- How did this happen?
- Anything else?

9.4   Appendix 4: Code groups (224)

Attitude_Ability to be persistant	Behaviour_Being competent in what is done	SocialComp_Being punctual
Attitude_Ability to believe in self	Behaviour_Being curious	SocialComp_Body language and gestures
Attitude_Ability to embrace financial instability	Behaviour_Being dependable	SocialComp_Broader social skills
Attitude_Ability to work in a ambigious environment	Behaviour_Being effective	SocialComp_Clear communication
Attitude_Ability to work in an environment where everything is not available	Behaviour_Being efficient	SocialComp_Clear communication of expectations
Attitude_Ability to work in the up and down environments	Behaviour_Being friendly	SocialComp_Client management
Attitude_Accept that at times work will be non-routine based work	Behaviour_Being likeable	SocialComp_Communicatin skills
Attitude_Always on the lookout for opportunities	Behaviour_Being open and honest in communication	SocialComp_EQ Developent
Attitude_Being able to embrace the unknown	Behaviour_Being prepared	SocialComp_Establishment of a reputation
Attitude_Being able to work in varying environments	Behaviour_Being reliable	SocialComp_Leveraing of broader networks to learn
Attitude_Being comfortable that you might not finish this piece of work	Behaviour_Being trustworthy	SocialComp_People skills need to be developed
Attitude_Being confident	Behaviour_Challenging self	SocialComp_Personal network of support
Attitude_Being courageous	Behaviour_Consistent high level of service deliver	SocialComp_Recognising others
Attitude_Being humble	Behaviour_Continious learning	SocialComp_Situational awareness
Attitude_Being intentional about learning and development	Behaviour_Delivering quality work	SocialComp_Soft skills
Attitude_Being open to change	Behaviour_Differentiate between work and non-work	SocialComp_Soft skills and the development thereof
Attitude_Being open to feedback	Behaviour_Disciplined	SocialComp_Thinking broader than just self
Attitude_Being open to learn	Behaviour_Do what has been committed to	SocialComp_Transparent in communication
Attitude_Being open to take risks	Behaviour_Flexibility in working arrangements	SocialComp_Understanding the value of your network

Attitude_Being positive	Behaviour_Focussed	SocialComp_Who will make me level up
Attitude_Being resilient	Behaviour_Follow through on commitments	SocialComp_Working in a team
Attitude_Being responsible in your action	Behaviour_Giving it your best in all situations	SocialComp_Working with various different people
Attitude_Being self driven	Behaviour_Guarding yourself emotionally	Success_Ability to be in control of self
Attitude_Constantly ready to learn	Behaviour_Hard working	Success_Ability to pick and choose that which one wants to do
Attitude_Determination	Behaviour_Having an even temperament	Success_Ability to provide financial support as required
Attitude_Do not be naive	Behaviour_How you show up	Success_Achieving happiness, health and stability
Attitude_Finding a balance	Behaviour_If you are nice to work with, people might choose you	Success_Being able to control one owns schedule
Attitude_Finding your ikigai	Behaviour_Knowing what I want to do and what I do not want to do	Success_Being able to define what you want
Attitude_Head strong	Behaviour_Learning from failure	Success_Doing work that develops me
Attitude_High-levels of self efficacy	Behaviour_Learning in small chunks	Success_Doing work that makes an impact
Attitude_Innovation driven	Behaviour_Manage yourself and work professionally	Success_Doing work that one is passionate about
Attitude_Learning agility	Behaviour_Not being pessimistic	Success_Establishment of partnerships with clients
Attitude_Not confusing arrogance and confidence	Behaviour_Paying it forward	Success_It is not just attitude but also skill
Attitude_Open to ideas	Behaviour_Putting in the extra work	Success_Perceived success comes from a combination of factors
Attitude_Problem solving orientation	Behaviour_Risk management	Success_Success in sustaining oneself after retirement through savings
Attitude_Self-belief	Behaviour_Self directed in getting more work	Success_Working independently
Attitude_Self-doubt	Behaviour_Self-directed learning	TechComp_Ability to ask effective questions
Attitude_Striving to be better	Behaviour_Setting strong examples	TechComp_Ability to bring different pieces together in terms of offering
Attitude_Taking a long-term view	Behaviour_Shaping your own culture	TechComp_Ability to build models

Attitude_Taking pride in what you do

Attitude_Tenacity

Attitude_Thinking out of the box

Attitude_Trusting in self

Attitude_Willing to go outside your comfort zone

Attitude_Working with varying sets of standards

Behaviour__Ability to suspend judgment

Behaviour__Being able to deal with emotions

Behaviour__Detail orientated

Behaviour__Not under estimating the whole process that is involved in the sales process

Behaviour_Ability to be creative

Behaviour_Ability to be decisive and think on your feet

Behaviour_Ability to be forward looking

Behaviour_Ability to deal with frustration

Behaviour_Ability to find a harmony

Behaviour_Ability to focus

Behaviour_Ability to network

Behaviour_Ability to question self and work delivered

Behaviour_Ability to recognise and deal with emotions

Behaviour_Social skills need to be developed

Behaviour_Taking accountability

Behaviour_Taking opportunities to reflect and learn

Behaviour_Taking responsibility

Behaviour_The ability to deliver on your reputation

Behaviour_Time management

Behaviour_Upskilling others

Behaviour_Using what is available in the public domain to upskill self

Behaviour_What is my legacy going to be

Behaviour_Willingness to lead

Behaviour_Work smart and hard

Being lucky

SecureWork_Advertising on digital platforms

SecureWork_Having business cards

SecureWork_The use of digital platforms

SecureWork_Word of mouth

SecureWork_Word of mouth referrals

SocialComp_Ability to build a brand

SocialComp_Ability to build a network

TechComp_Ability to create insights from interpretation of work

TechComp_Ability to develop new skills outside your realm of expertise

TechComp_Ability to do forecasting

TechComp_Ability to do research

TechComp_Ability to fullfil technical competencies

TechComp_Ability to have a broader understanding

TechComp_Ability to learn quickly - breadth and not depth

TechComp_Ability to make recommendations

TechComp_Ability to understand broader context

TechComp_Ability to understand business

TechComp_Ability to understand finance

TechComp_Ability to understand risks

TechComp_Ability to understand sales

TechComp_Ability to work with the technology infrastructure that is provided

TechComp_Being a subject matter expert

TechComp_Being available to answer questions

TechComp_Broad skills and knowledge

TechComp_Build out material to help with marketing and sales

TechComp_Combination of theory and practical knowledge

Behaviour_Ability to show emphathy and compassion	SocialComp_Ability to embrace support received	TechComp_Completing required structured training
Behaviour_Ambidextarity around following and leading	SocialComp_Ability to get a long with someone	TechComp_Defining that which you are good at
Behaviour_Appetite for taking risks	SocialComp_Ability to listen	TechComp_Developing other skills
Behaviour_At the edge of advancements	SocialComp_Ability to manage relationships	TechComp_Development of technical enabling skills
Behaviour_Being able to accept failure	SocialComp_Ability to push back	TechComp_Embracing that there are other things that one needs to do as well
Behaviour_Being able to be accountable	SocialComp_Ability to sell self	TechComp_Enabling competencies to fulfill work
Behaviour_Being able to defend oneself	SocialComp_Ability to work with people from different background	TechComp_Give alternative options
Behaviour_Being able to emphathise	SocialComp_Ability to work with people with different skill sets	TechComp_Keeping abreast of development
Behaviour_Being able to live with nuances	SocialComp_Acknowleding what has been done	TechComp_Knowing your client
Behaviour_Being able to make decisions for self	SocialComp_Articulating they way of working	TechComp_Overall business skills
Behaviour_Being able to pick up work from a point and take it from there	SocialComp_Awareness of actions	TechComp_Provide different scenarios
Behaviour_Being able to recognise overarching similarities	SocialComp_Awareness of environment	TechComp_Sales orientation
Behaviour_Being adaptable	SocialComp_Awareness of others	TechComp_Staying current and relevant
Behaviour_Being an advertisement agency for self	SocialComp_Awareness of rules and how things are done around here	TechComp_Streamlining of processes
Behaviour_Being an all rounder	SocialComp_Awareness of self	TechComp_Supplementary abilities around your core competencies of work
Behaviour_Being approachable	SocialComp_Being consistent in ones approach	TechComp_Technical competencies structured training and development
Behaviour_Being calm	SocialComp_Being pro-active in the client relationship management	

9.5 Appendix 5: Confidential agreement signed with transcriber and editor

CONFIDENTIALLY AND NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT

It is a condition of engagement that students shall aid in preserving all confidential information, ideas and plans; any confidential information or any information in respect of any data gathered in respect of their research work. The parties under this agreement agree to the following:

1. The parties of this agreement shall use its best endeavours to keep any information confidential which it has acquired or may acquire pursuant to the research initiative. For the purposes of this clause, confidential information excludes information which:

    1.1 is publicly available or becomes publicly available through no act or default of any Party;

    1.2 was in the possession of a Party prior to its disclosure otherwise than as a result of a breach by any party of any obligation of confidentiality to which it is subject;

    1.3 is disclosed to the student by a person which did not acquire the information under an obligation of confidentiality; and

    1.4 is independently acquired by a student and as a result of work carried out by a person to whom no disclosure of such information has been made;

2. No party shall use or disclose confidential information except with the prior written consent of GIBS or in accordance with an order of a court of competent jurisdiction or in order to comply with any law or governmental regulations by which any Party concerned is bound or as may be lawfully requested in writing by any governmental authority.

3. The party undertakes to permanently delete any electronic copies of confidential information received and destroy any confidential printed documentation or similar material in their possession promptly once they are no longer required on completion of the contracted service by the student.

4. On completion of the contracted service by the student, the party is to confirm to the student that they are not in possession of any confidential information.

Signed at _____on this _____day of_____20____ .

On behalf of:

_____

Name: _____ Signature:_____

duly authorised and warranting such authority

Witness: _____