Gordon Institute of Business Science
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The impact of self-awareness on effective leadership outcomes in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Leadership in today's volatile environment necessitates an understanding of what constitutes effective leadership. Self-awareness is described as critical for effective and positive forms of leadership, yet there is little research into the link between a lack of self-awareness in leaders and destructive, toxic and despotic leadership. The prevalence of destructive leadership is surprisingly common and bears a high cost to companies in terms of employee turnover, absenteeism and decreased productivity. The emotional toll it takes on employees is severe and affects their well-being, job satisfaction, commitment, loyalty and identification with the organisation.

A qualitative, exploratory approach was used to gain rich insights into the role that self-awareness plays in effective leadership, and how a lack thereof affects employee engagement and behaviour. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with executives who had experience of working for a manager with low self-awareness. Thematic analysis was then conducted to identify the main themes found in the data.

This study found that leaders with low self-awareness exhibit behaviours consistent with toxic and destructive leadership. Negative effects on subordinates were felt in terms of employee engagement. Increased resistance to the leader occurred, and retaliatory and deviant work behaviour resulted. A model for conceptualising the process by which a lack of self-awareness results in destructive leadership and its influence on followers' behaviours and attitudes emerged allowing for an improved understanding of this organisational behavioural phenomenon. Leadership can be considered a process of 'co-creation' between leaders and followers in a broader context, the outcome of which determines organisational success. Destructive leadership should be viewed in the same holistic fashion. This ultimately has an effect on the organisation's performance and culture.

KEYWORDS

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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Sharon Jane Davidson Da Fonseca

01 December 2020

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1.1. Introduction and Description of the Problem

An important factor in leadership success is self-awareness, but despite this, much of the existing leadership research has focused on leadership of others and the organisation, and largely ignored leadership of self (Crossan & Mazutis, 2008; Sturm, Taylor, Atwater & Braddy, 2014). There is an abundance of leadership theories, but no consensus as to which is the most effective (Crossan & Mazutis, 2008).

There is, however, consensus that self-awareness is an important antecedent and focal component in many positive forms of leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Crossan et al., 2008). Effective leaders become aware of the impact that their actions and behaviours have on followers, and how they are perceived through introspection and reflection (Showry & Manasa, 2014). Caldwell (2010) posits that according to the theory of self-awareness, leaders who are aware of how they are perceived are more effective at assessing themselves and their behaviour.

Self-awareness is critical for effective leadership and has been identified as the cornerstone of authentic, servant, empowering, resonant and transformational leadership amongst others (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014; Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Sturm et al., 2014; Suri & Prasad, 2011). Effective leadership, which includes leading the organisation, people and oneself, is important for organisational success (Koohang, Paliszkiewicz & Goluchowski, 2017). Crossan and Mazutis (2008) argue that in today's volatile environments, we need to move beyond transactional and transformational leadership, which focus on the exchange between managers and followers and positive follower outcomes, respectively. Leaders must learn how to master themselves through self-awareness and self-regulation (Crossan & Mazutis, 2008).

Organisational leadership theory is largely focused on the positive aspects of leadership (Krasikova, Green & LeBreton, 2013; Padilla et al., 2007; Schyns, 2015). Employee job satisfaction, trust and motivation all contribute to better organisational outcomes (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Koohang et al., 2017). Effective leaders who are responsible and ethical, are more likely to see these qualities exhibited in followers

(Eriksen & Cooper, 2018; Koohang et al., 2017).It is therefore necessary to more fully understand the impact that leaders have on followers. Caldwell (2010) postulates that the most important aspect of self-awareness is how leaders can respond to and apply knowledge about emotions in building trust and meaningful relationships with followers.

The topic of inauthentic, ineffective, bad, destructive, toxic and despotic leadership has been generating increased interest in both practitioner and academic literature (Erickson et al., 2015; Krasikova et al., 2013; Naseer, Raja, Syed, Donia & Darr, 2016; Padilla et al., 2007; Schyns, 2015; Thoroughgood et al., 2018). Despite this interest, the topic is nascent and studies have focused on understanding negative leader behaviours and identifying their consequences (Krasikova et al., 2013). The research into destructive leadership suffers from the lack of an integrated theoretical framework and disagreement over a comprehensive definition (Krasikova et al., 2013). The subject of intent is much debated, with authors divided on whether or not destructive leadership without intent should be included as destructive leadership, or should be considered ineffective leadership (Schyns, 2015; Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Thoroughgood, Sawyer, Padilla & Lunsford, 2018; Thoroughgood, Padilla,Hunter & Tate, 2012). Schyns & Schilling, (2013) argue that it is empirically difficult to differentiate between destructive leadership that is intentional or unintentional, but that both should be considered destructive. Despite self-awareness being considered essential for positive leadership outcomes, it is mentioned peripherally, if at all, in the destructive leadership discourse.

The prevalence of destructive leadership is surprisingly common, with one Norwegian study reporting that a third of employees had suffered abusive leadership within the past six months (Einarsen, Aasland & Skogstad, 2007) and USA figures estimating 13 percent of workers were affected (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Destructive leadership bears a high cost to companies in terms of employee turnover, absenteeism and decreased productivity (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). The emotional toll it takes on employees is severe and affects their well-being, job satisfaction, commitment, loyalty and identification with the organisation (Hogg, 2001; Kumar & Pansari, 2015; Padilla, Hogan & Kaiser, 2007; Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Increased resistance to the leader, and retaliatory and deviant work behaviour are further consequences of toxic leadership (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Thoroughgood et al.,

(2018) argue that literature on leadership acknowledges that it involves a process of 'co-creation' between leaders and followers in a broader environment, the outcome of which determines organisational success. Destructive leadership too should be thought of as a process, rather than a focus on only the "bad" behaviours of leaders. The high cost and prevalence of destructive leadership underline the importance of further research. Self-awareness and leadership of self therefore remain areas in need of further research, particularly as they relate to destructive or negative leadership outcomes (Crossan, Vera & Nanjad, 2008; Crossan & Mazutis, 2008).

To address this research need, this study attempts to understand more deeply the experience of having a manager with low self-awareness. First the behaviours associated with these leaders were identified and explored (Breevaart & de Vries, 2017; Einarsen et al., 2007; Schyns, 2015). The perceptions of how effective these leaders are was discussed by examining leadership style and behaviours (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Kouzes & Posner, 2007, 2016). The effect of having a leader with low self-awareness on employee engagement was investigated and finally how subordinates reacted to these managers was examined (Avolio et al., 2004; Kumar & Pansari, 2015; Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Thoroughgood et al., 2018; Thoroughgood, Tate, et al., 2012). A general conceptual framework, mapping the flow of steps taken to address the research problem is provided in Figure 1 below.
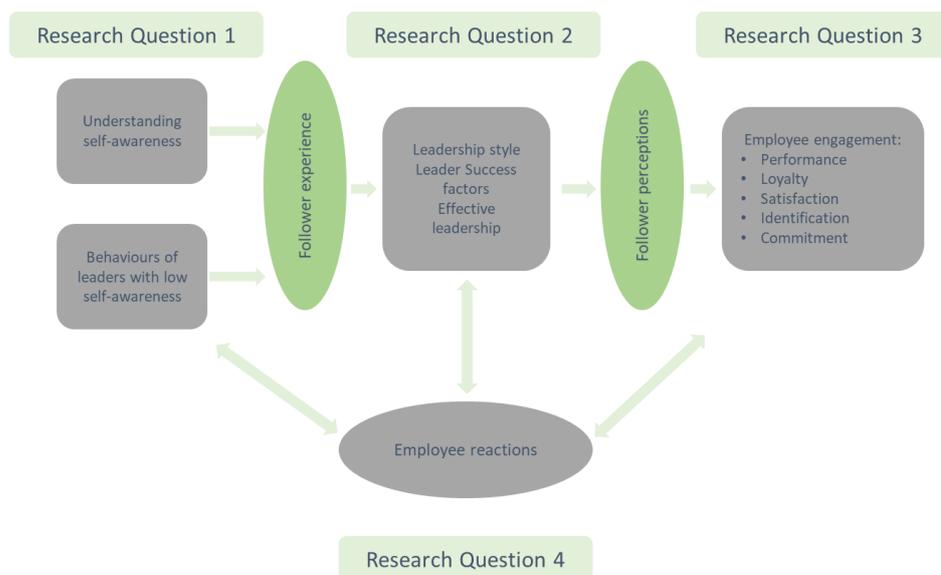
Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study (author's own)

1.2. Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to answer the following overarching research question: What is the impact of self-awareness on effective leadership outcomes in South Africa? The following underlying research questions will be investigated to assist in addressing the research purpose:

Research Question 1 – What are the specific behaviours exhibited by senior managers that lead them to being perceived as having low self-awareness?

Research Question 2 – How effective are managers with low self-awareness?

Research Question 3 – How does having a manager with low self-awareness affect employee engagement?

Research Question 4 – How do employees react to these managers?

1.3. Theoretical Contribution

This study is grounded in organisational behaviour theory and draws on positive organisational behaviour and social identity theory (Hogg, 2001) to expand the learnings from authentic leadership (Avolio et al., 2004) and the influence this has on followers, to include negative leadership outcomes as a result of a lack of self-awareness in leaders.

Leadership research has tended to focus on the positive aspects of organisation behaviour and what makes leaders effective (Schyns, 2015; Yukl, 2006). Various theoretical perspectives, such as authentic leadership and emotional intelligence are used to represent the behavioural domains thought to constitute effective leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio et al., 2018; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Authentic leadership recognises the influence of leaders on followers, and that through improved self-awareness, authentic leaders develop authenticity in followers through positive role modelling (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio et al., 2018; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Self-awareness is a critical component of emotional intelligence, where leaders are able to show empathy, understand their strengths and weaknesses and have the ability to manage their emotions (Goleman, 2017). Caldwell and Hayes, (2016) argue that ethical leaders have a moral obligation to improve self-awareness to ensure personal growth and the empowerment of subordinates and the organisation.

Destructive, toxic and ineffective leadership have been studied in terms of the consequences to followers and organisations, but there is little agreement on the antecedents and reasons behind it (Thoroughgood et al., 2018; Thoroughgood, Tate, et al., 2012). What is ubiquitous to positive forms of leadership is self-awareness, but there is very little research linking a lack of self-awareness to negative forms of leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Crossan & Mazutis, 2008).

Self-awareness is widely regarded as an important personal attribute. A Google search of the term brings up over 470 million results. While many leadership theories have the presence of self-awareness in leaders as a critical competence, there is very little focus or guidance on how leaders should achieve "leadership of self" (Crossan & Mazutis, 2008).

Self-other agreement is most often used as a measure of self-awareness, which has been linked to leader effectiveness and derailment potential (Braddy, Gooty, Fleenor & Yammarino, 2014; Fleenor, Smither, Atwater, Braddy & Sturm, 2010). Studies have shown that leaders who over-estimate themselves may benefit from feedback from 360 degree reviews to give them a more realistic view, however others have shown that negative feedback from subordinates can result in anger and reduce a leader's commitment to subordinates (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014). The possibility exists that over-estimators have narcissistic and arrogant tendencies, and as a result, negatively affect followers (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014). Decreased work performance and an increase in affected employees turnover can result, causing the organisation to decline (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014).

Leadership is a process through which leaders, followers and the context determine group and organisational outcomes (Yukl, 2006). By reviewing the existing literature on authentic leadership, destructive leadership and by drawing on more general organisational leadership theory, along with field findings, this research aims to add to extend the understanding of the role self-awareness plays in leadership outcomes, by building on the model of destructive leadership outcomes and the process by which they effect followers. Thoroughgood et al., (2018) suggest that inductive qualitative research would add to a more comprehensive view of destructive

leadership processes by understanding more deeply the personal experiences of subordinates. This research aims to address this need.

1.4. Business Need

This research seeks to identify the behaviours associated with low self-awareness in leaders, the effects of these behaviours on their followers, and reactions of followers to these leaders. Those leaders who exhibit high self-awareness are adept at self-monitoring and can successfully adapt their behaviour and relate well to followers (Caldwell, 2010).

Daniel Goleman (2017) emphasised the importance of being able to think before reacting impulsively and accepted this consideration of values and context as a critical leadership competence. Many leaders believe that they have good self-awareness, but in times of high uncertainty and stress, emotional responses can cause defective self-awareness (Caldwell, 2010). Leaders with a self-serving bias, may selectively gather corroboration and reach conclusions about their leadership ability that their subordinates do not agree with (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014; Caldwell, 2010). This research aims to broaden the understanding of destructive leadership by establishing the role of a lack of self-awareness in leaders. This will assist organisations in identifying and managing potentially destructive leaders before damaging subordinate and organisational consequences occur (Schyns, 2015; Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Thoroughgood et al., 2018).

As stated earlier, the high cost and prevalence of destructive leadership to organisations emphasises the urgency of further research. A more in-depth perspective of the impact felt by followers, and the reactions this type of leader engenders, may yield insight into promotion and recruitment decisions and how to avoid or deal with destructive leaders.

1.5. Research Scope

An exploratory study was carried out to provide insight into self-awareness and the role it plays in the negative aspects of leadership followers experience. It did not focus on the leaders themselves, but rather on followers and the impact that self-

awareness in a leader has on their work performance, attitudes, and behaviours. The value of focusing on the follower is to more fully understand the impact that improvements in self-awareness could yield. The results formed the basis of a proposed model of inauthentic, destructive leadership and how it relates to subordinates' attitudes and behaviours.

The literature review in the following section will discuss the key insights and predominant thoughts on where self-awareness fits into the leadership landscape, as well as the role this plays in leadership and organisational outcomes. Literature on destructive leadership and the behaviours and consequences associated with it are discussed. It highlights the importance of self-awareness in building effective teams, taking initiative, maintaining successful relationships with others and effective communication skills (Hurrell, 2017). These skills are considered critical for successful organisations and are highly sought after in today's economy, but are considered some of the most difficult to acquire (Rubens, Schoenfeld, Schaffer & Leah, 2018).

CHAPTER 2: THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.   Introduction

Leadership theory abounds with strategies for successful strategic leadership of organisations. Transformational leadership is contrasted with transactional leadership, as the former describes followers delivering performance in excess of expectations through inspirational, motivational leadership, while the latter involves the exchange between managers and followers through corrective behaviour (Crossan & Mazutis, 2008). Transformational leadership begins with self-awareness (Suri & Prasad, 2011) and should improve a leader's ability to motivate others.

Caldwell and Hayes (2016) argue that leaders have a moral obligation to develop self-efficacy and self-awareness. They argue that developing these personal qualities are critical to empowering themselves, others and their organisations. Self-awareness has also been shown to affect team performance (Dierdorff, Fisher & Rubin, 2018). Leaders need to be able to accurately assess their behavioural contributions to the team and adjust their behaviours accordingly (Dierdorff, Fisher & Rubin, 2018).

Crossan, Vera and Nanjad (2008) propose a model for strategic leadership, called transcendent leadership. A transcendent leader can lead across three levels: leadership of the organisation, leadership of others (followers), and leadership of self (Crossan, Vera & Nanjad, 2008). They argue that leadership of others and the organisation have been the dominant focus of leadership research, while leadership of self, or self-awareness, remains an emerging topic in the academic study of leadership (Crossan, Vera & Nanjad, 2008).

Authentic leadership stresses the importance of self-awareness and positive role-modelling, ensuring that their behaviours reflect their values (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Bruce J Avolio et al., 2018). Goleman (2017) argues that self-awareness is one of four fundamental capabilities needed for emotional intelligence and that without it our ability to succeed is hampered. Despite being mentioned as pivotal in positive forms of leadership, there is almost no mention of a lack of self-awareness

in despotic, toxic or destructive leadership literature (Krasikova et al., 2013; Lipman-blumen & Lipman-blumen, 2011; Padilla et al., 2007; Thoroughgood et al., 2018).

2.2.   Self-Awareness and Emotional Intelligence

Daniel Goleman (1995), in his book *Emotional Intelligence,* was one of the first to suggest that being emotionally intelligent was a more important measure than intelligence quotient (IQ), to predict employee career success and performance. Emotional intelligence was defined by Goleman (1998) as "managing feelings so that they are expressed appropriately and effectively, enabling people to work together smoothly toward their common goals" (p. 7).

Self-awareness is described as a competency under the construct of emotional intelligence, and as the foundational competency upon which the others are built. Goleman later wrote that self-awareness was composed of the core capabilities of emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment and self-confidence (Goleman, 2017). Self-management, social awareness and social skill were the other factors of emotional intelligence he identified (Goleman, 2017). These different elements, he believed, were the foundation for the six leadership styles employed by leaders across the world (Goleman, 2017). The most successful leaders can apply these different styles to different business contexts as needed. Goleman and Boyatzis (2007, 2011) developed an assessment tool which measures EQ using the emotional and social competencies listed below (figure 2).

Emotional Competence	Social Competences
Self-Awareness	**Relationship Management**
Emotional self-awareness	Conflict management
	Coach and mentor
Social Awareness	Influence
Empathy	Inspirational leadership
Organizational awareness	Teamwork
Self-Management	
Achievement orientation	
Adaptability	
Emotional self-control	
Positive outlook	

Figure 2: Emotional Intelligence Competency Clusters (Boyatzis, 2011)

Selecting the most appropriate responses for working with others depends largely on the degree to which leaders are self-aware (Caldwell & Hayes, 2016). Authenticity in that personal response is demonstrated through an ability to understand the needs of others and the context of a situation (Goleman, 2017). Self-awareness requires that leaders also demonstrate an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, as well as the impact they have on others (Caldwell & Hayes, 2016). Showry and Manasa (2014) posit that self-awareness occurs through social comparison and self-assessment.

Self-awareness has also been shown to play a significant role in the successful performance of teams, since success is predicated on individual contributions and interdependent tasks (Dierdorff et al., 2019). Team functioning and effectiveness are enhanced through aggregate levels of self-awareness in the team (Dierdorff et al., 2019).

Empirical evidence links a leader's emotional intelligence and their professional success, while simultaneously explaining career derailment potential (Braddy et al., 2014; Rubens et al., 2018). The ability to build effective teams, take initiative, maintain successful relationships with others and communicate effectively link self-awareness and these so-called "soft skills" to leadership effectiveness (Hurrell, 2017; Rubens et al., 2018). There is evidence that individuals with specific skill sets are more likely to hold senior leadership positions, but there is still a great deal of diversity in characteristics such as personality, ability and motivation (Day et al., 2014). To develop leadership skill requires self-motivation, collaboration with others though understanding context, and self-regulation (Day et al., 2014). Emotional intelligence has gained popularity in leadership research and studies link emotional intelligence with career success (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001) and ideal leadership practices (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). Self-awareness has been described as critical for effective leadership and has been identified as a cornerstone in several positive leadership theories (Sturm et al., 2014).

Self-other agreement is often used as a measure of self-awareness (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm & McKee, 2014). Amundsen and Martinsen, (2014) found that leaders who overestimated their leadership skills had followers who were more likely to leave their jobs and reported lower job satisfaction compared to those

subordinates with in-agreement leaders. The possibility exists that over-estimators have narcissistic and arrogant tendencies, and as a result, negatively impact followers (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014). Decreased work performance and an increase in affected employees turnover can result, causing the organisation to decline (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014).

Caldwell (2010) makes the connection between self-awareness and self-deception. He argues that a clear understanding of oneself is necessary for organisational effectiveness. Congruence in how we assess ourselves is key to self-awareness, however self-deception is a form of cognitive dissonance employed as a defence mechanism to maintain self-regard and pride (Caldwell, 2010). Self-awareness and self-deception are primarily unconscious actions, which means they are difficult and uncomfortable for leaders to acknowledge (Caldwell, 2010). Organisational outcomes, building trust and forming relationships can be positively magnified through an understanding of how self-awareness and self-deception apply in a business environment (Caldwell, 2010).

2.3.   Self-Awareness and Effective Leadership

During difficult and turbulent times, and with the pressures facing the world today, it becomes particularly relevant to understand the determinants of effective leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Avolio and Gardner (2005) argue that to restore faith, hope and optimism and build resilience in times of upheaval, a new kind of self-awareness must be built around genuinely relating to all stakeholders. They argue that the foundation for all positive types of leadership is authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio et al., 2018).

The basic assumption for what constitutes authentic leadership starts with the leaders' self-awareness (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Self-regulation is also a fundamental component of authentic leadership, as leaders who are able to exert self-control can align their actions and behaviour with their espoused personal identities (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Transformational leadership and servant leadership, as well as many others, also have leader self-awareness based on values, cognition and emotion (Avolio & Gardner, 2005) at their core. Transcendent

leadership describes leadership of self as one of three key pillars that leaders should master (Crossan & Mazutis, 2008).

"Leading by example" is a positive way that authentic, transformational and transcendent leaders can influence followers and their behaviour (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Crossan et al., 2008). Authentic leadership dictates that followers are developed along with leaders through open and positive dialogue. The leader through positive role-modelling, instils greater self-awareness in the follower (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). In transformational leadership the leader aspires to meet the needs of followers through idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration and linked self-awareness to positive organisational citizenship behaviour (Banks et al., 2016).

Kouzes and Posner's model, *The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership* (2007) explains the actions and behaviours needed for exemplary leadership. Their research has spanned more than 30 years and asserts that effective leadership is critical because it affects not only organisational performance, but also employee engagement and commitment (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). It describes five behaviours that leaders should adopt to lead effectively. The first practice of exemplary leadership involves modelling the way, which means leaders need to set a personal example of what they expect from their teams. It means clarifying and affirming shared values and aligning their actions and behaviours to those stated values (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). Inspiring a shared vision, where leaders can describe a compelling image of what the future can hold, is the second practice of exemplary leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). Leaders should be able to inspire willing followers to get behind a common vision by appealing to the common aspirations of the group. Exemplary leaders challenge the process by looking for innovative ways to improve and encourage experimentation whilst learning from mistakes (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). Fostering collaboration by building trust and competence in others, enables others to act (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). Supporting decisions that people make on their own and actively involving others shows trust in the team and is the fourth practice of exemplary leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). The final behaviour exhibited by exemplary leaders is encouraging the heart, through the celebrating accomplishments and the contributions of individuals (Kouzes & Posner, 2016).

Self-awareness as it relates to organisational outcomes has most often been examined in leadership literature and theories, where assessment of one's own behaviour is measured against perceptions of colleagues (Dierdorff et al., 2019). This self-other agreement is often taken as a proxy measure for self-awareness (Day et al., 2014).

Self-other agreement is generally related to leadership effectiveness, where those individuals with high self-agreement are found to have high self-awareness and those with low self-agreement are considered low in self-awareness and therefore, competence and effectiveness (Dierdorff et al., 2019; Fleenor et al., 2010). Self-other agreement is moderated by cultural differences (Atwater, Wang, Smither & Fleenor, 2009). Much of the leadership research on this topic has taken place in the United States and with the rise of world-wide adoption of multi-source feedback, cultural differences in perception must be understood (Atwater et al., 2009).

Self-awareness and self-image are also confirmed in the context of how a leader believes they are perceived by others (Caldwell, 2010; Sturm et al., 2014). Leader self-awareness is distinguished from individual level self-awareness by incorporating expectations of how the leader thinks they are viewed by followers (Sturm et al., 2014). This meta-perception has received far less focus in the theory of leaders' self-awareness than how a leader's self-rating compares to how others rate them (Sturm et al., 2014). Significant gender differences exist in metaperceptual abilities, since women are more likely to under-predict how they are rated by others, while self-ratings did not differ significantly between female and male leaders (Sturm et al., 2014).

Dierdorff, Fisher and Rubin (2019) also highlight the importance of meta-cognition in team functioning, highlighting the importance of how others view the contribution made by an individual to the team. This is particularly important in a team context, since individuals who inaccurately view their contributions and over-estimate how others see their contributions to the team, cause poor team cohesion and co-ordination, leading to increased conflict (Dierdorff et al., 2019). Individuals with poor self-awareness also have a destructive impact at the team level (Dierdorff et al.,

2019). Leaders who are able to successfully assimilate information from others into their self-evaluation can then incorporate this into their behaviour (Caldwell, 2010).

Most leadership activities fall into either task or relation-oriented dimensions, whereby the former focuses on organising and directing the tasks of subordinates and the latter behaviours focus on maintaining positive employee interactions (Lee & Carpenter, 2018). Generally, self-other ratings were similar across task-oriented dimensions but differed in terms of relation-orientation. Leaders over-rated themselves in terms of ethical, servant and transformational leadership, however questions still remain as to the extent that leaders are aware of these behaviours (Lee & Carpenter, 2018).

Cuddy et al. (2011) propose that leaders and individuals are judged based on the two attributes of warmth and competence. How leaders are perceived along these dimensions determines both the emotional and behavioural response received from subordinates. Warmth includes many of the attributes associated with high levels of self-awareness such as friendliness and empathy, while competence denotes intelligence and skill (Cuddy et al., 2011). Those leaders deemed high in skill and warmth are trusted leaders who elicit positive reactions from followers while those leaders who lack warmth evoke a passive facilitation and envy from followers, where they comply out of fear or convenience (Cuddy et al., 2011). Those low in skill and warmth evoke contempt and passive harm from subordinates. Leaders low in warmth or self-awareness, evoke negative emotional and behavioural responses in subordinates (Cuddy et al., 2011).
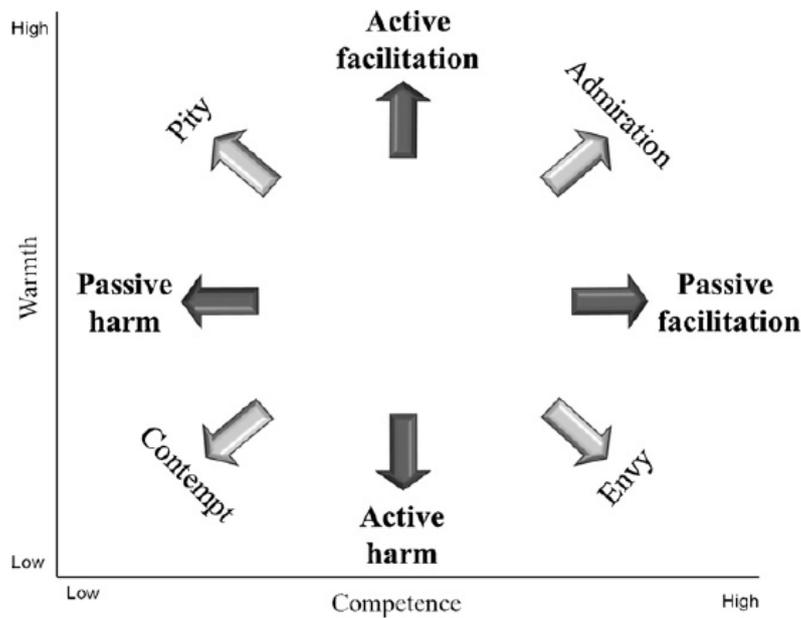
Figure 3: Stereotype content model predictions for emotions and BIAS map predictions for behaviour (Cuddy et al., 2011)

2.4. The Behaviour and Effects of Destructive Leaders

Talented individuals are often promoted on their technical business skills and intelligence with little regard to their 'soft' skills (Ackley, 2016). This is confirmed by Boyatzis and McKee (2005) who postulate that ineffective leadership is more often the result of a lack of self-awareness than general ineptitude. Leaders can be viewed as operating along a spectrum of behaviour ranging from extremely destructive to constructive, often displaying elements of both (Thoroughgood, Tate, et al., 2012).

There is a paucity of academic literature describing a lack of self-awareness and its link to negative forms of leadership, such as destructive, toxic or despotic leadership (Lipman-Blumen, 2011; Padilla et al., 2007; Pelletier, 2012; Shaw et al., 2011; Thoroughgood, Tate, et al., 2012). However, much literature is written on the importance of self-awareness in positive forms of leadership. Where leaders do not display any of the actions or behaviours associated with high self-awareness, it can be assumed then, that the opposite is true. This is confirmed by Debnam (2006, p. 55) who wrote, "An unaware leader is a leader out of control, careering along a road with no firm grip on the wheel. He will thrash around, lurching from one drama to the next, leaving a trail of misery and destruction in his wake. His behaviour will become

manipulative and harmful to himself and those around him as he gets locked into destructive patterns of blame, projection, denial, and rationalisation. The unaware leader becomes so absorbed with, and driven by, his own needs and insecurities that he eventually becomes disconnected from the world around him. He loses – or never finds – the ability to have any meaningful, authentic dialogue with his colleagues and business partners. He becomes isolated and self-protected, with a distorted sense of reality."

Irwin (Clancy, 2010) writes in his book, *Derailed*, that that many CEOs lack self-awareness and that this is the first early warning sign of derailment. Failing leaders display five behaviours and attitudes (Hewertson, 2012): They are dismissive of other people's perspective and emotion and lack empathy, they miss social cues and political nuances, they blame others, they avoid dealing with and resolving conflict and they isolate themselves and certain teammates, creating silos. These behaviours lead to destructive leadership and often failure (Hewertson, 2012).

Research into destructive leadership is nascent, however there is an increase in interest into the dark side of leadership (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). This has stemmed from the substantial costs that destructive leadership brings in terms of employee absenteeism, turnover and productivity, but also from findings that there are grave effects on followers (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Destructive leader behaviour has been described as voluntary acts by a person in a leadership role, which would be perceived as harmful or deviant towards follows or the organisation (Thoroughgood, Tate, et al., 2012). Leadership is again defined as intentional by Yukl, (2006) who says leadership is " a process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person over other people to guide, structure and facilitate activities and relationships in a group and organisation" (p. 3). Schyns & Schilling (2013) argue that it is empirically difficult to differentiate between destructive leadership that is intentional or unintentional, but that both can be considered destructive.

Pelletier, (2012) investigated how the perception of toxic leadership was influenced by the relationship of the leader and follower through social identity in the context of leader-member exchange. It was noted that favouritism was encouraged, and favoured status influenced followers' perception of toxic behaviour and intention to challenge the leader (Pelletier, 2012). Eight dimensions of destructive leadership

were identified, with by far the most damaging being the attack on self-esteem (Pelletier, 2012).

Shaw et al. (2011) propose a method for identifying the prevalence and type of destructive leadership in organisations based on the perceptions of subordinates. They classified the 767 behaviours associated with these leaders into 11 categories: autocratic behaviour, poor communication, unable to deal effectively with subordinates, low integrity, inability to use technology, erratic and inconsistent behaviour, poor interpersonal behaviour, micromanagement, poor personal behaviour, politically astute and a lack of strategic skills (Shaw et al., 2011). Using these behaviour classifications, they developed seven clusters of destructive leader types, the worst of which was a cluster 7 leader. These leaders are described as unethical bullies who micromanage, are controlling and unwilling to change with an inability to handle conflict or listen to others (Shaw et al., 2011).

Cuddy et al. (2011) suggests that the two competencies by which we judge individuals are warmth and competence. Warmth includes kindness, trustworthiness, and empathy, while competence includes an individual's intelligence, skill and efficacy (Cuddy et al., 2011). These judgments can influence the emotional reaction and behaviours they elicit in followers. Those deemed high in competence but low in warmth elicit passive facilitation and envy, while those low in competence and warmth elicit passive harm and contempt (Cuddy et al., 2011). Leaders who do not show warmth do not engender positive behaviour or emotion in followers.

Schyns and Schilling (2013) posit that the negative effects of destructive leadership are so severe that it is necessary to gain an understanding of the antecedents of destructive leader behaviour. Given the focus on authentic, inclusive leadership in modern organisations, Padilla et al. (2007) propose that toxic leadership can still prevail if the three factors of "destructive leaders, susceptible followers and a conducive environment" exist in an organisation (p. 176). Destructive leaders are described as narcissistic, charismatic and with a need for personal power. They manage through negative emotions like hate and have a negative life history. Susceptible followers have their own motivations for supporting destructive leaders, which include conformers who lack the maturity and self-confidence to challenge these leaders and colluders, who are ambitious (Padilla et al., 2007; Thoroughgood,

Padilla, et al., 2012). In turn, the organisation must provide a conducive environment characterised by instability or a lack of corrective action (Padilla et al., 2007).
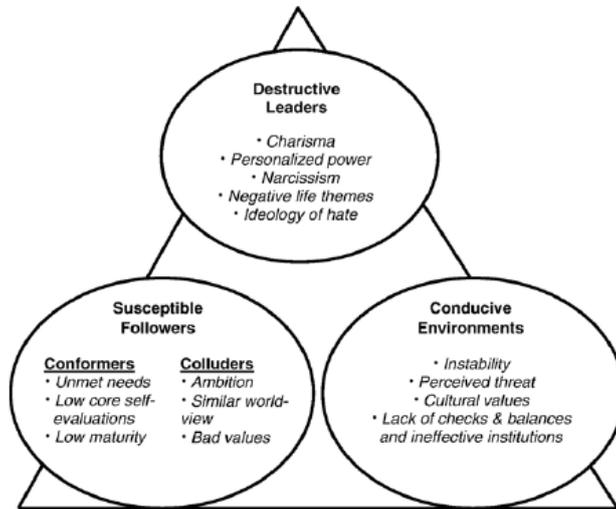
Figure 4: The toxic triangle: elements in three domains related to destructive leadership (Padilla et al., 2007)

The outcomes of destructive leadership can broadly be categorised as leader-related concepts, job-related concepts, organisation-related concepts, and individual follower-related concepts (Figure 4) (Schyns & Schilling, 2013).
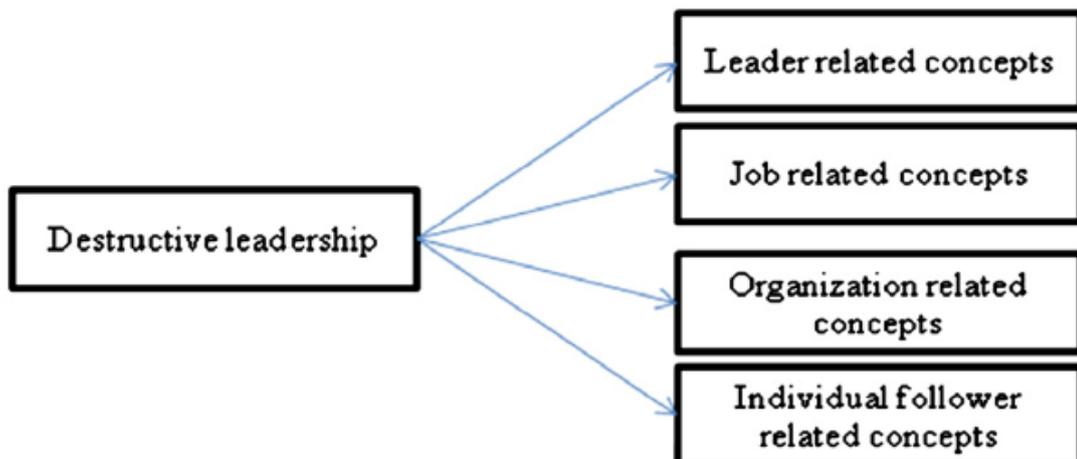
Figure 5: Outcomes of destructive leadership (Schyns & Schilling, 2013)

Leader-related concepts mostly include attitudes towards the leader, and follower resistance. Positive concepts like trust are negatively affected by destructive leadership (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Job satisfaction, motivation and dedication are job-related concepts that are negatively affected by destructive leadership (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Commitment to the organisation, positive sentiment towards the organisation as well as toxic retaliation by followers are listed under organisation related concepts (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). The consequences of destructive leadership on individual followers, such as performance, stress and sentiment, are captured under individual follower related concepts and are positively related to destructive leadership (Schyns & Schilling, 2013).

It is theorised that self-awareness is a foundational competency within emotional intelligence, and that it is necessary to cultivate other emotional intelligence competencies (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001; Goleman, 2017). However, self-awareness has not been as well researched in terms of how it relates to leaders themselves, particularly their leadership style, behaviours or effectiveness (R. E. Boyatzis, 2008; Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). This insight leads to the first research question, what are the specific behaviours exhibited by senior managers that lead to them being perceived as having low self-awareness? Self-awareness is considered a prerequisite for authentic, positive and effective leadership. The second research question then follows, how effective are managers with low self-awareness?

2.5.   Leader Self-Awareness and Employee Engagement

Kahn (1990) originally defined employee engagement as a work condition in which employees are engaged in their job tasks cognitively, physically and emotionally and as a condition in which employees consider their job to be important to the degree that they want to participate in their job in order to achieve personal and career development. Kumar and Pansari (2015) define employee engagement as "a multidimensional construct that comprises all of the different facets of the attitudes and behaviours of employees towards the organization" (p. 68). They further identify five dimensions of employee engagement. These dimensions are employee satisfaction, referring to the overall happiness of employees with their job and employer, identification with the organisation, commitment, loyalty and performance (Kumar & Pansari, 2015).

Leaders with the misperception that they are highly regarded can be as damaging to organisations as inadequate leadership skill itself (Vogel & Kroll, 2019). Leaders with low-self-awareness are considered to be lower performers, but additionally can have a detrimental effect on followers by reducing job satisfaction and commitment to the organisation (Fleenor et al., 2010; Vogel & Kroll, 2019). Managers who have an inflated view of their leadership skill may refuse training, mentoring and development opportunities (Lee & Carpenter, 2018). If there is no recognition of the need for behavioural change, a manager may need to be compelled to change (Vogel & Kroll, 2019). If the leadership problem persists, followers may become despondent and frustrated at the lack of leadership and become demotivated and disengaged (Lee & Carpenter, 2018).

Goleman (2017) states that emotional self-awareness can improve the performance of teams and organisational climate. Climate refers to six factors that impact the work environment, including *flexibility*, which indicates the level of autonomy subordinates feel they have to innovate and challenge processes. It also includes a sense of *responsibility* to the organisation, *standards* employees set for themselves, the *accuracy* of feedback and perception of fair *reward* as well as *clarity* of purpose and *commitment* to that vision (Goleman, 2017). When leaders lack self-awareness, these factors are negatively impacted.

Kumar and Pansari (2015) demonstrated that through increased employee engagement, organisational performance was improved. Transformational and authentic leadership are said to result in positive follower outcomes, including engagement, job satisfaction, performance and the willingness to put in extra effort (Crossan & Mazutis, 2008). These leaders can inspire engagement and passion by sharing a compelling vision and a plan to reach them (Koohang et al., 2017).

Despotic or destructive leadership has been shown to induce disengagement in employees, causing them to withdraw or engage in counter-productive work behaviour, which ultimately lowers performance (Naseer et al., 2016). Naseer et al. (2016) further suggest that to cope with the emotional exhaustion and stress of this type of leadership, employees are forced to conserve their emotional energy through

disengagement. How does a leader with low self-awareness affect employee engagement?

2.6.   Reactions to Destructive Leadership

Leadership, positive or negative, is the result of leadership processes and their outcomes, rather than simply the result of leader behaviour (Thoroughgood et al., 2018; Yukl, 2011). Followers who enable destructive leadership are described as susceptible, and as either conformers, with low levels of maturity and self-image, or colluders who are ambitious with bad values (Padilla et al., 2007). Thoroughgood, et al. (2012) extended the understanding of how susceptible followers contribute to toxic outcomes by further dividing conformers as lost souls, authoritarians or bystanders, and colluders as acolytes and opportunists. Lipman-Blumen (2005) describes the need for interaction between toxic leaders and followers to result in destructive leadership outcomes.

Toxic followers are described alienated, survivors, yes-men or sheep by Thomas et al., (2017). These reactions in subordinates follow from destructive leadership. Alienated followers are negative and discontented and who quietly undermine their leaders. Yes men and sheep blindly follow the leaders while survivors adapt to the toxic leadership style caring only for their own well-being (Thomas et al., 2017).

This research further confirms counter-productive work behaviour, which is more subtle than direct resistance, in response to toxic leadership (Schyns & Schilling, 2013).

The current descriptions of destructive, toxic or flawed leadership mention a lack of emotional intelligence peripherally but the conceptual and empirical links between a lack of self-awareness, destructive leadership, and follower attitudes, engagement and behaviours has not been fully developed (Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Thoroughgood et al., 2018; Thoroughgood, Padilla, et al., 2012). This leads to the final research question, how do subordinates react to management by a leader with low self-awareness?

2.7. Conclusion

Self-awareness is critical for effective leadership and has been identified as critically important for authentic, servant, empowering, resonant and transformational leadership amongst others (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014; Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Sturm et al., 2014; Suri & Prasad, 2011). Effective leadership, which includes leading the organisation, people and oneself, is important for organisational success (Koohang, Paliszkiewicz & Goluchowski, 2017). Crossan and Mazutis (2008) argue that in today's volatile environments, we need to move beyond transactional and transformational leadership, which focus on the exchange between managers and followers and positive follower outcomes, respectively. Leaders must learn how to master themselves through self-awareness and self-regulation (Crossan & Mazutis, 2008)

Research into destructive leadership is emerging, with a renewed focus (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). This has stemmed from the substantial costs that destructive leadership brings in terms of employee absenteeism, turnover and productivity, but also from findings that there are grave effects on followers (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Destructive leader behaviour has been described as voluntary acts by a person in a leadership role, which would be perceived as harmful or deviant towards follows or the organisation (Thoroughgood, Tate, et al., 2012).

Leaders who most lack the ability to accurately assess their own capabilities and areas for improvement, suffer from the Dunning-Kruger effect (Zell & Krizan, 2014). This describes the phenomenon that leaders with low self-awareness are much more likely to be under-performers across other competencies (Dierdorff et al., 2019; Zell & Krizan, 2014). Since self-awareness is a critical component of leadership success, it is imperative to understand the impact that a lack thereof has on followers.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research attempts to answer the four questions, derived from the literature review conducted in the previous chapter. Self-awareness has been identified as a cornerstone in positive forms of leadership such as authentic and transformational leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Most existing research focuses on the influence of these positive leaders on followers, while the potential for destructive leadership by leaders with low self-awareness remains in need of further exploration.

3.1. Research Questions

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: What are the specific behaviours or traits exhibited by senior managers that lead to them being perceived as having no self-awareness?

Research Question 1 aims to understand what behaviours or traits are exhibited by senior leaders that lead them to being perceived as having no self-awareness. The experience of working for a manager identified as having poor self-awareness, as well as the behaviours they exhibit, will be explored to clarify the specific behavioural traits and actions of these leaders.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: How effective are managers with low self-awareness as leaders?

Research Question 2 will attempt to answer whether self-awareness is necessary for effective leadership, examining how the leadership style and feelings it evokes affected the perception of leadership effectiveness.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3: How does having a senior manager with low self-awareness affect employee engagement?

Research Question 3 seeks to understand how having a leader with low-self-awareness affects employee engagement. To guide the discussion, participants were asked to discuss how they felt about their engagement levels along five dimensions: employee performance and willingness to go the extra mile, employee

job satisfaction, employee identification with the organisation, employee commitment and employee loyalty or withdrawal behaviour (Kumar & Pansari, 2015). The questions were open-ended to elicit more detail about the respondents' perceptions of those dimensions, and how the various constructs associated with these were affected.

RESEARCH QUESTION 4: How did employees react to these managers?

Research Question 4 will attempt to understand how employees at a senior level react to the behaviours and experience described in research question one. The effects of these leaders on organisational culture and performance will also be investigated to give further insight into employee reactions.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology and design applied to answer the research questions from Chapter 3.

The methodology was designed based on research methodology books and articles. A qualitative, exploratory approach was used to gain rich insights into the role that self-awareness plays in effective leadership, and how a lack thereof affects employee engagement and behaviour.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with executives who had experience of working for a manager with low self-awareness. These interviews were conducted online, using the Zoom platform. The data were then analysed by themes identified in the literature review presented in Chapter 2.

While developing the research methodology, data collection and data analysis, possible questions regarding data reliability and validity were considered. Strategies were formulated and executed to mitigate these issues with an appreciation of the time and resources available to the researcher. Ethical considerations were also discussed and presented at the end of this chapter within the study's defined limitations.

4.2. Choice of Research Methodology and Design

This exploratory research sought to further understand how leaders with low self-awareness affect employee perceptions and behaviour. An interpretivist lens was applied to explore this topic since the research involved people and how they experience the social world (Žukauskas, Vveinhardt & Andriukaitienė, 2018). The research philosophy of interpretivism reflects a focus on gathering insights into experiences and human sense-making and their socially constructed context (Bluhm et al., 2011; Myers, 2019; Saunders & Lewis, 2012). It focused on gathering insights into a lack of self-awareness in senior leaders and the impact this has on perceived effective leadership, and the engagement and behaviour of employees.

Qualitative research was chosen as it produces rich, detailed and exploratory accounts of organisational and management phenomena (Cornelissen, 2017). Creswell (2007, p. 37) stated that "qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem". This idea is echoed by Bluhm, Harman, Lee and Mitchell (2011) who implore researchers to use qualitative methods to increase and expand the knowledge base of organisational behaviour.

A primarily inductive research approach has been followed. Trochim (2006) describes this approach as basing arguments on observation and the experiences of individuals. Using in-depth interviews, this research aims to extend theory, using the research participants' views to build on the broader themes of self-awareness and leadership (Creswell & Plano Clark 2007). In-depth interviews are requisite in an interpretivist philosophy to understand the lived experiences of individuals and the meanings they ascribe to social phenomena (Saunders & Lewis, 2012; Seidman, 2006).

A mono-methodological choice was used in the form of an exploratory, phenomenological, qualitative study, using a single data collection technique. This single data collection method took the form of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with senior managers working in large organisations. The one-on-one interaction and monomethod allowed for the ability to gather rich insights into the subject matter (Collis & Hussey, 2013; Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent national lockdown, it was necessary to conduct the interviews via Zoom online.

The purpose of this study was to gain deeper insights into an area of leadership research that has not received much attention. This area is the lack of self-awareness in leaders and its consequences. The research therefore was exploratory in nature. A subjective, ontological lens was placed onto the effects of a lack of self-awareness in leaders since the interpretation of individuals constitutes their reality. Exploratory research is needed when there is an unexplained area within the field of study, or where the researcher is seeking new insights by asking new questions and re-

examining topics (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Qualitative research addresses business needs through the interpretation of phenomena, rather than numerical measurements (Zikmund et al., 2013). Phenomenology allows for the exploration of the experiences of respondents on the phenomenon of senior leaders who lack self-awareness (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007).

Data collection occurred during one particular short period of time, therefore the study was cross-sectional as it was based on a snapshot, a point in time, during which data was collected during face-to-face, online interviews (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

4.3. Population

Sanders and Lewis (2012) describe a population as a set of members from which the sample may be drawn and who can offer insight. The study participants should be similar in characteristics (Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin, 2013). The target population for this study was executive leaders in large organisations (more than 1 000 employees) who have experienced being managed by a leader who they believed had poor self-awareness. Large organisations were chosen since multiple management levels exist and the teams being managed by these leaders are large. It is assumed that the experience of working for a manager with low self-awareness in a small company could be experienced differently by subordinates. The question of how leaders with low self-awareness can reach senior positions could best be addressed within a larger organisation. To broaden the study, the population covers different industries and companies and included leaders from different functional areas of the business. The research was limited to executives operating in the Gauteng province of South Africa.

4.4. Unit of analysis

Zikmund et al., (2013) state that a unit of analysis is used as a level of measurement when trying to analyse who will provide the data and content. The unit of analysis was determined during the data analysis phase to be the perceptions of individuals affected by a leader with low self-awareness. This included the opinions and experiences of these executives.

4.5.   Sampling method and size

A sampling frame is the complete list of all members of the population from which your sample may be selected (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Since no complete list of executives who have experienced a leader with low self-awareness exists, the sample could not be selected randomly from that population. Purposive, or judgement, sampling was therefore used for this research. This is a non-probability sample selection technique, where the researchers' judgment is used to select research participants (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

This intentional selection of sample participants allows the researcher to select the sample most likely to produce useful and relevant data for answering the research questions by using specific criteria (Creswell et al., 2007). Since the sample used was judgemental, the experience of having a leader with low-self-awareness was the criteria for selection. The sample was purposely split to include executives from different demographic groups and industries to ensure sufficiently diverse characteristics. These executives needed to be at a leadership team or board level with at least five years management experience. The age of respondents ranged from early thirties to early sixties and management experience ranged from five years to over thirty years. Seven female and five male executives were interviewed. Common themes that emerge from a diverse sample will be of specific interest and value (Patton, 2002; Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

Since this was a qualitative study, the sample was small, consisting of senior executives working in large organisations. The sample included executives drawn from local and multinational organisations, across different functional areas. The companies included local and multinational pharmaceutical manufacturers, as well as local and multinational fast-moving consumer goods companies, as well the automotive retail sector. The researcher used people within their network to be interviewed. Respondents were then asked to recommend additional individuals who could be interviewed so snow-balling sampling was used thereafter to gain a wider pool of respondents (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

In a qualitative, phenomenological study, between five and twenty-five individuals should be interviewed to fully develop the possibilities of experiences (Creswell et

al., 2007). A total of twelve respondents were interviewed by the researcher. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants according to predetermined criteria and that the size of the sample is established inductively (Guest et al., 2006). Interviews should be conducted until saturation has been achieved. Saturation is the standard by which purposive sample sizes are determined (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). The concept of saturation indicates the point at which no new information or themes are observed in the interviews; this generally occurs within the first 12 interviews (Guest et. al.,2006). Data collection approached thematic saturation after eight interviews, indicated in the trend shown in Figure 6 below. By the 12th interview, only one new, unique response was identified and coded. The decision was made to cease data collection at that point.

This study followed an inductive approach where codes could emerge naturally from the interviews. A total of 218 codes were identified during the 12 interviews.
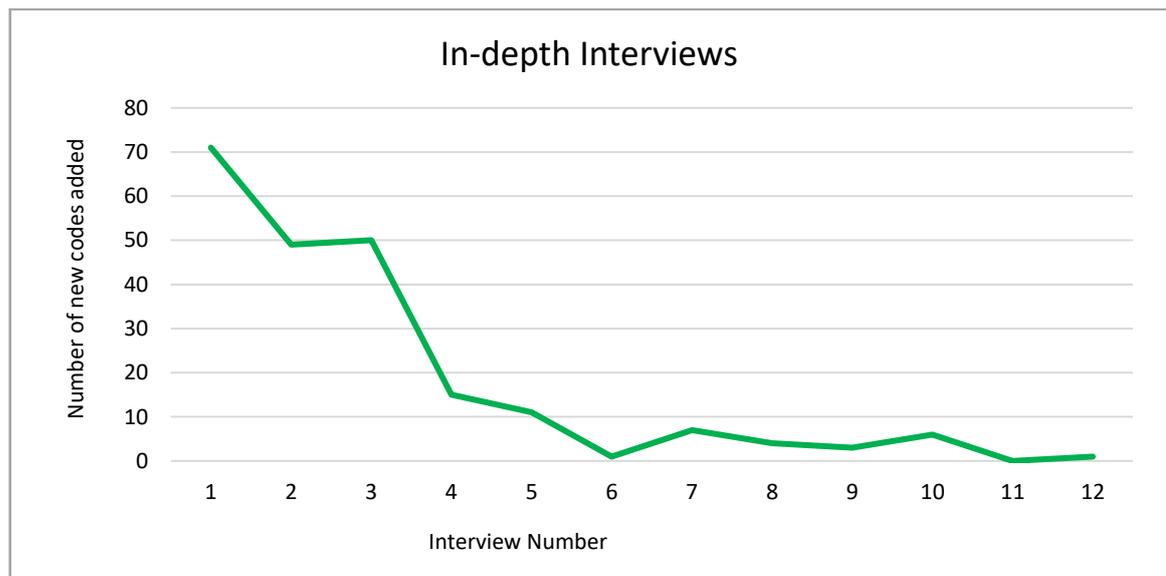
Figure 6: Data Saturation: In-depth Interviews

4.6.   Measurement instrument and data collection tool

Seidman (2006) said that he interviewed because he was interested in other people's stories. During qualitative research, the interviewer must use their senses to gather information and interpret the findings (Creswell et al., 2007). For this reason, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather data. Interview guides

were used to ensure data were collected consistently and encourage more natural, elucidative answers (see exhibit B). The interview guide was drawn up using elements of McCracken's (2011) four part method and after a thorough review of the literature. A consistency matrix was then used to map the interview questions against the research questions from Chapter 3. The questions began with some background information to make the respondents feel at ease (McCracken, 2011). Questions were then structured in such a way as to allow respondents to recount their stories and share their experience (McCracken, 2011).

The exploratory nature of the research allowed the interviews to be flexible and to explore themes in more depth (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Open-ended questions were used to elicit a rich understanding of the respondents' experience. Seidman (2006) extolls the virtues of interviewing saying that interviewing is the best technique to get people to tell their stories, to select experiences from a stream of consciousness. He states, "At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 9).

Seidman (2006) suggests a methodology for in-depth phenomenologically based interviewing. His methodology involves doing three interviews, the first of which covers the environment of the contributors' experience; the second involves the details of the experience; the third covers a reflection of the meaning the experience holds for them (Seidman, 2006). Due to time constraints it was not possible to conduct three interviews with each participant, however the topics served as a basis for the interview guide.

Validity is established when the research findings accurately reflect the data collected through rigorous methods (Noble & Smith, 2015). Consistent and accurate analytical procedures demonstrate reliability (Noble & Smith, 2015). A pilot interview was conducted to strengthen and add credibility to the interview guide. The result led to amendments which reduced ambiguity in the questions. The quality of the data collected during the pilot interview meant that this interview was included in the data analysis and findings report. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to minimise interviewer bias. Record keeping will also ensure clear decision trails, keeping interpretations of data transparent and consistent (Noble & Smith, 2015).

4.7.   Data gathering process

Data was collected using one-on-one, semi-structured, open-ended interviews with senior executives, that have at least five years of management experience, and are at a leadership team or board level. Field work began with identifying potential participants through the researcher's personal network that formed part of the chosen sample (Saunders & Lewis, 2012; Zikmund, et. al., 2013). One-hour interviews were set up with respondents via Zoom. This was necessitated by the national lockdown. Cameras were kept on during the one-on-one interviews to best approximate the experience of in-person interviews. The interviews were recorded and transcribed with the permission of the participants. The interviewer took detailed notes during the interviews to ensure credibility and transparency of the data collected.

Each interview started with an explanation of the purpose of the research and assurances that responses would be treated confidentially as per consent letter and ethics approval. Permission to record and transcribe the interviews was obtained. Interview questions were mapped against the research questions and the literature. These were open-ended questions to encourage dialogue. An interview guide was used during the interviews to assist the researcher, while allowing for adaptation according to circumstances.

4.8.   Data Analysis approach

A thematic analysis approach has been used for this research. This approach is appropriate for questions which can be answered through experiences and the views of respondents (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Braun and Clark (2008) define thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p. 79). Braun and Clark (2008) identify six phases of data analysis to follow as a guideline to the researcher to analyse data. This process is detailed below.

Table 1: Phases of thematic analysis (Braun and Clark, 2008, p. 87)

	Data Analysis Phase	Process Followed
1	Getting familiar with the data through reading and transcribing	Transcribing of data, reading and rechecking data, recording initial thoughts
2	Generating codes in a systematic and pragmatic manner	Inductively generate a list of codes by observing patterns and similarities
3	Creating themes and categories from the codes	Group codes into possible themes by identifying similarities
4	Reviewing the themes identified in the third phase	Check themes against the data set and generate a 'thematic map'
5	Defining the themes identified	Review and refine themes
6	Interpreting and reporting on the identified themes.	Report content and meanings of themes in the data, make a compelling argument through the use of analytic narrative, using convincing data extracts

The recordings from the interviews were transcribed into a readable Microsoft Word format using the Otter Ai program. Transcripts were then checked against the recording. The Word documents of the interview transcriptions were then uploaded into Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software program (CASDAQ). These documents were then coded using Atlas.ti by assigning codes to each sentence in the documents. The researcher generated a total of 218 codes, of which two were subsequently split (Appendix 2). Saldana, (2008) suggests a codes-to-theory model for qualitative research (p. 12) which was then applied:
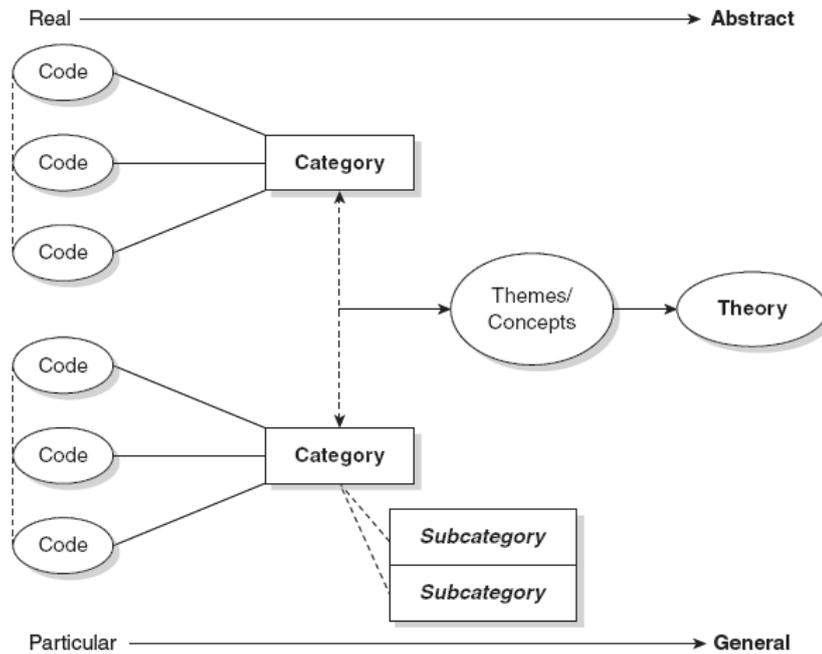
Figure 7: Codes-to-theory model for qualitative inquiry (Saldana, 2008)

Meaningful codes were developed to describe the data, which were then attached to relevant categories for further analysis into themes. Eighteen categories were created in Atlas.ti, and five themes emerged. With an inductive approach, the categories will emerge from the data (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

4.9.   Data Validity and Reliability

Validity in qualitative research involves producing findings that are trustworthy and defensible (Golfashani, 2003). Ensuring reliability in qualitative research requires an examination of trustworthiness (Golfashani, 2003). In order to ensure 'trustworthiness' of the findings, the researcher acknowledges that personal biases may have influenced findings and sampling (Noble & Smith, 2015). To mitigate the influence that this may have had, the researcher was aware of these biases and attempted to remain objective and neutral during data collection. Rich, verbatim accounts of participants answers have been used to confirm findings, and an attempt to provide clarity in thought processes during data analysis and interpretations has been given (Noble & Smith, 2015).

A thematic analysis approach ensured that data analysis followed a logical progression from collection to transcription and then onto analysis and findings. Roulston (2010) suggests several approaches to ensuring that data collected during interviews is of a high quality. During this study, a pilot interview was used to assess the suitability of the interview guide. Leading questions were not asked, to minimise the bias of the researcher. The interview guides ensured that questions were asked in sequence, going from the general to the specific (Roulston, 2010). Bias was limited by asking the same interview questions of all participants.

4.10. Research Ethics

The research was granted ethical clearance by the Ethics Committee of the Gordon Institute of Business Science prior to the collection of data (Appendix 2). All participants were asked to complete a Consent Form (Appendix 3) which explained the purpose of the research, the proceedings and provided the assurance of anonymity. Confidentiality was maintained during the reporting of the findings, with participants being assigned a number instead of their name and company details being removed from the transcripts.

4.11. Limitations

The study conducted contained a number of limitations since qualitative research is subjective (Saunders & Lewis, 2012; Zikmund, et. al., 2013) and personal bias from respondents was likely to emerge. Zikmund et al., (2013) describe response bias as occurring either consciously or unconsciously and could affect conclusions drawn by the researcher.

Other limitations include the fact the researcher is not trained or experienced in conducting research interviews and the research outcomes are largely dependent on the quality of data recorded during the interviews (Agee, 2009). Secondly, the research only focused on large companies and failed to incorporate small to medium organisations. The experience of this type of leadership may be different in a smaller environment. The research participants were drawn from the Gauteng region, indicating a geographical bias. The participants were all drawn from executive level

leadership positions. No attempt was made to broaden the population to gain the perspectives of lower-level employees. Lastly, only a limited number of sectors were included, limiting the generalisability to all private firms.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

5.1. introduction

This chapter introduces the results to the research questions posed in Chapter 3. The data analysis and findings collected from the 12 in-depth, one-on-one interviews are presented in this chapter. Through the use of a consistency matrix, the interview questions were derived in order to gain responses that would confirm the research questions. This process ensured a consistent link between the literature reviewed, the data collected and the analysis methodology.

5.2. Description of the Sample

Judgmental sampling was used to select the 12 executives as interview respondents. Each respondent had experienced leadership directly from a superior they believed had low self-awareness. The sample excluded other management or lower levels of the business. The sample crossed various industries, including: Consulting, Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG), Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Automotive Retail. The companies selected were large, defined as having more than 1 000 employees. The sample was purposefully split to gain representation across different gender, age, and racial groups.

Table 2 below lists the interviewees, their demographic information, position and the industry in which they work.

Table 2: Details of the Interviewees from the Sample

Respondent	Demographics	Position	Company	Industry
1	White Female Age group 31 - 40	Marketing Director	SA Company 1	FMCG
2	Indian Male Age group 31 - 40	Regional Legal Director	Multinational 1	Pharmaceutical Manufacturer
3	White Female Age group 60+	Independent HR Consultant	Independent	HR, Coaching
4	Black Female Age group 31 - 40	General Manager Factory	SA Company 1	FMCG
5	White Male Age group 51 - 60	Market Access Head	Multinational 2	Pharmaceutical Manufacturer
6	White Male Age group 31 - 40	Regional IT Director	Multinational 3	Pharmaceutical Manufacturer
7	White Female Age group 51 - 60	Medical Director	Multinational 3	Pharmaceutical Manufacturer
8	White Female Age group 41 - 50	Non-Exec Board Member; Finance	SA Company 2	Pharmaceutical Manufacturer
9	White Male Age group 51 - 60	CEO	SA Company 3	Automotive
10	Coloured Male Age group 41 - 50	Marketing Director	Multinational 4	FMCG
11	Indian Female Age group 31 - 40	Head of Sales and Marketing	Multinational 5	Pharmaceutical Manufacturer
12	Black Female Age group 31 - 40	Head of Market Access	Multinational 6	Pharmaceutical Manufacturer

5.3.   Presentation of Results

The results of the research undertaken are presented as per the research questions highlighted in Chapter 3 and based on the responses of 12 in-depth, semi-structured interviews carried out using the interview guideline in Appendix 1.

5.4.   Results for Research Question 1

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: What are the specific behaviours or traits exhibited by senior managers that lead to them being perceived as having no self-awareness?

Research question one specifically tried to understand what behaviours or traits are exhibited by senior leaders that lead them to being perceived as having no self-awareness. Aligned to this question, the interview focused on the experience of having a manager that exhibited these behaviours. Respondents were asked to provide a detailed account of the experience of working for a manager they had identified as having poor self-awareness, as well as the behaviours they believed demonstrated this lack of self-awareness. The discussion began by asking respondents how they understood self-awareness in the workplace. This was done to ensure there was a common understanding of self-awareness in the business context.

5.4.1. Understanding the Concept of Self-Awareness

The first interview question sought to establish each respondent's understanding of the concept of self-awareness. Self-awareness was identified as a core attribute for positive forms of leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005) so it was important to establish a common understanding and definition. This was reiterated by one respondent, who stated:

> *"I think the challenge is getting a common understanding of self-awareness and then, obviously how that applies to the leader" (Respondent 11)*

and another who echoed this:

> *"I think probably everyone's interpretation of self-awareness might be slightly different."* They also noted that, *"it's not a topic that a lot of people are exposed to, really in business. I don't think many people are exposed to that kind of thinking." (Respondent 1)*

Despite this, respondents were able to articulate a common understanding of self-awareness that broadly fell into two categories. These were understanding of self, and understanding one's impact.

Sixteen constructs were identified and were split into the two sub-categories shown in the figures (Figure 8 and Figure 9) below. The top two constructs in each sub-category represent a common understanding of what self-awareness in the workplace entails. Awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, as well as

understanding how your behaviour impacts others were the most frequently cited constructs. The x-axis represents the code count across all transcripts.
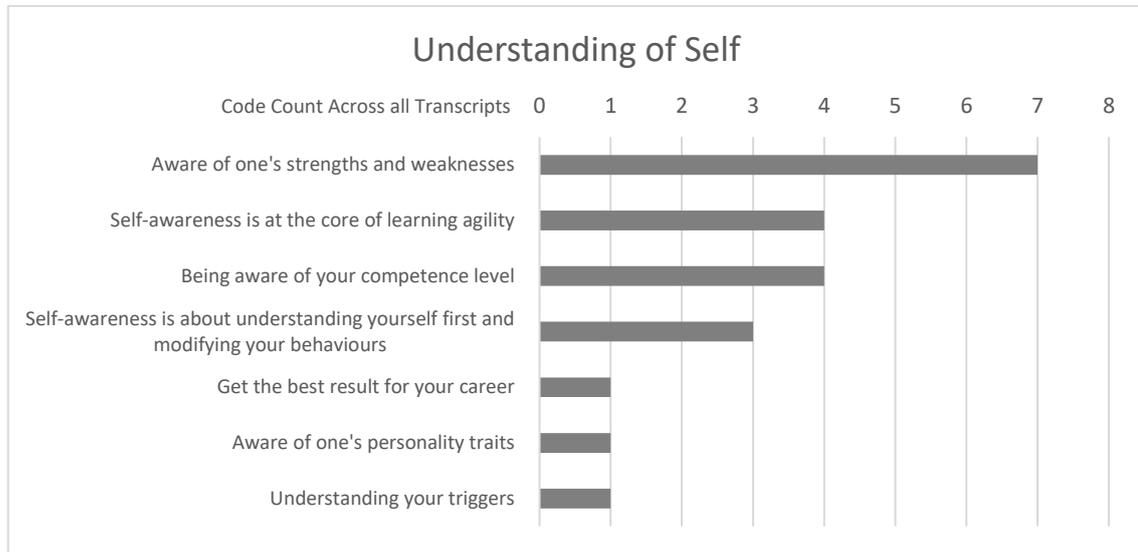
Figure 8: An Understanding of Self-Awareness – Understanding of Self

Most respondents believed that understanding your own strengths and weaknesses was key to self-awareness. In understanding one's own strengths and weaknesses, most respondents mentioned that this was important so that leaders could rely on their team's strengths to mitigate their own weaknesses:

> *"a leader needs to be able to understand what they're good at, what they're not and how they need to rely on their team, to collectively harness the intelligence of everyone to come up with the best solution." (Respondent 1)*

It was also noted by this respondent that self-awareness is:

> *"an understanding of oneself, their strengths, their weaknesses, and how they show up as leaders in an organisation." (Respondent 1)*

This understanding can then be used to get the best out of people because,

> *"it's how that self- awareness is then used to adapt to the environment or is used to get the best out of people. So, it is firstly understanding yourself, and then how you use that knowledge to get the best results out of your career and out of the people that you manage." (Respondent 1)*

Equally important in understanding of self, is recognising your triggers and being able to modify your behaviours, according to a few respondents. The importance of soliciting feedback was also highlighted by one respondent who said:

> *"I think part of having effective leadership is being self-aware. And part of that is making sure that you do solicit feedback, that you are very much engaged and aware of what is happening around you, and your impact on others."* *(Respondent 11)*

Being open to feedback allows managers to be more realistic in terms of how they rate themselves, according to Respondent 11. This was extended by another participant who said it,

> *"is about being open to feedback from others and acting on it. You also must be willing enough to ask for feedback from those that you engage with to get an understanding of how you view yourself versus how others view you."* *(Respondent 10)*

Self-awareness was also identified by Respondent 3 as being at the heart of learning agility, so the ability of a leader to act on feedback received,

> *"is dependent on self-awareness, especially when it comes to leadership and the impact on the business".*
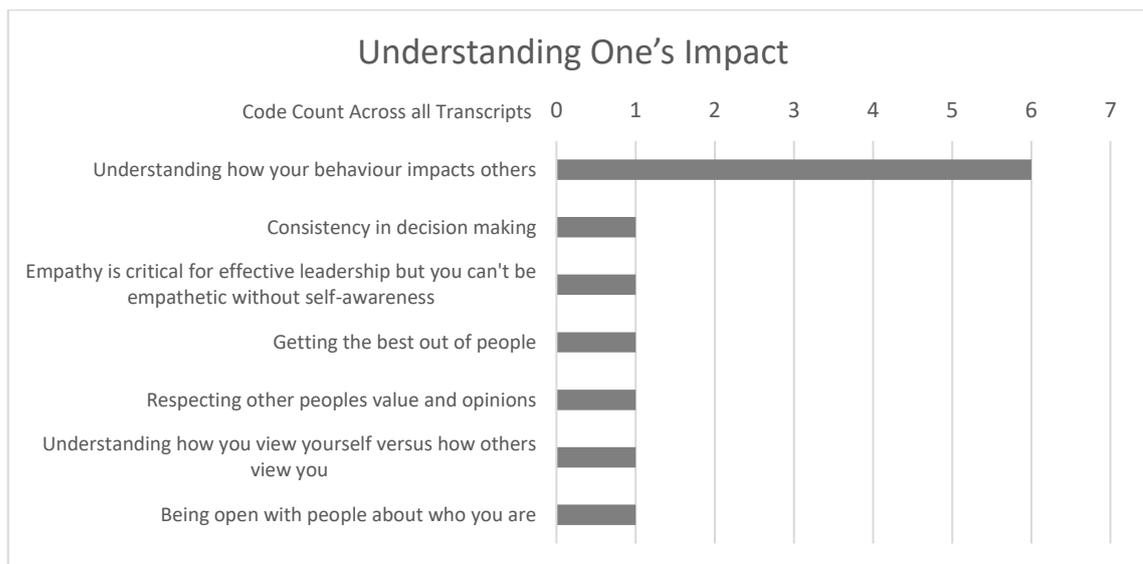
Figure 9: An Understanding of Self-Awareness – Understanding One's Impact

Most respondents agreed that being self-aware means understanding the impact that your behaviour has on those around you. This means considering the,

> *"way you give feedback to people, the way you criticise people"* and *"knowing how your actions, your decisions, your body language, your tone, your approach, and how it affects those around you".* *(Respondents 2 and 3)*

Consistency and the ability to be open and honest about yourself was also highlighted by a few respondents.

The importance of empathy was highlighted by one respondent, who proposed that a leader with self-awareness is,

> *"someone who is respectful of different views, different people, for whatever they contribute to the workplace. Someone who has the tact to engage in a way that doesn't hurt people, that doesn't put people down, that they feel valued". ."* *(Respondent 5)*

5.4.2. The Behaviours Exhibited by Leaders with Low-Self-Awareness

Respondents were asked to give a detailed account of their experience of working for a leader who was not self-aware. They were then asked to describe the behaviours or traits that led them to believe that these leaders lacked self-awareness.

These two questions yielded 61 constructs, which were grouped into six themes, illustrated in the figure overleaf (Figure 10).

RQ 1: What are the specific behaviours or traits exhibited by senior managers, that lead to them being perceived as having no self-awareness?

Narcissism, Ego and Self-Interest	Volatile, Emotional, Inconsistent	Unaware of Their Negative Impact	Feedback Ignored and Discouraged	Blamed Others	Created a Negative Environment and Consequences
Exhibited insecurity and self-preservation 7	Inconsistency led to a lack of trust 7	Caused offense without realising it 9	Not open to feedback or criticism 8	Complete lack of accountability 8	Created a culture of fear 7
Narcissism and ego 5	Behaviour was inconsistent and erratic 6	Did not respect personal boundaries, inappropriate at times 6	Defensive about feedback 3	Believes they are the only ones capable or working hard 3	Need to control everything 7
Politically astute 3	The leader was volatile 6	Incorrect opinion that everybody loves them 5	Not driving a culture of constant feedback 2	This leader blamed others so the organisation took too long to act 2	Incompetence and lack of credibility led to a lack of trust 5
Everything was done to make themselves look good 3	Behaviour inconsistent with espoused values 5	Unaware how they come across 3	No environment of psychological safety to give feedback 2	I felt I was being set up to fail 2	Created a challenging environment 3
Poor decision making due to a lack of collaboration 2	Behaviour seemed extreme 3	No idea how much they negatively impacted people 3	I tried to make the person aware of their behaviour 2	Refused to acknowledge mistakes 1	Unable to instill confidence during turbulent times 2
No attempt to connect with people 2	Lack of self-awareness meant inconsistency and chaos 2	Disproportionate amount of time managing the impact of this leader 2	Ignored criticism 1	Managers in another country don't see the impact of these leaders quickly 1	Lack of consultation meant changes were met with resistance 2
Self-preservation and survival during turbulent times 2	It was uncomfortable and chaotic 2	Hard work at the expense of listening to others and creating an envornment of respect 1	Many avenues existed to give this leader feedback 1		Lack of self-awareness was exacerbated by uncertainty and a turbulent environment 2
Consultation was done to cover their decision 1	They create chaos and disruption because of contradiction 2	No Listening Capability 1	This leader had no interest in understanding the perception of themselves 1		No consultation or consideration of teams' viewpoints 2
It was obvious they had an agenda 1	Lack of consistency - you never knew what to expect 1	Created confusion 1	Insincere promises to change 1		No empowerment or autonomy to do their job 1
Ego meant they didn't see that people were not supporting them 1	Constantly contradicting themselves 1	Lack of direction 1	Didn't answer questions 1		I experienced shock and disbelief that a senior leader could have no self-awareness 1
Hierarchy is very important to them 1	Takes things personally 1	Lack of vision 1			Did not get the best out of their people 1
					Creates unnecessary complexity and work 1

Figure 10: Overview of the results for RQ1

Source: Atlas.ti

Narcissism, Ego and Self-Interest

Most respondents described leaders who exhibited insecurity and self-preservation, as well as narcissism and ego. One respondent claimed that,

"insecurity, and self-preservation were two things that linked to the behaviour" (Respondent 2)

While another added,

"I think that when somebody is insecure in senior leadership, it's all about themselves, so they become egocentric [focused on] self-preservation, and that doesn't engender any sort of trust." (Respondent 3)

One respondent claimed that their leader's ego meant that he could not be challenged:

"He's got a very confrontational style and relationship with most people, but with most men in the organisation so it's almost like there's an ego at play, and a lot of the decisions or the forcefulness of his decisions in the way he bulldozes. I think when he's challenged on the quality of those decisions, for me, there's a certain amount of ego that comes into play. And instead of putting that aside, which I think someone who's got a lot of self-awareness would do, that ego and that need to prove himself right constantly is such a driving force. And all of that, I think, just leads me to believe there is very little awareness of self." (Respondent 1)

Ego is mentioned with narcissism by a few respondents,

We were sitting in one session one day, I googled narcissism, because I felt okay, this is typical. You can't call up six senior leaders, adults, into a room to teach them [company information] and the whole session, you call it a workshop, but you're the only one talking." (Respondent 4)

Respondent 3 believed that ego prevented these leaders from seeing that staff were not supporting them. They added that self-preservation became more pronounced during turbulent times:

"You must have some understanding that your leadership impacts on the performance because, it's a no brainer that if you want a higher performance, high engagement leads to higher performance leads to increased

productivity. But I think that having said that, in a turbulent time, it's survival. So, the leader maybe goes into self-preservation mode. And with that comes the lack of self-awareness, because they're just trying to survive themselves. And I guess showing empathy is completely out the window. Because it's self-preservation." (Respondent 3)

These leaders were perceived by some respondents as doing everything possible to make themselves look good, often at the expense of their team:

"A leader should want everyone who works for them to learn and be as good as them and be able to replace them as quickly as possible. Those are good leadership traits: I am better than you now, but tomorrow, you're going to be as good as I am. That's a good leader. This person is, I always want to be better than you, I always want to be perceived as better than you, and I always want to show everyone that I'm better than you." (Respondent 5)

"He's very much about managing his stakeholders and presenting himself in the best possible light." (Respondent 10)

These leaders were also described by a few respondents as being politically astute,

"as much as she lacked leadership, she was quite clever when it came to being a bit shrewd, or corporate savvy" and *"not self-aware, but quite devious and quite clever in when it comes to politics." (Respondent 2)*

These leaders made poor decisions because of a lack of consultation and collaboration, according to some respondents. Others took this further by accusing their leaders of having an agenda, and only consulting to cover their decision:

"With me being a support function, she would consult where she thought she could use my advice as covering her decision. So I think what was particularly frustrating was it wasn't like a consultation, it would be giving me certain bits of information, expecting me to or, you know, with, with that information, you're almost forced to give a certain answer." (Respondent 2)

Two respondents believed that these leaders just made no attempt to connect with people,

"So it's connectivity, I've tried to connect with you because we know we're different people, but the common bond is probably the work and working for

the same organisation. But there is no attempt to connect with people."
(Respondent 3)

"Even though he's been here for five years, he's very, the word "aloof" is not the right word, because I wouldn't use the word "aloof" to describe him, but he's almost out of touch almost, you know, where he's very, very distant. And he lives in this world. I think he sees it as I'm just here to do a job and he's obviously an expat so I don't have to engage and interact." (Respondent 10)

Volatile, Emotional, and Inconsistent

All the respondents described leaders who were volatile, prone to emotional outbursts and who displayed inconsistent behaviour. Respondents reported leaders who had temper tantrums, screamed and shouted at people and even one who threw things. This inconsistency led to a lack of trust in the leader.

"You deal with someone who's completely inconsistent, who goes back on decisions that have been made as a group, then afterwards, they'll side with one or two people, change everything, come back, give another story. So the transparency and the trust are just not there." (Respondent 7)

"One of the [company] behaviours is building trust. So, it's almost inculcated in the business and the culture. So does he help to build trust? I would say not really, again, based on how he presents himself and how he behaves." (Respondent 10)

This conflicting behaviour was also inconsistent with the leaders' espoused values, causing a belief that the leader lacked self-awareness.

"I think, his dogmatic approach to do as I say, not as I do, is another behaviour trait that I think leads me to believe there's very little self-awareness." {Respondent 1)

"She lacked the insight to realise that people could see through her, so she could stand up and very clearly say how she cared about people and values and all these good things. But no one believed, and she wouldn't know that no one believed her because she didn't realise that her inconsistencies were

picked up, or didn't even realise how inconsistent she was in the first place."
(Respondent 2)

These leaders are depicted as volatile and even extreme, causing the perception that the leaders' behaviour was erratic and unpredictable, according to most respondents.

> *"They had very low impulse control. So, whenever anything happened, they would literally blow up. And it would be ranting, raving, sometimes shouting, screaming kind of thing. And there's just no way that anybody who's got any level of self-awareness can be sitting there and saying, this is fine. And I'm having the appropriate impact on everybody around me when they're doing that."* This respondent also added, *"They were erratic, they were emotional, they were, you know, they had no listening capability whatsoever. Irrational, emotional and just couldn't listen." (Respondent 9)*

Some respondents described being incredulous and shocked by the behaviour:

> *"I just thought, is this guy like for real? Like, he would miss such clear social cues that you like, is it me?" (Respondent 12)*

One respondent added that their leader seemed completely unaware of the impact he had,

> *"You never just never knew what to expect. He can upset you to the core, but then he expects you to be laughing with him by the end of the meeting." (Respondent 4)*

Most respondents agreed that these leaders were most volatile when they felt it negatively affected perceptions of them,

> *"because it directly impacts him, as I've said earlier, and he's all about managing his stakeholders, then he completely demonstrates the opposite kind of behaviour where he goes off the handle in the most ridiculous way and screams at the top of his voice and behaves really, really badly." (Respondent 10)*

While some respondents explained that the unpredictable behaviour impacted company culture and the work environment,

> *"particularly when we're in a complex environment, you know, where there is a lot of uncertainty, ambiguity, and then you have a leader who's volatile, it's just creates a very unhealthy work environment." (Respondent 30*

Respondents commented that the lack of self-awareness meant inconsistency and chaos, creating an uncomfortable environment. Respondents never knew what to expect and these leaders frequently contradicted themselves. One respondent wondered,

> *"Are they truly malicious or are they just really human beings struggling? So, you end up with this schizophrenia complex, because you almost feel sorry for them sometimes. The rest of the time you are so angry at the way they behave." (Respondent 12)*

The chaotic environment made it extremely uncomfortable for some respondents, who added,

> *"it was very uncomfortable, very chaotic. The common thing about a leader that's so self-unaware is that it creates chaos. There's a huge level of chaos and contradiction. And tiptoeing so yeah, it's very, it's chaotic. It's disruptive." (Respondent 4)*

What seemed to compound the issue for respondents was that these leaders were unable or uninterested in developing their self-awareness, and that their behaviour became worse under pressure.

> *"I think that when a leader with a lack of self-awareness is not even interested in developing that self-awareness and is under pressure, it becomes chaos. Everybody around you is affected, it becomes very turbulent, very volatile, very fractured, and really it's difficult for the company to move forward under those circumstances." (Respondent 3)*

Unaware of their Negative Impact

The respondents agreed that these leaders often caused offence without even realising it. Aligned to this, being completely oblivious to how they come across was also mentioned by some respondents. One respondent explained:

"She often did that where she would offend people in her response. And, the way she would give feedback, and the questions she would ask. I mean, even if it wasn't an attempt to criticise people, she would offend people just in the way she came across. She wouldn't realise it or she wouldn't realise the extent of it." (Respondent 2)

Another added,

"For me, it's just missing it and believing that you're helping, believing that you are supporting when you're taking over. Believing that you are actually making time to support your team when you're actually imposing yourself on them." (Respondent 4)

As well as being unaware of causing offence, some respondents added that their leaders were unaware of personal and professional boundaries and were even inappropriate at times. In two cases, there was a belief that behaviour bordered on sexual harassment:

"A lot of the time, it was not respecting boundaries, and just really, really being inappropriate." (Respondent 6)

"He lost the job, then had to go home with his reputation in tatters, because even then, even with his reputation in tatters, he didn't think it was his fault what happened. And it totally was, it was so completely his fault. He began what he was hoping would be a relationship with a junior member of staff. And he did not see how that would be a bad thing." (Respondent 12)

Another respondent described the inappropriately emotional behaviour as,

"kind of unsettling, it's somewhat embarrassing, and it's almost in those public forums, it's uncomfortable and awkward. It's awkward for especially the lower level kind of employees to see the leader, the GM of the organisation behaving in such a fashion." (Respondent 10)

These leaders are described by some respondents as "living in a world they have created" where they mistakenly believe that that everybody loves them and that they are well-respected. One respondent said,

"I think that's essential to enabling them to continue in the way they do. If they had that self-awareness, they wouldn't be able to continue like that … I don't think they would ever survive, or get to where they are, if they were aware of how they are perceived in real life." (Respondent 7)

Other respondents added to this, claiming their leaders were somewhat delusional:

"He's so into the levels and hierarchy. He doesn't realise it, he thinks he's accessible. He thinks he's got an open-door policy. He thinks he's nice." (Respondent 4)

"[Staff] would be terrified because they didn't know what they were walking into today. And I don't think he realised; I think he thought that everyone loved him, and everything was good. And he was good to everyone. And he always did the right thing for people. And, yeah, I think he thought he was great. I think he probably still does." (Respondent 8)

A few respondents complained that these leaders had no idea how much they negatively affected people:

"I think just the impact that this individual was having on people around him, and it wasn't just me, I would see the impact on others. And think, wow, how can you not recognise what you've said to this person is uncalled for, and unfair, and disrespectful." (Respondent 8)

One respondent claimed that their manager worked hard, but that it was at the expense of creating an environment of respect. These leaders were also described by some respondents as creating confusion due to a lack of vision and direction.

Respondents also had to spend a disproportionate managing the impact they had:

"I found I was spending a disproportionate time managing the impact of that [leader], whereas the organisation had bigger issues and challenges to manage. But it was always, you know, having to try and manage the impact of this leadership and this leadership style and lack of self-awareness." (Respondent 3)

Feedback was Ignored and Discouraged

Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that these leaders were not open to feedback or criticism. Some respondents said that their leaders did not solicit feedback and were not interested in the contribution or feelings of others:

> *"A leader needs to be open to feedback, open to criticism, open to thinking differently, and accepting diverse opinions and the fact that he doesn't, again, you know, it just comes back to not being aware of how other people feel, or you know, how he can benefit and learn from other people." (Respondent 1)*

Other respondents said that these leaders were given feedback but either got emotional or were in denial about it,

> *"And then when we had the one-on-one last year with him and [gave him] the information, I found him to be not dismissive, I won't say he was dismissive of the information. But it certainly didn't resonate with me that he almost accepted the feedback, and then acted on the feedback." (Respondent 10)*

> *"I suppose she opened the floor to feedback. And then she didn't take it very well. And this was just in a forum where it was just the leadership team together. And as adults, we decided to sit down and kind of put all our cards on the table. And she disagreed with all the feedback. She just couldn't comprehend what we were saying. She argued about it. And there were a lot of emotional moments where she just kind of couldn't take the heat, and she couldn't take the stressful environment. And it blew up into her either being in tears or leaving the meeting." (Respondent 6)*

> *"There is just such a strong sense of denial. Maybe it's just lack of self-awareness." (Respondent 7)*

As well as becoming emotional and denying the feedback that was received, Respondent 7 added that feedback was misinterpreted and twisted to become a positive attribute. Respondent 7 gave this example, where their leader had received feedback on an assessment:

> *"[The feedback was] I've been told that I rush into things too much, and that I need to take a step back and consider, and understand before I make a decision or move forward, BUT, and this was the thing, they said BUT, it's*

because I'm so determined to make things happen and to move projects forward. So, they don't see the negative part of the feedback. They change it in their mind into something positive, you know, a positive trait that they have in moving the business forward."

Closely related to this inability to accept negative feedback was how defensive these leaders became when they received it. According to some respondents these leaders became defensive and tried to rationalise why it was somebody else's fault. One respondent believed that the organisational culture played a role in the behaviour of their leader.

"I think he is more comfortable about giving feedback, but he's not comfortable about receiving it and maybe that that has got to do with the culture of the organisation. I've been at organisations where feedback, cultural accountability, all of those things are drummed into you. We don't have that kind of culture in the organisation. (Respondent 1)

Having an organisation that does not support a culture of constant feedback, and a fear of repercussions were other reasons given by a few respondents on why staff felt they could not give honest feedback.

"Feedback is much more informal normally, and it's hugely dependent on the relationship that you have with that individual. And if you don't have that trust, or that safety, I think they call it psychological safety in the coaching terms. If you don't have that psychological safety, it's very difficult to give feedback. So I don't think he creates an environment where there is psychological safety with a lot of people, so I do think the less confident individuals in his team wouldn't provide that feedback, maybe a bit scared in terms of what the repercussions would be." (Respondent 1)

"You would not address it directly, because it just wouldn't be well received. It could almost invoke an even angrier, not angry. More, I'm going to call it abusive, because I think in some cases, it was an abusive response. So any kind of criticism was not well received, was not encouraged. And this person didn't want feedback." (Respondent 8)

While many respondents did not give feedback for the reasons mentioned above, a few respondents commented that they had tried to make this person aware of their behaviour, first directly and then through other mechanisms. These leaders ignored criticism, despite receiving it through 360-degree feedback. Many respondents reported that they got so desperate, eventually they resorted to going to the person's boss or a complaints line. Respondents reported that either the leader had no interest in understanding the perception of themselves:

> *"If I've got good self-awareness, I have a perception of myself. But it's important to understand the perception of others. The perception amongst your peers and the perception amongst your subordinates and your direct manager can be different and can be misaligned. But if there's no interest or desire to even understand that it's very difficult. And so usually utilising these mechanisms, you know, if you see a consistent thread, surely you would hope that the powers that be, you know, understand that there's a problem with the leadership." (Respondent 3)*

Or they made insincere promises to change.

> *"When we had the coaching intervention and everyone had to tell her what [they thought of her], she managed to force some tears. I can't think whether she was actually hurt, or whether it was part of her facade. I do think she's quite clever in a way. So I think it was just part of a little drama she's putting together to show that she's been moved, and that she would mend her ways. If there were enough people that were outspoken and said, you're wrong, she kind of then has to admit, or has to listen to them and say, yes, I'm hearing you and I will, I will change my ways and that's exactly what came out of that – she didn't, though." (Respondent 5)*

Blamed Others

A lack of accountability was mentioned by most respondents as being indicative of a lack of self-awareness. One respondent told the story that his leader had a saying:

> *"Sometimes we've got to jump off a cliff and grow wings on the way down. He never finished the story, that the guys that didn't grow wings didn't survive it. There was a lot of that. That was the problem. It was never taking the bet together as a team. It was him saying we're going to take the bet and you guys are going to be the ones who live and die by it." (Respondent 9)*

Another explained that,

> *"When you give them negative feedback, they will either flip it back at you or deny it completely, that that was never their intention. So they're very, they're almost narcissistic, they're very clever at being able to turn and say no, and make the person they're working with feel like they're at fault. So it's no, you know, you never I never intended that. I'm not sure how you interpreted it like that." (Respondent 7)*

Aligned to the lack of accountability was the belief that these leaders held that they were the ones doing all the work, or that they were the only ones capable of doing the work. This was mentioned by a few respondents.

> *"I've always said to him that, like you have trust issues. You think it will only be good if you've done it, or you've touched it. And, and he always like preaches team, team, team, but when he speaks, he's an 'I' man." (Respondent 4)*

A few respondents felt that because their leaders blamed others, the organisation took too long to act, especially in large multinationals where managers were in another country.

> *"if you've got a leader who's always defensive or not letting any anything stick to them and blaming others, it's difficult, you would hope that the organisation would come in and investigate. But sometimes these things take longer, and you lose good people in the interim." (Respondent 3)*

One respondent highlighted the inability of these leaders to acknowledge mistakes, which sometimes made them feel like they were being set up for failure,

> *"it's that whole self-preservation thing, and when they see that they've made mistakes, or maybe they are not 100% correct in their thinking, they adjust or not so much they adjust, but they deny it. So they don't acknowledge it. And that's what becomes very difficult, I think, because the lack of acknowledgement from them, of the fact okay, well, maybe you are correct, you get into this almost like scoring points off each other." (Respondent 7)*

Create a Negative Environment and Consequences

Respondents described the experience of having senior leaders with low self-awareness as creating a negative environment and destructive consequences. The

most cited was that they created a culture of fear. People were scared to speak up and were afraid of the consequences,

> *"People were too scared to speak up. I think when there were employee surveys, people didn't trust the process, because of the nature of the individual. And, you know, standing in a town hall meeting saying, I've got my sources. I know what's going on. I know who said what to [whom] you know that doesn't build a lot of trust. And, and I honestly don't think he was aware of it." (Respondent 8)*

Closely linked to the behavioural trait of micromanagement, was the need to control everything. Respondents were of the opinion that this was associated with insecurity, or the belief that they were the only ones who could do the work. This created unnecessary complexity and work for respondents.

> *"So this whole I am right, and I'm the only one who's right. And my father-in-law loves to say this wonderful thing: never allow yourself to be the only source of wisdom in your life. Because the moment you do that, you can only reach your highs from you alone. But if you get other people to hold you up, you soar so much higher than even you thought was possible."* They also added: *"There's always control issues, they're fearful that if I don't know what's going on, then I won't be as worthy." (Respondent 12)*

> *"It was things like she would become irritated if you presented a decision or way forward and she hadn't been involved in or hadn't been consulted earlier on. And it was irrational irritation … Irritated because she couldn't throw in a useless remark or useless comment or suggestion. (Respondent 5)*

> *"Yeah, we'll do all that additional work. And you get to the same result. So it's kind of now, what was the point because we were there a week ago, but we've gone and done all this additional work, to get to the same results almost just to make him feel comfortable more than anything else." (Respondent 10)*

Many respondents believed that these leaders were incompetent, and this led to a lack of credibility and trust. Respondents believed that no consideration was given to the teams' viewpoints and they were rarely consulted.

"Honestly, I don't think I ever met one or had one work colleague who said to me for any scenario that that the interaction was normal, expected, a reasonable engagement. Every interaction that every colleague had with her always had elements of micromanagement, irritation, lack of consultation." (Respondent 5)

This lack of consultation resulted in resistance. Respondents reported feeling like they had no autonomy, and that they were not empowered to do their job.

"I think like most people, people who have worked somewhere for such a long time feel they are the experts and their opinion should matter. And his approach I don't think was your opinion matters, it's this is how I think we need to be doing things and this is how we will do it, so you need to get on board. And that's when he was met with a huge amount of resistance." (Respondent 1)

"So whether you liked it or not, it kind of had the effect of creating this, like pushback." (Respondent 20)

Some respondents felt that the lack of self-awareness was exacerbated by uncertainty and the turbulent environment. The lack of credibility meant that these leaders could not instil confidence during these volatile times.

"I think the issue is, during turbulent times. When somebody lacks awareness, I think you just find that there's more, so no, I don't, in terms of their behaviours and how they behave, it was still dismissive, it was still completely out of sync with what the rest of the organisation thought or believed, but during turbulent times, the impact on the rest of the organisation was actually really negative." (Respondent 11)

"I think when you're in turbulence and uncertain times, what people need from leadership is a sense of security, to the best of your ability. Second is a vision of hope, you know, like, you know, we've got this and thirdly is you know, some action taken falls forward." (Respondent 3)

For most respondents this created a challenging environment. One respondent described it as,

> *"an experience of almost shock that somebody could be so unaware of themselves and the impact they're having on others. And they would just carry on and carry on and never give it a second thought. And it was a shock that they could become such senior people in a big global organisation, especially when [this organisation] prided themselves on having leadership as one of the core competencies. And to see someone like that get ahead was just a big shock."* (Respondent 9)

Another added,

> *"It's very difficult and challenging. I think what happens is you set out, and you've got all intentions, you've got your objectives, you have what you are driving towards or wanting to achieve. But you have this boss who's almost on a different page, and not understanding or being aware of what the common objective is. And they're almost driving down one road, and you're trying to kind of steer, get them back on track. And it just becomes incredibly frustrating."* (Respondent 7)

5.5. Results for Research Question 2

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: How Effective are Managers with Low Self-Awareness as Leaders?

Research Question 2 sought to answer whether self-awareness was necessary for effective leadership. To begin the discussion, respondents were asked to describe their managers' leadership style. Since there is no agreed standard against which to measure effective leadership, Kouzes & Posner's (2007) Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership was used to guide the discussion.

Respondents were asked open-ended questions regarding how they felt about their leaders' ability to practice exemplary leadership. Respondents were then asked to discuss how a leader with no self-awareness had been successful in getting to a senior level within their organisation. The constructs which were created under each category are displayed in the figure below (figure 11). A discussion of the results and constructs follows.
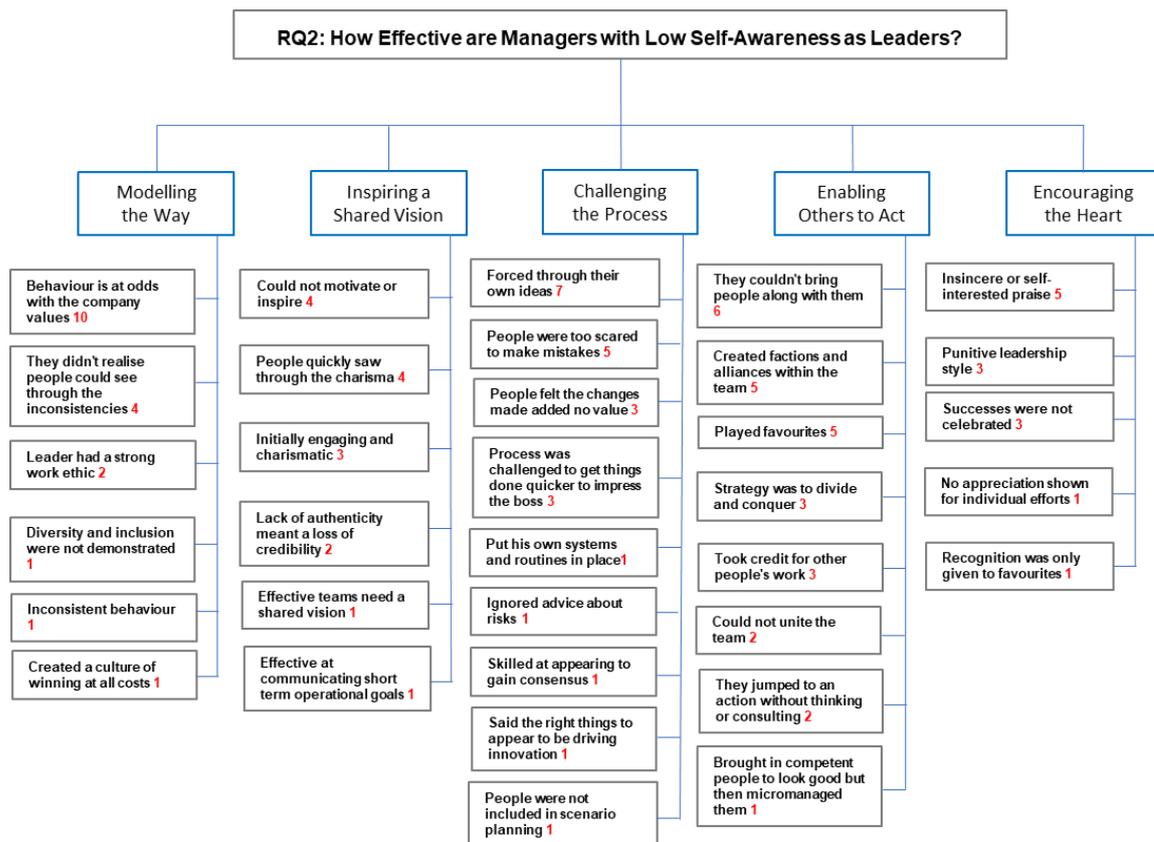
Figure 11: Overview of Results for RQ 2

Source: Atlas.ti codes in Excel

5.5.1. Leadership Style

Seventeen constructs were identified under leadership style. The most frequently cited was micromanagement. In a few instances this was linked to the belief that the manager was insecure with one respondent saying,

> *"I think it came from an insecurity that then meant being micromanaged, even at a senior level." (Respondent 3)*

Another explanation was put forward that the manager was,

> *"not understanding or not being aware of his particular areas of real strength and other people's, or not spending the time to really understand other people's areas of strength, I think, you know, that, for me is a symptom of the micromanaging." (Respondent 1)*

This inability to recognise that the team might be strong in areas where the leader was weak was explained as a lack of trust by another participant:

> *"I think the micromanaging is definitely an indicator that there's not a lot of trust in the team." (Respondent 4)*

Lack of trust in the team came through strongly from most participants, either because the leader believed that no one could do it as well as them, or because of a need to be involved and control everything, with one respondent describing their manager as a "control freak". Another stated,

> *"He micromanages that to death, because I get the impression rightly or wrongly, that he just doesn't trust that anyone can do that as well as he could." (Respondent 1)*

This lack of trust in the leadership team was also felt in the broader organisation.

> *"She was just hot headed. She didn't trust her staff. She didn't trust the people that were professionals in their roles and subject matter experts. So, in doing that, again, it's a bit of a ripple effect, the staff would see this happening to the leadership team, see them being side-lined. That doesn't do anything for you or the business." (Respondent 6)*

One respondent believed that leaders should have a vision and be able to build trust and motivate or inspire their teams. All respondents agreed that their leader was unable to do this.

> *"If they don't have any kind of leadership capabilities, don't assist in any way at all, they set up barriers. I mean, I've had it in two different situations and have worked with another CEO who was the same, and it just became so destructive." (Respondent 7)*

An inability to build trust in the team was mentioned by all respondents during their interviews. There was a feeling that these leaders did not have their best interests at heart and were only interested in their own success.

> *"Leaders should support their team, they should encourage, they should want the team to do well, because if the team does well basically the leader will do well." (Respondent 5)*

Respondents also mentioned that these leaders did not seem to realise that they could not do everything themselves and were unable to build high-performing teams.

> *"In order to foster trust, in order to understand how you're coming across to those around you, is actually really important in terms of being able to build really high performing teams, people or collaborative environments."* *(Respondent 1)*

Two respondents described leaders who had a "helicopter" management style. They were hands-off and only got involved when something was going to reflect badly on them. Said one respondent,

> *"It's a very kind of hands-off relationship and he's not the kind of leader that leads from the front, he's not the kind of leader you know, you always hear people talking about, you know, you'd go to war for your leader and really walk in the trenches with your leader. I don't feel that way about him at all."* *(Respondent 10)*

Some other respondents described leadership styles that were authoritarian, autocratic, contrary, dictatorial, and more like a parent-child management style. This was closely aligned to micromanagement, with one leader saying:

> *"[They were] someone whose style is more autocratic. Definitely not someone who values team opinions. They masquerade a bit so they can pretend. But you see through that, so she'd always pretend to be interested or pretend to listen, but it was just a smokescreen. So, I think it's someone who really wants to put their own shape into every single thing that is on the table."* *(Respondent 5)*

Another described their leader as,

> *"very authoritarian, not inclusive, not consultative".* *(Respondent 1)*

Two directors felt there was no leadership style, saying,

> *"I think the person tried to tick the boxes and do and say what she thought would have been the right thing to say, but actually didn't have a style of her own."* *(Respondent 2)*

These leaders were also described by some respondents as being very aware of hierarchy and expecting a level of respect based on their position. One respondent said,

> *"Leaders sometimes assume that because they're in a leadership position, certain things would happen a certain way, or that they would get certain responses or that they give off like a certain degree of authority. And maybe there is a naiveté in that, or maybe they don't realise that the little people below them are clever enough to pick things up very quickly. And I think that just [is missing] in someone who lacks self-awareness." (Respondent 2)*

Some respondents described these leaders as having very dogmatic points of view but not prepared to take accountability if things go wrong. One respondent complained that they are very involved in the details.

> *"His approach is not about coming up with a solution, understanding how it happened. It's all about managing the consequences, who's to blame? And who needs to be reprimanded? There must be consequences to these actions." (Respondent 1)*

Another respondent took this further by saying that,

> *"They don't accept any accountability for any of the outcomes, especially if there's an issue with it to the to the point that they will actually almost falsify the information or go to any means to clear themselves of any association with what has happened even though they could have been the instigator or the person responsible for it, then they don't accept any blame. They blame others." (Respondent 7)*

5.5.2. Success Factors for Leaders with Low Self-Awareness

The question naturally arose after the first interviews, that if these leaders were exhibiting such poor leadership behaviours, how did they get to such senior positions within these organisations? Where this question was not asked in the initial interview, a follow-up question was asked.

Nine constructs were identified. Some respondents believed that hard work and individual results got their manager to a general manager level. One described their leader as,

> *"a super clever, super capable guy, especially from a, you know, kind of from a sales, marketing, and strategy perspective, he had a lot of good, hard tangible skills. So, I think that's how he got there." (Respondent 9)*

Another believed that,

> *"t lower levels in his career the lack of self-awareness did not impact his career as he was not managing large teams or businesses. He has a great work ethic, works extremely hard and would be committed to his job. That most likely got him promoted often when he was younger." (Respondent 1)*

Luck, charisma and having a high IQ and the right qualification, as well as having the right connections in the organisation were mentioned by two respondents each. One respondent explained,

> *"They've just been there in the right place at the right time, and if people have had the right connections within the organisation." (Respondent 3)*

Another respondent felt that sometimes people were promoted because they had put in the time but also,

> *"You get very smart, young people who have very good IQ, and so get into positions and accelerated." (Respondent 3)*

Charisma is mentioned as a key driver in the initial success of these leaders because they can sell themselves.

> *"If you didn't look into [her CV] deeply enough, it may have ticked right boxes, I think being someone with flair, or you know, she just had like a way or a strong personality. So, if you if you didn't go to level two, and you just spoke to her on the surface, she could have been very engaging, and very convincing. You know, you needed the time to pick up on it, or you needed to delve deeper to pick up on it. But on a first impression, she probably sounded really great. So she probably interviewed very well." (Respondent 2)*

What is clear from the interviews, is that during recruitment, companies focused on individual strengths with little focus on leadership skills. One respondent complained,

> *"It speaks to poor ability in organisations to assess a good leader and clearly there are elements of bias and probably interview processes are just theoretical excursions. Sometimes I think corporates are blinkered in the face of "words" that resonate with the corporate image or values. Talk is cheap … I'm not convinced that being the GM or head is necessarily a success measure. Being GM doesn't mean you should be GM. There are many examples that I have seen in corporates where organisations cannot distil the differences between good and bad leaders. Clearly this organisation was one of them." (Respondent 5)*

Interestingly, one respondent hypothesised that lack of self-awareness was why these leaders were able to be successful,

> *"I think the fact that they are so unaware of the impact they have, doesn't mean that they are not clever people, I think they can be totally unaware. But because of that, they will do business, and they'll make decisions at any cost. Whereas most other people might be more considerate in business or maybe a little more risk averse. Whereas they are prepared to take the risks, if it doesn't work out, they don't take any of the blame, they manipulate. And they have the personality that they're not accountable for it." (Respondent 7)*

One respondent said that their leader was so obsessed with his own career that he was oblivious to what was happening to his team.

> *"Everything is just about him, and him winning at whatever cost. So, he delivers the results, but he delivers it with broken people." (Respondent 4)*

5.5.3. Modelling the Way

Respondent 3 stated that to earn respect, leaders need to be clear on their values and model their behaviour accordingly. The respondents unanimously agreed that their leaders' behaviour was not aligned to the company values. Respondents felt that the company values were clear, and often communicated but,

"there was no walking the talk. And honesty, fairness, transparency, and I mean, the values changed over the years. But I don't believe that there was always fairness. I don't think there was always integrity." (Respondent 8)

Another said,

"As a leader, I have to express, model and reinforce. In fact, you can gain more credibility as a leader in a turbulent or very volatile time. Because people are watching you, unfortunately, that goes with leadership. So, it's all very well to talk, but I need to model, I need to walk the talk." (Respondent 3)

These behaviours led to poor company performance in one case:

"He actually was the opposite of it. And he just kept going down that path. And quite frankly, you could see it in the results of the company, because [we] went through quite a big dip initially in the company." (Respondent 9)

Two other respondents said that the values were only mentioned for self-interest, and believed their leaders were "deceitful" and inauthentic.

"[He] was forced to live the behaviours, even if in some instances, he's kind of unauthentic in the way that he goes about it. So, I find him to be massively unauthentic where, for example, he's sitting in a town hall and he's on the verge of tears with his quivering lip. And then a meeting later, he's screaming and shouting because we didn't make the number." (Respondent 10)

These inconsistencies in behaviour have led to a lack of trust in the leader.

Some respondents believed that their leader didn't realise that people could see through these inconsistencies. One respondent speculated,

"In terms of values, I think she was clear in terms of what she communicated to the company. But she was blind to the fact that people could pick up on what was genuinely intended. So, although she would say the right things in certain forums, it wasn't consistent. People would pick up on it very quickly. And then everything became false. She lacked the insight to realise that people could see through her, so she could stand up and very clearly say how she cared about people and values and all these good things. But no one believed and she wouldn't know that no one believed her, because she didn't

realise that her inconsistencies were picked up or didn't even realise how inconsistent she was in the first place." (Respondent 2)

Another opined,

"I think, why they survive, and why they keep going is in their minds, they have this illusion that they are covering their tracks, and they're managing it and they continue, because they don't pick up on the negative feedback or whatever. I think they are in complete denial, and they just carry on." (Respondent 7)

A few respondents felt that their leader modelled a strong work ethic and expected his team to do the same.

"I think he's a very passionate person, that he displays the passion and dedication to delivering results and the success of the company. So, he does set the tone in terms of the level of work ethic that people need to display, even if you're just going to rock up at six [in the morning] and let him talk." (Respondent 4)

This was linked to creating a culture of winning at all costs.

"He'll succeed at every cost. And that's why in everything that he does, even if it means stepping on your toes, he will win. So winning is a key thing for him. And it's created that culture of winning for the team. But the HOW is the problem." (Respondent 4)

Behaviour was described as inconsistent by another:

"He exhibits some and models some, but not others" (Respondent 1)

as well as an inability to demonstrate diversity and inclusion.

"Diversity inclusion, not his thing. You know, allowing sharing of opinions and putting people first and developing people." (Respondent 1)

5.5.4. Inspiring a Shared Vision

All respondents agreed that these leaders were not able to inspire a shared vision in the team. One explained,

> *"There's no rallying kind war cry for all of us to get behind, he's not a very inspirational leader at all because of all the things I've already mentioned. So it's quite difficult to be a supporter of him and go the extra mile for him based on some of the styles and behaviours he exhibits."* (Respondent 1)

They were able to communicate short-term operation goals, such as sales targets, but nothing inspirational. One participant felt that corporate communication of strategy was clear but,

> *"then you had a leader who wasn't just toxic, but completely all over the place, and you just never understood a word that came out of their mouth. And you were left completely confused as to what that meant for you at [local] level; you didn't see the alignment to strategy. And you didn't even see where the future of the company was, because there was no buy-in."* (Respondent 11)

These leaders were described by some respondents as charismatic initially.

> *"That sounded good [in the first meeting] and because she spent so much time trying to sell herself or seem convincing, she was one of those personalities that was a bit out there, you know, so there was passion, and there was a degree of emotion and just a little flavour to the way she presented stuff."* (Respondent 2)

Another agreed,

> *"They're larger than life. And that's why they carry on and get away with it. And especially in an organisation where there are sales, those kinds of people can relate to that sort of personality."* (Respondent 7)

Unfortunately, people quickly saw through the charisma.

> *"I thought this is really cool, a new beginning, new leader. She's got some attitude, flair, whatever it is, it's cool. But, but it just didn't follow through. So, you just picked up on that very quickly. And then it was, it was downhill from there."* (Respondent 2)

One respondent mentioned,

> *"You can have a vision, but a vision would be built on the values and the culture and that would feed into the strategy and the vision that that you'd be*

working towards. So they can articulate it, keep it at a superficial level, they can keep people engaged, but as soon as it requires greater or more in-depth interaction with the employees, the employees start to see the holes or the gaps, and then they begin to wonder." (Respondent 2)

These inconsistencies and a perceived lack of authenticity meant a loss of credibility for a few respondents.

"People are looking to the leader for [confidence] to reassure, it's going to be rough sailing, but we've got this. So, lack of confidence, or like a lack of sincerity and authenticity, concern at the emotions. But if I don't really believe it, I don't really have a plan on how we're going to get there or a plan of how we're going to collectively find the way forward. It doesn't become credible." (Respondent 3)

Another noted that,

"One of the key elements of effective teams is having a shared goal and a shared vision." (Respondent 1)

5.5.5. Challenging the Process

Respondents unanimously agreed that these leaders were not innovators, and in most cases where their leaders tried to challenge the process, they forced through their own ideas. One respondent complained:

"While I think he had great intentions, and did, in some respects had a lot of good new processes and thinking, I think, because he is so in the detail micromanaging, he made it too complicated, and he wasn't able to see that his ideas weren't being adopted or his processes were being ignored largely, and instead of trying to adapt and work around that and get people to see the value in it, he kind of was forcing it through." (Respondent 1)

Another explained that,

"She would challenge the process by pushing through what she wanted to achieve. But in doing that, she wasn't getting the best advice from people who supported her. And she created risks that she then needed to own at a later stage. And I think that was part of her undoing." (Respondent 2)

One respondent explained that their leader would have a workshop to drive innovative thinking but would then be the only one talking. She complained,

> *"There [should be in any relationship] a sort of two way listening. And there definitely was none of that with this leader. It was all about her way, all about what she says, all about what she's done in the past. And there was nothing in terms of what we thought or what we considered. And so even when she had the workshop, there was no opportunity to even say one thing."* *(Respondent 11)*

Another explained that there was no room for experimentation.

> *"No, you get told what the right thing is, and you either follow the leader or you get out of the way."* *(Respondent 12)*

Trust again came up as an issue for some respondents. People were too scared to make mistakes so,

> *"people rather do nothing because they fear making mistakes. And nothing happens."* *(Respondent 4)*

One respondent explained,

> *"They don't initiate new or exciting projects, they tend to stick with [corporate initiatives]. They do sometimes take risks. But the idea of learning from mistakes, they don't really buy into because as soon as they make a mistake, they'll put it on to someone else."* *(Respondent 7)*

People resisted changes by these leaders because they often felt that they added no value.

> *"For many people within the organisation who had been here for 20 or 30 years, they fought against [the process change] and still fight against it to this day. They feel it's very complicated, it's very manual. It's time intensive, and it's not adding any value to anyone's life."* *(Respondent 1)*

Sometimes the changes were perceived as superficial.

"It would stay the same, there would be a few words that would change, but nothing actually changed. So, I don't think there was huge encouragement for anything innovative, or exciting or different." (Respondent 8)

Another respondent's leader would proclaim,

"'My role here is to challenge' and the participant's response would be, *'Yes, your role is to challenge but your role is also to lead and that's where you kind of fall flat. He feels quite comfortable just challenging you and [usually] it's just another level of detail, another level of analysis, another level of work to be done, to get to the same result. So, you are challenging, but you know, are you challenging in the right places?'"* (Respondent 10)

A few respondents felt that the process was only challenged to impress the boss. In one instance this was done to try and speed up processes.

"I think she tried to challenge processes from a time perspective. So, it was all about trying to get things done sooner. And she believed that would impress people that she in turn reported to." (Respondent 2)

Risks were ignored:

"She tried to bulldoze so many processes. It sounded good initially probably to her management, where they thought, wow, you know, this person is getting things done sooner." (Respondent 2)

Some respondents reported that these leaders appeared to say the right things to be driving innovation and were skilled at appearing to gain consensus. Unfortunately, people were not included in meaningful scenario planning, so there was no buy-in from staff. One respondent expressed,

"I think that if you're looking to the way forward, it's very important to allow opportunity for scenario planning because we can't predict the future, you need to get that diversity of thinking to map out and have different scenarios. And when you do that, you get incredible buy-in, because people feel they are part of a group. It's a wonderful opportunity to get buy-in from your organisation, because everyone feels they've participated. But, if you don't align with people, they think, oh, well, you know, what's the point?" (Respondent 3)

5.5.6. Enabling Others to Act

Fostering collaboration, building competent teams, and actively involving everyone was not something these leaders were able to do, according to all respondents. According to most respondents these leaders couldn't bring people along with them.

> *"You don't have to have all the answers as a leader, you have to allow your people alongside you and within your teams to support the thinking. You might direct the process, but you've got to allow contribution from the talent that you have." (Respondent 3)*

This was due in part to a

> *"complete lack confidence in that kind of leader, the fact that you're not able to trust them". (Respondent 11)*

Also, these leaders

"just didn't have the leadership credibility to bring people across". (Respondent 9)

Some respondents said the organisation suffered because these leaders created factions and alliances within the team resulting in,

> *"a very disjointed team dynamic. Where, instead of being a high performing, well connected team, we are creating pockets of alliances … I am very team oriented and I get the most satisfaction from being in a well-connected, high performing team and when that's completely lacking, it does force you to seek out individual alliances and create almost many teams which is really counterproductive." (Respondent 1)*

It created chaos and broken relationships, resulting again in a lack of trust.

These leaders played favourites, according to many respondents. This,

> *"had a massive impact on the environment. I mean, favouritism to a point is [understandable]. Here, there was favouritism to a point where we no longer actually felt like we were part of the organisation." (Respondent 6)*

Another claimed that these types of leaders are,

> *"very big on picking who [their] people are. Because these people comply or, don't fight them too much." (Respondent 12)*

Another said it is obvious to the rest of the organisation,

> *"he's very much about favouritism. He has this almost borderline obsession with this one individual, and it's almost like they are a team. And then there is everybody else. It is so visible and so obvious that people in my team kind of see this and they comment on it." (Respondent 10)*

A few respondents believed that their leaders had a strategy to divide and conquer because,

> *"when they're looking to reaffirm themselves they look for faults in others, it's almost like they break down the people around them to continue to be able to feel like they're in this position of power, that they're the only one who can actually have a role. So, they'll play people off each other, break down certain people, they'll just disrupt the environment, so that no one can kind of band together to take them on. They try not to allow that." (Respondent 7)*

Another claimed,

> *"She wasn't able to get the team together because her approach was divisive. She lacked self-awareness to the extent that after a few months, she even made us aware of what her strategy was in terms of controlling us. I mean, that's how, how much self-awareness, she lacked." (Respondent 2)*

Another respondent said that their leader frequently took credit for their work.

> *"He can teach you stuff. But in the same breath, he takes it away. And he almost multiplies the whole effort by zero. So, you don't even see when he's empowering you because you know, you put in the effort and he takes all the credit. It's like okay, then do it, then let it be your work." (Respondent 4)*

In one case these leaders were able to bring in competent people to look good,

> *"but didn't let them implement what they needed to implement and didn't let them stand on their own and bring about the changes that we needed. So, you brought in potentially good people, or people that were perceived to be*

good, but then you micromanage them or restricted them in certain ways."
(Respondent 2)

Two respondents said that their leaders would act without thinking or consulting. One said:

"This leader was quick to tell, rather than to elicit the thinking and the thoughts and the innovative ideas, that might have come out of the opportunity to actually think things through. Don't be impatient to just try and jump to an action plan, but rather take their time because that's a valuable step in a very unpredictable environment." (Respondent 3)

Another added,

"They often act in haste, they have this thing where they just want to get something done at any cost, whatever the cost, they just want it to happen. They don't care how it happens. They have one thing in mind, and they don't care how it's achieved." (Respondent 7)

5.5.7. Encouraging the Heart

Most respondents felt that these leaders were able to recognise the contributions that individuals made to achieving organisational goals, but that it was insincere or self-interested praise.

"It was more for show than being genuine. [Once] a regional team came [to South Africa] and we were presenting to them, and for me it was more of a show. It was about trying to show what she was doing, rather than appreciating what the employees were doing. It was not genuine, it wasn't actually authentic, it was just completely off the side to portray what she believed would make her look good." (Respondent 11)

Two more respondents took this further by adding that it was all part of their agenda.

"She praised them to say, well done, thanks for putting the deal together. But it may have been her idea to put the deal together, the person may have felt there were risks in the deal. And by praising that person, it was an attempt to pass liability on to that person." (Respondent 2)

The other said,

> *"They will, when it suits them, when it builds towards their agenda, they'll recognise the success, and sometimes they will go out of their way to create a success, that works for them. You know [if they wanted] something out of that person or wanted to align them, so they'll create a success, and bolster that person in order to keep them closely aligned and within the inner circle."* *(Respondent 7)*

Other respondents felt that successes were not celebrated because of the punitive leadership style exhibited by these leaders.

> *"His style is very much more, let's not focus on the good, let's rather focus on the bad and, so it's quite a punitive style. It's not about celebrating successes."* *(Respondent 1)*

Another reiterated,

> *"There's less patting on the back and more kicking on the ass when things don't work out."* *(Respondent 4)*

One mentioned,

> *"being punished"* and, *"because they're leading from a place of fear it's like, I want to keep the status quo. And if I let us celebrate and be joyful in our wins, that will take away from that."* *(Respondent 12)*

Recognition was only given to favourites and was inconsistent:

> *"You would get great recognition, but I think people were sometimes overlooked if they were out of favour. So, it comes back to the whole fairness thing. I think some of some of the decisions in terms of recognition were sometimes not quite right."* *(Respondent 8)*

5.6.   Results for Research Question 3

RESEARCH QUESTION 3: How does having a senior manager with low self-awareness affect employee engagement?

Research question three sought to understand how having a leader with low-self-awareness affected employee engagement. To guide the discussion, participants were asked to discuss how they felt about their engagement levels along five dimensions: employee performance and willingness to go the extra mile, employee job satisfaction, employee identification with the organisation, employee commitment and employee loyalty or withdrawal behaviour (Kumar & Pansari, 2015). The questions were open-ended to elicit more detail about the respondents' perceptions of those dimensions, and how the various constructs associated with these were affected.

The figure (Figure 12) below displays the constructs beneath each dimension of employee engagement. The frequency of each is written in red next to it. A discussion of each construct follows.
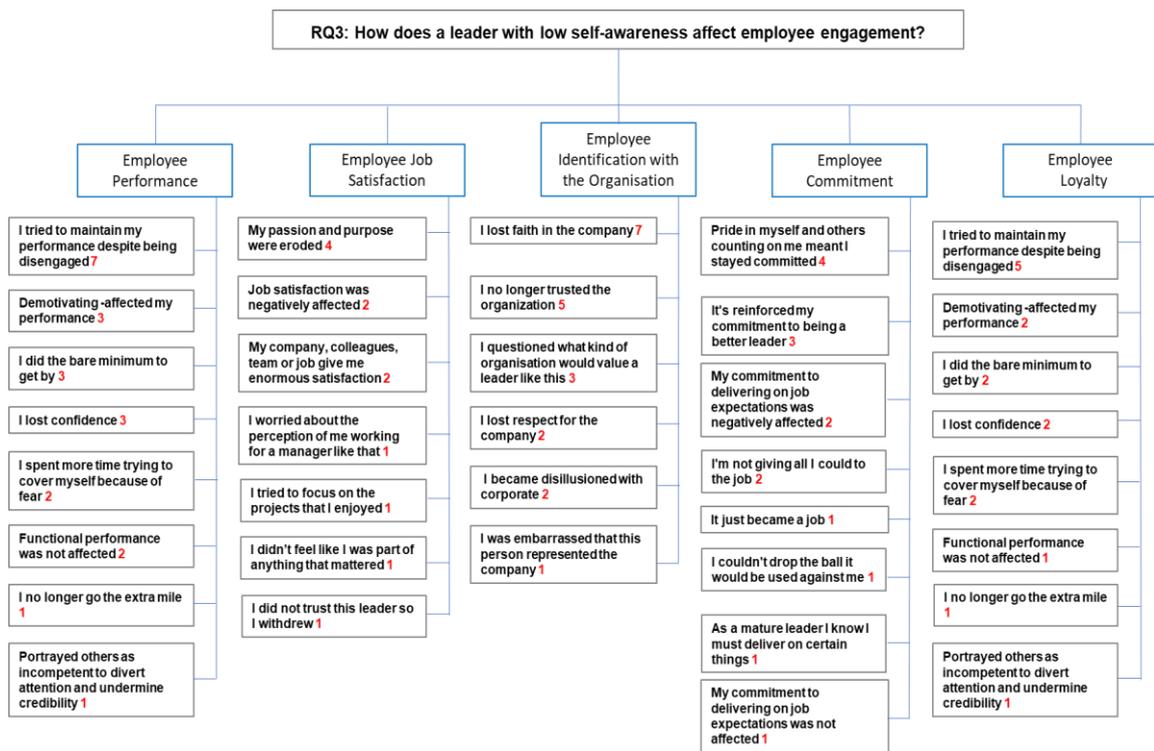
Figure 12: Overview of Results for RQ 3
Source: Atlas.ti

5.6.1. Employee Performance

Employee performance was affected in several negative ways. Most respondents felt that their performance had deteriorated under this type of leader, while one respondent felt more determined not to let their performance slip.

What all the participants did agree on was the emotional toll that it took on them. The respondents are all senior leaders and reported trying to maintain their performance, despite being disengaged. One respondent observed:

> *"You're almost trying to control [the manager], do your job and almost do their job to keep the company going. And you become disengaged." (Respondent 7)*

Another admitted,

> *"there were times where she'd [enrage me] to such a degree that I didn't want to work. I didn't even want to be in the organisation." (Respondent 6)*

Closely aligned to the disengagement level was how demotivated these respondents were, admitting,

> *"that disengagement put me into the camp of doing just enough to be okay, without going the extra mile. And that definitely impacted performance." (Respondent 9)*

Another added,

> *"I'm probably not giving the most to him as a leader, because it has been quite demotivating." (Respondent 1)*

In three instances functional performance was not affected because the respondents were in specialised roles that their manager did not necessarily fully understand, however *"emotionally it was a different story"*.

What was interesting was the fact that some respondents lost confidence in their own abilities because of what they were experiencing, and because they did not receive positive reinforcement or positive and enabling support. Because of this they did less

work. Another reason given for lower productivity was the fact that these leaders knew that their opinions were not valued. One leader expressed,

"I've gotten to a point where I don't even bother. Because I knew [they were] going to change it anyway. Just give me the number. Let me work it backwards." (Respondent 4)

Some of these leaders spent an inordinate amount of time trying to protect themselves, either because of fear or risk of reputational damage. The performance of one functional expert described that,

"Overall, I was doing pretty much the same output, but definitely not going the extra mile, and I actually spent more time trying to cover myself, because I was fearful of her." (Respondent 2)

Another expressed that,

"You're always trying to protect yourself, because you know that if something does go wrong, it's going to come back at you. You don't work as efficiently or probably in as broad or as lateral a capacity as you could, because you're trying to ensure that what you do, you are kind of covering your tracks the whole time. And then you get to a point where you spend an inordinate amount of time trying to strategise around how it could play out. So, you are forever doing scenario planning, instead of just getting on with the job." (Respondent 7)

What was concerning for one respondent was that performance became irrelevant,

"because it didn't matter whether you were performing well or not. She had the ability to criticise or to give feedback [to her boss] that you were not performing. So, it would suit her for you to be a poor performer. Because if you were a poor performer, you'd have less credibility to criticise her." (Respondent 2)

5.6.2. Employee Job Satisfaction

Seven constructs were identified under the category of employee job satisfaction with the most frequently being cited that "my passion and purpose were eroded". One respondent complained,

"I hated the environment. I hated the person, I hated everything around me. I loved what I do prior to this manager coming on board but I think she just sucked the life and the passion out of you to such an extent where there was just no satisfaction in what you did, you absolutely hated your job. You hated what you did. Not because you are incompetent, but because she elicited the worst in you." (Respondent 11)

Two respondents disagreed with this sentiment somewhat, by saying that despite their leader they derived satisfaction from the work they did, the company or their colleagues.

Job satisfaction was negatively affected by their leader for two respondents.
"I think I would be a lot more satisfied in my role absolutely. I'm getting a lot of personal and professional reward from this role, it's completely new and different for me, it's in quite a challenging environment. But I'd say my job satisfaction currently is maybe about a six or seven. If it weren't for him, it would be right up there as one of the best experiences that I've had. So [he] currently has put a damper on what could be an amazing work environment and role for me." (Respondent 1)

Another felt that, *"It was hard work being at work."* (Respondent 9)

One respondent said that they had tried to focus on the projects that they enjoyed initially, but eventually started to avoid the leader because,
"You're not gaining anything from interactions with your leader, you're not learning." (Respondent 3)

More negative consequences on job satisfaction were reported by three other participants. An inability to trust their leader meant,
"There's no point, so you withdraw, and that connectivity component first starts to be missing and then credibility and consistency. So those three things which are fundamental to building trust, start going out the window." (Respondent 3)

Job satisfaction was also affected by concern over the perception of the respondent working for a manager like that, while another felt that they were no longer part of anything that mattered, saying,

> *"From a job satisfaction point, I didn't feel like I was part of anything that mattered. I just felt like it was really a small pointless job." (Respondent 2)*

5.6.3. Employee Identification with the Organisation

Most respondents felt that their identification with the organisation they worked for was damaged because of the leader they had. Most commonly they lost faith in the company. There was a feeling of disbelief that,

> *"If her poor leadership is obvious to myself, and everyone that works with me at this level, why wasn't it obvious to anyone higher up in the organisation? And so, you begin to doubt the integrity of the people who employ her and manage her. Because why wasn't she [fired], and so when that happens when you're reporting to this person, and you think that this person, actually their position is aided and abetted by the greater organisation, then you feel less for that organisation. You know, they must share some of the blame." (Respondent 5)*

Other respondents felt that not only had they lost faith in the company, but they had also become insecure in their own position because of a lack of trust in the organisation. This was reiterated by one leader who felt that incongruence between the company values and the behaviour of the leader meant

> *"[having] that misalignment does make you feel like you've lost confidence in the company". (Respondent 11)*

Some respondents felt that they could no longer trust the organisation. This was in part because the organisation did not seem to realise the failings in the leadership, but also garnered some extremely negative reactions from respondents. One respondent accused the organisation of betrayal, explaining

> *"betrayed in the sense that we felt, how is it that whoever put her in this in this position could not have seen anything, given all the signs from everyone in the organisation, given the surveys that were being done, given the unhappiness of everyone". (Respondent 11)*

Another claimed:

> *"It created some paranoia because it made you wonder, what did her management actually have in mind? Was there a bigger plan that I wasn't aware of?" (Respondent 2)*

This negativity and fear were felt by another, who charged,

> *"If that kind of behaviour is condoned, and there's no accountability, and nothing's done, you have this unsettledness amongst people and your team will end up being unhappy with the company as a whole, because you kind of feel is no one else, almost seeing what is happening? And so, yes, it does spill over to the company." (Respondent 3)*

This angry attitude towards the organisation's inaction became,

> *"quite a destructive force and goes beyond how you operate at a local level, but you begin to feel some resentment almost towards the greater organisation." (Respondent 7)*

Probing during the interviews revealed that this negative sentiment went further, when leaders started to question what kind of organisation would value a leader like this. One participant questioned what it said about the organisation, while another said,

> *"You try to see the bigger picture, and what the company holds, rather than seeing that person as representing the company. But you do query the decisions of the company in appointing such a person." (Respondent 7)*

Another opined,

> *"You start thinking, is this what this company is about? If they are going to recognise managers like this and give them positions, maybe this is not the company for me? For the first time it enters your mind, do I want to be a senior manager in a company like this? Because I will then be a representative of this. And it really bothers you for a while." (Respondent 12)*

Some respondents also reported that they lost respect for the company in appointing a leader like this, with two going as far as to state that they became disillusioned with corporate life in general, saying

> *"I think you also get to a point where you kind of wonder about the whole work situation, and you know, if you go somewhere else, what are you going to, because you've become unsure about leaders anywhere." (Respondent 7)*

5.6.4. Employee Commitment

Surprisingly, many of the respondents interviewed believed that their commitment to delivering on job expectations was not affected. Respondents reported that pride in themselves and the knowledge that others were counting on them, meant they stayed committed to delivering a high standard of work. For one respondent this was because,

> *"You have a certain work ethic. I mean, for myself, I set out to do something I want to ensure it's done properly. So, I will never do it half-heartedly, because of a person, but it's more my own way of working." (Respondent 8)*

Another reported,

> *"You become determined, more focused on ensuring you meet your milestones and succeed and get to where you need to go." (Respondent 10)*

Another finding was that in three cases, participants reported that the experience had actually made them more committed to being a better leader. One respondent said,

> *"I'm still committed to doing a good job, I'm still committed to managing my team, and being a good leader to my team. I think if anything, it's probably strengthened that commitment and forced me to do a bit more research into my leadership style, and what I'm doing right, what I'm doing wrong. So, I think if anything, it's probably reinforced my commitment to being a better leader." (Respondent 1)*

Some respondents reported that they had learned how not to lead and had become more determined to protect their teams and model good leadership behaviour. One respondent stated,

> *"I've learned that I need to be everything that he isn't." (Respondent 10)*

One leader stated that their commitment was not affected because of the fear of repercussions, whilst two others reported that their commitment was negatively affected. Two respondents reported that they were not giving all that they could to the job because,

> *"your passion is lost. So, where you would proactively sometimes take initiative to go above and beyond, you don't do that anymore." (Respondent 4)*

One respondent reported that they stayed committed to delivering on job expectations because they wanted the credibility to criticise their leader, stating,

> *"You're working with someone who is bringing out the worst in you, it's creating confrontation. So, you couldn't afford to drop the ball too often. Because it will then be used against you. So it wasn't that you wanted to, but you were forced to because you couldn't be forthright in your opinions of the person, if you weren't doing any work." (Respondent 2)*

One respondent reflected that being a senior, more mature leader meant that,

> *"You know you've got to deliver, but it's just delivering, it's an extra mile component that's missing." (Respondent 3)*

5.6.5. Employee Loyalty and Withdrawal Behaviour

The great majority of respondents reported an increase in their intention to leave, and negative views on loyalty. Most respondents reported looking for another job within six months, and in some cases this was almost immediate. This was reported as a direct result of the manager. One functional director, who reported looking for a new job within the first two months, said,

> *"I was quite excited about change, and about it being something new. So I just feel my criticism is that much worse than someone who wasn't open to the change in the first place. But yes, I would say as soon as I caught on to the inconsistencies, and the fact that the behaviour wasn't something that you could trust." (Respondent 2)*

Trust and inconsistencies in the leaders' behaviour are frequently cited themes.

In two cases respondents reported that they decided to leave because the company did not seem to be doing anything about the leadership issues. In one case the respondent said that the company was everything one could want, but that,

> *"This guy kind of came on, he just eroded that all the time. And it was not worth staying, because of him, just to be able to be in a company that's got those things." (Respondent 9)*

Two respondents got to a point

> *"when you make up your mind and say I'm out of this organisation because I can't see light at the end of the tunnel with the current leadership." (Respondent 3)*

The other respondent also highlighted that,

> *"The environment became toxic very early on. And I think a lot of us were in the same boat that we started looking for new jobs, along with the fact that we were not confident this person would take the organisation [forward successfully]." (Respondent 6)*

Some respondents reported that they decided to leave because the environment was hampering their development:

> *"It's not empowering me, I'm not learning, I'm not growing, it's hampering my growth and development and my leadership, ultimately it's not making me a more effective leader." (Respondent 3)*

In another case, a respondent claimed that they were too scared to leave because this leader had broken down their confidence to a point where,

> *"There was a feeling that that kind of built up over the years that I owed my success to him." (Respondent 8)*

A few respondents did not seek alternative employment because they loved their work and engagement with their colleagues. Where the leaders in question were expatriates, intention to leave took far longer or did not occur, as there was a sense that they could outlast them.

One participant theorised that,

> *"Senior leadership might take longer to decide to leave, they might try to make this work and do what they can to help their team get through this."* (Respondent 3)

5.7. Results for Research Question 4

RESEARCH QUESTION 4: How did employees react to these managers?

Research question four sought to understand how the 12 senior managers interviewed reacted to the behaviours and experience described in research question one. The 12 respondents unanimously agreed that the perceived behaviours were experienced negatively. How the respondents reacted to management by a leader they believed had no self-awareness yielded 22 constructs.

A network diagram from Atlas.ti is shown overleaf to illustrate how the constructs relate to each other. The discussion then moves onto the effects of these leaders on organisational culture and performance.
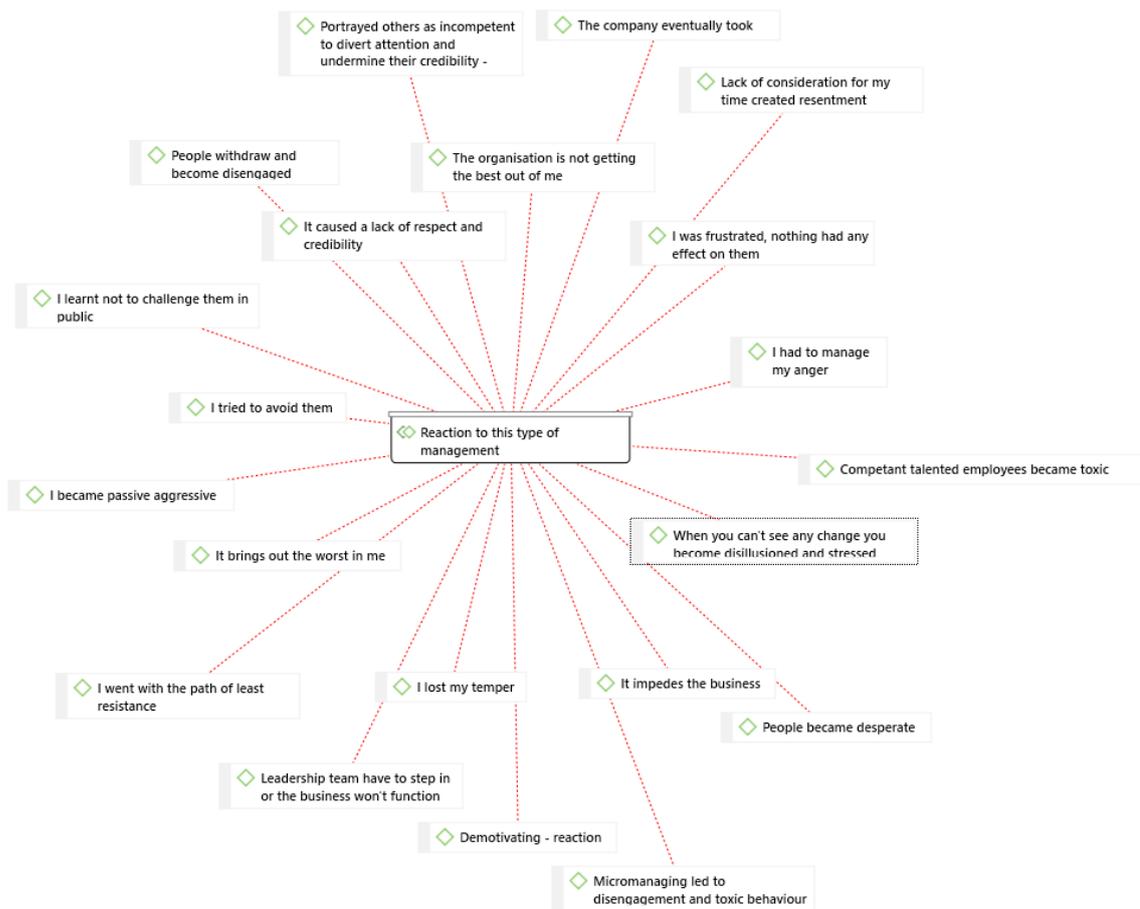
Figure 13: Reactions to leaders with low self-awareness

Source: Atlas.ti

5.7.1. Reactions to Leaders with Low Self-Awareness

Micromanagement was identified by most respondents as a behaviour which led to disengagement and toxic behaviour.

> *"If you have a micromanaging leader it erodes [engagement] because it's disempowerment. People become, very competent individuals don't [feel] empowered, you know, if [these leaders] delegated to an empowered individual it brings out the best in them. And so, you actually see them withdraw and they just start doing what they need to do, not what they should do. So, your engagement goes down, and they withdraw and can in some cases become toxic to the organisation and anybody around them." (Respondent 3)*

Toxic behaviour was explained as submitting substandard work, impeding the business, and arguing by another respondent,

> *"I think it comes with micromanagement. With micromanagement, a lot of delay happens in work. Because that's the nature of managing the microshit, is that you never actually get to the end, right? I think she definitely impeded me progressing things swiftly, timeously. Everything was delayed and it was always the final version was a version that would be less than perfect but happened to make her less quarrelsome in the process. It was always a compromise, to keep the peace. And that's not ideal, because it was never ultimately in the interest of the greater business. But then you always find yourself at loggerheads and having an argument, so you find yourself going to the path of least resistance, like doing something but knowing in your heart that it should be better." (Respondent 5)*

Another respondent added that they were so frustrated they started to doubt themselves because their leader was so determined to go down a certain path.

> *"Maybe I've got this wrong, [if they are so determined]. I think when you realise that no, actually, you are correct, you become just incredibly frustrated with this lack of understanding or common ground between the two of you. And then the frustration turns into a very negative emotion, where you're almost driving against each other, and you lose focus as to what you're trying to achieve in terms of the business. Because you're so caught up in this battle between and it's actually just been completely destructive." (Respondent 7)*

Competent, talented employees also became toxic after a time.

> *"When it started demoralising us and putting us down and frustrating us to a point of us dropping our shoulders and giving up hope, that would then ripple down to the staff and the staff became very aware of what was going on, we weren't a leadership team, we weren't chatting. They could just pick up the environment, it was it was a bad environment, it was a toxic environment. And because of the way we dealt with it, which obviously wasn't the right way, it rippled down, and we recreated the toxic environment." (Respondent 6)*

This was observed by another respondent who agreed,

> "You have highly talented, competent people who then lose that and they become, almost toxic because now they're, they're not getting the support. They've been mistrusted, they're not being empowered, they're being micromanaged." (Respondent 3)

Respondent 12 was resentful of the time they had to spend learning how to manage this leader whilst Respondent 9 spoke about the personal toll this experience had on him:

> "It was a very tough time personally, to actually realise that I'm in this mode and hating everything that's going on, which is eventually why I left."

Some leaders felt that the leadership team had to step in to ensure business continuity.

> "I think the team do [build trust and competence] themselves under duress, in terms of as a team realising they need to preserve the business or get the business to function. So, the team take it on, and they do all of that and make it work because they realise that it's like a necessity, otherwise, the business is not going to advance or move forward" (Respondent 7)

Some respondents describe being incredibly frustrated because nothing had any effect on these leaders. Many felt that their engagements were pointless:

> "It was just too frustrating. It felt like you were spending time in engaging with the person and you weren't going to get that time back in your life and every so many engagements, you would just lose your cool entirely. Trying to set her on the right path, trying to jack her up, trying to criticise her, none of that had any effect obviousl.y" (Respondent 2)

Another said,

> "Unfortunately, that tends to lead to being argumentative. I mean, you're never going to agree, you're never going to talk sense into that person, so try as you might to say, well, I've heard your two cents' worth, but it's inappropriate because it's trivial, and, and won't impact the situation. The rebuff from her all the time was just, no, it's completely important. And you just find yourself getting into this, this hole of, well, we're going to actually

have to bump heads, because we're never going to find a way forward."
(Respondent 5)

Many respondents reported losing their temper completely.

"With my personality I wanted to prove a wrong right and so I would act out, I would try to remain calm but every so many meetings, every so many engagements, I would just like, lose my cool entirely." (Respondent 2)

"[I reacted] In the most, extreme, violently," and *"what really blew me away, is the one time that I completely lost it. And my response was to just raise my voice and use language that I don't usually use in the workplace to try and just like get her to, to understand, dammit!" (Respondent 5)*

One respondent went as far as to say it caused them to lose their temper with their colleagues as well.

"I never really had conflict with anyone in the company. And the amount of fights I had with people within the organisation was at a record high, and I think it's just because people were so frustrated and so angry at the way the leadership and the organisation was at the time, that people just lashed out." (Respondent 11)

Some respondents explained that working for a manager with low self-awareness brought out the worst in their personalities:

"It was basically like a bad relationship, that brought out the worst in you. I would compare it to that, where you knew you didn't want to behave a certain way. You couldn't help it." (Respondent 2)

Another described it as "narcissistic bullying" and became confrontational.

"When someone's deliberately bullying you in a playground, the response is to lash out, you know, punch. And unfortunately, this bullying behaviour brings out, things that you don't really want in the workplace. But you almost have no other way of managing it. I mean you can walk away, but that kind of leaves it hanging, you want to walk away with some resolution, but you can't because they're driving this level of stupid, trivial micromanagement and bullying you.

I never really knew how to interact with that someone other than to tell them to their face that they were stupid, which I did." (Respondent 5)

Some respondents described a loss of respect and credibility for their leaders due to their management style.

"It also leads me to lose respect for the individual. I guess he lacks credibility with me, and a lot of the things he says and does." (Respondent 1)

"I couldn't take the person seriously" (Respondent 2)

Some respondents were less directly confrontational and admitted that they became passive aggressive,

"I can be quite passive aggressive, so I will, maybe say something that he wants to hear but then do something completely different in the background." (Respondent 1)

"Because the person was so inconsistent, and I would say incompetent, it brought out like, my attitude would have been, you know, you try to play nice, but at the same time, you just couldn't do what was expected because it was just too crazy." (Respondent 2)

"You get passive aggressive, because you're like, look, I'm going to do this because I can see whatever happens, let it finish. And then I will pick up the pieces at the end because trying to stop this train is tiring me out. And I honestly cannot spend this much time worried about work and things that happen at work. I have an actual life outside of employment. So, you start getting that attitude, which is a terrible attitude to have, especially when you enjoy your job." Respondent 12

Some respondents reported becoming disillusioned and stressed when they could not see any change in their leader's behaviour or any action from the organisation.

"If you can't see any change in behaviour and you can't see light at the end of the tunnel, you become disillusioned and you think, do I stay in an environment which is not doing me any good, it's stressful and stress is not a

good thing as it manifests, both mentally and physically. Often that's indicative that things are not right, when there's high absenteeism." (Respondent 3)

"I first became disengaged, I then became quite frustrated, disillusioned, and ultimately, it was one of the key things that made me leave." (Respondent 9)

A few respondents reported that their own reactions to these leaders impeded the business and its objectives.

"It causes a loss of confidence, a lot of frustration, a lot of negativity. And it actually impedes the business because you don't function clearly, and as well as you should, in terms of being able to get to that end point, because you're always trying to justify the why and the how." (Respondent 7)

"Luckily, I was able to avoid [them] for the most part, it being a big multinational, he was in a different country. I was able to do whatever I could to avoid for the most part, so the interaction was a lot lower, but that also then impacted results because if we were more aligned and interacting more often, we could have got a lot more done." (Respondent 9)

"The rest of the time, I'm going to ignore them and do my own thing, which is not good for the team. Because then you're leading two different strategies, right? You use them when you want for your strategy. And then the rest of the time you just ignore them and get on with it. And it's not good. It's not good for any business, because the intention is everyone must move forward together." (Respondent 12)

A few respondents reported being demotivated and avoiding their managers where possible.

"At first, I just tried to ignore [the volatility] as a once-off incident, but then when it kind of kept appearing, my reaction was, when that happened, I would just and be quiet, sit back, wait for the ranting to finish. So we could move on to do something else. And then in the longer term, it forced me to then as I said, disengage and avoid it at all cost." (Respondent 9)

"In that environment where I don't feel that my opinion mattered, or I'm not seen as an equal, or a thinking partner, and I'm just told what to do. For me, that, unfortunately, is extremely demotivating." (Respondent 1)

Two respondents added that they had to learn not to challenge these leaders in public.

"I've realised that there's an ego. I've seen how he crushes people that push back when there's an audience. And when people push back then it's like, you know, I have to win it. So in the moment, I comply maliciously, but then I will deal with it later [in private] and that's the advice I've given people that I've seen fighting with him, but like, he just holding us all in the same meeting, just say, 'Okay', then later explain [to him privately]. We are actually not interested in knowing who's right." (Respondent 4)

"I expressed my views. But if, if he said something that I completely disagreed with, I would always cushion it or I would always have an out just in case I needed an out. And that's not healthy, that's not productive." (Respondent 8)

Some respondents acknowledged that the organisation was not getting the best out of them, and that they withdrew and became disengaged. One leader admitted that they had to learn to manage their anger:

"They can anger you somewhat, and you've got to learn to manage that. You shouldn't have to feel that you've got to be on top of managing your anger through every engagement with a work colleague … there's never a sense of you say something, and you think that that listener has heard what you've said, has respected the way you've put that opinion across and is digesting it in a rational way. I've never felt that once. And, and working in that situation, it's just, it's shocking, absolutely shocking." (Respondent 5)

Resentment was created because of a lack of consideration for personal time on one case, and in another they admitted giving up and going with the path of least resistance.

Almost all the respondents reported that feedback to the organisation had resulted in some sort of intervention, which usually took the form of coaching for these leaders

or team interventions. One respondent described how desperate people had become.

> *"It really did come to this point, where there's an intervention of people threatening to resign if he didn't change or he wasn't forced out. So you know, that's quite a desperate place for people to get into, where they're going to the CEO of one of the largest businesses in South Africa to say, we'll quit, if this man doesn't change." (Respondent 1)*

5.7.2. The Effect of Leaders with Low-Self-Awareness on Organisational Culture and Performance

Leaders with low self-awareness affected organisational culture and performance in several ways. Most respondents agreed that the first sign was that fractures started to appear in the executive team. This division in the leadership team was felt across the organisation:

> *"It started fracturing the leadership team, which wasn't a good thing. I think that what's very important at the leadership level is authenticity. And that's what the organisation looks for: transparency, authenticity, and the moment they recognise that it's not there, there is a level of mistrust or distrust across the organisation." (Respondent 3)*

Respondents added that this fractured leadership created silos, where people were working independently and just trying to survive,

> *"in that whole space of being so unaware, when he thinks he is helping the team, he actually breaks the team. So you find yourselves fighting amongst each other, not trusting each other." (Respondent 4)*

With a broken leadership team, divisions appeared across the organisation. One respondent went as far as to say,

> *"You almost get a dysfunctional exco, which then has an impact on your junior people. Because that comes through you know, with time that will always come through as well. You know, there's something not quite right here. And that's what starts to divide the company and cause a lot of the issues." (Respondent 7)*

Respondents agreed that they lost faith in the company, firstly because a person like this had risen to such a senior position and secondly because at first the company appeared not to act.

> *"If you couldn't believe what the leader was selling to you, it didn't matter whether you're a senior person or a junior person, you lost faith in the company, and you became insecure in your own position … you lost all respect for her and the company. Because if she came across as being incompetent, or lacking emotional intelligence, then when you lost respect for her, you lost respect for the company." (Respondent 2)*

Another respondent complained,

> *"How long do I need to go on day by day in this negative environment, which is not bringing out the best in me? … At some point you seriously question, I need to decide, do I stay or do I try and move on for something different." (Respondent 3)*

This lack of self-awareness in the leader had a negative impact on everyone in the company, according to most respondents. A few respondents claimed it was a talking point throughout the organisation, while another said,

> *"It just creates a very unhealthy work environment. That's when you see people leave. Because the culture of the organisation comes from the top and if there are some problems there then obviously it filters down through the organisation." (Respondent 3)*

The impact was felt through all levels.

> *"It's critical to be self-aware. And I think, having a manager that completely lacked it, you can see the negative impact it has in the organisation in terms of the unhappiness it creates, the loss of productivity, the loss of trust, the loss of collaboration amongst people, the loss of talent within the organisation … When you have somebody so toxic in such a high level leadership position, the ramifications across everybody is detrimental not just to the organisation, but to the people working there." (Respondent 11)*

A counterbalance to this was that a few respondents reported that staff were united in their frustration and that it almost brought them closer together. A few respondents highlighted that the became each other's support and that it,

> *"united people in the organisation. Because they had one common person who frustrated them more than anyone else. So at the very least, everyone united against this one focus and when people have a common enemy, they become friendlier." (Respondent 2)*

For the most part, however, respondents reported that this type of leader created a toxic and confrontational culture. One leader described it as,

> *"this toxic kind of spill starts and there's no one to stop it. And it doesn't matter how strong you are as a leadership member, eventually you give up and people feed off that. Everyone became aware of the fact and the staff weren't happy. I mean, the numbers speak for itself, we had a lot of staff leaving the organisation, specifically due to that individual. And maybe you know, the toxic environment that it became." (Respondent 6)*

Respondents added that it created an environment where people were demoralised. Company morale deteriorated. This inevitably brought about high staff turnover, according to several respondents.

> *"So my direct reports and exco direct reports, feel it quite a lot, I think the constant need to get the detail, the constant need to have an opinion and force your opinion through, can be felt throughout the organisation, and it has created a culture in the last few years that he's been there of, nothing is ever good enough for this man, so I think it's created an environment of people being quite demoralised." (Respondent 1)*

> *"I saw her derail processes; I saw her completely demoralize staff. And in doing so it actually almost led the organisation to self-implode." (Respondent 6)*

> *"It's almost a continuous issue. It's not like, it's a good day and a bad day, it's every single engagement with that person is an engagement that is troublesome, there's either some animosity that slowly builds, because after*

a certain period of time, you just feel like, they're not listening to you or they're not valuing your input." (Respondent 5)

A few respondents added that people stopped taking accountability for their work because of the micromanagement or for the negative impact on the culture. Respondents reported that a culture of blame was created as well as a culture where people could not thrive.

A few respondents reported that staff became less productive because of insecurity in their position and because of the negative environment. Staff became tired of the negativity and eventually withdrew and disengaged:

"People withdraw and say, so what? I just do my own thing and try and stay out the way." (Respondent 3)

Another respondent complained that work just stopped being fun.

All of the respondents reported that eventually their feedback led to an intervention by the organisation. These varied in severity but mostly included coaching for the relevant individual, or team coaching interventions.

"We went through a process of team effectiveness where we were individually interviewed to give feedback. And the common theme was the lack of self-awareness. The control, the fact that the person wants to control everything, the fact that the person is disempowering in his approach, it breaks the team." (Respondent 4)

"[We got] a business coach, just to assist us in getting the team to gel. And she was forced to take the feedback or receive the feedback, because this coach was there to facilitate meetings. And still, even while he was there, there was a lot of disagreements in terms of what we had said, and she couldn't really self-reflect and understand where we were coming from." (Respondent 6)

"It got to the stage where we needed to have somebody externally intervene. And it was actually where, eventually, we all had to give a, like a real detailed written view of what we think of him and his behaviour." (Respondent 10)

One respondent believed that coaching had helped, but this person still left the organisation as a direct result of this leader. The other respondents reported that either interventions were unsuccessful, or that they were still ongoing. Most respondents felt that because these leaders had reached such senior positions, they did not believe that they needed to work on their self-awareness, or that the problem was with them.

5.8. Conclusion

This chapter has presented the themes and constructs identified during the 12 in-depth interviews regarding the experience of having a senior leader in an organisation who is perceived to have low self-awareness. The behaviours associated with these leaders, as well as their effect on perceived leadership efficacy and employee engagement, were explored.

Chapter 6: Discussion of Results

6.1. Introduction

Chapter 6 offers a detailed discussion of the research findings from Chapter 5, in the context of the study and considering the literature from Chapter 2. The results are discussed in relation to each research question and are compared and contrasted to the current literature in order to answer the Research Questions identified in Chapter 3. The research findings contribute to an improved understanding of how leaders with low self-awareness can affect employee engagement and their behaviour, as well as company culture and performance through destructive and inauthentic leadership.

Destructive leadership has been used to describe various negative behaviours in leaders, which are associated with detrimental consequences for the organisation and followers. Leadership, however, comprises more than just the behaviours of those in supervisory positions, it is a collaboration between leaders and followers within the context of the organisation (Thoroughgood et al., 2018; Yukl, 2006). It follows then that destructive leadership should also be considered more holistically.

The current descriptions of destructive, toxic or flawed leadership mention a lack of emotional intelligence peripherally but the conceptual and empirical links between a lack of self-awareness, destructive leadership, and follower attitudes, engagement and behaviours has not been fully developed (Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Thoroughgood et al., 2018; Thoroughgood, Padilla, et al., 2012).

This research proposes a model to describe the processes through which leaders who exhibit a lack of self-awareness influence the attitudes, behaviours and engagement of followers, resulting in destructive leadership (Figure 14). It attempts to extend the current model of destructive leadership outcomes (Schyns & Schilling, 2013) by integrating it with a model that includes the impact on followers and their reactions (Avolio et al., 2004; Thoroughgood et al., 2018). Avolio et al. (2004) proposed a theoretical framework to show the process by which authentic leaders influence their followers positively in terms of their attitudes and behaviours. The

model acknowledges that authentic leadership alone is not enough to achieve organisational goals, it recognises the role of emotion, trust and both person and social identification of followers in the process (Avolio et al., 2004). Their purpose in developing this model was to provide a foundation from which future research into the process by which authentic leaders inspire positive followership could be based. This model proposes that inauthentic or destructive leadership should be considered in the same way. A lack of self-awareness in the leader results in inauthentic, destructive leadership and negatively influences subordinate's engagement, motivation, job satisfaction and commitment.

Leadership behaviours alone do not create destructive leadership. Social identity theory suggests that leadership is a group process where the perception of inauthentic leadership results in a disconnect from followers who do not see the leader as prototypical of the group's identity (Hogg, 2001). Negative followers reactions to this 'inauthentic' leadership contribute to the dysfunctional leader-follower relationship, eventually affecting company culture and performance (Thoroughgood et al., 2018). This model acknowledges that whilst destructive leadership is detrimental to followers and the organisation, it is the process which links that destructive behaviour to follower attitudes and behaviours which creates destructive leadership outcomes. A discussion of the elements in the model follow by addressing each research question.
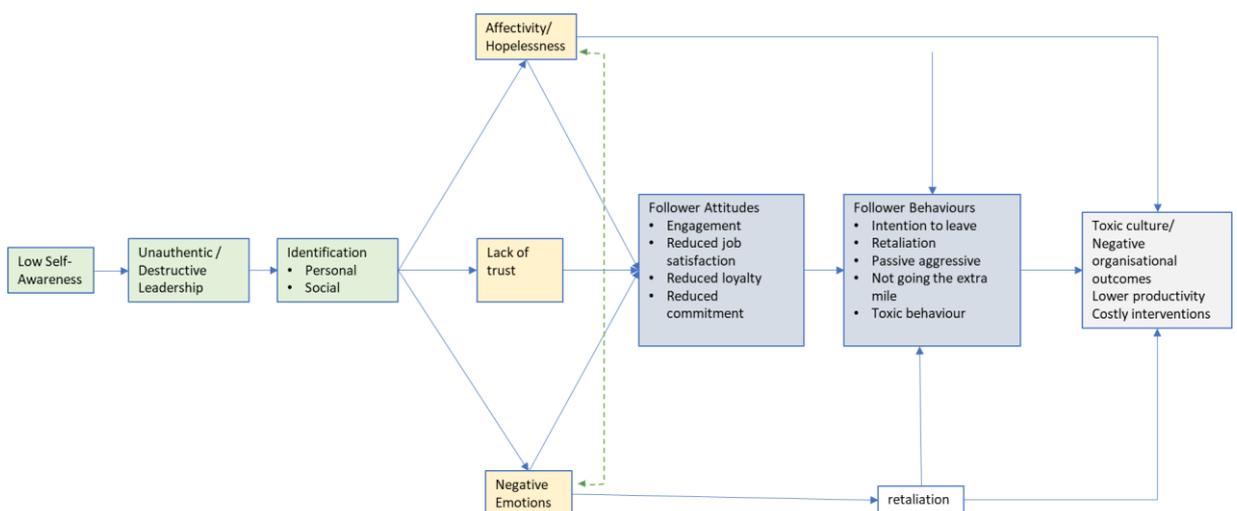

Figure 14: Proposed framework linking destructive leadership to followers' attitudes and behaviours (adapted from Avolio et al., 2004; Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Thoroughgood et al., 2018)

6.2. Discussion of Results for Research Question 1

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: What are the specific behaviours exhibited by senior managers, that lead to them being perceived as having low self-awareness?

Research Question 1 sought to identify the behaviours followers identified as being associated with the leader they characterised as having low self-awareness. The literature abounds with descriptions of positive leadership, where self-awareness is considered the foundational competency for authentic, resonant, servant, spiritual and transcendent leadership, amongst others (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Crossan et al., 2008; Sturm et al., 2014). Self-awareness is an important factor in leadership success and the ability of leaders to influence others (Goleman, 2017). Destructive leadership, conversely, has been used as an all-encompassing term for negative behaviours from leaders (Thoroughgood et al., 2018).

This research has described these behaviours from the perception of followers, and perceptions may vary according to level in the organisation as well as favoured status of employees (Padilla et al., 2007; Thoroughgood et al., 2018). Six categories of behaviours associated with leaders with low self-awareness were identified in this study: narcissism, ego and self-interest; volatile, emotional and inconsistent; ignored or discouraged feedback; blamed others and created a negative environment and consequences for the organisation and followers. Shaw, Erikson and Harvey (2011) identified seven clusters of destructive leaders' behaviours. The worst type of leader was a "Cluster 7", exhibiting bullying, dishonesty, micromanagement, the inability to deal with conflict, not having the requisite skills and an unwillingness to change or listen to other points of view (Shaw et al., 2011). The six categories identified in this study closely align to this classification, confirming the literature. Bullying, however, was not mentioned as one of the most prevalent behaviours of leaders with low self-awareness.

In discussing the behaviour of their managers, participant's descriptions of their behaviour confirm the literature that aggressive behaviours have three dimensions (Einarsen et al., 2007). Physical and verbal aggression was demonstrated in the

research by leader volatility and included shouting and throwing things. Active aggression included the need to control, manipulation and denigrating people. Passive aggression was displayed by playing favourites and attempting to divide and conquer. Being argumentative and blaming others is an active direct behaviour. This research demonstrated that behaviour was perceived as volatile, contradictory and this eventually led to a lack of trust in the leader confirming research by Pelletier (2012).

Toxic leaders are associated with positive affects for the organisation in the short-term, which is confirmed by this research (Padilla et al., 2007). These leaders are described as initially charismatic, results-driven and talented in an individual capacity. They are promoted based on individual results and intelligence early on in their careers, but lack the requisite leadership skills to bring people along with them. Padilla et al., (2007) describe a "toxic triangle" that incorporates the leader, follower, and environmental factors as determinants of toxic leadership. This research confirms the description of destructive leaders as being charismatic, narcissistic, and having a need for personalised power, but negative life themes and an ideology of hate were not supported. Respondents described these leaders as being unaware of the impact that they were having, which is in contradiction to Lipman-Blumen's (2005) findings, which mention evil and callous behaviour. Lipman-Blumen (2005) describes toxic leadership as a sustained and severe process characterised by causing psychological distress in subordinates. This research confirms that respondents experienced leaders with low self-awareness in the same way. Leaders with poor self-awareness have a destructive impact on team functioning (Dierdorff et al., 2019) which this research also confirmed.

Einarsen's et al., (2007) model of constructive and destructive leadership behaviour describes leaders with pro-organisational and anti-subordinate behaviours as tyrannical leaders. A lack of self-awareness and emotional intelligence is not mentioned as a behaviour, but this research confirms the literature in that the behaviours exhibited by leaders with low self-awareness are congruent with tyrannical leadership. Behaviours included undermining the motivation and job satisfaction of staff while carrying out the tasks and missions of the organisation. The research confirmed that these leaders got results, but at the expense of people. The

research further confirmed their assertion that while these leaders were destructive towards staff, they were able to show a different side to superiors and customers.

Leaders who are able to successfully assimilate information from others into their self-evaluation can then incorporate this into their behaviour (Caldwell, 2010). Amundsen and Martinsen, (2014) found that leaders who overestimated their leadership skills had followers who were more likely to leave their jobs and reported lower job satisfaction compared to those subordinates with in-agreement leaders. This research confirmed that these leaders had a distorted belief about how they were viewed by subordinates and were perceived as having narcissistic and arrogant tendencies, as well as being unwilling to accept negative feedback (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014).

Existing research describes types of destructive behaviour, including incompetence, paranoia, narcissism and ego but offers very little explanation into the cause of these behaviours (Lipman-blumen, 2011; Thomas et al., 2017; Thoroughgood et al., 2018; Thoroughgood, Tate, et al., 2012).This research demonstrates that leaders with low self-awareness exhibit behaviours consistent with destructive leadership and aspects of toxic leadership, providing a possible antecedent for negative leadership behaviours.

6.3.   Discussion of Results for Research Question 2

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: How effective are managers with low self-awareness as leaders?

Research Question 2 sought to answer whether self-awareness was necessary for effective leadership. Leadership is a widely studied and published subject, yet despite this there is no agreed-upon definition of effective leadership. Given the volatile and unpredictable environment that leaders are called upon to manage through, effective leadership is the ability to be authentic, and motivate followers through building trust, empathy, relational transparency and balanced processing (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Bruce J Avolio et al., 2018; Gardner et al., 2011).

Kouzes and Posner's model, *The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership* (2007) explains the actions and behaviours needed for exemplary leadership. Their research has spanned more than 30 years and asserts that effective leadership is critical because it affects not only organisational performance, but also employee engagement and commitment (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). Transformational leadership and servant leadership, as well as many others, also have leader self-awareness based on values, cognition, and emotion at their core (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Transcendent leadership describes leadership of self as one of three key pillars that leaders should master to be effective (Crossan & Mazutis, 2008). This research confirms that leaders with low self-awareness display none of the behaviours or qualities associated with positive forms of leadership.

6.3.1. Authentic, Transformational and Resonant Leadership

It is theorised that self-awareness is a foundational competency within emotional intelligence, and that it is necessary to cultivate other emotional intelligence competencies (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001; Goleman, 2017). However, self-awareness has not been as well researched in terms of how it relates to leaders themselves, particularly their leadership style, behaviours or effectiveness (R. E. Boyatzis, 2008; Cherniss & Goleman, 2001).

This research identified 18 constructs associated with the leadership style of leaders with poor self-awareness. These are outlined in the frequency table (Table 3) below. Micromanagement and an inability to trust their team, characterises these leaders, as well as an inability to build trust or inspire and motivate subordinates behind a vision. These leaders are described as autocratic, dogmatic and dictatorial with a parent-child relationship with staff.

Table 3: Leadership Styles of Leaders with Low Self-Awareness

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Micromanagement	9
2	Lack of trust in the team	8
3	Leaders should have a vision, build trust and inspire or motivate	7
4	Expected respect because of their position	4
5	not authentic	3
6	Dogmatic viewpoints	3
7	No real leadership style	2
8	Quick to assign blame	2
9	Helicopter management style	2
10	Autocratic leadership style	2
11	Parent child management style	2
12	Authoritarian leadership style	2
13	Very involved in the details	1
14	Contrary leadership style	1
15	Feedback is met with resistance	1
16	Collaborative decision-making	1
17	Inexperienced leader has not developed the requisite skills	1
18	Dictatorial leadership style	1

Authentic leadership focuses on the ethical dimensions of the leader-follower relationship to build open and honest relationships (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Authentic leadership is defined as: "A pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development." (Walumbwa et al., 2008 p. 94). This style of leadership is based on four components: self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing and a strong moral code (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). The leadership styles found in this research show that leaders with low self-awareness do not exhibit authentic leadership.

Authentic leaders are able to demonstrate self-awareness by ensuring that their internal values and behaviour align and can withstand external pressure and influence (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Research findings in Chapter 5 found inconsistencies in the behaviours of these leaders, where there was a clear disconnect between company and espoused values, and behaviours. Respondents

felt that the company values were clear, and often communicated, but "there was no walking the talk". This led to distrust and negative perceptions of these leaders as being "deceitful" and "inauthentic". This research found that these inconsistencies in leader behaviour also affected the company performance and culture.

Relational transparency refers to the ability of leaders to admit mistakes, and share both strengths and weaknesses with others (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Personal disclosure promotes trust (Walumbwa et al., 2008). The research found that these leaders would never admit mistakes, instead assigning blame to their team. People were too scared to make mistakes and so creativity and innovation were stifled. The culture of fear created meant there was little opportunity to learn from mistakes. These leaders were also not aware of their strengths and weakness or how to "collectively harness the intelligence of everyone to come up with the best solution" (Respondent 1).

Being balanced in approach through encouraging the sharing of diverse and opposing viewpoints, without displaying overt emotion, is another component of authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). These leaders will seek out opinions that challenge their views (Walumbwa et al., 2008). The research found that these leaders did not openly share their feelings or motives and were perceived to have their own agenda. These leaders were also described as volatile, and this inability to control their emotions led to a lack of trust as followers could see through the inconsistencies. Diversity and inclusion were not demonstrated as these leaders forced through their own ideas and micromanaged their team.

Authentic leaders have a strong moral code and are able to regulate their behaviour according to their values, resulting in ethical behaviour and decision-making (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008). It is a form of integrated self-regulation where external pressures or group-think do not affect decisions taken (Walumbwa et al., 2008). This is in contrast to the research, which found that these leaders made decisions based on self-interest and to appease their superiors.

Resonant leadership too requires high levels of self-awareness, empathy, honesty and transparent communication (R. Boyatzis & McKee, 2005). Transformational leadership requires an ability to inspire and motivate through idealised influence,

while transcendent leadership requires an ability to lead across self, which bears the responsibility of being self-aware (Banks et al., 2016; Crossan et al., 2008). None of these qualities were demonstrated in the findings of this research, confirming that high levels of self-awareness are necessary for positive leadership.

Cuddy et al., (2011) describe warmth and competence as the two dimensions by which leaders are judged. Warmth includes kindness, trustworthiness and empathy – characteristics which this research found lacking in those leaders identified by respondents as having low self-awareness. Competence includes an individual's intelligence, skill and efficacy (Cuddy et al., 2011). The question of how these leaders with low self-awareness were able to get to such senior positions yielded nine constructs listed below (Table 4).

Table 4: Success Factors in Leaders with Low Self-Awareness

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Hard work and individual results got this person to a GM level	4
2	Luck played a part in this person getting to a GM role	2
3	Charisma played a role in this person getting to a GM level	2
4	IQ and the right qualification got that person accelerated	2
5	Right place right time and connections within the organisation got this person ahead	2
6	There is a lag in EQ, self-awareness and heart in leadership development	1
7	Lack of self-awareness is why this leader was successful	1
8	Technical skills	1
9	Organisations did not consider leadership skill	1

This research shows that these leaders were skilled technically, were hard workers and successful at delivering individual results. This individual talent got them promoted, but the lag in their self-awareness and leadership skill was overlooked.

This research confirms the literature that authoritarian, autocratic, dictatorial leadership emphasises competence over warmth and is still a major driver in promotion and hiring decisions (Cuddy et al., 2011). Those leaders high in competence and low in warmth are said to elicit feelings of envy in followers, whilst those low in both evoke contempt (Cuddy et al., 2011). This research did not entirely confirm the literature here, as the reason for this lack of warmth was assumed to be a lack of self-awareness.

6.3.2. Exemplary Leadership

The first practice of exemplary leadership involves modelling the way, which means leaders need to set a personal example of what they expect from their teams. It means clarifying and affirming shared values and aligning their actions and behaviours to those stated values (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). The findings in Chapter 5 demonstrated that all respondents believed that their leader's behaviour was not aligned to the company's or their own espoused values. One respondent said," as a leader, I should express, model, and reinforce positive behaviours. So, it's all very well to talk, but I need to model, I need to walk the talk." These inconsistencies in behaviour led to these leaders being perceived as deceitful and inauthentic. This in turn led to a lack of trust in the leader. Lack of self-awareness meant that these leaders also did not realise that staff could see through these inconsistencies. Without aligning values with actions these leaders lost all credibility (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Inspiring a shared vision, where leaders can describe a compelling image of what the future can hold, is the second practice of exemplary leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). Leaders should be able to inspire willing followers to get behind a common vision by appealing to the common aspirations of the group. Research from Chapter 5 described leaders who were initially charismatic but because of the inconsistencies in behaviour did not engender a common vision or inspiration. They were good at communicating short-term operational goals but lacked the ability to unite the team.

Exemplary leaders challenge the process by looking for innovative ways to improve and encourage experimentation whilst learning from mistakes (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). This behaviour was not exhibited in this research, as these leaders were perceived to "force through their own ideas" and ignored the advice and opinions of their teams. They were skilled at appearing to gain consensus, but were not innovative, instead only driving processes for self-interest. Staff resisted changes as they felt that the changes were unnecessary and unreasonably burdensome. There was no room for innovation or experimentation as people were too scared to make

mistakes. This behaviour of taking no accountability for mistakes and blaming staff again led to distrust.

Fostering collaboration by building trust and competence in others, enables others to act (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). Supporting decisions that people make on their own and actively involving others shows trust in the team and is the fourth practice of exemplary leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). The research shows that these leaders played favourites and had a strategy to "divide and conquer". The organisation suffered because these leaders created factions and alliances within the team resulting in, "a very disjointed team dynamic, where, instead of being a high performing, well-connected team, pockets of alliances were created." Another felt that a broken team, "does force you to seek out individual alliances and create almost many teams which is really counterproductive". It created chaos and broken relationships, resulting again in a lack of trust. The research also showed that these leaders frequently took credit for others' work and rushed into things without consultation and thinking. They brought in competent people to look good but then "micromanage them or restricted them in certain ways." Divisive leadership, micromanagement, as well as taking credit for others work are mentioned in the destructive leadership discourse and this research confirms that leaders with low self-awareness exhibit these behaviours (Schyns, 2015; Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Thoroughgood et al., 2018).

The final behaviour exhibited by exemplary leaders is encouraging the heart, through the celebrating accomplishments and the contributions of individuals (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). The research demonstrated that these leaders only gave insincere or self-interested praise, which was perceived as inauthentic. Praise was used to further an agenda, often to buy loyalty or pass on liability. Praise and recognition were only given to favourites so these leaders would create a success to bolster that person to keep them closely aligned and within the inner circle. These leaders were also described in the research as having a punitive management style, where the focus was always on the negative and ensuring that someone was to blame.

Research findings indicate that the behaviours and actions of leaders with low self-awareness are at odds with the behaviours associated with positive forms of leadership such as authentic, transformational, resonant, and transcendent

leadership. These leaders do not exhibit the behaviours associated with exemplary leadership practices, leading them to being perceived by their subordinates as ineffective leaders.

6.4. Discussion of Results for Research Question 3

RESEARCH QUESTION 3: How does having a senior manager with low self-awareness affect employee engagement?

Kumar & Pansari, (2015) define five dimensions of employee engagement, which comprises the different attitudes and behaviours of employees towards their organisation. These five dimensions guided the interview questions and responses to each were coded inductively.

Authentic leaders are able to improve the engagement, job satisfaction and motivation of followers (Avolio et al., 2004). Inauthentic or destructive leaders negatively affect employee engagement (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001; Goleman, 2017; Nauman et al., 2020).This research confirms the literature that despotic and destructive leaders affect employee's performance as they become disengaged and withdraw, and lose trust in the leader and organisation (Jabeen & Rahim, 2021; Nauman et al., 2020). This effect was weaker in respondents who derived satisfaction from their colleagues or work (high quality work life),) which again confirms the literature (Nauman et al., 2020). This research further confirms the literature that negative leadership effects their subordinates perception of meaningfulness in their work (Nauman et al., 2020).

Employee Performance

This research revealed that most respondents felt that their functional work performance was maintained under this style of leadership, but that they were disengaged and demotivated. Despite this, they reported an overall loss in productivity and performance as they did the bare minimum to get by and spent time covering themselves due to fear of retribution. This confirms the literature indicating that destructive leadership reduces productivity and work performance, ultimately

affecting the organisation's financial performance (Kumar & Pansari, 2015; Lipman-Blumen, 2011; Pelletier, 2012).

Employee Job Satisfaction

All respondents felt that working for this destructive leader had negatively affected their overall job satisfaction. This confirms the literature that destructive leaders undermine the overall well-being and job satisfaction of employees (Einarsen et al., 2007; Kumar & Pansari, 2015; Shaw et al., 2011). Purpose, passion and meaning were eroded by these leaders, which confirms the findings in literature (Nauman et al., 2020; Pelletier, 2012; Shaw et al., 2011). Emotional exhaustion and a lack of trust were cited as reasons for withdrawal behaviour further confirming the literature that to cope with the emotional exhaustion and stress of this type of leadership, employees are forced to conserve their emotional energy through disengagement (Naseer et al., 2016).

There was no consensus, contrary to the literature, on feelings of closeness to colleagues. Respondents were divided, with some reporting that it united the team against a common enemy and the rest saying that they distrusted people in the team because of the leader. This partially confirms the assertion by Schyns & Schilling, (2013) that in the face of destructive leadership, teams will seek the support of colleagues but confirms the literature that destructive leaders create silos and 'in-groups' (Padilla et al., 2007; Thoroughgood, Padilla, et al., 2012).

Employee Identification with the organisation

Respondents agreed, with the exception of those with managers from another country, that their identification with the organisation was negatively affected. They lost faith and trust in the company, questioning what type of an organisation would value a leader like that. Some reported losing faith in corporate leadership entirely. Only those with long tenure and a strong entrenched organisational culture reported no effect. Social identity theory (Hogg, 2001) explains the process where the perception of inauthentic leadership results in a disconnect from followers who do not see the leader as prototypical of the group's identity, resulting in a lack of personal identification with the leader. Social identification occurs when employees identify with the group, in this case the organisation. This research confirmed that

both personal and social identification were negatively affected, supporting the literature (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2018; Naseer et al., 2016; Nauman et al., 2020).

Employee Commitment

Paradoxically, the research showed that these respondents stayed committed to delivering on expectations because of pride in themselves, a feeling of not wanting to let their team down and a desire to be better leaders than their destructive managers. Some respondents admitted that "it just became a job" and that they were not giving their all to the organisation. This generally resulted in less willingness to go the extra mile. Some reported that their commitment was not affected because they were too scared to let any work slip. The research somewhat supports the literature that counter-productive follower behaviours result from negative leadership (Schyns & Schilling, 2013) but was largely inconclusive.

Employee Loyalty

Employee loyalty was negatively affected by leaders with the low self-awareness, with most respondents reporting a decline in their sense of loyalty to the company and an increase in their intention to leave. Most respondents reported trying to leave within the first six months of working for this leader. Those respondents who did leave reported that it was as a direct result of their manager. Respondents felt that the organisations were not doing anything about the leadership issues, and they saw no light at the end of the tunnel. This strongly confirms literature, which cites employee turnover as a costly consequence of destructive leadership (Nauman et al., 2020; Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Thoroughgood et al., 2018).

The research confirms the literature that the five dimensions of employee engagement from Kumar and Pansari, (2015) are negatively affected by the destructive leadership witnessed in those leaders with low self-awareness. It further confirms the assertion that destructive leaders drive mistrust in subordinates, and lower employee loyalty and identification with the organisation, leading to the potential for reduced performance and lower productivity (Kumar & Pansari, 2015; Thoroughgood et al., 2018)

6.5. Discussion of Results for Research Question 4

RESEARCH QUESTION 4: How did Employees react to these Managers?

Leadership, positive or negative, is the result of leadership processes and their outcomes, rather than simply the result of leader behaviour (Thoroughgood et al., 2018; Yukl, 2011). Followers who enable destructive leadership are described as susceptible, and as either conformers, with low levels of maturity and self-image, or colluders who are ambitious with bad values (Padilla et al., 2007). Thoroughgood, et al. (2012) extended the understanding of how susceptible followers contribute to toxic outcomes by further dividing conformers as lost souls, authoritarians or bystanders, and colluders as acolytes and opportunists.

This research found that even highly engaged followers resorted to toxic behaviour eventually due to frustration. The respondents tried various methods to address their leader's behaviour, including telling them directly, giving feedback during a 360-degree review and eventually reporting them to more senior levels in the organisation. Lipman-Blumen (2005) describes the need for interaction between toxic leaders and followers to result in destructive leadership outcomes. This research confirms this assertion, as followers became more negative over time. Organisations promoted these leaders due to their individual performance, rather than their ability to lead others. This somewhat confirms Padilla's et al., (2007) third dimension in the toxic triangle of a conducive environment.

Micromanagement was described as the leader behaviour that elicited disengagement and toxic behaviour the most. This confirms Shaw et al., (2011) who list micromanagement as one of their 11 categories of "bad" leadership and is a definitive behaviour of "Cluster 7" leaders. Toxic behaviours reported by respondents ranged from losing their temper and shouting, to passive aggressive behaviour. They admitted that these leaders brought out the worst in them. Passive aggressive reactions included giving "malicious compliance", not challenging the leader, and going with the path of least resistance. This correlates with toxic followers who feel alienated and quietly undermine their leaders (Thomas et al., 2017). This research further confirms counter-productive work behaviour, which is more subtle than direct resistance, in response to toxic leadership (Schyns & Schilling, 2013).

Cuddy et al. (2011) suggest that how leaders are judged on warmth and competence will elicit different behaviours and emotions in followers. Using warmth (which includes friendliness, empathy) as a proxy for self-awareness, those low in warmth elicit negative behaviours in followers. Those leaders who were low in warmth but high in competence elicit passive facilitation from followers, which this research confirms as evidenced by the description of 'malicious compliance' and passive aggressive behaviour including ignoring instructions from leaders and then lying about it. Those leaders who were low in warmth and viewed as incompetent did elicit passive harm, where they were ignored. This research confirms the behavioural but not emotional reactions in followers.

Resentment was created and respondents reported either having to manage their anger or withdrawing and avoiding their leader where possible. When it appeared that the organisation was not taking any action, respondents became stressed and cited the emotional toll these leaders took on them. This strongly confirms literature indicating that subordinates will withdraw their emotional and cognitive efforts in response to destructive leadership behaviours (Nauman et al., 2020).

Respondents reported that they became desperate and escalated the leadership issues through various mechanisms in the organisation. This eventually led to an intervention in all cases.

This research confirms the literature that destructive leadership inspires toxic followership, but also found that even senior, ambitious, highly engaged, principled followers, who neither fall into the category of "conformers" or "colluders", resorted to toxic retaliatory behaviours.

6.6. Conclusion

Schyns and Schilling, (2013) describe the outcomes of destructive leadership under four concepts. Leader-related concepts include resistance towards the leader and a lack of identification with the leader (Hogg, 2007), as well as the reactions and behaviours of subordinates to leaders (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). This research

found that subordinates perceived leaders with low- self -awareness as destructive, and despite the acknowledgement of no ill intent from these leaders, showed resistance towards these leaders.

Job-related concepts include job satisfaction, dedication and motivation (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). This research confirmed the negative impact on job-related concepts by leaders perceived as destructive. Organisation-related concepts include those issues affecting the company directly such as commitment to the organisation and turnover intention (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). This research confirmed that subordinates engaged in retaliatory behaviour and had a high intention to leave.

Individual follower-concepts include stress, well-being and performance of the affected subordinates and was confirmed to deteriorate during this research (Schyns & Schilling, 2013).

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1.   Introduction

This research set out to identify how leaders with low self-awareness are perceived by their subordinates in terms of their behaviour and how subordinates reacted to this behaviour. It further sought to understand how these leaders affect employee engagement and the perception of their effectiveness as leaders. This chapter consolidates the main findings of the qualitative research undertaken as well as the implications and limitations of the research and suggests areas for further study.

7.2.   Principal Findings

7.2.1. Behaviours exhibited by leaders with low self-awareness

Leaders who lack self-awareness exhibit the behaviours commonly associated with toxic, destructive, and despotic leaders, which seems to suggest that there is causality. These leaders were perceived by their followers as being toxic and destructive, causing cognitive dissonance as the values and behaviours of these leaders were not consistent with those of subordinates (Hogg, 2001). Personal identification with the leaders was therefore negatively affected. Social identity was also negatively affected as subordinates no longer felt a sense of belonging or pride in their organisation. Hogg (2001, p.191) stated that "as people identify more strongly within a group, the basis for leadership perceptions, evaluations, and endorsement becomes increasingly influenced by prototypicality; prototypical members are more likely to emerge as leaders, and more prototypical leaders will be perceived to be more effective".

Self-awareness is considered essential for authentic, resonant, servant, spiritual and transcendent leadership, among others (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Crossan et al., 2008; Sturm et al., 2014). By contrast, the lack of self-awareness in leaders is not a central theme in destructive leadership discourse. Despite this, findings from this research confirmed that leaders with low self-awareness display "Cluster 7" destructive leadership behaviours and aggressive, exhibiting bullying, dishonesty, micromanagement, the inability to deal with conflict, not having the requisite skills

and an unwillingness to change or listen to other points of view (Einarsen et al., 2007; Shaw et al., 2011).

Though initially charismatic and able to produce positive results for the organisation in the short-term, they had had a distorted belief about how they were viewed by subordinates and were perceived as having narcissistic and arrogant (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014; Padilla et al., 2007).

The destructive behaviours exhibited by these leaders caused negative emotional reactions in subordinates. A loss of trust and feelings of hopelessness and being demoralised occurred. This research confirmed that leaders with low self-awareness exhibit behaviours consistent with destructive leadership and aspects of toxic leadership, providing a possible precursor to negative leadership behaviours.

7.2.2. Effectiveness of leaders with low self-awareness

Effective leadership can be thought of as the ability to be authentic, and motivate followers through building trust, empathy, relational transparency and balanced processing (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Bruce J Avolio et al., 2018; Gardner et al., 2011). Kouzes and Posner's model, *The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership* (2007) explains the actions and behaviours needed for exemplary leadership. Effective leadership is critical because it affects not only organisational performance, but also employee engagement and commitment (Kouzes & Posner, 2016).

Authentic leaders are able to demonstrate self-awareness by ensuring that their internal values and behaviour align and that they have a high moral code (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Resonant leadership requires high levels of self-awareness, empathy, honesty and transparent communication (R. Boyatzis & McKee, 2005). Transformational leadership requires an ability to inspire and motivate through idealised influence, while transcendent leadership requires an ability to lead across self, which bears the responsibility of being self-aware (Banks et al., 2016; Crossan et al., 2008).

The findings from this study indicate that those leaders with low self-awareness are not able to demonstrate the behaviours associated with exemplary leadership and

they are perceived by followers as inauthentic and lacking transparency. This has led them to be considered ineffective leaders and confirms that self-awareness is necessary for positive forms of leadership.

7.2.3. The effect of leaders with low self-awareness on employee engagement

Those leaders perceived to be authentic are able to improve the engagement, job satisfaction and motivation of followers (Avolio et al., 2004). The findings from this research confirm that destructive leaders negatively affect employee's performance as they become disengaged and withdraw, and lose trust in the leader and organisation (Jabeen & Rahim, 2021; Nauman et al., 2020).

Kumar & Pansari, (2015) define five dimensions of employee engagement, which comprises the different attitudes and behaviours of employees towards their organisation. Findings from this study indicate that the five dimensions of employee engagement from Kumar and Pansari (2015) are negatively affected by the destructive leadership witnessed in those leaders with low self-awareness. Toxic leaders engender mistrust in subordinates, and lower employee loyalty and identification with the organisation, leading to the potential for reduced performance and lower productivity (Kumar & Pansari, 2015; Thoroughgood et al., 2018). Subordinates' perception of meaningfulness in their work is also reduced, negatively affecting commitment to the organisation (Nauman et al., 2020).

7.2.4. Subordinates reactions to leaders with low self-awareness

Followers who enable destructive and toxic leadership are described as susceptible, and as either conformers, with low levels of maturity and self-image, or colluders who are ambitious with deficient moral values (Padilla et al., 2007). Findings from this study support the concept of destructive leadership as a process, which involves the interaction between leaders and followers in their context (Padilla et al., 2007; Thoroughgood et al., 2018).

What was surprising was that this study found that highly engaged subordinates resorted to toxic behaviour eventually due to frustration and having their concerns over the leadership behaviours not being addressed. Lipman-Blumen (2005)

describes the need for interaction between toxic leaders and followers to result in destructive leadership outcomes.

Respondents admitted losing their temper and shouting, being passive aggressive or eventually giving up and not challenging their leader by going with the path of least resistance. They were maliciously compliant in some instances, and in others, constantly fought with their leader. Eventually the leadership team became siloed and almost dysfunctional in some cases. This study further demonstrated that counter-productive work behaviour ensued in response to toxic leadership (Schyns & Schilling, 2013).

This study further found that negative emotional reactions were demonstrated in subordinates where they needed to manage their anger or the withdraw and avoided their leader where possible. When it appeared that the organisation was not taking any action, respondents became stressed and cited the emotional toll these leaders took on them. This strongly confirms literature indicating that subordinates will withdraw their emotional and cognitive efforts in response to destructive leadership behaviours (Nauman et al., 2020).

Findings from this study indicate that due to the extremely negative consequences of these leaders and the fact that subordinates were willing to report the behaviour, eventually organisations intervened. Destructive leadership inspires toxic followership, but additionally, even senior, ambitious, highly engaged, principled followers, who neither fall into the category of "conformers" or "colluders", resorted to toxic behaviours.

7.3. Implications for Management

While there is no agreed upon definition of effective leadership, self-awareness has been identified as a crucial component of positive forms of leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Leaders with higher self-awareness are perceived to be more effective leaders (Butler et al., 2014). Through improved self-awareness, self-regulation and positive role modelling authentic leaders can stimulate the development of positive work behaviours in subordinates (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Authentic leadership has been linked to increased follower job satisfaction, task

performance, organisational citizenship behaviour and performance (Banks et al., 2016). This increased employee engagement results in improved profitability for the business (Kumar & Pansari, 2015).

This research has recognised that a lack of self-awareness in leaders results in destructive leadership, by inspiring destructive behaviours in followers, negatively impacting the organisation and resulting in costly interventions. By adapting the model from Cuddy et al., (2011) we can map predicted leadership styles along the dimensions of self-awareness and performance.
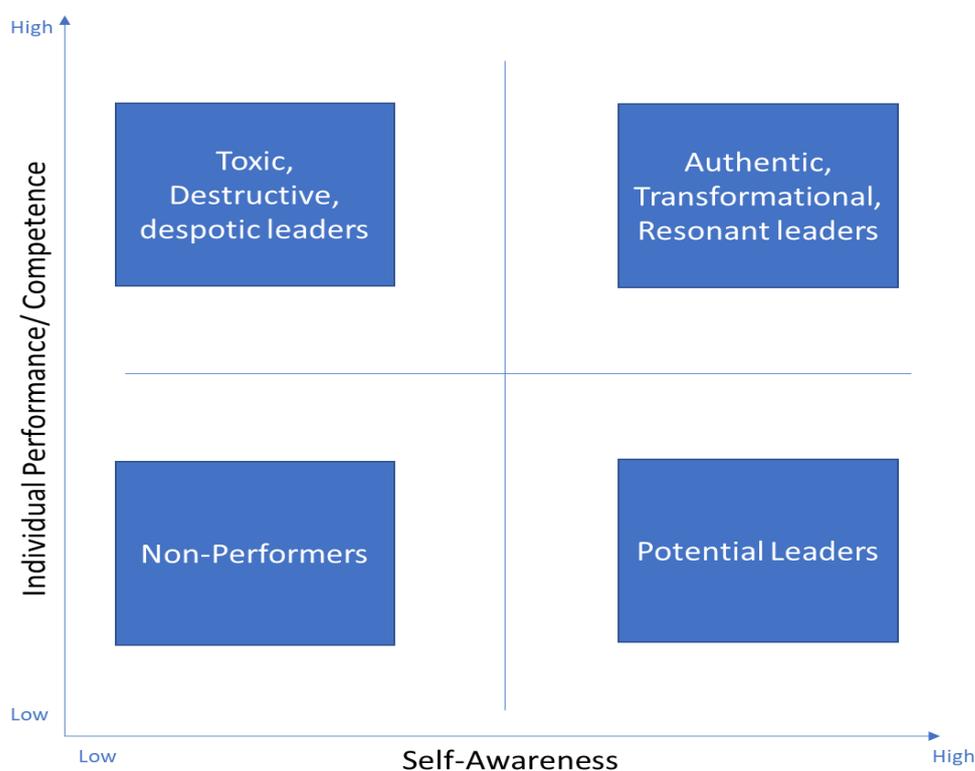
Figure 15: Model prediction for leadership potential based on individual performance by self-awareness adapted from (Cuddy et al., 2011)

This research showed that promotion and recruitment decisions were based largely on the individual performance of the leaders. These leaders were skilled in strategy and functional expertise, or were politically astute with good connections in the organisation. These leaders, while high in competence or individual performance, were low in self-awareness, resulting in destructive leadership outcomes for both subordinates and the organisation.

Leaders who have high levels of self-awareness and talent have the ability to be authentic, transformational and resonant leaders (Avolio et al., 2004; Banks et al., 2016; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Those individuals who lack both self-awareness and individual competence can be considered non-performers and would likely inspire contempt from colleagues (Cuddy et al., 2011). Management should look to those high in self-awareness but lower in individual performance as potential leaders, rather than simply considering individual performance in recruitment or promotion decisions, since self-awareness is a requirement for positive leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Butler et al., 2014; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

It is imperative that adequate measures are put in place to deal with destructive leadership, given the costly impact on both staff on the organisation. Given the harmful effects on employee performance and engagement, organisations should guard against employing these leaders at all. Destructive leadership affects the five dimensions of employee engagement negatively. Destructive leadership is also not just an absence of leadership; over time it creates lasting negative consequences for the organisation. Management therefore needs to act quickly and take reports of destructive leadership seriously.

7.4. Implications for HR

The initial selection of individuals adept at achieving results on their own needs to be weighed against their emotional intelligence and self-awareness. High potential candidates should not just be drawn from the pool of individuals who show functional expertise, but rather those with the characteristics associated with authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Promotion and succession planning are crucial for the longevity of organisations, which is why self-awareness should be considered a critical skill for candidates hoping to manage and lead others.

Of concern in this research was how long it took for organisations to intervene. The situation had to reach a crisis point where subordinates had become desperate, and many talented individuals had left the organisation or resorted to retaliatory behaviours. The leaders in question were in very senior positions and were unwilling to acknowledge that there was an issue with their leadership style. Management and

human resource professionals should consider a focus on self-awareness development and interventions earlier in the careers of potential managers.

7.5.   Limitations of the Research

Some limitations in this study result from limitations in the primary research sample. The sample was limited to respondents at an executive level, so results may differ by including respondents from lower levels in the organisation. The use of self-reported data means that the constructs derived in this research are based on respondents' perception and are therefore highly subjective. The research was largely leader-centric and focused on the behaviours of these 'bad' leaders and the reactions they provoked in followers. Contextual factors, such as the macroeconomic environment externally, or the internal company culture were not investigated fully. Research was limited to large organisations in limited sectors based in Gauteng so generalisability to other contexts is limited. Data saturation was reached by the 12th interviews, so the sample size was small.

7.5.   Suggestions for Future Research

Research into destructive leadership is nascent but receiving more attention as organisations acknowledge the detrimental impact on productivity, employee morale and financial results (Shaw et al., 2011). Various themes emerged that fell outside the scope of this research but that warrant future investigation. Future avenues for research include:

- A quantitative longitudinal study linking a lack of self-awareness to destructive, toxic, and despotic leadership and its effect on followers over time;
- An inquiry into the effect of culture and context on the proposed model in this research. Respondents wo had a leaders from a different country had slightly different reactions;
- Research into followers who are not susceptible but start to display toxic behaviours in response to this type of leadership;
- Investigating whether different types of destructive leadership behaviours elicit different reactions from followers, depending on intent; and
- Researching destructive leadership, self-interest and a lack of self-awareness – beyond the organisation and the effect on society as a whole.

7.6. Concluding Remarks

The objectives of this study, described in Chapter 1, sought to answer what the impact of self-awareness on effective leadership outcomes in South Africa were. This was done by answering what specific behaviours are exhibited by senior managers that lead them to being perceived as having low self-awareness, how effective those managers with low self-awareness are, whether having a manager with low self-awareness affects employee engagement, and how employees react to these managers.

In achieving these objectives, it was found that leaders with low self-awareness exhibit behaviours consistent with toxic and destructive leadership. These leaders are not perceived as effective leaders and employee engagement is negatively affected. Subordinates react to this type of leadership by challenging it and escalating concerns to more senior levels in the organisation. When it appears that nothing is being done to rectify the situation by the organisation, subordinates exhibit toxic reactions, such as public arguments, retaliatory behaviours and passive aggressive reactions. This ultimately has a detrimental effect on the organisation's performance and culture.

Management and human resource professionals need to ensure that leaders are not selected and promoted only on their individual results, but also considering their self-awareness and ability to lead. Given the high cost and prevalence of destructive leadership to organisations, measures need to be put in place to deal with and avoid the promotion and recruitment of destructive leaders in the first place.

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Appendix 1: Interview Schedule

Interview Guide

SECTION A: Demographics

Age:

20 – 30	31 – 40	41 – 50	51 – 60	60+

Gender:

Male	Female

Race:

African	Coloured	White	Indian	Other

Number of years of management experience:

5 – 10	11- 20	21 – 30	31 – 40	41 - 50

Gender of leader with low self-awareness:

Male	Female

SECTION B: Qualitative

1. How would you define self-awareness

2. Have you ever reported directly to a leader you would consider as having poor self-awareness?

3. Please describe your experience with the boss in question? Explore

4. How would you describe their leadership style?

5. What were the different behavioural traits exhibited by the boss during this time that led to you perceiving them as having low self-awareness? Explore

6. How did you react to this behaviour displayed by the boss in question?

7. During this managers' tenure, were any of your colleagues experiencing the same feeling?

8. What was the effect of this leader on the company culture?

Section C: Leadership Effectiveness

Leadership effectiveness impacts business performance. The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership (Kouzes & Posner 1987, 2007, 2012; Posner & Kouzes,1993) is a model that is used in research to measure leadership effectiveness. The aim of the next part of the interview is to understand how effective the manager in question was as a leader based on these behaviours.

- Modelling the way.
  - How well does this leader set the example by behaving in ways that reflect the shared values of the company? Was the leader in question clear on values and align actions with these shared values?
  - Please explain

- Inspiring a shared vision.
  - How well did this leader create a vision of the future and could they inspire that common vision in others? Were they able to enlist others in a common vision by appealing to their values, interests, hopes and dreams?
  - Please explain?

- Challenging the process.
  - Did this leader look for opportunities, challenge the status quo, and look for innovative ways to improve? Did they encourage experimentation, take risks and learn from any mistakes? Search out challenging opportunities to change, grow, innovate and improve?
  - Please explain?

- Enabling others to act.
  - Leaders foster collaboration by building trust and cultivating relationships, and they develop competence in their team. How well did the leader in question develop others and foster collaboration by promoting cooperative goals and building trust?
  - Strengthen people's ability by delegating power, developing their competence and offering visible support?
  - Please explain?

- Encouraging the heart.
  - Dd the leader in question show appreciation for individual efforts and celebrate successes? How? Recognise individual contributions to the success of the company? Celebrate team accomplishments regularly?
  - Please explain?

Section D: Employee engagement

The aim of the next part of the interview is to understand how your experience affected your employee engagement around the following dimensions.

Follower work behaviours:

- Employee performance
    - Was your job performance affected (positively or negatively while working for the manager in question?
    - Please explain further.
- Extra effort
    - How willing were you to go above and beyond what was expected of you?
    - Please explain
- Withdrawal behaviours or loyalty
    - Did you seek alternative employment while working for the manager in question?
    - If so:
        - How long did you work for this individual before attempting to leave?
        - Was it as a direct result of the managers' behaviour?

Follower work attitudes:

- Employee Job satisfaction -
    - Was your overall job satisfaction affected, either positively or negatively?
    - Please explain further.
- Employee Identification with the organisation
    - How was your feeling of identifying with the company affected while working for this manager?
    - Please explain further
- Commitment
    - Did your commitment to delivering on your job expectations increase or decrease while working for this boss?
    - Please explain

Is there anything further that you would like to add?

Thank you for sharing your experience with me.

Appendix 2: Ethical clearance approval

Gordon Institute
of Business Science
University of Pretoria

Ethical Clearance
Supervisor Notification

Dear Hugh Myres,

Please be advised that Sharon Da Fonseca's application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.

We wish Sharon Da Fonseca everything of the best for the rest of the project.

Kind Regards

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

Appendix 3: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Letter:

Dear Participant

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

I am conducting research on self-awareness and leadership styles and am trying to find out more about the role this plays in leadership outcomes. Our interview is expected to last about an hour and will help us understand more about how South African leaders present themselves and how this is perceived by others. **Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without penalty**. All data will be reported without identifiers. If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or me. Our details are provided below.

Researcher name: Sharon Da Fonseca   **Research Supervisor**:

Email: 96290294@mygibs.co.za   **Email**: myresh@gibs.co.za

Phone: 064 752 1721   **Phone**: 083 302 3802

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 4: Copyright Form

Gordon Institute of Business Science
University of Pretoria

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Student details			
Surname:	Da Fonseca	Initials:	SJ
Student number:	96290294		
Email:	sharonjanedavidson@gmail.com		
Phone:	0647521721		
Qualification details			
Degree:	MBA	Year completed:	2020
Title of research:	The impact of self-awareness on effective leadership outcomes in South Africa		
Supervisor:	Hugh Myers		
Supervisor email:	Myresh@gibs.co.za		

Access		
A X	My research is not confidential and may be made available in the GIBS Information Centre and on UPSpace.	

I give permission to display my email address on the UPSpace website

Yes	X	No	

B	My research is confidential and may NOT be made available in the GIBS Information Centre nor on UPSpace.

Please indicate embargo period requested

Two years		Please attach a letter of motivation to substantiate your request. Without a letter embargo will not be granted.
Permanent		Permission from the Vice-Principal: Research and Postgraduate Studies at UP is required for permanent embargo. Please attach a copy permission letter. Without a letter permanent embargo will not be granted.

Copyright declaration

I hereby declare that I have not used unethical research practices nor gained material dishonesty in this electronic version of my research submitted. Where appropriate, written permission statement(s) were obtained from the owner(s) of third-party copyrighted matter included in my research, allowing distribution as specified below.

I hereby assign, transfer and make over to the University of Pretoria my rights of copyright in the submitted work to the extent that it has not already been affected in terms of the contract I entered into at registration. I understand that all rights with regard to the intellectual property of my research, vest in the University who has the right to reproduce, distribute and/or publish the work in any manner it may deem fit.

Signature: *Sharon Davidson Da Fonseca*	Date: 01/12/2020
Supervisor signature: *J. Hugh. Myres*	Date: 01/12/2020

Appendix 5: Certification of additional support

CERTIFICATION OF ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

(Additional support retained or not - to be **completed by all students**)

Please note that failure to comply and report on this honestly will result in disciplinary action

I hereby certify that (please indicate which statement applies):

~~• **I DID NOT RECEIVE** any additional/outside assistance (i.e. statistical, transcriptional, and/or editorial services) on my research report:~~

…………………………………………………………………………

• *I* **RECEIVED** *additional/outside assistance (i.e. statistical, transcriptional, and/or editorial services) on my research report*

I used editorial support only for formatting and grammatical changes

If any additional services were retained– *please indicate below which:*

☐ *Statistician*

☐ *Transcriber*

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I hereby declare that all *statistical write-ups and thematic interpretations of the results for* **my study were completed by myself without outside assistance**

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Appendix 6: Code list

	Codes Created
1	As a mature leader I know I have to deliver on certain things
2	Authoritarian leadership style
3	Autocratic leadership style
4	Aware of one's personality traits
5	Aware of one's strengths and weaknesses
6	Behaviour inconsistent with espoused values
7	Behaviour not aligned with the company values
8	Behaviour seemed extreme
9	Behaviour was inconsistent and erratic
10	Being aware of your competence level
11	Being open with people about who you are
12	Believes they are the only ones capable or working hard
13	Brought in competent people to look good but then micromanaged them
14	Caused offense without realising it
15	Charisma played a role in this person getting to a GM level
16	Collaborative decision-making
17	Company culture exacerbated the problem
18	Company morale deteriorated
19	Competent talented employees became toxic
20	Complete lack of accountability
21	Consistency in decision making
22	Constantly contradicting themselves
23	Consultation was done to cover their decision
24	Contrary leadership style
25	Could not motivate or inspire
26	Could not unite the team
27	Created a challenging environment
28	Created a confrontational culture
29	Created a culture of blame
30	Created a culture of fear
31	Created a culture of winning at all costs
32	Created a culture where people couldn't thrive
33	Created a toxic culture
34	Created an environment where people are demoralised
35	Created confusion
36	Created factions and alliances within the team
37	Creates unnecessary complexity and work
38	Defensive about feedback
39	Demotivating - reaction
40	Demotivating -affected my performance
41	Dictatorial leadership style

42	Did not get the best out of their people
43	Did not respect personal boundaries, inappropriate at times
44	Didn't answer questions
45	Disproportionate amount of time managing the impact of this leader
46	Diversity and inclusion were not demonstrated
47	Does your level in the organisation affect how you are impacted by this type of leader
48	Dogmatic viewpoints
49	Effective at communicating short term operational goals
50	Effective teams need a shared vision
51	Ego meant they didn't see that people were not supporting them
52	Empathy is critical for effective leadership but you can't be empathetic without self-awareness
53	Everyone's interpretation of self-awareness might be different
54	Everything was done to make themselves look good
55	Exhibited insecurity and self-preservation
56	Expected respect because of their position
57	Feedback has led to an intervention
58	Feedback is met with resistance
59	Forced through their own ideas
60	Fractures were created in the executive team
61	Get the best result for your career
62	Getting the best out of people
63	Hard work and individual results got this person to a GM level
64	Hard work at the expense of listening to others and creating an environment of respect
65	Helicopter management style
66	Hierarchy is very important to them
67	High staff turnover
68	I became disillusioned with corporate
69	I became insecure in my position
70	I became passive aggressive
71	I couldn't drop the ball because it would be used against me
72	I decided to leave because I wasn't growing or developing as a leader
73	I decided to leave because the organisation did not seem to be doing anything about the leadership issues
74	I did not seek alternative employment because I love my job
75	I did not trust this leader so I withdrew
76	I did the bare minimum to get by
77	I didn't feel like I was part of anything that mattered
78	I experienced shock and disbelief that a senior leader could have no self-awareness
79	I felt I was being set up to fail
80	I had to manage my anger
81	I learnt not to challenge them in public

82	I left the company as a direct result of this manager
83	I lost confidence
84	I lost faith in the company
85	I lost my temper
86	I lost respect for the company
87	I made up my mind to leave because I saw no light at the end of the tunnel
88	I no longer go the extra mile
89	I no longer trusted the organisation
90	I questioned what kind of organisation would value a leader like this
91	I spent more time trying to cover myself because of fear
92	I started looking for a new job within 6 months
93	I tried to avoid them
94	I tried to focus on the projects that I enjoyed
95	I tried to maintain my performance even though I was disengaged
96	I tried to make the person aware of their behaviour
97	I was embarrassed that this person represented the company
98	I was frustrated, nothing had any effect on them
99	I was too scared to leave
100	I went with the path of least resistance
101	I worried about the perception of me, working for a manager like that
102	Ignored advice about risks
103	Ignored criticism
104	I'm not giving all I could to the job
105	Incompetence and lack of credibility led to a lack of trust
106	Inconsistency led to a lack of trust
107	Inconsistent behaviour
108	Incorrect opinion that everybody loves them
109	Inexperienced leader has not developed the requisite skills
110	Initially engaging and charismatic
111	Insincere or self-interested praise
112	Insincere promises to change
113	IQ and the right qualification got that person accelerated
114	It brings out the worst in me
115	It caused a lack of respect and credibility
116	It impedes the business
117	It just became a job
118	It was obvious they had an agenda
119	It was uncomfortable and chaotic
120	It's reinforced my commitment to being a better leader
121	Lack of authenticity meant a loss of credibility
122	Lack of consequence for bad behaviour impacted company culture negatively
123	Lack of consideration for my time created resentment
124	Lack of consistency - you never knew what to expect

125	Lack of consultation meant changes were met with resistance
126	Lack of direction
127	Lack of self-awareness in the leader affected everyone in the company
128	Lack of self-awareness is why this leader was successful
129	Lack of self-awareness meant inconsistency and chaos
130	Lack of self-awareness was exacerbated by uncertainty and a turbulent environment
131	Lack of trust in the team
132	Lack of vision
133	Leader had a strong work ethic
134	Leaders should have a vision, build trust and inspire or motivate
135	Leadership team have to step in or the business won't function
136	Luck played a part in this person getting to a GM role
137	Managers in another country don't see the impact of these leaders quickly
138	Many avenues existed to give this leader feedback
139	Micromanagement
140	Micromanaging led to disengagement and toxic behaviour
141	My commitment to delivering on job expectations was negatively affected
142	My commitment to delivering on job expectations was not affected
143	My company, colleagues, team or job give me enormous satisfaction
144	My functional performance was not affected
145	My job satisfaction has been affected negatively
146	My passion and purpose were eroded
147	Narcissism and ego
148	Need to control everything
149	No appreciation shown for indivdual efforts
150	No attempt to connect with people
151	No consulation or consideration of team's viewpoints
152	No empowerment or autonomy to do their job
153	No environment of psychological safety to give feedback
154	No idea how much they negatively impacted people
155	No listening capability
156	No real leadership style
157	not authentic
158	Not driving a culture of constant feedback
159	Not open to feedback or criticism
160	Organisations did not consider leadership skill
161	Our corporate culture is strong enough that we can mitigate the damage of this leader
162	Parent child management style
163	People became desperate
164	People felt the changes made added no value
165	People got tired of the negativity
166	People quickly saw through the charisma

167	People stopped taking accountability
168	People were not included in scenario planning
169	People were too scared to make mistakes
170	People withdraw and become disengaged
171	Played favourites
172	Politically astute
173	Poor decision making due to a lack of collaboration
174	Portrayed others as incompetent to divert attention and undermine their credibility - performance
175	Portrayed others as incompetent to divert attention and undermine their credibility - reaction
176	Pride in myself and others counting on me meant I stayed committed
177	Process was challenged to get things done quicker to impress the boss
178	Punitive leadership style
179	Put own systems and routines in place
180	Quick to assign blame
181	Recognition was only given to favourites
182	Refused to acknowledge mistakes
183	Respecting other peoples value and opinions
184	Right place right time and connections within the organisation got this person ahead
185	Said the right things to appear to be driving innovation
186	Self-awareness is about understanding yourself first and modifying your behaviours
187	Self-awareness is at the core of learning agility
188	Self-awareness is not a topic people are exposed to in business
189	Self-preservation and survival during turbulent times
190	Senior leaders might take longer to leave to get the team through it
191	Skilled at appearing to gain consensus
192	Staff became less productive
193	Staff were united in their frustration
194	Strategy was to divide and conquer
195	Successes were not celebrated
196	Takes things personally
197	Technical skills
198	The company eventually took action
199	The leader was volatile
200	The organisation is not getting the best out of me
201	The organisation was not values driven
202	There were many frustrating conversations
203	There's a lag in EQ, self-awareness and heart in leadership development
204	They couldn't bring people along with them
205	They create chaos and disruption because of contradiction
206	They didn't realise people could see through the inconsistencies
207	They give a malicious compliance

208	They jumped to an action without thinking or consulting
209	This leader blamed others so the organisation took too long to act
210	This leader had no interest in understanding the perception of themselves
211	Took credit for other people's work
212	Unable to build a strong team
213	Unable to instill confidence during turbulent times
214	Unaware how they come across
215	Understanding how you view yourself versus how others view you
216	Understanding how your behaviour impacts others
217	Understanding your triggers
218	Very involved in the details
219	When you can't see any change you become disillusioned and stressed
220	Work stopped being fun