



Exploring managers' perceptions of personal resilience and coping strategies in a South African retail company

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I honour my father, Prof Chris Lombard, whose example inspired my love for resilience. Last, to my wife, Lizette, and our daughter, Magdelie, thank you for your unwavering support. This one is for you.

DECLARATION

I, Sebastian Lombard, hereby declare that this mini-dissertation, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Business Administration in the Faculty of Economics and Management Science at the North-West University, is my own original work and has not been submitted to any institution of Higher Education. All the sources used for this study are cited and referenced in the reference list.



.....
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ABSTRACT

This mini-dissertation examines how managers in a South African retail company perceive and sustain personal resilience under volatile, interruption-heavy conditions. The study follows an interpretivist, qualitative, descriptive design. I conducted ten semi-structured interviews and analysed the data reflexively using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic approach. ATLAS.ti version 25 supported coding and theme development. An audit trail and field notes strengthened credibility.

The primary objective was to identify managers' perceptions of personal resilience and their coping strategies. Secondary objectives focused on willingness and ability to persist, on support structures inside and outside work, and on effort–recovery during and after work. The analysis produced six linked themes. Micro-recovery provides the practical base. Planning and prioritising organise attention through loops of anticipating, priming, sequencing, and reflecting. Support ties offer fast guidance and effective recharge. Emotional intelligence in motion keeps interactions constructive. Organisational conditions either create drag or act as growth levers. A winning mindset, anchored in duty, self-talk, discipline, and meaning, holds the system together.

These practices convert volatility into workable subsequent actions when schedules and clarity create feasible recovery windows. The study contributes a layered, practice-based account of managerial resilience in retail. It offers targeted implications at individual, line-manager, and organisational levels. Limitations include a single-company scope, possible recall and social desirability bias, and the absence of direct behavioural measures. Saturation, transparent procedures, and a clear audit trail support credibility. Transferability is argued by reasoned analogy to similar South African retail environments.

Keywords: Personal resilience, coping strategies, managers and the retail industry.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The study examines managers' perceptions of personal resilience and how coping is enacted on a day-to-day basis in a large South African retail company. The researcher adopted an interpretivist, qualitative, descriptive design, using semi-structured interviews and reflexive thematic analysis to capture patterned meanings and their context. Ten managers were interviewed; the data were handled with care to ensure trustworthiness, including an audit trail and field-note triangulation.

The primary objective was to explore and identify managers' perceptions of their personal resilience and coping strategies. Secondary objectives were to examine willingness and ability to persist, to identify internal and external support structures, and to explore effort recovery practices during and after work.

Interviews followed a consistent, ethical procedure: transcripts were coded inductively, then organised according to themes. The analysis remained reflexive and aligned with the research questions. ATLAS.ti version 25 supported systematic retrieval, while field notes added contextual depth.

- **Theme 1: Dedicated rest and micro-recovery breaks** underpin regulation, detachment, and steady tone during and after work.
- **Theme 2: Habits of planning and prioritising** run a light loop (anticipating, priming, sequencing, and reflecting) that converts long days into workable paths.
- **Theme 3: Crucial support structures**, both inside and outside work, provide quick framing, practical scripts, and emotional recharge.
- **Theme 4: Emotional intelligence on the move** keeps interactions constructive through fresh starts, de-escalation, perspective-taking, and reading the room.
- **Theme 5: Organisational conditions** either create structural drag, time debt, late changes, unclear norms, or act as growth levers, facilitating clear SOPs, realistic coverage, simple connection structures, coaching, and feedback.
- **Theme 6: A winning mindset** is anchored in duty and ownership, self-talk, disciplined follow-through, and finding meaning through faith, service, and family.

These themes are recursive: recovery enables planning, which in turn frees capacity to utilise support. Emotional intelligence reduces conflict; favourable conditions expand bandwidth. Lastly, a positive mindset binds the effective resilience system. Where

these themes align, retail managers report calmer judgement, cleaner handovers, and durable interpersonal quality despite continuous change.

Implications are specified at three levels with short-horizon metrics. Individuals adopt brief planning and self-regulation routines. Line managers embed a shared resilience vocabulary and micro-coaching cadence; organisations standardise lean reflection templates and protect short admin windows. This alignment turns willingness to cope into sustained, active coping.

The study clarifies how personal resilience is practised by managers in the fast-paced South African retail and links mechanisms to outcomes that matter for performance and relationships. Transferability is argued by analogy, given the single-company scope; transparency, saturation, and credibility checks strengthen confidence in the claims.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- **ATLAS.ti:** Qualitative data analysis software used to organise codes and themes.
- **COR:** Conservation of Resources theory.
- **JD–R:** Job Demands–Resources model.
- **NWU:** North-West University.
- **POPIA:** Protection of Personal Information Act.
- **PCS:** People Capacity Solutions (resilience framework and active coping construct referenced in the literature).
- **RQ:** Research Question(s).
- **SOP:** Standard Operating Procedure(s).

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Kothari (2021), before the COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare and other professionals did not frequently engage with the topic of personal resilience. Kothari (2021) explored the concept of resilience, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which pieces of literature were gathered on the topic. The sample groups primarily consisted of staff in the healthcare environment, employees from various industries, and individuals in high-risk occupations (Freedman, 2004; Peres et al., 2011; Vanhove et al., 2015). After the pandemic, professionals realised the importance of personal resilience and active coping strategies (Kothari, 2021). Personal resilience and active coping strategies should be learned, as resilient individuals and teams are more productive, physically healthier, and maintain good relationships (Kothari, 2021).

In the South African retail industry, managers operate in extremely high-pressure environments characterised by high targets, deadlines, intense competition, excessive workload, limited resources, fluctuating economic conditions, and high customer expectations (Wilson, 2023). South African retailing also faces unique challenges like sociocultural issues, political uncertainty, and cultural diversity. These add on to what retail managers have to deal with (PSC, 2023).

Personal resilience helps retail managers deal with the complexities of the industry (Martston & Martston, 2018). The People Capacity Solutions Resilience framework examines three dimensions: the extent to which support is perceived as available at work and outside of work, effort recovery both at and off work, and the coping resources and resolve in the face of persistent challenges (Lombard, 2025).

To explore these aspects, this study utilises a purposive sample of managers from a South African retail company, focusing on their understanding of personal resilience and coping strategies. Managers have a significant impact on how engaged, satisfied, productive, and resilient their teams are, and therefore, their opinions are crucial to the overall success of the organisation (Gallup, 2023).

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The retail sector in South Africa operates under the pressure of long hours, tight deadlines, and aggressive target setting (Bowman, 2025; Hirsch et al., 2024). In these conditions, managers are expected to address the impact of high turnover, absenteeism, and

unproductive staff, as well as ever-escalating pressure from customers and rival businesses (Cabrera-Aguilar et al., 2023). Family commitments, combined with the limited time managers spend outside of work, make the attainment of a work–life balance even more challenging (Vanhove et al., 2015). The persistent pressure and high stress levels, often accompanied by a sense of fatigue, have a detrimental impact on managers' performance, satisfaction, and engagement (Vanhove et al., 2015).

This research focuses on managers as they determine employees' level of engagement, influence how customers are treated, and impact the overall climate (Buckingham, 2021). When managers fail to adjust to the demands of the field, dissatisfaction and disengagement of these role players follow (Wilson, 2023). The research aims to investigate retail managers' views on personal resilience and coping strategies. People Capacity Solutions (2023) states that managers who handle pressure, stress, and setbacks are more personally resilient, positively and directly affect retail managers' engagement. Resilience decreases absenteeism and increases productivity (Cabrera-Aguilar et al., 2023). Similarly, high personal resilience enables managers to cope with stress, adjust to transformative challenges more readily, and increase overall job satisfaction, as noted by Coetzee and De Villiers (2010).

According to Buckingham (2021), resilient employees tend to be those who trust their managers. This means that, especially in the retail sector, managers should spend more time building relationships in high-pressure situations. Buckingham (2021) also states that being part of a team increases the potential for resilient and supportive structures. Managers who lack a sense of belonging tend to have lower individual resilience. Companies that fail to communicate their events and plans are more likely to experience disengagement and overall apathy from employees (Buckingham, 2021). As such, it's abundantly clear that managers own the responsibility to create inclusive environments that directly influence their own resilience and that of their subordinates.

Organisations with engaged employees are more likely to be seen as resilient when facing challenges (Flade et al., 2014). This, of course, is the result of the culture that those organisations built and the initiatives that foster resilience-building behaviours (Elhamed & Hessuin, 2022). Managers can encourage this culture and create a more resilient retail sector by providing teams with the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to adopt a more resilient mindset (Elhamed & Hessuin, 2022).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The retail industry is rapidly expanding and increasing in size in South Africa and worldwide (Bowman, 2025). As the industry grows, managing human capital becomes one of the key challenges within the retail industry (Giri & Chheda, 2019). Ovans (2015) claimed that 75% of managers stated that working with difficult people, office politics, and workload are key issues that undermine their resilience. Managers in retail and other industries need to learn, understand and refine the resilience skills and adaptive behaviours required to overcome and deal with challenges in this rapidly changing world (Meynaar et al., 2021).

Managers in the South African retail industry face stress due to high turnover, increasing diversity, and challenges in meeting seasonal demand (Meynaar et al., 2021). Long hours, work-life imbalance, poorly educated staff, and low retention rates, as well as low productivity, are additional stressors (Meynaar et al., 2021). Responsibilities and managerial level expectations in retail have grown considerably (Giri & Chheda, 2019). Resilient managers face work challenges and support productivity and the organisational bottom line. Conversely, managers with low resilience are more likely to experience difficulties in coping, stress, and burnout (Ojo et al., 2021).

Given their central role in coordinating people and results, managers are pivotal to a company's success. It could be argued that a high-pressure industry like retail would require an even higher level of resilience from managers and staff. Especially in the retail industry, managers need to be resilient in their work to achieve the necessary results (Ojo et al., 2021).

Extensive research has been conducted on employee resilience in organisations and high-stress environments, including nurses in the medical environment, police officers, and firefighters (Freedman, 2004; Peres et al., 2011; Vanhove et al., 2015). However, there is a gap in the literature regarding managers' personal resilience and coping strategies in the South African retail industry.

The specific problem is that the personal resilience and active coping strategies of managers in the South African retail industry have not been explored in the literature. Managers experience pressure from their supervisors, employees, customers, family members, and the complex South African retail environment. Managers with low levels of personal resilience struggle to cope with both internal and external challenges (Lombard, 2025). Employees' and team members' engagement, satisfaction, productivity, and resilience are influenced, to a great extent, by the actions of managers (Gallup, 2023). The researcher investigated the

managerial outlooks that are likely to significantly affect managers' occupations, well-being, and personal lives.

1.4 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

Jangsiriwattana (2021) defines resilience as the ability to recover from, learn from, and overcome setbacks, challenges, and mistakes. Workplace behaviours, attitudes, and social supports are the building blocks for learning and developing workplace resilience (Fernandez, 2016). Personal resilience, the ability to cope with and adapt to sudden and complex challenges in the world, is, therefore, an essential skill (Meynaar et al., 2021).

Buckingham (2020) found that 96% of a 25,000-employee survey across 25 countries indicated that during a complex, unforeseen situation like the COVID-19 pandemic, a great deal of changes were taking place. The more changes individuals had to adapt to, the more resilient they were. This, in turn, highlights the importance of managers communicating the changes and uncertainties that employees face at work to help them adapt. According to Bakker and Demerouti (2009), job and personal resources are key drivers of work engagement and satisfaction.

Resilience is a core personal resource that positively impacts work engagement. Engagement is a prerequisite for managers to respond rapidly to changing circumstances. Resilience enables managers to cope with the effects of severe emotional strain, as well as the exhaustion that accompanies a physically demanding job (Bakker et al., 2008).

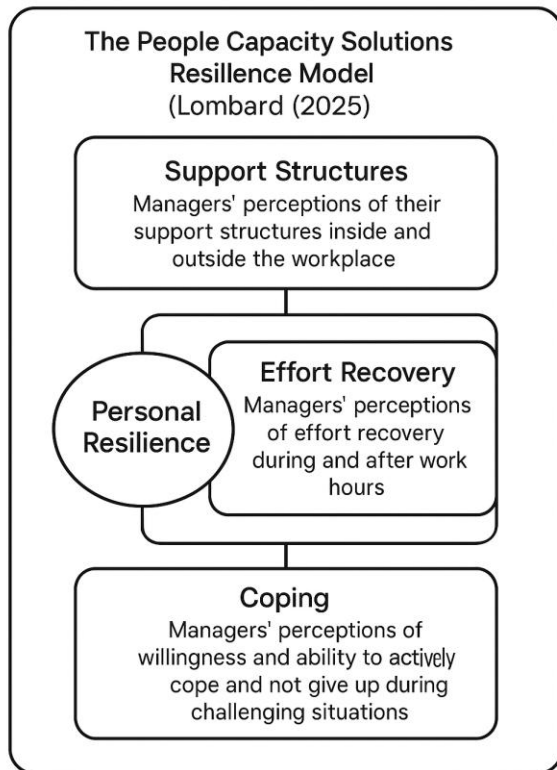
Ovans (2015) states that 90% of personal resilience is attained intrinsically and 50% from meaningful relationships, while less than 10% from the current organisation. It has been noted that work disengagement and a lack of personal resilience can be counteracted if managers perceive that the organisation advocates for them (Jangsiriwattana, 2021). Resilient managers effectively manage the work and life stressors that often lead to increased productivity.

They draw on cognitive, emotional, and behavioural capacities to maintain performance under strain and to operate in a complex retail environment (PCS, 2023). They also need to remain resilient in the face of adversity, pressure, and stress, and be ready to recover after setbacks (Jangsiriwattana, 2021).

The People Capacity Solutions Resilience framework identifies three dimensions of personal resilience (Lombard, 2025). First, managers' perceptions of support structures inside and outside the workplace. Second, managers' perceptions of effort recovery during and after work.

Third, managers' perceptions of their own willingness and ability to cope and not give up in challenging situations. These dimensions are examined in the literature review.

Figure 1-1: Conceptual framework



In South African retail, the ability to bounce back from challenges is influenced by the support systems a manager has, both in and outside the workplace. Managers face the challenges of long hours, tight deadlines and targets, and fluctuating customer demands, along with the pressures of family, health, and the work-life ratio (Wilson, 2023; Vanhove et al., 2015). Finding ways to obtain support offers retail managers the emotional and pragmatic resources that help them gain some control over the overwhelming demands of the job.

In the People Capacity Solutions Resilience framework, the definition of resilience is somewhat relational, with the degree and quality of support being central (Lombard, 2025). Supervisors, colleagues, and teams provide support from the inside (Meintjes, 2016). During challenging periods, clear guidance and uniform expectations from line managers provide resources and predictability, aiding in mood regulation. Recognition of effort enhances engagement and fosters a state of flow. Managers, when trust is present, work with increased productivity and motivation under pressure (Meintjes, 2016).

Retail managers face similar workplace challenges that contribute to high levels of pressure and stress. Through collaborative relationships, managers can support each other with problem-solving interventions, encouragement, and the exchange of active coping strategies (Martson & Martson, 2018). Managers who do not function in isolation but instead collaborate with managerial colleagues at their level as a team are more resilient (Gallup, 2020). Hence, managers in the retail industry should engage and seek support from peers at their managerial level. Fostering such managerial relationships might contribute positively to higher levels of personal resilience and active coping strategies among managers in the South African retail industry (Martson & Martson, 2018).

The South African retail industry is characterised by its strict deadlines, targets, and result-driven orientation, with subordinates who report to retail managers playing a crucial role in the support structure (Flade et al., 2014). Subordinates need to complete tasks promptly and to the required standards. Pressure is relieved on the managers knowing that their subordinates could be trusted with their duties (Gallup, 2020). Managers who have healthy relationships with their subordinates are more resilient, as they receive the support they need (Flade et al., 2014).

Managers also rely on family, friends, and community, whose support helps them face difficult periods and persist through strain (Hellfeldt et al., 2020). These connections help view difficult situations constructively and encourage positive emotions, physically and psychologically (Abbott et al., 2022). In the South African retail context, where internal workplace support is available, resilience is also strengthened by dependable external networks (Lombard, 2025). Managers with strong support on all fronts can better navigate the intricacies of their roles, both within the organisation and in their external responsibilities. Managers who perceive they possess such support systems endure with greater resilience in the face of workplace challenges and adversity. The recognition and positive reinforcement of such support systems will likely enhance the individual well-being, work-life integration, and overall organisational effectiveness of these managers in South African retail (Vanhove et al., 2015).

Personal resilience is about having the ability to accumulate enough energy to stop, rest, and start again when needed (Achor & Gielan, 2016). Equating rest to recovery seems to ignore the reality of work and leisure activities, where managers eventually return to a state of high strain (Sonnentag, 2018). Positively, and to the extent that recovery is possible, this is downward strain from work, leisure, and activities. Recovery, effort, and even rest will be possible, to a small extent, during work when managers can recuperate from the various demands and stressors of their job. Chan et al. (2022) particularly cite managers in the South

African retail industry as an example. For such managers, the level and pace of work is relentless, making rest a critical component to recovery. Ensuring rest is woven into the rhythm of work is needed to cope and function within the environment. Repeatedly, when work demands, time pressures, and limited resources are the norm, as they are in the South African retail sector, time for short breaks, and thus recovery, will not be scheduled (Sonnentag, 2018).

When managers take time off, these are regarded as moments when they are not facing the demands of the job (Parker et al., 2021). Even for a short time, the activity comprising the physical break must allow the manager to recuperate fully (Sonnentag, 2018).

Recovery from effort and the resulting positive changes in emotional exhaustion, well-being, and physical health should not be underestimated (Sonnentag et al., 2022). Apart from breaks, recovering from effort may be influenced by how the work is organised. In the retail sector, the upper management must entrust their managers with the initiative to recover, as this is associated with greater autonomy in their work (Parker et al., 2021). The retail managers' ability to self-regulate their fatigue, along with autonomy, is a cornerstone in the implementation of energy management strategies (Chan et al., 2022). Sonnentag et al. (2022) define after-work recovery as rest that occurs outside work hours, such as leisure time, vacations, hobbies, and family time. However, South African retail managers work long hours, including on weekends and public holidays, making it extremely difficult for them to fully recover after work (Giri & Chheda, 2019).

Managers in the South African retail industry often struggle to psychologically detach from work, as their responsibilities persist even when they are not at work (Sonnentag et al., 2022). Managers need to be accessible to their superiors, customers, and subordinates (Chan et al., 2022). Sonnentag et al. (2022) categorised effort recovery activities into high- and low-profiling categories. High-profile recovery refers to activities such as attending to home and family responsibilities, whereas low-profile recovery relates to activities like exercise and taking holidays. Sonnentag et al. (2022) argue that managers in the South African retail industry who wish to maintain personal resilience must implement sustainable effort recovery strategies both during and after work.

According to Meintjes (2016), managers with high levels of personal resilience are less emotionally unstable, more adaptable to change, and more actively able to cope with uncertainty. The People Capacity Solutions Resilience framework emphasises an active approach to managing pressure and stress. Active coping is the foundation of personal resilience, and managers in the retail industry who practise it take a direct, rational approach

to dealing with their problems (Lombard, 2025). PCS (2023) defines active coping as a manager's ability to understand the challenge cognitively, recognise the specific issues they are facing, and identify the possible causes. However, numerous managers in the South African retail industry are struggling to cope with the cognitive complexity of their work. Active coping means a manager understands the emotions this challenge elicits (Lombard, 2025). Managers in the South African retail industry are struggling to cope with the emotional complexity of their work and personal lives. Active coping refers to managers who take action to address challenges, either on their own or with the help of others (Martson & Martson, 2018). They decide to take steps to resolve the matter. According to PCS (2023), if pressure and stress are not managed, it may result in emotional and physical burnout.

1.5 CONTRIBUTION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Managers play a key role in employees' engagement, job satisfaction, and resilience. That is why this study focuses on how managers view personal resilience and their coping mechanisms across their careers, personal, and health spheres. This study also focuses on managerial resilience in the South African retail context, aiming to address the existing gap in retail research in South Africa.

The study contributes theoretically by clarifying how managers understand and practise coping in a high-pressure retail context. It also offers practical and industry value, as the findings reflect managers' day-to-day realities and inform interventions that strengthen coping, support well-being, and sustain performance in retail workplaces.

1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1.6.1 Primary objective

To explore and identify managers' perceptions of their personal resilience and coping strategies in a South African retail company through semi-structured interviews.

1.6.2 Secondary objectives

- To explore managers' perceptions of their willingness and ability to cope and persist in challenging situations actively.
- To identify the internal and external support structures that influence managers' resilience.
- To discover managers' effort recovery strategies during and after work hours.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.7.1 Primary research question

How do managers in a South African retail company perceive their personal resilience and the coping strategies they utilise to cope with workplace and life demands actively?

1.7.2 Secondary research questions

- In what ways do managers perceive their willingness and ability to cope and persist through challenging situations actively?
- What internal and external support structures do managers perceive as essential to sustain their personal resilience (e.g., supervisors, peers, family, community, suppliers)?
- What effort recovery strategies do managers utilise during and after work (e.g., micro-breaks, psychological detachment, sleep), and how do these practices help them restore capacity?

1.8 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A paradigm is a basic belief system and theoretical frame that rests on assumptions about ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). This study is situated in an interpretivist paradigm, guided by ontological and epistemological positions that shape the overall approach.

Ontologically, the study recognises personal resilience and coping in South African retail, acknowledging that reality is multiple and socially constructed through experience and context (Kamal, 2019; Pretorius, 2024). Constructivism supports this view by treating knowledge as co-created by the researcher and interviewees, whereas relativism accepts the coexistence of different, situated perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Epistemologically, the interpretivist stance positions the researcher within the process, aiming to understand meanings and lived experience rather than to derive universal laws. The study, therefore, draws on the perspectives of interviewees to generate insights into resilience and coping strategies among retail managers.

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

For this study, the primary data collection tools will be unstructured interviews and open-ended survey questions. By selecting qualitative research and specifically unstructured interviews, I

aim to capture the respondents' experiences and the meaning they associate with those experiences, rather than capturing quantifiable variables (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Personal resilience and coping are largely uncharted areas among retail managers in South Africa; thus, this study adopts an exploratory orientation. In such contexts, qualitative exploratory work suggests that researchers be open, flexible, and adaptive in their understanding (Ahmadzai, 2020; Saunders et al., 2019).

The rationale for a qualitative exploratory research design lies in the study's aim of understanding the respondents' inner thoughts and perceptions. Such a design captures the interviewees' context and perspectives, rather than the researchers' pre-defined constructs (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Qualitative inquiry privileges descriptive depth over broad generalisability, and exploratory designs allow new lines of inquiry to be followed as narratives unfold (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Di Matteo, 2019).

Semi-structured interviews serve as the primary method to balance comparability across interviews, allowing interviewees to elaborate in their own terms. This approach combines structure with flexibility and is well-suited to sensitive or personal topics, enabling probing, clarification, and attention to nuance (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021; Bryman, 2016; Reid-Searl & Happell, 2012).

This study's data analysis is guided by an interpretive logic consistent with the methodology, with attention to patterns of meaning across the interviews and to the context shaping those meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). ATLAS.ti version 25 will be used as a tool to organise data and support systematic coding and retrieval; its role is instrumental rather than determinative and is described neutrally in the methodology (Frieze, 2019). The overall design, therefore, aligns the interpretivist stance, qualitative methodology, and exploratory logic to address the research aim and questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Saunders et al., 2019).

1.10 RESEARCH STRATEGY

As identified in the problem statement, a gap existed in the literature regarding managers' personal resilience and coping strategies in the South African retail industry. A descriptive qualitative research design enables the researcher to further explore a subject that has received little attention in previous studies (Owusu-Ansah, 2018). This strategy also allows interviewees to contribute to the advancement of new knowledge in this field of study (Reid-Searl & Happell, 2012).

The research strategy employed in this study is descriptive in nature. Although many scholars have addressed resilience, each study was unique, and therefore, not all current theories were relevant to the sample used in this study (Di Mattea, 2019). This study is unique in that it focuses on managers in the South African retail sector and examines how they perceive personal resilience and the coping mechanisms they employ.

The potential impact of uncontrolled events that could disrupt fieldwork and analysis was outlined by Ahmadzai (2020). Then, a qualitative, descriptive approach was employed, utilising semi-structured interviews, which were organised in advance to facilitate orderly data gathering (Creswell, 2014).

1.11 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

For this study, purposive sampling was employed to recruit information-rich cases that aligned with the research focus (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015). The study focused on managers of a South African retail firm who can articulate personal resilience and coping (Owusu-Ansah, 2018). The criteria for inclusion specified having a minimum of one year in a management position, being at least 25 years of age, and being conversant in English, while no specifications for gender were defined (Owusu-Ansah, 2018). This homogeneous, organisation-bound purposive sampling strategy suits the phenomenon and the study goals. An information session was held to describe the study, respond to participant questions, and collect written consent.

Data saturation determined the sample size, which meant that the interviews ceased when no new themes emerged, insights were developed, and every research question was answered (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2018). In qualitative research, the metric of adequacy focuses on the depth of the data rather than its volume; within this type of research, the 10-20 interviewee range serves as a foundation for the thematically oriented qualitative analysis, all of which hinges on the complexity of the issue (Creswell, 2014). Hence, in this study, after ten interviews, data saturation was achieved.

Inclusion criteria:

- Participation is voluntary, with the understanding that the interview may be recorded (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).
- Employment as a manager in the designated retail company to maintain organisational applicability (Giri & Chheda, 2019).
- At least one year in a managerial role (Wilson, 2023).

- Sufficiently fluent in English to communicate and for data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Exclusion criteria:

- Unwilling to participate (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).
- Less than one year of managerial experience (Wilson, 2023).
- Insufficient English fluency for an in-depth interview (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

1.12 RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

The recruitment strategy outlines the steps taken to recruit study participants and the selection process that was followed. Even though different approaches were available. The researcher approached the gatekeeper, who is the head of learning and development at the South African retail company. A Microsoft Teams meeting was scheduled with the gatekeeper to explain the purpose of the study, the process, and potential implications. The researcher later received written permission. Following that, an independent mediator emailed the eligible managers to invite them to participate. The gatekeeper subsequently provided a list of the managers willing to participate.

The independent mediator was responsible for invitations, subsequent correspondence, and informed-consent emails. For transparency, the process was explained to the gatekeeper and all prospective interviewees. Participation was voluntary, and refusal would be a non-issue regarding their job performance, responsibilities, or duties. During recruitment, the researcher also shared the anticipated benefits of the study with managers, employees, and the company, which would aid current and future managers within the South African retail sector and employees. Findings could support current and future managers in South African retail and may indirectly benefit employees, their families, and the wider organisation.

1.13 INFORMED CONSENT PROCESS

An independent gatekeeper contacted potential interviewees with information about the study and a note that participation was voluntary. Those interested in learning more were invited to meet the researcher, who guided them through the process, answered their questions, and provided clarifications. Those who agree to them signed an informed-consent form.

As per Creswell and Creswell (2022), the consent form explained the study's purpose, scope, and potential risks, while also addressing confidentiality and the voluntary nature of participation. The interviewees were guided through the process, and only after affirming they were ready to participate did the researcher explain information gathering and the

interviewee's role (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The researcher's role was also outlined. The researcher, who was trained, familiar with the objectives, and independent of the South African retail company, conducted the semi-structured interviews.

1.14 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Semi-structured interviews maintained focus while allowing for the exploration of other ideas. This facilitated a better understanding of managers' perceptions of personal resilience and coping (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). In line with the research objectives, an interview guide containing open-ended questions was developed to enable participants to elaborate on their experiences and provide detailed responses. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in a neutral, private location that was away from the participants' workplaces. For effective concentration on the discussion, interviews were audio recorded (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

The same researcher conducted every interview to ensure consistency in qualitative interviewing, taking into consideration the researcher's knowledge of the study's aims (Creswell, 2014). Rapport was established with the interviewees, and they were thanked after the interview. The subsequent steps were then communicated to them. Ethical considerations were incorporated by ensuring informed consent, maintaining confidentiality of the data, and providing interviewees with the outcomes promptly (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). To capture the tone, energy, and non-verbal cues during the interviews, the researcher made field notes in addition to the audio recordings.

1.15 DATA ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis was done based on the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The recordings of the semi-structured interviews were transcribed to create accurate records of what the interviewees said (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). To support validity, field notes documented the non-verbal cues (Creswell, 2014). The dataset was organised, and systematic coding and retrieval were facilitated by ATLAS.ti version 25. The program identified the codes, patterns, and recurring themes, but remained passive; the researcher alone made the interpretations (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Frieze, 2019).

The themes were refined to the point of transparency and coherence, as Braun and Clarke (2006) and Creswell & Creswell (2022) cited empirical evidence as the basis for this approach. The analysis was centred on the South African retail sector and the managers to understand the personal resilience and coping aspects.

Creswell and Poth (2018) outlined possible trustworthiness through reflexivity, field notes, and journaling, and advised on keeping potential bias in check. To bolster dependability, an audit trail was used to outline decisions regarding the development of themes, and feedback from an experienced peer reviewer was incorporated into the analysis (Freeks, 2017).

1.16 MEASURING INSTRUMENTS: VALIDITY, RELIABILITY, AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Creswell (2014) states that systematic procedures that yield accurate outcomes support the qualitative aspects of validity. In this instance, validation worthiness is based on the principles of credibility, transferability, and confirmability. Reliability is an attribute of a method and its outcomes, which is evident when a different researcher analysing the same data with the same methodology reaches the same conclusion (Leung, 2015). The reliability of the study was enhanced by achieving data saturation during the semi-structured interviews. From the perspective of Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness encompasses the blended aspects of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, which are uniformly applied throughout.

Credibility stems from the use of well-formulated semi-structured questions and appropriateness of the interviewing style and technique. As for transferability, it was facilitated through the detailed and context-sensitive descriptions solicited via open-ended questions. Dependability was achieved by using the same instruments with each of the interviewees. In contrast, confirmability was achieved by presenting the study's conclusions based on the interviewees' voices and perspectives, rather than those of the researcher. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), peer debriefing, journaling, and reflexivity help maintain the researcher's focus on personal assumptions. Contexts and meanings were supported through field notes that recorded non-verbal communication and other contextual elements. An audit trail, which contained the documented rationale for the various analytical choices made, was created for transparency. The constructive input of a peer reviewer also contributed to the credibility and dependability of the results.

1.17 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Formal, clear, and transparent frameworks, as well as cooperative expectations, are fundamental (Ng, 2006). This study focused on managers' perceptions and used interviewees' responses as a primary data source. It focused on one retail organisation in South Africa. After providing a briefing for the study via Microsoft Teams, permission for the study was obtained from the gatekeeper, who is the head of learning and development. After receiving written permission, an independent mediator contacted the eligible managers to invite them to

participate in the study. Volunteers were provided an informed-consent letter and were made aware of the POPIA protocol.

According to the agreement, interview subjects were guaranteed confidentiality, one of the essential elements of the agreement (Creswell & Creswell, 2002). Assigning each interviewee a specific code allowed them to identify themselves and answer questions more freely, thereby enhancing the accuracy of the data provided (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). In all outputs, the organisation retained complete anonymity.

All interviews were transcribed by the researcher and an independent, experienced transcriber, both of whom signed confidentiality agreements. Data was collected in accordance with South African regulations regarding the electronic storage of data, which has a duration of five years, after which the data is to be disposed of securely as per the electronic disposal regulations. Data was collected on a password-protected storage device.

1.18 LAYOUT OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1: Introduction

The introduction details the significance of the study by presenting the topic, problem statement, aim, and objectives (Klopper, 2008).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review outlines pertinent theoretical literature that underscores the necessity of the research study. The researcher reviews prior research, discusses the current study's contribution to the body of knowledge, and outlines directions for future research (Klopper, 2008).

Chapter 3: Research methodology

This chapter outlines the research paradigm, approach, and strategy, as well as the timeline and the procedures for data collection and analysis, and how the measures in the research support validity and reliability. The chapter clarifies how the research and analysis are to be carried out.

Chapter 4: Reporting of findings and interpretation

The conclusions of the interviews have been articulated and interpreted in a way that lays the foundation for the discussion and conclusion to follow.

Chapter 5: Discussion, conclusion and recommendations

The most important findings are discussed and placed within the context of theory and practice.
The conclusion reiterates the study's results, and the recommendations follow.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW ON PERSONAL RESILIENCE AND COPING STRATEGIES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an integrated review of the literature on the personal resilience of South African retail employees' managers, as well as the coping mechanisms employed. The focus was on managers' perceptions of personal resilience, internal and external recovery, effort support, and recovery structures that enable active coping within a South African retail company. These issues reflect the study's objective of investigating how managers perceive personal resilience and the coping mechanisms they employ to deal with the demands of their jobs and personal lives. In this chapter, an attempt is made to anchor the research objectives within a cohesive structure that interweaves the theoretical and empirical literature, while also outlining the literature on managerial resilience as a key component of the retail industry's research imperative.

Personal resilience is the ability to respond to complicated and unexpected conditions (Meynaar et al., 2021, p. 2) and to counter challenges while maintaining functionality and performance (Cabrera-Aguilar et al., 2023, p. 3). Personal resilience is the ability to learn from mistakes and setbacks, and to move toward a goal or task, using those lessons as a guide (Ovans, 2015). According to Jangsiriwattana (2021, p. 3), Personal resilience is the ability to recover from setbacks, interruptions, and mistakes. Perceptions of support systems, the capacity to control emotions, and the ability to maintain optimism in the face of adversity are all factors that contribute to personal resilience, according to Fernandez (2016). Workplace-based habits, attitudes, and social support are the foundation of personal resilience (Fernandez, 2016).

A survey of 25,000 employees across 25 countries found that individuals exhibit high levels of resilience when facing complex and unforeseen circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Buckingham, 2020). The unknown and uncertainty of COVID-19 were much worse in our minds than the reality of being in that situation; 96% of individuals reported that there were plenty of changes taking place around them – the more changes they had to absorb, the higher their resilience levels (Buckingham, 2020). This indicates that managers must be open and honest about the changes and uncertainties employees face in companies, enabling them to be aware and act with resilience. According to Ovans (2015), 90% of people attain their resilience intrinsically, 50% from meaningful relationships, and less than 10% from their current organisation. If managers could see that the organisation supported and cared about them, it would improve work engagement and build personal resilience, which leads to high

performance (Jangsiriwattana, 2021, p.2). It could, therefore, be argued that resilient managers could effectively manage work and life pressures, resulting in increased productivity.

Job and personal resources drive engagement, satisfaction, and motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2009). In this study, resilience is viewed as a core personal resource that sustains engagement, as managers must adapt quickly to shifting conditions. It helps them absorb high emotional demands and physical fatigue (Bakker et al., 2008). Over time, steady performance and well-being rely on both internal capability and access to external resources, which together enable resilient responses (Zolli & Healy, 2012).

Managers set direction and align day-to-day actions with short- and long-term goals (Algahtani, 2014, p. 74). They achieve results through people by coordinating efforts and utilising resources effectively (PCS, 2023). They also allocate resources and embed workable processes to deliver outcomes (Wajdi, 2017). In retail, this plays out across both in-store and online channels (Rhodes & Brien, 2015). In this context, the retail industry refers to businesses that sell various products to customers in licensed, registered, and tax-compliant retail spaces (Goyal & Gupta, 2016). Furthermore, the South African retail company specialises in selling goods and services directly to end-users for personal use (Krisnadewi & Soewarno, 2020).

2.2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF RESILIENCE

Resilience is an individual's, team's, and organisation's capacity to withstand, adapt to, and recover from setbacks, adversity, and challenges inside and outside the organisation (Wagnild & Young, 1993; Zolli & Healy, 2012). Resilience is the ability to maintain performance while dealing with psychological and emotional stress and behavioural pressures (Luthans et al., 2006, 2017). For this study, the researcher posed questions based on three main theories of resilience: competence-based trait theory, psychological capital theory, and the theory of resilience and relational load. These theories reflect the research questions.

2.2.1 Competence-based trait theory

The competence-based trait theory of resilience views it as a collection of characteristics or attributes, such as optimism, self-efficacy, and emotional control, that help a person to withstand and deal with challenges. Every person has or may acquire distinct psychological qualities that facilitate stress management and optimum functioning within challenging situations. (Oshio et al., 2003; Wagnild & Young, 1993). Competence-Based Trait Theory (CBTT) argues that one's performance is a function of how much a person withstands the traits that go with the competencies of a given role. Openness to experience, emotional regulation,

and stress tolerance are traits that define a person's state of mind, conduct, and performance in difficult situations. (Flint-Taylor et al., 2014).

Resilience fits neatly with the competence-based trait theory. Managers examine, adapt, and apply their individual traits to arrive at an answer to the unique and changing circumstances. A manager's personality traits and competencies, paired with the needed skills, guide the answer and the response technique. If the required skills are not present, then the traits and skills are blocked, and as a result, the skills and traits are ineffective in addressing challenges and difficulties. In a South African distribution firm, managers who planned and prioritised tasks increased employees' willingness, openness, and flexibility towards new tasks, which in turn led to improved job involvement, satisfaction, and engagement (Flint-Taylor et al., 2014).

Employees in coffee shops in Indonesia showed positive personal and organisational performance. Managers and employees showed high openness and personal resilience, as well as stronger relational competencies (Putri & Huwae, 2023). Martinelli and Tagliazucchi (2019) discuss how merchants with market-oriented traits in Italy, after an earthquake, recovered their stocks and utilised their social capital skills to bounce back.

Brazilian supermarket managers maintained operational efficiency by integrating stress management and resource allocation skills (Silva & da Silva, 2025). During the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders of small US stores who combined identity-based passion with tech skills successfully maintained their online presence, while their competitors struggled (Childs et al., 2022).

The resilience framework displayed in coffee shops, retailers in Italy and Brazil, and small stores in the US depicts resilience as two interconnected phases. This quality sets the mental attitude of managers and employees, which defines their curiosity, calmness, and persistence. The competency executes high performance through planned actions and implementation, such as adapting with diversification in suppliers and sales channels. When the two align, managers are more resilient as they maintain steady operations and recover quickly from setbacks.

CBTT, therefore, supports resilience research with a precise mechanism. Traits motivate managers; competencies drive the motivation of managers. Companies in the retail industry demonstrated high levels of resilience when their managers possessed openness, emotional stability, self-awareness, and social awareness. Furthermore, managers who had good conflict resolution skills and utilised resources effectively were also seen as resilient. This trait–skill

combination enables managers to maintain high performance during setbacks and bounce back once the disruption has passed. In the context of this dissertation, this theory suggests that South African retail managers may possess or develop specific personality characteristics that inherently enhance their resilience in high-pressure environments.

2.2.2 Psychological capital theory

Luthans et al. (2007) developed the Psychological Capital Theory, which was defined as an individual's positive psychological state resulting from the development and integration of four psychological resources. Afzal et al. (2020) believe that Hobfoll's (2002) description of psychological resources also contributed to the development of the Psychological Capital Theory. The Psychological Capital Theory comprises four psychological resources: hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism (Luthans et al., 2007). These four psychological resources were collectively referred to as the HERO elements (Avey et al., 2010; Hu et al., 2018; Luthans et al., 2008; Luthans et al., 2017).

Hope was seen as an individual's, team's, and organisation's motivation and willingness to achieve desired results in challenging or uncertain situations (Luthans et al., 2007, p. 113). Individuals who maintained hope adapted to setbacks through active coping strategies and were perceived as resilient (Avey et al., 2011; Luthans et al., 2017). Self-efficacy refers to a person's belief in their ability to perform and complete tasks successfully (Luthans et al., 2007, 2017). It relates to the ability to sustain effort in the face of adversity and is linked to functioning better in a role during difficult times (Luthans et al., 2007, 2017). Consistently, higher self-efficacy correlates with proactive behaviour, job satisfaction, and work engagement (Avey et al., 2011; Hu et al., 2018). When resilience is developed, it enables individuals and teams to function effectively during difficult or uncertain times (Luthans et al., 2006, 2017). Organisations with resilient employees experience lower employee turnover, lower stress levels, and higher overall employee well-being (Avey et al., 2010; Hu et al., 2018).

Optimism refers to the perception that people view challenges and setbacks as temporary, resulting from a positive attitude towards life (Luthans et al., 2007; Avey et al., 2011). Optimistic individuals and teams exhibit high levels of motivation, perseverance, and psychological well-being, which contribute to high performance and engaged members within organisations (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). According to Luthans et al. (2007), the four positive psychological resources meet the criteria of being research- and theory-based, as well as validly measurable. The requirements were also met with individuals' attitudes, performance and behaviours (2011). Psychological resources were found to be correlated with positive emotions, purpose, and high levels of job satisfaction (Afzal et al., 2020).

The Psychological Capital Theory suggests that individuals with high psychological capital are more proactive, engaged in their personal and professional lives, and perform efficiently under pressure (Avey et al., 2011). The last section of the criteria was the contribution to well-being, which Paul et al. (2023) believe refers to both organisational and personal life well-being. Psychological capital has been shown to support sustained psychological well-being over time (Avey et al., 2010). Psychologically healthy workplaces are reported to have lower stress levels and, in contrast, heightened levels of engagement, satisfaction, and performance (Avey et al., 2011; Luthans et al., 2008). Authentic leadership is at the heart of this. Acting consistently and communicating clearly are ways managers foster trust, integrity, and transparency. This climate fosters a hopeful environment where the pillars of psychological capital are leveraged: efficacy, resilience, and optimism. All are predictors of improved performance, well-being, and engagement (Hu et al., 2018). Psychological capital flows from the support structures. Reinforcing the HERO elements, satisfaction, commitment, and performance are linked to emotional support and constructive feedback from supervisors, peers, and subordinates. Paul et al. (2023) identify community, family, and friends as crucial external resources, alongside the outlined networks.

Psychological Capital considers resilience as something that can be cultivated, rather than something that one has or does not have (Luthans et al., 2006). In practice, it helps people adjust to setbacks and ongoing change, and higher Psychological Capital (PsyCap) is linked to stronger engagement and performance (Hu et al., 2018; Luthans et al., 2006; Luthans et al., 2008). Managers grow these capacities through credible support, clear expectations, coaching, and resourcing (Luthans et al., 2007). Together, hope, efficacy, optimism, and resilience provide a practical route to recovery and more stable well-being for individuals and teams (Avey et al., 2010; Hu et al., 2018; Luthans et al., 2007, 2017). In South African retail's high-pressure, fast-changing context, with high turnover, lean staffing, and socioeconomic volatility, validated tools such as the Resilience Scale for Adults help target development where it counts (Hjemdal et al., 2011). Where organisational and leadership support is reliable, managers tend to stay engaged, productive, and adaptable (Avey et al., 2011; Luthans et al., 2008).

2.2.3 Theory of resilience and relational load (TRRL)

The Theory of Resilience and Relational Load explain how people and their close support systems manage stress through shared appraisal, communication, and ongoing relationship maintenance (Afifi et al., 2016). Coping improves when meaningful relationships share

responsibility for setbacks and demands (Awonuga, 2020). The primary mechanism is open, supportive communication that fosters trust, allows for collaborative problem-solving, and reinforces resilience under pressure (Afifi et al., 2016; Arroyo et al., 2023; Awonuga, 2020; Rubinsky, 2019).

Relational load refers to the strain that accumulates from the prolonged depletion of emotional, psychological, and relational resources (Afifi et al., 2016). The continued investment of effort in meaningful relationships counteracts this depletion, expands emotional resources, and equips partners on both a relational and psychological level to face potential adversities (Arroyo et al., 2023; Rubinsky, 2019). The negative consequences of under-investment are well documented: parenting relationships in ill-defined roles with foster-caregiving and couples who did not maintain their relationship reported high parenting stress (Arroyo et al., 2023), and families facing Type 1 diabetes experienced rising strain with isolation as one or more members tried to cope alone (Afifi et al., 2018).

Encouraging and supportive interactions minimise relational load across work and home domains, leading to more positive engagement (Afifi et al., 2016; Arroyo et al., 2023). Afifi's research on long-distance couples also associates supportive communication with less relational distress and greater resilience (Awonuga, 2020). Resilient individuals rely on others to help them navigate difficult experiences, rather than carrying the entire burden themselves; involving partners, friends, family, and co-workers during high-pressure situations helps build more effective coping strategies, relational closeness, and contributes to decreases in stress (Afifi et al., 2016, 2018; Awonuga, 2020).

Close, well-kept bonds neutralise shock and aid recovery. Where managers show concern, team cohesion and external contacts' trust in the organisation rise, leading to increased employee resilience (Afifi et al., 2016, 2018). Resilience is understood from a collaborative perspective in theories as a relational construct within uncertain frameworks, drawing from a communal focus, a shared appraisal of the stressor, and relational investment over time (Arroyo et al., 2023; Awonuga, 2020). Positive emotions within and from the external support system buffer terminal and intermediate stress. Easing the relational load fortifies resilience by replenishing the emotions and relational resources people need to confront challenging situations (Afifi et al., 2016). The arrangement illustrates how relational dynamics enhance the protective elements of well-being and provides actionable insights for the South African retail context. Here, managers face considerable operational, emotional, and work–life conflict pressure. When managers withdraw from relational maintenance, the relational load increases, and the core emotional resources are depleted increasingly.

2.3 PEOPLE CAPACITY SOLUTIONS RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK

The People Capacity Solutions (PCS) Resilience Framework draws from the three key resilience theories discussed above, particularly active coping, support structures, and effort recovery. This study presents robust managerial resilience (Lombard, 2025).

Retail managers deal with ongoing pressure. High demands are coupled with tight resource constraints (Meynaar et al., 2021). In South Africa, those contextual pressures are compounded by weak support structures and volatile markets. Managers deal with a broadening role scope, including aggressive targets, long working hours, demanding customers, human resource problems, and performance evaluations that are continually being scrutinised. Research indicates that three effective coping strategies for maintaining resilience are problem-solving, emotional regulation, and adaptive learning. These are not standalone strategies but are part of a larger system of self-regulation and proactive action systems. This chapter primarily relies on local and international studies to describe how managers employ coping strategies at the boundaries of operational capacity and psychological resilience. Problem-focused coping reduces the pressure of stressors through task-oriented behaviours of planning, prioritisation, and problem-solving.

Several studies documented these strategies. For instance, Slovak trade managers showed a strong inclination towards active coping by approach rather than by avoidance. During high-stress periods, Slovak managers used task delegation and proactive planning (Birknerová & Čigárska, 2021). Comparably, Australian middle managers increased their personal resilience by employing proactive strategies in time management and planning to regain control and maintain control in unpredictable situations (Frydenberg & Lewis, 2002).

In Indonesia, 57% of retail workers within a large chain took proactive initiatives and sought feedback to resolve work-related issues (Meliala et al., 2020). Managers who prioritised and planned actively showcased amplified cognitive engagement with respective workplace stressors. High personal resilience was maintained by breaking down problems and identifying their components. For managers to function with autonomy, role clarity, and explicit supportive frameworks both in and around the organisation, the successful implementation of prioritising and active planning would follow. Managers, even competent ones, often lack personal resilience and struggle to achieve target results without defined autonomy, clear roles, and explicit supportive frameworks around them.

Examining South Africa enables a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of managerial resilience. As per PCS (2023), several managers exhibited non-coping cognitive phenomena. These include poorly allocated energy, ineffective concentration and prioritisation, responsibility avoidance, and hasty, underthought actions. These phenomena collectively suggest that cognitive overload is hindering managers from solving the problem at hand. Conversely, managers described as resilient consistently engage in rational goal-directed actions, as opposed to emotionally driven or purely responsive actions (Lombard, 2025). The transition from passive to active coping is what defines sustained personal resilience.

Retailing under pressure relies on emotional regulation. To cope with daily stress, acceptance, appropriate humour, and reframing are employed (Lombard, 2025). Acceptance and appropriate humour are associated with lower levels of burnout and sustained engagement (Meliala et al., 2020). Viewing setbacks as challenges can promote effort, perseverance, and informed decision-making (Junusi & Mubarak, 2020). Culturally influenced coping under unstable market conditions is evident when self-discipline and perseverance permit continued trading (Baltazar et al., 2021). In South Africa, non-coping is common: emotionally intense, depleted, impulsive, and unaware profiles can be shifted through training (PCS, 2023). Control can be strengthened through mindfulness, journaling, and emotional awareness training (Zolli & Healy, 2012). Where emotional regulation is lacking, resilience declines even when technical skill is intact. Managers require environments that facilitate emotional processing (Lombard, 2025).

Engaged managers demonstrate a passion for continuous improvement through reflection, targeted skill development, redesigning their roles, and successfully crafting their job descriptions. This sustained engagement and adaptability lead to even more impressive results (Ghosh et al., 2023). Learning encompasses both cognitive and motivational dimensions in the individual, with a focus on developing a growth mindset to enhance ability (Dweck, 2006). Mental flexibility to improve resilience through perspective shifting, reframing, and even behavioural adaptation zeal to manage the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural interfaces (Zolli & Healy, 2012). In practice, a sales decline is often viewed as an opportunity for experimentation rather than a failure (Lombard, 2025).

Technological fluency enables more service and sales pivots and is associated with increased resilience (Smith et al., 2022; Retailers' Response to Digital Transformation, 2024). In South Africa, however, many managers still face a development-access gap due to inequality, limited mentorship, and overload. Viewing resilience as a non-learnable, fixed trait discourages investment in learnable skills (Meintjes, 2016).

Interactivity is a key indicator of personal resilience, comprising the habits of planning, emotional control, and learning, and is associated with high effectiveness, stronger resilience, and lower psychological strain for the individual (Ghosh et al., 2023).

Conversely, non-coping becomes apparent when these strategies are lacking or misaligned. Cognitive overload, emotional fatigue, and stagnation follow, and managers slip into impulsive action or complete disengagement. PCS (2023) confirmed that many South African retail managers were stuck in such patterns; however, active coping can reverse this process. According to Martson and Martson (2018), active coping means understanding a problem cognitively and emotionally, taking steps to resolve it, or seeking help. It is not a personality trait; it is a behavioural commitment. Personal active coping strategies are critical for resilience in retail managers, who face daily pressures, changes, and challenges (Lombard, 2025).

Effective managers prioritise, regulate their own emotions, manage others' emotions, and keep learning through uncertainty, challenge, and setback. In both global and South African contexts, the most resilient managers use these strategies actively and in combination with one another. Success also depends on clear role definitions, continuous learning, and emotional literacy. Organisations should treat personal resilience not as a selection filter but as a competency to be developed. A prepared mind is not an accident. It is the outcome of comprehensive training, encompassing both theory and practical aspects. By helping the retail industry integrate structured problem-solving, emotional regulation, and a growth mindset, managers will learn not just to survive but to thrive under stress.

2.3.2 Internal and external support structures for resilience of retail managers

Retail managers encounter stress, change, and uncertainty daily and often experience gaps in their resilience. Such difficulties will always impact individuals, but so will the support systems designed to help them. These system gaps will always exist within the organisation, as well as outside with friends, family, and the community. Within the South African context, informal support systems that retail managers interact with, both during and outside business hours, are critical for developing and maintaining personal resilience and resilient coping strategies (Ungar, 2011). Tight deadlines, overbearing customers, long working hours, and ambitious targets, both during and outside the retail season, lead to stress and a strain imbalance (Wilson, 2023). Compounding stress will always include work–family conflict, and personal health (Vanhove et al., 2015). Such systems will always be vital for preserving and protecting one's mental health. These support systems provide coping resources that mitigate

strain and psychological stress (Dimoff et al., 2021). Systems gaps will always exist, but mental health will suffer at their hands.

Support provided by interpersonal relationships encompasses both emotional and practical dimensions, aiding individuals during challenges both inside and outside the workplace. Such ties help managers navigate uncertainties and challenging times (Zolli & Healy, 2012). Ungar (2011) argues that during times of crisis, support frameworks help managers maintain a steady emotional balance and a sense of belonging. This suggests that emotional, psychological, and practical support is necessary for retail managers during challenging times to foster resilience (Zolli & Healy, 2012). The People Capacity Solutions Resilience Model emphasises that resilience must be viewed in the context of the support and systems, both internal and external, that are available to the individual (Lombard, 2025).

The internal work support structure entails the retail managers' direct superiors, colleagues, subordinate staff, and the managerial peers at the same hierarchical level (Fisher & Walker, 2022). Each of these support structure members made a meaningful contribution to the personal resilience of South African retail managers (Meintjes, 2016). The role of support from these individuals in the workplace enhanced the managers' pressure and stress coping mechanisms (Kelloway et al., 2023). The more formally planned systems of support, such as those provided by HRM practices, further support the internal resilience frameworks of managers (Kowalski & Loretto, 2017). Workplace support also helps managers who need a sense of belonging, which promotes positive mental health.

Isolation can be detrimental to your mental health without social support systems in place, potentially resulting in depression, anxiety, and anger (Kelloway et al., 2023). Internal support systems enable managers in South African retail to respond effectively to and adjust to intense internal and external challenges (Zhu et al., 2025). The emotionally supportive internal systems help managers regulate their emotions and manage coping and crisis avoidance (Cheyroux et al., 2025). Such systems are linked to the enhancement of job satisfaction and effective effort recovery, thereby promoting personal resilience over the years, which in turn leads to the satisfaction of the systems (Zhu et al., 2025). The absence of these systems, however, will result in disengagement and an increase in dissatisfaction, burnout, and turnover (Abugre, 2017). In the South African retail industry, structured internal support systems help managers lead under pressure, cope with demanding conditions, and maintain morale and engagement (Karatepe & Olugbade, 2017).

In recent studies, four internal dimensions have been identified that help develop managerial resilience: organisational learning and knowledge systems, internal brand and culture, operational infrastructure, and capability development (Biedenbach et al., 2022; Martinelli et al., 2019; Robertson et al., 2022). Together, these dimensions create an ecosystem that ensures well-being, flexibility, and sustained performance.

The processes of achieving an organisation's learning objectives and learning systems create a strong foundation. Learning-oriented cultures, scenario-based practice, disciplined innovation, and especially digital maturity enhance agility, while continuous learning, knowledge integration, and market-oriented approaches increasingly enable managers to manage disruptions (Martinelli et al., 2018; Sandada, 2015). Digital leadership and digitally integrated information systems provide resilient crisis innovation by rapid access to actionable information and innovative crisis response (Robertson et al., 2022).

Culture and the internal brand, through shared values, trust, and communication, shape adaptive and resilient systems. Unity of purpose under pressure springs from a shared vision and value congruence (Boers and Brozovic, 2024; Ljungkvist et al., 2024). Distributed decision-making, stress buffering, and strong collective resilience systems are built through cohesive engagement systems, including forums, learning groups, and regular communication (Biedenbach et al., 2022; Välikangas & Romme, 2013).

Operational infrastructure provides the structural backbone of an organisation. Adaptive responses to disruptions are made possible through flexible supply chains, visibility systems, and multi-sourcing (Mamun, 2024; Guimarães, 2018). Integrated information systems and strong situational (day-to-day) and emergency response technology are vital. Equally for emergency response, frontline managers require consistent infrastructure, strong coordination, and cross-layered multi-level support (Karlton et al., 2023).

Psychological and structural support are combined in the development of capability. Personal resources include confidence, self-care, and adaptability, but peer networks, structured leadership programmes, and supportive systems are where they are developed (Childs et al., 2022; Lundqvist et al., 2018; Mogami & Kakemoto, 2025; Wall & Bellamy, 2019). Resilience, as in most organisations, is the product of the blend of inner organisational support and self-directed initiatives aimed at promoting autonomy, competence and relatedness.

Overall, internal support for managerial resilience is multifaceted and interdependent. Learning systems, cultural cohesion, operational readiness, and psychological development all require

attention simultaneously. Firms that invest across these dimensions protect managers' well-being and strengthen their capacity to withstand and adapt to continuing change.

Gallup (2020) believes that supervisory support provides the resources these managers need to perform their jobs effectively. A healthy relationship between the superior and manager can also facilitate mental health, as superiors can share helpful information and resources with managers whom they trust and respect (Kelloway et al., 2023). Superior leaders could also play a critical role in recognising signs of psychological distress and providing managers access to mental health resources (Dimoff et al., 2021). Superior leaders provided feedback to managers, creating a psychologically safe zone for them if the input was done correctly. (Fischer & Walker, 2022). Newsome et al. (2021) believe that inadequate or no feedback from superiors contributed to managers feeling overwhelmed and struggling to cope at work. Managers' performance and productivity levels were impacted negatively (Newsome et al., 2021). According to Fisher and Walker (2022), trust between superiors and managers was critical for managers to experience high levels of personal resilience.

In the high-pressure retail industry, recognition from supervisors would positively contribute to managers being engaged at work, increasing their levels of resilience (Gallup, 2020). South Africa's retail sector demonstrates the impact of trust at an organisational level, where supervisors trust and support their managers, leading to improved resilience. Highly productive and trusting managers experience the type of disengagement that most organisations try to avoid (Meintjes, 2016). Formal mentorship programmes and professional networks offer collaboration, knowledge sharing, and advocacy. These networks ease the flow of community and supplier support (Childs et al., 2022). These facilitators do help, but they do not help everyone, and in some cases, they seem to have no effect at all. The high and constantly operational stress faced by retail managers is experienced every day across workplaces. This consistent pressure is likely the missing link in the literature.

Managers can facilitate problem-solving and exchange coping strategies, encouraging one another through cooperative friendships (Martson & Martson, 2018). Recently, Fisher and Walker (2022) highlighted peer support as a helpful resource for emotional stability and cohesion within and among teams, including team leaders, which in turn enhances personal resilience.

Working as a cohesive team, rather than in isolation, has a direct impact on a manager's level of resilience (Gallup, 2020). However, when there was a lack of organisational and peer trust, with an unsupportive organisational team culture, managers were disengaged and unsatisfied

at work (Newsome et al., 2021). Hence, managers in the retail industry should engage and seek support from peers at their managerial level. Fostering such managerial relationships might contribute positively to higher levels of personal resilience and active coping strategies among managers in the South African retail industry (Martson & Martson, 2018).

The South African retail industry is known for its strict deadlines, targets, and result-driven orientation, and subordinates who report to retail managers fulfil a crucial role in the support structure (Flade et al., 2014). Subordinates need to complete tasks promptly and to the required standards. Managers would feel less pressure knowing that their subordinates could be trusted to carry out their duties (Gallup, 2020). Managers who had formal mentorship sessions with their subordinates had stronger relationships, trust, and accountability when facing challenges (Sandvik et al., 2021).

Mentoring from within management helps reduce employee burnout and turnover, which in turn aids organisational sustainability (Sandvik et al., 2021). While turnaround managers displayed a high level of personal resilience, they also had to manage within organisations that, according to Browne (2021), employed reverse mentorship. Reverse mentorship is a process in which novice managers, in a mentorship capacity, provide previously unthought-of task execution to their senior managers (Browne, 2021). This, again, highlights the fact that managers who fostered positive relationships with their subordinates were more resilient in crisis situations as they had the subordinates to support them (Flade et al., 2014).

Retail managers, particularly, respond to market shifts, supply disruptions, and constant customer demands. Sustained external support facilitates organisational resilience. This part of the paper reviews several studies to extract practical methods for helping managers.

Flexibility on the part of suppliers remains critical. According to Childs et al. (2022), small retailers were able to maintain operations and stabilise their cash flows during crises when suppliers offered extended payment terms and flexible delivery schedules. Childs et al. (2022) also highlight that flexibility from suppliers helped to reduce immediate financial strain and protect continuity.

Close personal networks help managers emotionally and practically, enabling persistence during difficult times (Hellfeldt et al., 2020). This support positively affects emotional, physical, and mental well-being, as well as coping with challenges that one faces in the work environment, and the challenges that arise outside of work (Abbott et al., 2022; Rachmad, 2022). The Social resilience theory describes the contribution of families, friends, and other

community members in bolstering individual resilience during personal crises and setbacks (Rachmad, 2022). These relationships facilitate mental resilience, emotional regulation, and recovery of effort during stressful episodes (Southwick et al., 2016). External support becomes critical when organisational support, particularly from the workplace, is weak or absent (Ozbay et al., 2007). Communities and shared cultural values help in building emotional and practical help, a sense of belonging, and active participation in support (Vartak, 2015).

Impact varies. While they might provide solace, familial and friendship circles do not decrease workplace strain, while internal workplace relations were found to be more impactful on stress relief (Wolken & Good, 1995). Lack of external support correlates with greater psychological distress, emotional exhaustion, and reduced satisfaction with life (Köse et al., 2021). Weaker external networks can cause slower recovery from work and personal issues. Overdependence on internal systems can disrupt the equilibrium between personal and professional identity (Rachmad, 2022; Zhu et al., 2025).

As firms go through periods of turmoil, goodwill from the community can provide useful aid, emotional support, and improvement of perception benefits (Childs et al., 2022). Spiritual and religious systems provide moral support, and cope through some emotion-focused methods, but are tied to weak statistical correlations with resiliency outcomes, which implies the relationship could be affective as opposed to operational (Junusi & Mubarok, 2020). Government support is ambiguous: administrative obstacles hinder the influence of grants and other support tools, which many managers find frustrating (Junusi & Mubarok, 2020). Retail associations are expected to assist with advocacy and training, yet the surveyed studies report limited influence on resilience. Membership offers a network but often lacks immediacy and relevance in crisis response (Junusi & Mubarok, 2020).

Research notes that emotional strain is linked to work–life conflict but does not always specify the most effective external sources to target well-being directly (Smith & Elliott, 2012). Effects depend on context. Childs et al. (2022) examined small businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, where supplier and community support played a crucial role in sustaining business continuity and resilience. Junusi and Mubarok (2020) studied Muslim entrepreneurs in Indonesia, where cultural and religious values shaped networks. Business size, crisis type, and culture all influence which external supports are most important.

A range of external supports benefit managers, but only some show consistent, measurable effects on resilience. Supplier flexibility and community support are the most influential. Religious, family, and government support can offer emotional or moral value, yet links to

outcomes are uneven. Interventions should therefore prioritise practical, context-specific mechanisms that managers can access during operational crises.

Lombard (2025) emphasises that managers in the South African retail industry require both internal and external support structures to remain resilient. Managers who experience strong overall support are better equipped to actively manage the complexities of their responsibilities, both within and outside of work (Dimoff et al., 2021). Managers who feel that their support structures were in place were more resilient during difficult situations and setbacks (Zolli & Healy, 2012). Recognising and strengthening support structures could enhance overall personal well-being, work–life balance, and organisational performance among these managers in the South African retail industry (Vanhove et al., 2015).

2.3.3 Effort recovery during and after work hours

Personal resilience is not about how long a person can endure; it is about choosing to stop, rest, and start again (Achor & Gielan, 2016). When a person reaches a high level of physical or emotional strain due to work or leisure activities and then returns to a neutral state through rest, it is seen as an effort to recover (Sonnentag, 2018). According to Sonnentag et al. (2022), effort recovery refers to a psychological process in which managers restore their depleted cognitive, emotional, and physical resources both during and after working hours. Sonnentag (2018) defines effort recovery as the process by which a manager discharges after facing various job and personal demands. Effort recovery could occur during work, before and after work, over weekends and holidays (Cha African et al., 2020). According to Chan et al. (2022), managers in the South retail industry had to regain their energy through effort recovery during and after work hours. Sonnentag et al. (2022) state that managers spent long hours at work dealing with cognitive and emotionally complex situations; therefore, rest and recovery were crucial for managers to endure the fast-paced retail environment.

According to Cheyroux et al. (2024), retail managers experience high job demands, including long hours, customer demands, complex employee relationships, and digital connectivity after work. Without effective recovery strategies, managers in the retail industry could become disengaged and unproductive, or they could burn out (Thomas, 2019; Kim, 2021). Additionally, modelling recovery-supportive behaviour improves managerial and employee well-being, which contributes to positive organisational outcomes (Sonnentag et al., 2022). Effort recovery supports mental well-being and overall health, and it reduces the risk of fatigue and burnout under high job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018).

Recovery from effort is also important. Managers using recovery strategies tend to have increased motivation, engagement, and job satisfaction, and even emotional stability during stressful situations, which is the case with retail in South Africa (Arnold & Sonnentag, 2023; Gordon & Shi, 2021). Effective recovery helps managers make clear and sound decisions since the burden of pressure has been released mentally and emotionally, which is necessary for balanced judgment (Sonnentag et al., 2022). It also relates to higher retention among staff and managers, which benefits organisational outcomes (Shulz, 2024).

During your workday, short tea breaks, lunch breaks, or even voluntary breaks contribute to at-work recovery (Sonnentag, 2018). In South African retail, however, due to the pace, workload, time, and resource constraints, managers rarely plan for any of these (Vanhove et al., 2015). When breaks are taken, they only offer short periods absent from immediate job demands, which in turn supports short-cycle restoration (Parker et al., 2021). The mere physical activity of the break needs to provide the manager with a complete rest experience, if only for a little while (Sonnentag, 2018).

Sonnentag et al. (2022) in their research claim that the positive impact of effort recovery on well-being, emotional fatigue, and even physical health is due to its mitigation. It is the management of work along with breaks that facilitates effort recovery. In retail, superiors need to be able to empower and permit their managers to be self-directed with recovery activities, which would provide a greater sense of self-governance (Parker et al., 2021). Furthermore, autonomy was a necessity for energy management strategies, which naturally rely on retail managers to take steps to minimise physical and emotional fatigue proactively (Chan et al., 2022).

According to Zhu et al. (2025), it is recommended that managers take short breaks frequently during the workday. During these micro breaks, managers should psychologically detach from work demands and aim to rest mentally, emotionally, and physically (Virtanen et al., 2021). Zhu et al. (2025) believe that supportive leadership interventions contribute to managers' recovery of effort during work. Flexibility regarding working hours and collaboration activities increases effort recovery among managers (Zhu et al., 2025). In Schulz's (2024) opinion, task variety and a supportive managerial culture can enhance work recovery. According to Kavanagh (2023), breaks during working hours where managers are exposed to nature are incredibly beneficial for their mental well-being. Employees and managers could walk around in an office garden or park, which would stimulate rest and recovery (Kavanagh, 2023).

Sonnentag et al. (2022) define after-work recovery as rest that occurs outside of work hours, including leisure time, vacations, hobbies, and family time. However, South African retail managers often work long hours, including weekends and public holidays, making it extremely difficult for them to recover fully after work. (Giri & Chheda, 2019). Managers in the South African retail industry often struggle to psychologically detach from work, as their responsibilities persist even when they are not at work (Sonnentag et al., 2022). Managers need to be accessible to their superiors, customers, and subordinates (Chan et al., 2022). Sonnentag et al. (2022) categorised effort recovery activities into high- and low-profiling categories. While high-profile recovery is characterised by home and family duties, low-profile recovery is represented by exercise and holidays (Sonnentag et al. 2020). Sonnentag et al. (2022) point out the need for South African retail industry managers to create sustainable effort recovery practices while working to preserve their personal resilience.

2.4 CONSEQUENCES OF LOW RESILIENCE IN RETAIL MANAGEMENT

Within retail management, resilience was the foundational ability that advanced one's well-being and performance. Managers who have little resilience are likely to handle day-to-day pressures and unexpected occurrences poorly. This situation increases stress, makes job dissatisfaction worse, and is linked to a higher probability of turnover (Abbott et al., 2009; Crane, 2017; Huang et al., 2019). During times of disruption, such as natural calamities and economic downturns, managers who are resilient ensure that operations are stabilised and recovery is fast (Kativhu et al., 2018; Martinelli et al., 2019).

The retail industry is characterised by the need to control and optimise fluctuating demand while remaining in constant and direct contact with a multitude of customers and working toward the achievement of stringent goals. This situation revolves around the removal of coping resources, negative resilience, and the increase in stress. This phenomenon, in turn, lowers job satisfaction and increases turnover intention (Abbott et al., 2009; Crane, 2017; Huang et al., 2019). In times of crisis, the linking of resilience and ability to concentrate is crucial for the coordination of services and the maintenance of stabilised teams (Martinelli et al., 2019).

Increased global work and non-work strain on managers remained unchanged. During and following the pandemic, absenteeism, turnover, and lost productivity generated heightened costs due to aggravation, anxiety, and depression (Kelloway et al., 2023). Managers experience spillover effects when employees struggle with the job and family balance, and with attention, fatigue, and deadline misses in teams, which add to workload and service quality,

threatening work overload (Dimoff et al., 2021). This creates a feedback loop: high demands from staff increase strain on managers, which in turn impacts operations and customer service outcomes (Dimoff et al., 2021; Kelloway et al., 2023).

The Job Demands–Resources theory explains these phenomena: strain arises when demands are made to an individual while resources are made available to counter the strain and support motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). Resources enable managers to achieve their goals and fulfil the needs for belonging and competence. The pivotal role that leadership and social support play as protective factors toward one's well-being speaks to the mental health protective factors as well. This makes the JD–R theory particularly relevant to retail, as demand is often uncontrolled, teamwork during shifts is arranged in a way that shapes the overall service quality, and there are frequent spikes in customer demand (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018).

There are three main recurring clusters. The first cluster consists of individual attributes, which include an integration of sales skills with flexible self-regulation, adaptive, and problem-solving skills that help one perform under pressure (Martinelli et al., 2019). The second, which consists of relational resources, describes how internal and external networks provide support, options, and pathways for problem-solving with advice for recovery (Martinelli et al., 2019). The third cluster consists of strategic orientation, which enables rapid sense and response capabilities, mitigating potential performance declines during periods of shocks (Martinelli et al., 2019). These, coupled with local ecosystems where spatial and form diversity impacts the rate at which trading zones absorb and recuperate from shocks (Dolega & Celińska-Janowicz, 2015).

The lack of measurement constructs presents a challenge. There are no prominent and widely accepted frameworks for assessing the resilience of retailing at an individual level or a unit level (Kativhu et al., 2018). There are studies that monitor continuity, speed of recovery, and adaptability, but each of the components lacks cohesive definitions and varying time frames, which subsequently presents a challenge for comparisons. Construct clarity at the store and managerial level in a longitudinal design that addresses and captures daily strains and shocks in a response cycle will advance the field of study (Kativhu et al., 2018).

Resilience can be developed. Programmes that strengthen cognitive, emotional, and behavioural skills help managers maintain performance under pressure. Evidence suggests that interventions that build coping skills and expand access to support are particularly beneficial for managers and employees under 50 (Heather et al., 2019). Practice guidance portrays resilient managers as those who maintain steady performance, navigate complexity,

and recover through planned reflection and action (Jangsiriwattana, 2021; PCS, 2023). In JD–R terms, such programmes raise resources and buffer peak demand cycles (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018).

Retailers can embed resilience in strategy and people systems. Selection and promotion can prioritise problem-solving, help-seeking, and a recovery-oriented approach for store leadership roles. Work design should balance shifts, set credible targets, and grant autonomy so that demands align with available resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). Leader development must focus on building coaching and feedback skills, as well as fostering peer support networks. Capability building strengthens sales skills, market sensing, and rapid-response routines suited to local risk profiles (Martinelli et al., 2019). Well-being systems should incorporate access to mental health care and manager training to support early identification and response to strain within teams (Dimoff et al., 2021; Kelloway et al., 2023).

2.5 PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON RESILIENCE IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN RETAIL INDUSTRY

Research in South African retail highlights several resilience levers. Research on FMCG supply chains highlights technology, economic conditions, and transport networks as key design dimensions (Neboh & Mbhele, 2021; Neboh & Mbhele, 2020). Studies of SME retailers during COVID-19 link higher digital maturity with stronger organisational resilience (Robertson et al., 2022). Research has also focused on entrepreneurial resilience and its positive relationship with SME success. Supply chain resilience approaches for FMCG grocery manufacturers have been explored, identifying labour unrest as a common risk and strategic stock and supply chain mapping as functional design approaches. Additionally, studies have addressed governance of strategically relevant research in the wholesale and retail sector (Sewell et al., 2016) and the influence of emotional intelligence on resilience in the entrepreneurial industry (Makhanya, 2024).

2.6 GAPS IN LITERATURE

Research on retail managers' resilience is growing, but the evidence base remains fragmented and uneven. Core limitations cluster around four areas: the treatment of personal resilience, weak evaluation of organisational support, limited crisis-sensitive designs, and methodological and measurement problems. Addressing these gaps is necessary to move from descriptive insights to tested guidance for practice (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Kelloway et al., 2023; Martinelli et al., 2019). Many studies foreground contextual drivers, such as targets, customer pressure, and supply instability, while treating the manager's resilience capacities as background factors. Constructs such as active coping, self-regulation, and psychological

detachment were mentioned, but were seldom modelled as focal predictors or tracked over time (Sonnentag, 2018). Demographic variation was also thin. Women managers and younger store leaders were often under-represented, and subgroups analysed by gender, age, or role were rare (Broadbridge, 2000). The field needs clear, theory-aligned definitions of personal resilience and longitudinal tests that follow the same managers across peak periods and quieter cycles (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Sonnentag, 2018).

Links between leadership support, HR practices, and resilience were reported, but most designs were cross-sectional. Few studies test interventions such as manager resilience training, team climate programmes, or schedule control policies using experimental or quasi-experimental methods (Dimoff et al., 2021). Evidence on care and support systems during service disruptions was descriptive rather than causal, limiting claims about what works and for whom (Kelloway et al., 2023). Rigorous field trials were needed to estimate effects on manager strain, team engagement, service reliability, and retention. Disaster and downturn studies describe adaptive practices, such as rapid problem-solving, networking, and market sensing, but seldom integrate individual coping, support structures, and recovery routines into a single, testable model (Dolega & Celińska-Janowicz, 2015; Martinelli et al., 2019). Most projects capture a single moment rather than trajectories before, during, and after shocks. Without longitudinal or panel designs, it is challenging to identify which resilience capacities speed recovery, or how personal and organisational resources interact when demands spike (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018).

Small convenience samples and single-retailer case studies limit generalisability. A heavy reliance on self-reporting introduces common-method bias and inflates the associations. Cross-sectional designs preclude causal inference. Objective indicators, such as absence, turnover, sales volatility, shrinkage, and service-level breaches, were not routinely linked to survey data (Kelloway et al., 2023). Mixed methods designs that triangulate interviews, diaries, and operational metrics would strengthen inference and practical relevance (Sonnentag, 2018). Resilience was measured with diverse scales and ad hoc items, which hinder comparison across studies and contexts. In retail, resilience is variously defined as coping, adaptability, persistence, recovery, or a combination of these. At the market level, scholars also note the lack of widely applicable criteria for “retail resilience”, which complicates the links between store-level leadership and area-level recovery (Kativhu et al., 2018). Progress depends on validated, retail-appropriate instruments that distinguish three personal dimensions: active coping agency, multi-source support, and effort recovery (Lombard, 2025; Sonnentag, 2018). Findings often reflect the experiences of individual countries and formal retail chains. Informal retail, rural stores, failing outlets, and women managers remain

understudied, despite these settings often facing the sharpest demand shocks and the thinnest support structures (Broadbridge, 2000). Cross-cultural and cross-format comparisons were needed to identify boundary conditions and to avoid exporting solutions that fit only stable, resource-rich contexts (Dolega & Celińska-Janowicz, 2015).

These gaps suggest a practical research path for future studies. Treat active coping agency perceived multi-source support, and effort recovery as distinct yet related dimensions. Test their direct, mediating, and buffering roles under the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) lens (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Lombard, 2025; Sonnentag, 2018). Use field experiments and robust quasi-experiments to estimate the effects of supervisor support training, schedule control, peer-support networks, and recovery-friendly work design on manager well-being, service stability, and turnover (Dimoff et al., 2021; Kelloway et al., 2023). Build panels that track managers across normal operations and shock events. Model recovery speed and stability as outcomes tied to both individual capacities and organisational systems (Dolega & Celińska-Janowicz, 2015; Martinelli et al., 2019). Combine surveys with operational KPIs, reduce common-method bias, and standardise measurement to enable comparison and future meta-analysis (Kativhu et al., 2018; Sonnentag, 2018). Sample across formats, regions, and demographic groups, with attention to women in management and resource-constrained stores (Broadbridge, 2000).

Current scholarship has demonstrated why resilience matters for retail managers, but it has not yet provided sufficient causal clarity on how to strengthen it across varied contexts. Clear construct definitions, rigorous intervention tests, crisis-aware longitudinal designs, consistent measurement, and inclusive sampling were the immediate priorities. These steps convert descriptive insight into actionable guidance that improves manager well-being, service quality, and organisational performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Kelloway et al., 2023; Lombard, 2025; Martinelli et al., 2019).

2.7 SUMMARY

This chapter focuses on personal resilience within South African retail management. It conceptualises resilience from adaptive functioning, which emphasises behaviours, attitudes, and social resources to maintain performance under pressure (Zolli & Healy, 2012; Fernandez, 2016). Retail leaders must pay attention to these capabilities in the emotionally charged and volatile environments governed by fluctuating customer demands, ever-changing targets, and rapid and constant shifts in the business context (Cabrera-Aguilar et al., 2023; Meynaar et al., 2021).

The chapter is structured around three strands. First, from the Job Demands–Resources perspective, sustained demands increase strain, and resources such as autonomy, social support, and other resource barriers increase motivation and well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). Second, the Theory of Resilience and Relational Load show us that within close relationships, supportive and predictable communication encourages joint coping and buffering of chronic stress (Afifi et al., 2016; Arroyo et al., 2023). Third, recovery theory promotes the importance of psychological detachment and relaxation and sleep of a certain quality as resources for recovery (Sonnentag, 2018; Sonnentag et al., 2022).

Using these as the base, the chapter proposes three People Capacity Solutions (PCS) dimensions for empirical testing (Lombard, 2025). The first is active coping, which refers to the willingness and ability to persist, plan, and regulate emotions in the face of difficulty. The second is perceived multi-source support, which refers to the combination of instrumental and emotional support received from supervisors, peers, teams, family, and external partners. The third is effort recovery, which involves restoring energy during and after work through micro-breaks, detachment, and sleep.

Evidence links these dimensions to lower exhaustion, higher engagement, better task performance, and reduced turnover intention (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Sonnentag, 2018). The chapter translates this into practice by highlighting four organisational levers: learning systems, culture and internal branding, operational infrastructure, and capability building, all of which enable managers to grow and use these capacities (Biedenbach et al., 2022; Kelloway et al., 2023; Martinelli et al., 2019; Robertson et al., 2022). Externally supported structures are also crucial when the workplace structures are not in place or underdeveloped.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the methodology used to achieve the aim of the study on how managers understand personal resilience and coping mechanisms in a South African retailing firm. Retail managers must deal with strong performance expectations and face rapid changes, fierce competition and socio-economic challenges. This compounded pressure has an impact on the manager's psychological and physiological pressure, engagement and productivity. Therefore, this study seeks to understand how managers in the South African retailing firm understand and act on personal resilience and coping mechanisms.

This chapter describes the methodological approach taken to respond to the study objectives. It describes the philosophical approach, the research design and the strategy of inquiry. It provides details about the population, sampling techniques, and the approaches for the collection and analysis of information, followed by the approaches for the establishment of validity and reliability and the ethical principles that guided the study. These components, taken together, provide a clear and systematic outline of how the study was designed, implemented and protected to achieve reliable and meaningful results.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A paradigm refers to the underlying belief system and theoretical framework shaped by ontological, epistemological, methodological, and methodical assumptions (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). For this research, the researcher accepted the ontological position of the reality of personal resilience and coping within the South African retail sector and used this to inform the inquiry into managers' perceptions of such (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Kamal, 2019).

This research sits within the interpretivist paradigm and the foundations of relativism and constructivism. Reality is neither singular nor static; it is socially constructed and shaped by both individual and collective experiences. Thus, multiple realities can co-exist within different contexts (Pretorius, 2024). Constructivism posits that knowledge is created collaboratively between the researcher and the interviewees, while relativism argues that the knowledge constructed is partial and context-specific. Such a stance is consistent with exploratory-descriptive qualitative designs that focus on under-researched topics (Hunter et al., 2019). This approach, with its inductive and deductive components, acknowledges the duality of theory, which both emerges from and instructs the data (Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018).

An interpretivist approach supports rich, contextualised descriptions of interviewees' worlds rather than reducing them to generalisable variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Epistemologically, the study values managers' subjective accounts of resilience within a South African retail company (Kamal, 2019) and treats knowledge about coping as rooted in managerial perceptions across work and non-work domains (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

In qualitative work, theory often arises from data rather than being imposed a priori (Azungah, 2018). This project, however, combines approaches. The interview guide drew on prior literature and theoretical frameworks, introducing a deductive element, while the analysis remained open to patterns and meanings that emerged from the interviewees' accounts. Taken together, this qualitative interpretivist paradigm, along with its linked ontological and epistemological commitments, guided method choice. Semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis were selected to explore, interpret and present an in-depth understanding of managers' perceptions of personal resilience and coping in the South African retail industry.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design outlined the processes, structures, and directions used to gather and analyse information in a qualitative study (Creswell, 2014). The project adopted a qualitative, exploratory–descriptive design to examine retail managers' perceptions of personal resilience and coping in a South African company (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Hunter et al., 2019). A qualitative descriptive orientation was appropriate for applied settings because it yields straightforward, unembellished accounts that remain close to the language of interviewees and are accessible to practitioners and decision-makers (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

The study privileged an inductive approach to surface managers' understandings, beliefs and behaviours from their own accounts (Azungah, 2018). Inductive analysis enables findings to emerge from the data rather than from pre-set frameworks, thereby enhancing authenticity and grounding in lived realities (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Thomas, 2006).

The design also contained a deductive component. The semi-structured interview schedule was informed by prior literature and relevant theoretical ideas, reflecting movement from concept to inquiry and securing coherence between the interpretivist stance and literature-guided questioning (Pretorius, 2024; Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018). In exploratory–descriptive work, this balance of inductive openness with deductive guidance strengthens both rigour and contextual richness (Hunter et al., 2019). Semi-structured interviews were selected

as the primary data collection method because they strike a balance between structure and flexibility. They keep the interviewer focused while allowing probing of unanticipated but essential ideas, which deepens data quality (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021; Kallio et al., 2016). Consistent with Creswell and Creswell (2022), this descriptive approach, utilising semi-structured interviews, was the most suitable method to capture managers' perceptions of resilience and coping.

Finally, the researcher remained alert to unplanned or uncontrollable events that can delay or disrupt qualitative fieldwork and planned accordingly for timing and access risks (Ahmadzai, 2020). Overall, the design ensured openness to new insights while producing accessible, practice-relevant findings grounded in the words of interviewees.

3.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The target population consisted of managers of large South African retail companies who could reflect on personal resilience and coping within organisational settings. A purposive sample was drawn from one large company, following specific inclusion criteria (Owusu-Ansah, 2018). Eligible interviewees were managers with no less than 1 year of management experience and adequate fluency in English; no gender specifications were required (Owusu-Ansah, 2018).

Purposive sampling was applied according to the criteria outlined by Creswell (2014).

Inclusion criteria:

- Voluntary agreement to be interviewed and recorded (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).
- Employment as a manager in the specific retail company to ensure organisational relevance (Giri & Chheda, 2019).
- At least one year of management experience (Wilson, 2023).
- Sufficient English fluency for accurate communication and data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Exclusion criteria:

- Unwilling to participate (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).
- Less than one year of managerial experience (Wilson, 2023).
- Insufficient English fluency for an in-depth interview (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Purposive sampling was used to select information-rich cases, permitting the intentional selection of managers who would provide relevant insight toward the study objectives (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015). A session to provide information to potential interviewees was

conducted, which included an explanation of the process, answering questions, and obtaining written informed consent; an independent person and a witness ensured compliance with informed consent guidelines (Creswell, 2014).

The target population included managers in big retail companies in South Africa. A purposive sample was obtained from one such organisation, concentrating on managers who fulfilled the inclusion criteria and had one or more years of experience. The sample size was determined by the concept of saturation, where collection continued to the point where no additional themes or insights were found, and where all the questions posed in the research were answered (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2018). For qualitative research, depth rather than numeric representation is what signifies adequacy; for studies of this nature, 8 to 20 interviewees is a generally accepted number for the thematic analysis to be comprehensive, depending on the intricacy of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). The concept of saturation offers a defensible endpoint to the recruitment of participants and indicates to researchers that they are not oversampling from the population (Gues et al., 2006).

3.5 RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

Recruitment strategy involves systems for recognising potential interviewees, inviting them, and the selection methods. Each of these stages offers multiple strategies (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). For this study, the researcher sought access through a gatekeeper, the head of learning and development at a South African retail company. A Microsoft Teams meeting with this gatekeeper detailed the study's purpose, scope, and procedures, explored possible implications for the organisation, and collaboratively mapped out the next recruitment steps. After the gatekeeper provided written consent for the researcher to continue, an independent mediator (not within the reporting lines) emailed the eligible managers to ascertain their interest in study participation. This was a confidential engagement. The independent mediator then sent the researcher a list of managers eligible for the study. The independent mediator, who acted on behalf of the researcher, was the one with whom to coordinate invitations and keep these managers updated. The managers who showed interest in participation were sent an informed consent document, which was also provided by the independent mediator. The gatekeeper and all potential interviewees were briefed on the informed-consent process as explained by the researcher.

All managers were briefed on the study's purpose, the requirements for their participation, and ways in which their data would be used. Participation was entirely voluntary, with no consequences on their performance evaluation for opting out, and managers were free to withdraw at any point with no implications.

During the recruitment phase, the study's potential advantages for current and future managers, as well as for the broader company, were discussed. Possible impacts on employees, their family members, and the organisation as a whole were covered to help managers make informed decisions.

3.6 INFORMED CONSENT PROCESS

An independent third-party mediator contacted potential interviewees with information about the study, including a statement emphasising the voluntary nature of participation. Interested individuals who wanted additional information were invited to a meeting with the researcher. During that meeting, the researcher explained the process in detail, answered any remaining questions, and provided information. Interviewees who agreed then completed an informed-consent form.

The informed consent form stated that these managerial interviewees agreed to the study's provisions before they gave the desired information. Following Creswell and Creswell (2022), the informed-consent form outlined purpose, procedures, risks, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw. Once the interviewees were comfortable and satisfied and had signed the informed consent, the researcher planned to explain how the information would be gathered (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The researcher's role was presented to the interviewees. The researcher conducted the semi-structured interviews, as he was well-trained in the process, familiar with the research objectives to be achieved, and independent of the South African retail company. The interviews were conducted in a safe, private and neutral venue.

3.7 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary method to capture managers' perceptions of resilience and coping because they strike a balance between structure and flexibility, allowing for in-depth exploration of lived experiences (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021; Bryman, 2016). The research objectives helped formulate an interview guide with open-ended questions that kept the conversation centred, while the interviewer was able to clarify and elaborate as needed during the interview (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021; Gill et al., 2008). As relationship-building and depth were important, interviews were held face-to-face, in a boardroom, and all sessions were audio-recorded with consent to ensure accurate transcription and analysis (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021; Bryman, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2022). As interviews were conducted in a boardroom, this facilitated relationship-building depth.

All interviews opened with an explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, and benefits, and the interviewer constructed a relaxed, welcoming environment to better help the interviewee (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; King & Horrocks, 2010). Ethical arrangements were made clear; participation would be voluntary, interviewee responses would be kept confidential, and no harmful identifying information would be disclosed (Creswell, 2014). All interviews were conducted by the same researcher to ensure consistency in questions and probing; this researcher was thanked at the close of the interviews and informed of the subsequent steps of transcription, analysis, and reporting (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

To maintain a record of each interview, the researcher maintained notes, including non-verbal communication, the emotional tenor and context in which each interview was conducted, and immediate impressions and notes on themes that were developing (Bryman, 2016; Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). Field notes offered additional support as a data source in a triangulation context and were used to enhance the overall reliability of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

To maintain clarity and rigour, data analysis used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis. A reflexive approach was taken in which Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that themes and codes be developed and refined through interpretive active engagement and reflexive memo-writing, rather than relying on the statistical coder agreement.

Face-to-face audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim to maintain fidelity to the language of the interviewees (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Early immersion around the transcripts was done by reading them in conjunction with field notes, which served to highlight the non-verbal cues and spoken content that helped in bringing institutional, contextual and behavioural aspects around resilience and coping to the forefront (Creswell, 2014).

Initially, 25 codes were created inductively and recorded in ATLAS.ti version 25 starting from the language of the interviewees. The codes represented behavioural indicators, coping mechanisms, emotional reactions, and institutional constraints. The coding process was not linear, as consolidating patterns across interviews required revisiting and refining codes. An audit trail to document coding choices and adjustments made to the themes aimed to ensure transparency and allow external scrutiny (Freeks, 2017). The researcher maintained reflexivity and examined their positionality as well as any interpretative biases to reduce bias (Creswell,

2014). Trustworthiness was improved through triangulation by comparing content from interviews and field notes, thus enabling the integration of verbal and non-verbal information (Matikiti, 2024).

The integration of illustrative quotes and analytic commentary during the final stage illustrated how each theme addressed the research questions and their relationship to the theory and practice. I adhered to the steps provided by Braun and Clarke (2006) for this phase: familiarisation, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing and defining and naming themes, and producing the report. ATLAS.ti version 25 provided organisational support for the codes, patterns, and themes, while the field notes helped provide insights (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell, 2014).

The key steps included:

- Familiarisation – Reading the transcripts, noting initial reactions, and highlighting potential themes.
- Generating codes – Coding meaningful phrases and sentences and developing a codebook.
- Exploring themes – Organising similar codes into advanced patterns for analysis.
- Evaluating and honing themes – Verifying the details in each theme for distinctness.
- Articulating and designating themes – Concisely framing each theme's range and its relevance to the questions in the study.
- Completing the report – Choosing illustrative excerpts, constructing analytical discussions, and connecting the findings to the literature and the study's objectives.

Attention to credibility and validity was maintained throughout. The researcher mitigated bias through reflexivity and kept an audit trail documenting all decisions pertaining to coding and the development of themes (Freeks, 2017).

3.9 MEASURING INSTRUMENTS: VALIDITY, RELIABILITY, AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Qualitative validity was achieved through purposeful design, resulting in accurate and dependable findings (Creswell, 2014). Data triangulation integrated interview transcripts with field notes to strengthen internal validity. Methodological triangulation compared patterns from the thematic analysis with relevant theoretical constructs, reinforcing interpretive accuracy (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Credibility was enhanced through alignment of interview questions with research objectives and by allowing interviewees the freedom to express themselves openly (Ahmed, 2024). Credibility in qualitative fieldwork was also increased when the research setting and interview conditions were well-documented; this study achieved that through detailed contextual descriptions and reflective field notes (Shufutinsky, 2020).

Recent scholarship supports the notion that credibility in qualitative research is strengthened when researchers' reflexivity and interviewees' meaning making are explicitly acknowledged as central to knowledge production (Pretorius, 2024). Hunter et al. (2019) further emphasise that credibility was reinforced in exploratory-descriptive qualitative designs when data collection was both systematic and flexible, ensuring accurate representation of interviewees' voices. Peer debriefs and member reflections have also been done.

For transferability, a detailed, contextually grounded description of the setting, interviewee characteristics, and organisational environment enables readers to assess applicability to other contexts (Hays & McKibben, 2021; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Sector-specific contextualisation is critical in exploratory-descriptive qualitative work to support transferability (Hunter et al., 2019).

In terms of dependability, methodological consistency was maintained through a standardised interview process and detailed process notes (Leung, 2015). An audit trail was constructed of data collection, coding frameworks, and decisions pertaining to themes, which facilitated replicability; this was also supported by version-controlled codebooks and project logs in ATLAS.ti version 25 (Ahmed, 2024). Procedural dependability was reinforced through peer reflection sessions, while coherence was achieved across phases through the integration of inductive and deductive reasoning (Ahmed, 2024; Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018).

The findings supported confirmability because they were based on interviewees' narratives instead of the researcher's bias (Chung et al., 2020). Reflexive journalling recorded bias, positionality, and interpretive shifts. This aligns with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) guidance, while the evidence of conformity was focused on thematic links to theory, as the emerging themes were mapped to established frameworks of resilience. Throughout, reflexivity was maintained as a safeguard for confirmability (Pretorius, 2024).

Regarding trustworthiness strategies, peer debriefs provided a methodological critique and external perspective (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Reflexive journals documented the rationale behind the analytic choices, including strategies to contain bias. Field notes captured non-

verbal communication and contextual information regarding surroundings, which enhanced the interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The combination of these three strategies, namely triangulation, reflexivity, and contextual transparency, provides trustworthiness to the exploratory–descriptive qualitative designs. This provides evidence that the findings are credible, dependable, and transferable (Hunter et al., 2019; Pretorius, 2024). All these strategies represent the best practices outlined for qualitative validity, reliability and trustworthiness (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study implemented rigorous ethical protocols to safeguard the rights, privacy, and well-being of the interviewees, following the required international and local ethical standards. Written permission was acquired from the designated company contact before data collection to ensure the transparency of the research activities and authorisation of the collection of research data.

Personalised email invitations explaining the study aims, which outlined the voluntary nature of participation, were sent to the eligible managers. Any potential risks and benefits of participation were also outlined. The information was clear and simplified to aid decision-making. Questions were invited, and signed consent was required before any participation.

All precautions were taken to ensure compliance with POPIA. Each interviewee was given a specific identification code, and all results kept the retail company anonymous. With respect to confidentiality in organisational research, this means that it is not enough to just not name someone; it also means that there should be no revealing descriptions that would flag the identification of certain positions or organisational units. This principle was applied in respect of individuals and the organisation.

Transcriptions of the interviews were done by the researcher and an independent transcriber, who both worked under signed confidentiality agreements. Data was safeguarded; the physical copies were in a locked cabinet, while the digital copies were on encrypted drives and were password-protected. As per the NWU policy, data will be kept for five years to provide for validation or secondary analysis, and then it will be disposed of safely.

Fieldwork also involved certain ethical safeguards to reduce harm that may come to participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). For example, interviews were held in a neutral, safe and private venue. Each interviewee also had the freedom to withdraw from the research or

to skip questions. Each interview was also 'debriefed' to allow the interviewee to reflect and to address potential concerns that may have come up during the interview.

By employing these strategies, we were able to maintain the ethical principles of informed consent, confidentiality, safe data storage, minimisation of potential harm, and anonymisation of the organisation, which were fundamental to the study. This was in line with the recommendations for qualitative research in similar South African contexts (Matikiti, 2024).

3.11 SUMMARY

This chapter outlines the approach taken to understand managers' views on personal resilience and coping within a South African retail company. It restated the study's philosophical framework and explained why an interpretivist paradigm would best serve the research, along with a qualitative descriptive design to provide contextually grounded understanding. Then, the chapter described the inductive approach, purposive sampling, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria that guided the recruitment of information-rich interviewers.

As part of data collection, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with accompanying field notes. Concerning data validity, reliability, and trustworthiness, the researcher incorporated triangulation, peer reflection, verification, and reflexive journaling. The researcher outlined the steps taken during thematic analysis, from coding to the final development and interpretation of the primary themes. The researcher also discussed the ethical steps taken, which included informed consent, confidentiality agreements, and data storage, all according to institutional and legislative stipulations. In the end, the researcher discussed the key limitations of the study and offered possible directions for future research. The following chapter contains the analysis and presentation of the findings.

CHAPTER 4: REPORTING OF FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings and the interpretation based on an inductive thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), of ten semi-structured interviews with managers in a South African retail company. Consistent with the study's primary objective, which is to explore and identify managers' perceptions of their personal resilience and coping

strategies through semi-structured interviews. The assessment outlines daily survival strategies for resilience developed within the unpredictable, high-velocity environment of the South African retail sector.

Themes and codes were built bottom up from interviewees' accounts, with each theme presented alongside its constitutive codes to make the analytic pathway visible and to link claims to evidence. The chapter addresses the primary research question: how managers perceive their personal resilience and the coping strategies they employ to manage workplace and life demands actively. It also deals with the secondary questions regarding the focus and the capacity for enduring hardships and brings to the surface the internal and external support systems. Those who include supervisors, peers, subordinates, family, friends, community, and church groups are seen as essential for sustaining resilience. Exploring effort recovery practices during and after work. Which included micro-breaks, psychological detachment, and sleep, and how these restore capacity. Lastly, describing organisational conditions that enable or constrain these strategies in the retail environment. Interpretation remains anchored in the research questions and qualitative research conventions, notes credible ambiguities, and offers a practical account of resilience in the managers' own language.

4.2 THEME 1: DEDICATED REST AND MICRO RECOVERY BREAKS

Across interviews, managers describe resilience not as a fixed personal trait or toughing it out, but as a practical, dedicated recovery routine. Interviewees shared strategies for repeatable micro-recoveries that downshift arousal, reset focus, and prevent emotional residue from leaking into subsequent interactions or home life. The simple actions, such as resting for ten minutes in a parked car, practising breathing exercises, listening to the right song on a short drive, and establishing a two-minute boundary ritual before walking inside the store or home. Managers described how they stacked these rest and recovery strategies during and after work. These recovery breaks function as a portable self-regulation system that maintains tone, judgment, and stamina under high workload, continuous change, and pressure.

4.2.1 Code A: Reset pauses between tasks / between stores

Between demanding meetings or store visits, scheduled short breaks of 5 to 15, and sometimes 20 to 30 minutes, enabled emotional regulation before subsequent interactions within the retail environment. In the South African retail sector, the installation of longer breaks is feasible during peak trading periods, where the time between visits is short. The use of

scheduled breaks and the avoidance of emotionally stimulating interactions with staff and guests during exchanges were described as a management practice for store visits.

Illustrative quotes:

"I do get upset... I'm human. But I've learned if I sit in the car for ten or fifteen minutes, breathe, just be quiet, then it's done. I don't take that mood into the next place."

"Sometimes I just tell myself, 'Take a breather.' Even ten minutes is enough. No WhatsApp, no emails. Just sit, deep breaths, reset, and then I go in fresh."

"There must be a point where I stop, sit, and calm down before I drive off. If I don't do that, the next person gets the frustration that belongs to the last store."

"I keep reminding myself: even five minutes of quiet is a reset. I close my eyes, breathe slowly, and then I'm ready to start the next visit clean."

Protected from digital intrusion and time debt, these brief resets preserve judgement, tone and interpersonal quality across rotations, showing resilience as a portable recovery rhythm rather than simple endurance. In practice, spending five to fifteen minutes in the car as a low-stimulus liminal space, engaging in quiet sitting, slow breathing, and sipping water, with the phone out of reach, helps re-establish attentional control and lower carry-over arousal. The same pause supports end-of-day detachment and promotes better sleep, allowing the next shift to start with composure rather than depletion. Consistent with Theme 1, micro-recovery operates as a practical infrastructure for sustained performance in retail, provided small buffers are honoured in the schedule.

4.2.2 Code B: Audio-based regulation

Listening to music and podcasts during drives helps calm down or re-energise between stops. The car is repeatedly described as a private, controllable 'recovery space.'

Illustrative quotes:

"I'm always listening to my music when I'm driving between stores. That's what I do. It makes me feel good, and I can go in with the right attitude."

"If the day is heavy, I put on motivational audio. It puts back my energy, even a short drive helps me show up better at the next store."

"There are days for heavy stuff, like loud music to burn off the pressure, and other days I switch to something softer so I arrive calmer."

"I don't want radio chatter. I choose playlists that change my state. Ten minutes of the right songs and I'm not carrying the last issue into the next meeting."

Managers in the South African retail industry spend many hours in their cars driving between stores and appointments. The managers with high levels of personal resilience employed active coping strategies while driving, such as playing music or motivational audio, to regulate their emotional state between stores. The car functions as a private, low-interference recovery space where managers reset and recharge themselves cognitively, emotionally, and spiritually, within short windows, often 5–15 minutes. This routine is most effective when managers maintain control over the soundscape and limit phone interruptions by taking phone calls when they are in a good mental state, not when they are rushed. Functionally, audio-based resets preserve judgment, tone, and interpersonal quality on arrival, while reducing emotional carry-over into home life. In this way, resilience is a purposeful state management, with audio serving as a portable tool that supports sustained performance across high-paced retail rotations.

4.2.3 Code C: Boundary rituals before home

Short rituals that mark the psychological boundary between work and home to prevent emotional spillover into family life.

Illustrative quotes:

“When I go home, I don’t carry any baggage. I pause outside, then pray, and only then go in. It keeps work from following me into the house.”

“Family is my safe space, so I make sure I arrive settled, even if it’s just a two-minute quiet moment before I walk in.”

“I sit in the car at home and release the day before I open the door. If I skip that, I’m short with people who did nothing wrong.”

“Church and short prayers help me switch off work mode. It doesn’t take long, but it changes how I show up for my family.”

Managers in the South African retail industry must implement recovery strategies and boundary rituals after a demanding day at work. These rituals included a two-minute quiet period in the car before the managers entered their homes. Other managers stated that they did a short prayer, slow breathing, or an intentional release of the day’s mental clutter. Managers believed the boundary ritual activities shifted their focus to be present at home with their families. The car or gate serves as a controllable liminal space with simple rules, such as no calls, WhatsApp, or emails, that make the practice repeatable even when time is tight. The routine is most effective when shielded from digital intrusion and last-minute demands. It

is fragile under time debt or unresolved conflict. Functionally, these micro-rituals preserve tone and relational quality at home, enable better overnight recovery, and return managers to work with steadier judgement and energy, which showcases resilience as structured detachment.

4.2.4 Code D: Importance of sleep

Sleep is the anchor recovery strategy. Some interviewees also use short rests when possible. Adequate sleep is linked directly to next-day composure and cognitive sharpness.

Illustrative quotes:

“Sleeping is important. Sometimes I’ll take something to help me sleep, as it helps me become fresh for the next day. If I don’t, I get forgetful.”

“There are weeks I need two days of solid, deep sleep to reset properly. After that, I’m myself again.”

“If I’m running on empty, I’ll power-rest, just twenty minutes with my eyes closed, and it changes my mood for the afternoon.”

“I protect sleep like a meeting. When I sleep properly, I’m calmer, and the small resets in the day actually work.”

In the high-paced, unpredictable South African retail industry, managers see sleep as the anchor of resilience. Sleep is the base that stabilises mood, attention, and working memory, so the day’s micro-recoveries can have an impact. Sufficient sleep restores energy and cognitive sharpness, preventing irritability and forgetfulness that can affect good judgment in store interactions. When sleep is prioritised, next-day composure improves, and audio/quiet-pause rituals work reliably. However, when sleep is fragmented by late messages, time debt, or unresolved issues, managers’ reports carry-over fatigue, poorer self-control, and diminished interpersonal quality. Thus, within Theme 1, sleep functions as the foundational recovery infrastructure that enables sustained performance across the retail demands.

Across interviews, resilience presents as a portable rhythm of short, deliberate resets that fit the cadence of retail work. Quiet pauses in the car, slow breathing, hydration, and brief audio-led state shifts downshift arousal and clear residue before the next engagement. Two-minute boundary rituals at the store or home threshold prevent spillover and restore presence, while adequate sleep anchors the entire system, allowing micro-resets to take effect. When protected from time debt and digital intrusion, these low-cost practices recentre attention, stabilise tone and judgement, and preserve interpersonal quality across rotations. When

buffers collapse or sleep fragments, reactivity and carry-over rise, and even well-intended routines fray.

Theme 1 advances the primary objective by showing resilience as a repeatable recovery system rather than endurance. It addresses RQ1 by specifying concrete, portable practices, such as reset pauses, audio-based regulation, and boundary rituals. It addresses RQ2 by evidencing willingness and ability to persist through orderly next steps after a reset. It addresses RQ3 by linking sleep and detachment to effort–recovery cycles that stabilise next-day composure. It also signals RQ4’s enabling conditions, explicit norms for after-hours contact, and short protected windows that make these micro-recoveries feasible in the flow of work.

4.3 THEME 2: HABITS OF PLANNING AND PRIORITISING

Across interviews, managers portray planning not as bureaucracy but as a mindset that organises attention and energy across volatile retail days. Simple tools (to-do lists, checklists, diaries/calendars) are paired with light cognitive cues (self-talk, ‘wake up empty’, affirmations, quick error-recovery scripts) to keep attention on controllables and to enter each context ‘fresh’. The practice operates at a micro-scale, including night-before preparation, morning priming, in-the-moment sequencing, and brief evening reflections that inform the next day. These strategies limit emotional carryover and support steadier judgment and a more relational tone under pressure.

4.3.1 Code A: Night-before planning and checklists

Deliberate preparation the day before, such as creating to-do lists, checklists, and prioritising what must happen first. These strategies reduce ambiguity and start with clarity rather than emotion.

Illustrative quotes:

“But now we have to move on, and we have to prepare ourselves for the next interaction, which is not going to be the same, might be better, might be worse, but we don’t know.”

“I had to prepare my mind, because anything and everything in terms of being resilient... I need to take care of your mental health.”

“I tell myself, you do need a plan that you follow every day, not based on your emotions.”

“And the following day... prepare for the following day... maybe walking around the block and... on a Sunday, just do some booking in the morning, then coming back, then going by our day.”

Planning helps reduce psychological clutter by minimising ambiguity at the start of the day, which in turn helps to reduce reactivity. This is because, by planning their first moves, managers can decrease their next day's cognitive load and maintain attentional control. This helps the managers to engage in active coping rather than responding based on their mood. In the South African retail industry, managers travel between stores, which are easily accessible, and open stores early, thereby compressing their preparation time. This advanced selection of strategies creates a productive path for retail managers for the first hour. The habit works best when lists are short, visible, and tied to a first concrete action; it weakens when evenings are consumed by time debt or when lists bloat into vague wish-lists that invite avoidance. Coupled with a brief morning priming routine, managers convert the list into immediate action, reducing carry-over stress and preserving tone for early stakeholder interactions.

4.3.2 Code B: Morning routines

Early-morning routines, such as prayer, short affirmations, a favourite song, and a to-do list, were utilised to arrive 'fresh' and on purpose.

Illustrative quotes:

“Oh, this is my go-to song now, because it's a Friday morning, and I need to, you know.”

“The strategy that maybe we used this morning assisted us to achieve the numbers... to prove... we can actually do sales for you.”

“Most of the time when I leave home... this motivates me a lot... today I wake up...”

“So this is what I do each and every morning.”

Morning routines operate as rapid state regulation at the day's threshold, stabilising affect and attention so early interactions are purposeful rather than residual from yesterday. The routine's value lies in its brevity and repeatability; it can be completed in minutes, reliably setting the tone without adding friction. It is strongest when shielded from early digital intrusion and rushed schedules and becomes fragile when last-minute demands compress or displace the priming window.

4.3.3 Code C: Sequencing the day

Using calendars, slots, and ordering rules (batch like with like; ring-fence focus windows) to lower switch costs and keep the day workable.

Illustrative quotes:

“Even when I’m tired, that tiny sequence stops me from dragging work inside.”

“I know that I have a very, very busy schedule, but... I am in a good space if I have an order.”

“So prioritising my lists, even challenges or instructions, helps me decide what comes next and keeps me moving.”

“There’s the week, this is how I’m going to get it done per day, so I don’t carry unnecessary pressure.”

For managers in the South African retail industry, sequencing provides environmental support that converts a long to-do list into a workable path by determining when to tackle in-depth tasks, when to engage with stores, and when to complete quick administrative tasks. This reduces context switching, preserves attentional resources, and stabilises interpersonal quality across engagements. It works best when blocks are realistic and renegotiated after disruptions; it weakens when escalations stack back-to-back and erase buffers.

4.3.4 Code D: Reflection loops (evening debriefs and learning)

End-of-day look-backs that capture lessons and seed the next plan; a light, consistent review habit often paired with a boundary for home transition.

Illustrative quotes:

“Sometimes I’ll take something to help me sleep, as it helps me become fresh for the next day.”

“It’s very difficult to not give your children a bad experience all the time, and it’s also important for them to see me again the next day, when I am back to my normal self.”

“When my daughters see me, they need to see the reflection that I want them to be.”

“How do you get over that challenge, and after that challenge is done, how do you rest to give 100% for the next day?”

Reflection loops deliver rapid sense-making and closure, showcasing what worked, what didn’t, and what carries forward. Daily reflection reduces cognitive residue and improves sleep quality. Because the review seeds the night-before list, it tightens the learning cycle and boosts next-day composure. The habit is most vigorous when scheduled as a brief, repeatable slot

and becomes fragile when unresolved conflict or late-evening digital noise reopens the day.

Across interviews, planning and prioritising appear as a portable, light-touch habit system that organises attention and energy across volatile retail days. Night-before lists reduce ambiguity and pre-select first moves; brief morning priming steadies affect and intent. Simple sequencing, calendars, slots, and batching lower switch costs and keep the day workable. Short evening debriefs close loops, seed the next plan, and limit carry-over. Together, these routines act like micro-resets, downshifting arousal, recentring focus, and protecting tone and judgment across stores. When shielded from time debt and early digital intrusion, they preserve interpersonal quality under high workload and continuous change; when buffers collapse, lists bloat, or calls stack back-to-back, reactivity and spillover rise.

Theme 2 advances the primary objective by showing resilience as a set of everyday planning practices rather than a fixed trait. It addresses RQ1 by specifying concrete behaviours, night-before selection, morning priming, in-day sequencing and evening reflection. It addresses RQ2 by evidencing willingness and ability to persist through orderly next steps when pressure rises. It addresses RQ3 by linking reflection loops and boundary rituals to effort–recovery cycles that stabilise next-day composure, which enhances these habits in the flow of work.

4.4 THEME 3: CRUCIAL SUPPORT STRUCTURES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE WORK

Managers in the South African retail industry emphasised the stabilising effect of reliable support, which creates level-headed line managers who are reachable and calm, peers who swap ideas and “hold each other’s hands” through change, and subordinates whose reliability reduces the need for firefighting. Beyond work, family, friends, and faith-based communities operate as charging stations that restore perspective and energy. Support is often bidirectional: interviewees fight for their teams with store managers and reps and, in turn, depend on those teams to execute under tight timelines. Across interviews, the consistency and predictability of these ties shape whether similar demand profiles feel stretching or overwhelming, which contributes to support structures as a backbone of everyday resilience in retail.

4.4.1 Code A: Line manager support and accessibility

Line managers who are reachable (phone/Teams), give perspective and next steps, and de-escalate pressure in the moment.

Illustrative quotes:

“When I can’t solve a problem, I call my manager. A five-minute chat gives me the next step and calms me down.”

“My boss answers when it’s hot. Even if it’s just, ‘Do A, then B,’ it stops the spiral and I can move.”

“If I know I can reach my manager on Teams, I don’t panic. I go in with a plan.”

“Being able to phone and say, ‘Here’s the situation, so what’s the priority?’ helps me reset and carry on.”

Accessible, level-headed line managers function as a rapid regulation and decision-support node under volatility. Brief guidance reduces uncertainty, lowers arousal, and restores task control, allowing managers to act rather than ruminate. This stabilising effect is most potent when availability is predictable (clear contact windows, quick callbacks) and weakens when escalation routes are unclear or when calls go unanswered during crunch times.

4.4.2 Code B: Peer connection and sharing best practices

Being on the move within a network of retail stores is associated with working under heavy load pressures. Stretching work periods requires colleagues to create supportive environments, enhance creative process flows, and boost morale, particularly in times of change.

Illustrative quotes:

“My colleagues are very supportive. When one of us is under pressure, we jump on a call and share what’s working.”

“We trade quick fixes, like ‘Try this display’, and it saves me time at the next store.”

“Peer managers keep me honest. They’ll say, ‘Focus here first,’ and that resets my day.”

“In tough weeks, just hearing ‘you’re not the only one’ gives me energy to push through.”

Peer ties provide fast, context-specific tactics and emotional normalisation, shrinking trial-and-error cycles and buffering isolation. For South African managers in the retail industry, dispersed geographies, load-shedding, and volatile trading weeks make these peer circuits a primary stabiliser of pace and judgement, with regular script-swaps turning local fixes into playbooks that travel across provinces. The mechanism is simple: practical knowledge transfer combined with social proof that the challenge is workable. It works best with disciplined touchpoints, short huddles and ad-hoc peer calls within a sharing culture; it weakens when competition, distance, or clashing schedules limit contact.

4.4.3 Code C: Family and friends as emotional buffer

Time spent with family and friends restores emotional balance, perspective, and motivation, helping managers arrive at work feeling settled.

Illustrative quotes:

“My family is my safe space, so being with them resets me so I can show up better the next day.”

“Even a quick walk with my spouse clears my head. I go back to work calmer.”

“Friends remind me who I am outside the job, which stops me carrying store stress into everything.”

“When my kids see me steady after a hard day, it reminds me to keep the right attitude.”

Close ties provide affective recovery and identity anchoring, lowering emotional residue and restoring capacity for the next rotation. The benefit is most substantial when managers protect simple rituals (such as shared meals, brief walks, or phone catch-ups), and it is fragile when late messages, unresolved conflict, or time-consuming tasks debilitate home presence.

4.4.4 Code D: Faith and community groups

Faith practices and community involvement (church, prayer, small groups) offer meaning, boundary rituals, and groundedness.

Illustrative quotes:

“Prayer helps me put the day down and start again.”

“Church keeps me centred after a tough week, I leave lighter.”

“Serving in my community reminds me the work matters but it’s not everything.”

“A short prayer before I go inside at home changes how I show up.”

Faith and community create a meaning frame and short boundary rituals that downshift arousal and prevent spillover. This operates through perspective-taking and conscious transition cues. It works best when kept simple and regular; it weakens when practices are skipped during high load or treated as optional extras rather than essential resets. For managers in the South African retail industry, brief practices such as a prayer at the gate, a midweek small-group check-in or a service commitment anchor identity and restore perspective after volatile trading days. These anchors support calmer re-entry at home and steadier conduct in stores the next morning, protecting judgment when pressure returns.

4.4.5 Code E: Communication channels that enable support

Quick calls, Teams chats, and WhatsApp groups make advice and reassurance available on demand, speeding up coordination.

Illustrative quotes:

“A two-minute WhatsApp voice note from my manager is enough to steer me the right way.”

“Our Teams group is for quick wins, photos and short tips, so we don’t reinvent the wheel.”

“When a store phones, I can loop in the right person fast, and we move.”

“If I send a picture on WhatsApp, ‘Is this right?’, I get an answer and carry on.”

Lightweight channels compress time-to-support, turning uncertainty into subsequent actions and reducing cognitive drag. They work best with explicit, clear norms (what channel for what, response windows, and short messages) and degrade when group noise, after-hours spills, or unclear ownership create more load than relief.

Across interviews, resilience is depicted as co-created through dependable support that catches pressure and converts uncertainty into subsequent actions. Reachable, level-headed line managers provide perspective and reduce arousal; peers exchange practical scripts and normalise tough weeks; family and friends supply affective recovery and identity anchoring; and faith or community practices offer meaning and simple boundary rituals. Lightweight channels like phone, Teams, and WhatsApp compress time-to-support, so advice is instant and portable. When these ties are predictable and active, managers can preserve tone, judgment, and interpersonal quality despite a high workload and change. However, when ties are thin or erratic, similar demand profiles can tip from stretching to overwhelming.

Theme 3 advances the primary objective by demonstrating resilience as a shared system, rather than a singular trait. It addresses RQ1 by specifying concrete, portable support practices across work and home; RQ2 by evidencing willingness and ability to persist when guidance and peer reciprocity are available in the flow; RQ3 by linking family, faith, and quick access to line support with recovery and next-day steadiness, which enable these support structures to take and endure.

4.5 THEME 4: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON THE MOVE

Interviewees consistently described adaptive emotion work across stores and stakeholders, including reading the room, separating one interaction from the next to avoid contaminating tone, and apologising promptly for overreactions. Identity-safe leadership talk coexisted with firm boundary-setting where needed. Emotion regulation was framed as a learned and effortful process. Emotion regulation here is mundane and mobile: managers carry it between sites, using low-effort reappraisals to protect tone and judgment. Its effectiveness depends on pairing with micro-recovery to manage costs.

4.5.1 Code A: Fresh start rule between appointments

Resetting mindset before entering a new store or meeting; consciously leaving prior emotions at the door.

Illustrative quotes:

“Resilience is to rest, reset and give 100% in the trade.”

“Yes, either way, what would happen there, you can leave it behind you and treat the new customer like a new book.”

“I need to start over again”

A deliberate fresh-start cue creates a psychological boundary between interactions, preventing emotional carry-over and protecting judgment in the next context. Managers accomplish this with brief resets (breathing, self-talk, a short sit) before entry. It works best when protected from digital intrusion and rushed transitions; it weakens when time debt forces back-to-back arrivals without a pause. For managers in the South African retail industry, long drives, load-shedding disruptions, and variable small-access protocols often compress transitions. Hence, a 60–120 second reset is the difference between reactivity and composed service. Used consistently, these cues stabilise tone across busy routes and protect relational quality with store staff and customers.

4.5.2 Code B: De-escalation and tone control under challenging interactions

Staying calm, maintaining a controlled tone, and avoiding escalation, even when provoked.

Illustrative quotes:

“I am patient and I stay calm.”

“I just need to control my emotions and voice.”

De-escalation relies on tone regulation and slow speech to reduce arousal in the room, thereby converting conflict into a problem-solving situation. Managers use short internal prompts (“lower your voice”, “stick to facts”) and allow a beat before replying. This holds best when organisational norms reward calm conduct and when managers have authority to set boundaries; it falters when provocation is public or when performance pressure rewards quick, sharp responses.

4.5.3 Code C: Empathy and perspective-taking

Listening for the other person’s perspective and adjusting response to what they need to feel heard.

Illustrative quotes:

“I just stay motivated and committed, even on a difficult day”

“It might not happen, but at least let me hear you out and see what I can do from my side to make the relationship better.”

“My superior provides me with advice, yeah, and a different perspective, yeah, and the fact that I know he is only one phone call away, yeah.”

Perspective-taking helps diffuse defensiveness and restore joint focus. Managers signal understanding (“I hear you; here’s what I can do”) and separate the person from the problem, which preserves dignity while moving the task forward. It is strongest when paired with specific next steps and weakens when empathy is offered without action or when time constraints cut listening short. For managers in the South African retail industry, this deft shift from emotion to task turns crowded-floor flashpoints during volatile promotions into workable plans within minutes.

4.5.4 Code D: Reading the room and adapting to stakeholders

Sensing the mood and needs of the stakeholder or store and adapting the approach accordingly.

Illustrative quotes:

“I take it as a push back, like a coming back, like adapting, and then push back.”

“Everyone must be happy when she’s in a good mood, and then everyone else must not be in a good mood.”

“For years, it’s been a bit tough. If you’re in the first year, you know, adapting to Gauteng, you know, it’s like, there’s a major difference about taking KZN. In terms of the busyness, the life, the quality of life, yeah, there’s a lot of difference.”

“You know, it’s a different vibe, different energy.”

Adaptive reading of the room allows managers to tailor the pace, detail, and tone to match the store or stakeholder. The mechanism involves rapid cue scanning, including faces, body language, noise, and time pressure, followed by selecting the correct entry (“quick win first” vs. “slow walk-through”). It works best with local knowledge and pre-existing relationships; it struggles with new teams or when signals are masked by fatigue or noise.

4.5.5 Code E: Emotional regulation

Acknowledging frustration or disappointment without letting it drive behaviour; not taking things personally.

Illustrative quotes:

“The emotions can’t control my reactions.”

“And like I’ve said, if there is a problem, you resolve it, you move on, and you don’t take it personally, yeah?”

“It’s, it’s self-control, yes, it allows you to view, to view a situation in a much better way and come up with a strategy on how to approach a situation, instead of just, you know, losing control of your emotions.”

Managers in the South African retail industry frame emotion regulation as a learned process: name the feeling, then choose the corresponding response. By not taking issues personally, they maintain composure and decision quality. This is reinforced by simple rules (pause before reply; stick to facts; shorten the loop). It is most reliable when sleep and micro-recovery are intact and weakens under chronic fatigue or unresolved conflict.

Across interviews, emotional intelligence in this retail context appears as a mobile, everyday practice. Managers reset between contexts, de-escalate when heat rises, hear the other side, read the room, and regulate feelings so that behaviour stays constructive. These small, repeatable moves prevent tonal contamination between stores, protect judgment under pace, and sustain relational quality with staff, customers and suppliers. When paired with micro-recovery windows, managers can maintain steady performance despite volatility. Without these boundaries, reactivity and spillover increase.

Alignment with the study objective and research questions is precise. Theme 4 advances the primary objective by showing how managers perceive and enact resilience through moment-to-moment emotion work in retail settings. It addresses RQ1 by specifying portable regulation practices. It addresses RQ2 by evidencing willingness and ability to persist through de-escalation and perspective-taking under pressure. It addresses RQ3 by linking emotion regulation to micro-recovery that stabilises next-day composure.

4.6 THEME 5: ORGANISATIONAL CONDITIONS: STRAIN AND GROWTH LEVERS

Interviewees converged on two clusters of organisational conditions. First, structural drag: time debt from switching between admin and field demands, last-minute changes, unclear store-access norms, and the cognitive load of constant messaging. Second, growth levers: transparent processes and role expectations, realistic store coverage, simple connection structures, job-embedded coaching, and regular, actionable feedback. Where the latter are present, managers describe breathing better and being able to apply their personal coping playbook; where absent, even robust personal strategies fray. Resilience is not only a trait; it is materially shaped by the design of work, specifically whether processes, bandwidth, and connection structures allow managers' personal strategies to take hold.

4.6.1 Code A: Workload and fast-paced environment

Balancing admin/reporting with field demands and managing multiple stakeholders in a fast-paced cadence.

Illustrative quotes:

"A big challenge for me is the admin balance."

"Even if we work hard, we have to try to minimise everything, balance work and personal life."

"We try to balance everything we do."

"Yes, I try to handle the workload, as best I can".

The primary strain is context switching: moving between administration/reporting and store-floor execution compresses recovery and collaboration windows. Managers experience 'time debt' that accumulates across the day, elevating cognitive load and risking tonal spillover. Conditions improve when the admin has protected slots or shared support; they deteriorate

when urgent escalations erode buffers and the stakeholder set expands without sufficient bandwidth.

4.6.2 Code B: Structural clarity and communication

Last-minute changes and unclear instructions create rework; clear SOPs/templates and timely comms reduce ambiguity and waste.

Illustrative quotes:

“I think communication skills that is the best, if you I don’t go on and on in one-on-one conversations.”

“Yeah, I think communication skills are the best for me.”

“So my communication skills are good and getting better.”

Clarity functions as a growth lever: simple SOPs, templates, and early, concise briefs lower ambiguity and rework, thereby preserving attention for value-adding tasks. The mechanism is decision-load reduction and shared expectations. This holds when channels are disciplined and change windows are respected; it fails under late pivots, mixed messages, or shifting criteria.

4.6.3 Code C: Resourcing and staffing

Perceived staffing gaps and coverage issues increase load and limit time for core duties and recovery.

Illustrative quotes:

“The second one is a staff member sometimes, when we work with a merchandiser, they don’t give feedback on time.”

“There was a scenario where one of my staff at my team was chased out, so I got a call from their manager, and then I went to the store.”

“And this change happened while I was in hospital, and when I came out of hospital and returned back to work, I mean, a new area, I don’t know my staff.”

For managers in the South African retail industry, coverage is the bandwidth lever: adequate staffing converts challenges into planned work and re-opens small recovery windows, which stabilises tone and judgement. The benefit peaks when relief or backup is scheduled and roles

are cross trained; it erodes when vacancies linger, sick cover is ad hoc, or headcount targets override workload reality.

4.6.4 Code D: Feedback, training, and coaching sessions

There is a clear desire for training refreshers, targeted feedback, and practical, job-embedded coaching from line managers.

Illustrative quotes:

“The second one is a staff sometimes, when we work with a merchandiser, they don’t give feedback on time.”

“I think communication skills that is the best, if you don’t go one-on-one, then I think to get the feedback”

“Then you would like training in terms of how to cope, yes, and to look better after yourself.”

Development inputs act as growth multipliers: specific, actionable feedback and brief, scenario-based coaching compress learning loops and reduce the frequency of repeated mistakes. This approach works best when feedback is timely and tied to clear standards; it weakens when feedback is generic, delayed, or purely compliance-focused without practical application.

Across interviews, resilience is shown to be materially shaped by organisational design. Structural drag, including admin–field switching, late changes, unclear access norms, and constant messaging, creates time debt and increases cognitive load, which frays even well-rehearsed personal routines and leads to increased tonal spillover. Where growth levers are present, such as clear SOPs and templates, realistic coverage, simple connection structures, job-embedded coaching, and regular, actionable feedback, managers report having breathing room and the ability to apply their coping playbook with consistency. In short, resilience travels when processes, bandwidth and connection structures make micro-recovery and boundary rituals feasible in the flow of work; it stalls when design choices remove buffers and reward reactivity.

Theme 5 advances the primary objective by demonstrating that managers perceive resilience as co-produced by organisational conditions and personal strategies that operate in tandem. It addresses RQ1 by specifying how coping looks under different structural contexts, from time-debt environments to well-scaffolded routes. It addresses RQ2 by evidencing willingness and ability to persist when clarity, coverage and feedback create feasible conditions for steady

performance. It addresses RQ3 by linking development inputs and bandwidth to effort–recovery cycles that stabilise next-day composure and reduce rework.

4.7 THEME 6: WINNING MINDSET THROUGH SELF-TALK AND PURPOSE

Interviewees repeatedly grounded their persistence in identity and the meaning it held for them. Many took pride in representing the client well and upheld values-based commitment to fairness, apology, and composure as a personal standard. For some, faith was integral to meaning and boundary rituals; for others, a leadership identity (“leader, not manager”) shaped daily conduct and justified effort under challenging interactions. Across accounts, portable self-talk scripts orient attention toward controllables and enable a fresh start before the next task.

4.7.1 Code A: Duty and ownership identity

Identity statements emphasising responsibility, ownership, and fulfilling one's duties are often paired with going the extra mile.

Illustrative quotes:

“So it does actually affect me a lot, okay, because if they don’t deliver, I’m also not gonna believe it, whether it’s too much for us or where I’m supposed to take it, so okay,”

“It’s like, as a man, you have a duty, like when, when you get interviewed at a workplace and you sign that contract, those responsibilities are your duty.”

“Ah, you know, being a field manager comes with a responsibility.”

“It’s obviously sales is our thing, but the switch over and the responsibility that we needed to take on.”

For managers in the South African retail industry, duty and ownership operate as identity anchors that justify sustained effort under pressure. By framing tasks as personal commitments, i.e., “my stores,” they reduce avoidance, translate ambiguity into clear next steps, and maintain a tone when the stakes are high. The pattern is strongest when scope and standards are clear, and it weakens when accountability is diffuse or goals change midstream.

4.7.2 Code B: Positive self-talk and optimism under pressure

Very brief internal scripts that orient attention toward controllables, interrupt rumination, and cue a ‘fresh start’ before the next task.

Illustrative quotes:

"I do self-talk, especially in the mornings and when it's busy. It helps me prioritise with 'What's next?' What's in my control for the next hour?, and that calms me."

"After bad news, I reassess: 'Okay, it didn't work, but it doesn't have to be perfect the first time.' That mindset and a few exaggerated breaths help me think clearly."

"Before I step out, I do a 'fresh start' in my head. I tell myself, leave it there, and then list the first two actions for this store."

"When I feel rushed, I say, 'Control the controllables.' It takes seconds, but it stops the spiral, and I focus on what I can actually fix next."

Self-talk functions as a rapid cognitive reframe, which indicates what is controllable, accepting imperfection, and specifying the next one or two moves. This lowers arousal, restores task control, and prevents emotional spillover into the next interaction. It works best when paired with subtle physical cues (such as slow breathing or a brief sit) and falters under chronic sleep deprivation or relentless interruption.

4.7.3 Code C: Not taking things personally

Separating feedback or customer reactions from self-worth to keep interactions calm and constructive.

Illustrative quotes:

"Spend time together and think that's it, then we go our separate ways."

"It was a separate division back when, or before, I was with Heineken itself, I was with Stalin."

"And like I've said, if there is a problem, you resolve it, you move on, and you don't take it personally, yeah?"

"Managers signal understanding ('I hear you; here's what I can do') and separate person from problem, which preserves dignity while moving the task forward."

For managers in the South African retail industry, depersonalising feedback and customer complaints turns heated interactions into operational signals rather than ego threats, sustaining calm problem-solving in the moment. Where clear service standards and fair escalation routes exist, this distancing preserves tone during peak trade; where public call-outs mix with shifting targets, composure erodes and corrective action stalls.

4.7.4 Code D: Self-control and discipline

Intentional self-regulation and reminders to keep behaviour aligned with values, even when provoked.

Illustrative quotes:

“So if you’re going to lead a team of employees, or whoever it is that you are leading, you need to have, firstly, discipline.”

“It’s, it’s self-control, yes, it allows you to view, to view a situation in a much better way and come up with a strategy on how to approach a situation, instead of just, you know, losing control of your emotions.”

“And then I kept that discipline that I need to be early for work, because sometimes when they call me that I need picture of this picture of that picture of this round, because they sometimes call I move.”

“This is reinforced by simple rules such as pause before reply, stick to facts and shorten the loop.”

Discipline compresses the gap between intention and behaviour: pause, choose your tone, and act according to plan. This protects relationships and decision quality in moments of strain. It is strongest when routines (sleep, micro-recovery) support self-control and when boundaries are backed by leadership; it falters with fatigue or when provocation is rewarded.

4.7.5 Code E: Meaning and purpose

Sources of meaning, such as faith practices, service to others, and family responsibilities, are used to stabilise effort and sustain perspective.

Illustrative quotes:

“to have time with my family and have time with my job.”

“So personal resilience for me is to have work time, and have family time. I need it to cope”

“Outside of work, when I’m going through a tough time or through a challenge, I rely on family, friends and my church community.”

“But at first, my husband didn’t want me to take the offer, okay, yeah, because I think he knows my weaker side or what, especially in communicating.”

For managers in the South African retail industry, purpose supplies a stable ‘why’ that absorbs shocks and keeps effort directionally consistent. Faith and family rituals provide boundary cues that downshift arousal and prevent spillover. Kept regular and straightforward, these

anchors steady judgment through volatile trading weeks and translate setbacks into clear subsequent actions. The effect is most potent when practices are routine; it weakens when time debt or unresolved conflict interrupts those anchors.

Across interviews, a winning mindset is grounded in identity and purpose and then held in place by fast and portable self-talk. Duty and ownership provide the “why” for extra effort; brief cognitive reframes steady tone and momentum after setbacks; depersonalising turns criticism into information; and disciplined conduct keeps behaviour aligned with values in heat. Faith, service, and family routines provide simple boundary cues that help downshift arousal and prevent spillover between tasks. Together, these practices convert volatility into a next-action focus and preserve relational quality with staff, customers and suppliers.

Theme 6 advances the primary objective by showing resilience as identity- and meaning-led coping enacted in the moment. It addresses RQ1 through concrete cognitive and values-based practices; RQ2 by evidencing willingness and ability to persist via reframing and disciplined follow-through; RQ3 by linking purpose and boundary rituals to recovery and next-day steadiness, which enable these mindsets to take root and endure.

4.8 CROSS-THEME INTEGRATION

Across Themes 1–6, resilience is presented as a layered system, rather than a single trait. At the base are micro-recovery practices (Theme 1) that lower arousal and stop tonal spillover. On that base sit planning and prioritising habits (Theme 2) that run a simple loop: anticipate, prime, sequence, reflect. Long days become workable paths. Support structures inside and outside work (Theme 3) add fast guidance, practical know-how and affective recharge, turning uncertainty into subsequent actions. In motion, emotional intelligence (Theme 4) keeps interactions constructive through fresh starts, de-escalation, perspective-taking, and reading the room. Relationships hold under pace. Surrounding these practices, organisational conditions (Theme 5) either drag through time debt, late changes, unclear norms, coverage gaps, or lift through clear SOPs, realistic coverage, simple connection structures, coaching, and feedback. Finally, a winning mindset (Theme 6), duty and ownership, self-talk, and discipline, along with meaning through faith, service, and family, provide the why and the cognitive cues that sustain steady effort.

The pattern is recursive. Recovery enables planning. Planning frees capacity to use support. Support and EI reduce rework and conflict. Favourable conditions expand bandwidth. Mindset binds the system when days are volatile. Where a layer is missing, sleep fragments, plans

derail, support thins, EI is overwhelmed, or structure is unclear. Where layers align, managers in the South African retail industry report calmer judgement, cleaner handovers between stores and durable interpersonal quality, despite high workload and continuous change.

4.9 CODES PER THEME

The tables that follow present a concise map of the analytic architecture used in Chapter 4. For each theme, the table lists the Code label (for traceability in the text), the Code name (the core idea captured by that code), and a brief Description that summarises how the pattern shows up in managers' day-to-day work. The purpose is to provide examiners with a quick reference that links the narrative analysis to its building blocks, illustrating how codes were defined and applied across the dataset. Full quotations and expanded interpretation appear in the body of Chapter 4 and in the appendix, where interviewee identifiers anchor the claims to the underlying interviews. Read horizontally to see what each code contributes to its theme, and vertically to observe how related codes cluster into mechanisms that address the research questions.

Table 4-1: Dedicated rest and micro recovery breaks

THEME 1: DEDICATED REST AND MICRO RECOVERY BREAKS		
Code	Code name	Description
Code A	Reset pauses between tasks / between stores.	Short, intentional pauses (often 5-15 minutes, sometimes 20-30) are inserted between demanding interactions or store visits to let emotions settle before the next engagement, typically sitting quietly, a few deep/exaggerated breaths, a sip of water, and deliberately not touching the phone.
Code B	Audio-based regulation.	Listening to music and podcasts during drives to

		calm down or to re-energise between stops. The car is repeatedly described as a private, controllable 'recovery space.'
Code C	Boundary rituals before home.	Short rituals that mark the psychological boundary between work and home to prevent emotional spillover into family life (e.g., a minute of quiet in the driveway, brief prayer/faith-based reflection, conscious 'leave it at the door' cues).
Code D	Importance of sleep.	Sleep is an anchor recovery strategy; Adequate sleep is linked directly to next-day composure and cognitive sharpness.

Table 4-2: Habits of planning and prioritising

THEME 2: HABITS OF PLANNING AND PRIORITISING		
Code	Code name	Description
Code A	Night-before planning & checklists.	Deliberate preparation before the next day. Managers would set up to-do lists, checklists, and decide what must happen first. These habits resulted in stress reduction and clarity-gaining.
Code B	Morning routines.	Early-morning routines to mentally prepare for the

		day: Morning prayers, short affirmations, to-do lists, and exercises that clear mental clutter.
Code C	Sequencing the day.	Using calendars, slots, and sequences to batch similar tasks, protect focus windows, and reduce switch costs.
Code D	Reflection loops.	To reflect after each day and capture lessons learned in the day. Practise daily reflection habits.

Table 4-3: Crucial support structures inside and outside work

THEME 3: CRUCIAL SUPPORT STRUCTURES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE WORK		
Code	Code name	Description
Code A	Line manager support and accessibility.	Interviewees describe line managers who are reachable via phone/ or Teams. Line managers provide perspective or next steps, which reduces uncertainty and calms the emotions of interviewees.
Code B	Peer connection and sharing best practices.	Colleagues act as sounding boards and a source of practical ideas. Interviewees value collaboration sessions with colleagues.
Code C	Family and friends as emotional buffer.	Spending time with family members and friends restores emotions, energy,

		and motivation among interviewees. Family and friends contribute to interviewees arriving at work with more composure.
Code D	Faith and community groups.	Faith practices and community involvement (church, mosque, prayer) provide boundary rituals and a sense of meaning that counterbalance daily stress.
Code E	Communication channels for enhanced support.	Support is enabled by quick, short calls, Teams meetings and WhatsApp messages, which allow advice and reassurance available on demand.

Table 4-4: Emotional intelligence on the move

THEME 4: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON THE MOVE		
Code	Code name	Description
Code A	Fresh start rules between appointments.	Resetting mindset before entering a new store/meeting; consciously leaving prior emotions at the door.
Code B	De-escalation and tone control in difficult interactions.	Staying calm, controlling tone, and avoiding escalation even when provoked.
Code C	Empathy and perspective-taking.	Listening for the other person's perspective and

		adjusting response to what they need to feel heard.
Code D	Reading the room and adapting to stakeholders.	Sensing the mood and needs of the stakeholder or store and adapting the approach accordingly.
Code E	Emotional regulation.	Acknowledging frustration or disappointment without letting it drive behaviour; not taking things personally.

Table 4-5: Organisational conditions: strain and growth levers

THEME 5: ORGANISATIONAL CONDITIONS: STRAIN AND GROWTH LEVERS		
Code	Code name	Description
Code A	Workload and fast-paced environment.	The continuous balance between admin and reporting. Interviewees also need to manage different stakeholders' demands.
Code B	Structural clarity and communication.	Last-minute changes and unclear instructions create rework and frustration; clearer SOPs/templates reduce ambiguity.
Code C	Resourcing and staffing.	Perceived short staffing and coverage gaps, which increase load and limit time for daily duties.
Code D	Feedback, training and coaching sessions.	Interviewees want training refreshers, feedback sessions, and practical coaching from line

		managers aimed at everyday scenarios.
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Table 4-6: Winning mindset: Through self-talk and purpose

THEME 6: WINNING MINDSET: THROUGH SELF-TALK AND PURPOSE		
Code	Code name	Description
Code A	Duty and ownership identity.	Identity statements around responsibility, ownership, and doing what you're paid to do, often paired with going the extra mile.
Code B	Positive self-talk and optimism under pressure.	Choosing a constructive attitude and reframing setbacks to maintain momentum.
Code C	Not taking things personally.	Separating feedback or customer reactions from self-worth to keep interactions calm.
Code D	Self-control and discipline.	Intentional self-regulation and reminders to keep behaviour aligned with values, even when provoked.
Code E	Meaning and purpose (faith, service, family).	Sources of meaning, faith practices, service to others, and family responsibilities, that stabilise effort.

Taken together, the codes showcase personal resilience as a practical repertoire that is portable, feasible, and context sensitive. Within and across themes, the patterns cohere around four interlocking mechanisms: brief recovery and regulation routines that stabilise mood and attention; planning and cognitive scripts that steer effort toward controllables; social scaffolds that make strain manageable; and organisational conditions that either enable or

constrain these individual strategies. The tables, therefore, serve as an audit trail for the thematic claims in Chapter 4, providing a transparent link from coded data to the chapter's integrative argument. They also create a transparent bridge into Chapter 5, where the synthesis is taken forward to consider implications and limits considering the study's aims and theoretical framing.

4.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND LIMITATIONS

Reflexively, the analysis privileges repeated patterns across a relatively small sample of managers in one business context. Quotes are indicative, not exhaustive. While convergence across interviewees supports the plausibility of claims, transferability to other retail formats or regions should be argued by analogy rather than assumed. Social desirability and recall biases are likely to occur, particularly in relation to identity claims and compliance with recovery practices. These constraints are mitigated by the inductive process, cross-interviewee triangulation, and explicit alignment to recent peer-reviewed evidence; however, they remain essential when interpreting the strength of the claim.

4.11 SUMMARY

This chapter showed that managers' resilience in a fast-paced South African retail environment is practical, portable, and designed. Rather than "toughing it out", interviewees described a repeatable infrastructure of micro-recovery. An effective planning cadence, dependable support ties, and mobile emotional intelligence, all held together by identity, self-talk, and purpose. Resilience is thus enacted through small acts, such as brief resets, first-move lists, two-minute check-ins, slow speech in high temperatures, and short evening reflections, which protect tone and decision quality across store rotations. Crucially, organisational design magnifies or mutes these personal strategies: transparent processes, realistic coverage, and actionable coaching extend managers' capacity; structural drag and time debt compress it.

In addressing the study's objective and research questions, the findings provide a grounded account of how managers perceive and practise resilience, their willingness and ability to persist through disruption, the effort recovery strategies that restore capacity during and after work, and the conditions that enable or constrain these practices. Resilience in the retail industry is co-produced by people, habits, relationships, and the design of work, enabling performance and relational quality to be sustained under pressure.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings and interpretations presented in Chapter 4 in relation to the study's objectives and the broader literature as seen in Chapter 2. Chapter 5 synthesises the empirical insights to explain how managers in a South African retail company perceive and maintain their personal resilience through daily coping strategies. The discussion connects the thematic evidence to the research aims, providing an integrated understanding of what personal resilience means in the managerial context with the South African retail industry and how it is enacted in practice.

The primary objective of this study was to explore and identify managers' perceptions of their personal resilience and coping strategies in a South African retail company through semi-structured interviews.

The secondary objectives were:

1. To examine how managers perceive their willingness and ability to cope and persist through challenging situations actively.
2. To identify the internal and external support structures that managers perceive as necessary for sustaining personal resilience.
3. To explore the effort recovery strategies utilised during and after work to restore capacity.

This chapter is organised around these objectives and grounded in the six themes that emerged from the inductive analysis in Chapter 4. Each section links the thematic findings to the study's objectives and relevant literature, providing both theoretical and practical interpretations. The discussion culminates in the presentation of conclusions, managerial recommendations, identified limitations, and areas for future research.

5.2 DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

This section consolidates the empirical patterns reported in Chapter 4. It demonstrates how the six themes interact to shape managers' perceptions of personal resilience and their active coping strategies in a South African retail context. Section 5.2.1 integrates the themes into one coherent account, then unpacks how each theme works and what the outcomes produced are. Explicitly tying those mechanisms back to the Chapter 2 literature on resilience, effort–recovery processes, job demands–resources, conservation of resources, coping (problem-focused, emotion-focused, and maladaptive), social support, self-regulation, and

efficacy/identity. A brief comparison with recent studies (mostly from 2021 to 2025) follows to demonstrate how these findings align with or extend evidence from other high-strain settings.

5.2.1 Discussion of the explanation and identification of managers' perceptions of personal resilience and coping strategies

Across accounts, resilience is not treated as a fixed trait but as a system of coordinated practices that stabilise functioning in a volatile, interruption-heavy retail environment. Dedicated rest and micro-recovery breaks help puncture strain build-up and provide moments of psychological detachment and attentional reset within the work. Habits of planning and prioritising create anticipatory structure and boundary control that prevent demand spirals. Critical support structures (inside and outside the workplace) supply emotional containment, rapid advice, and instrumental help, while organisational conditions – strain and growth levers either drain capacity (when resourcing or target clarity is low) or enable learning and job crafting (when supportive). Running through these are self-regulation and emotional control (minute-to-minute modulation of arousal, reappraisal, and pause-before-respond), as well as identity-as-leader and personal efficacy (a values-anchored view of oneself as the person who steadies the team, with confidence in one's influence). The co-activation of these elements produces day-to-day coping capacity, performance stability, and persistence without eroding health.

THEME 1: DEDICATED REST AND MICRO RECOVERY BREAKS

Across accounts, resilience is described not as toughing it out but as a set of small, repeatable acts that downshift arousal, reset attention, and prevent emotional spillover between back-to-back interactions. Interviewees repeatedly positioned the car as a private recovery space, using five- to fifteen-minute pauses, breathwork, music, and no-phone moments to reset before the next store or stakeholder interaction. One manager summarised the practical logic succinctly: if the reset is skipped, the next person gets the frustration that belongs to the last store. Others emphasised ending the day with short boundary rituals such as “leave it at the door”, a brief prayer, or sitting quietly in the driveway to protect home relationships. Sleep was described as the anchor on which next-day composure and working memory depend.

Read against the literature, these accounts align with contemporary evidence that very short breaks, often referred to as micro-breaks, can improve vigour and reduce fatigue when they include mild detachment (Albulescu & Sulea, 2022). Recovery scholars argue that brief detachment episodes during and after work accumulate to preserve self-regulation over the day and week, a view summarised by Sonnentag (2022) and Sonnentag and Fritz (2023). The habitual reframes reported by interviewees, for example, a fresh start and control the

controllables, are consistent with reappraisal-based emotion regulation strategies that are linked to engagement and performance (Madrid et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2025). The no-baggage rituals before entering the home resonate with boundary control research that shows psychological detachment and limits on rumination can buffer spillover into family life (Baktash et al., 2025; Junker et al., 2025; Žiedelis et al., 2022). Feasibility is critical in this context; managers described stacking two or three low-friction behaviours, for example, sit plus breathe plus water, or music plus self-talk, rather than elaborate routines that would be unrealistic on the road. A counter-reading is that some resets risk being displaced by digital catch-up, such as checking WhatsApp quickly, which can undermine detachment. That tension is returned to under Theme 5 on organisational conditions.

In this setting, micro-recoveries function as the immediate fuel for self-control. By creating brief but repeated detachment windows, managers protect the executive resources that underpin calm judgment, deliberate problem-solving, and tone control in the next interaction. Practically, the habit of “resetting before the next person” converts pressure into a series of manageable sprints rather than an uninterrupted strain curve, which is the difference between reactive endurance and active coping. In JD–R/COR terms, these small recoveries slow resource loss and enable resource gain cycles, allowing managers to choose problem-focused actions by re-prioritising, seeking help, and scripting the next move, instead of slipping into avoidance or rumination.

THEME 2: HABITS OF PLANNING-AND-PRIORITISING

Interviewees repeatedly framed planning as a mindset that organises attention rather than an administrative chore. The night-before checklists, morning priming, the wake-up empty script, and fast triage self-talk, for example, “what is next” and “what is in my control”, are used to interrupt rumination and sustain momentum through interruptions. When errors or delays occur, managers described quick error-recovery scripts, acknowledging, reprioritising, and acting, rather than engaging in extended post-mortems. For some, planning and emotional regulation are explicitly linked; planning enables emotional regulation, which in turn supports a calm start.

The plan-and-prioritise mindset can be read as a cognitive resource in Job Demands-Resources terms (Bakker et al., 2023). It facilitates channelled effort under volatility and overlaps with proactive coping and implementation intentions, both of which are associated with lower day-end strain and higher daily goal progress in field studies (Sonnentag, 2022). The wake-up empty narrative echoes research on evening recovery and morning affect in which positive end-of-day states and clear next-day plans predict better detachment and

calmer starts (Rodríguez-Muñoz et al., 2021). A stronger claim, namely that checklists cause resilience, is not defensible here. Rather, the data indicate a reciprocal loop: planning steadies affect, and steadier affect improves prioritising. Over-scripting, however, can fail when the day diverges, and several interviewees acknowledged the need to reset the plan after unexpected events.

Planning here is not paperwork; it is an attentional technology that reduces switching costs and makes challenges feel tractable. By pre-deciding “what matters next” and anchoring to controllables, managers create conditions for rapid re-planning when trade deviates. This fosters active coping because the next step is always available, even under volatility. Within JD–R, planning operates as job crafting in time: it redistributes demands, preserves scarce cognitive resources for leverage tasks, and sustains momentum, thereby stabilising functioning across peaks rather than amplifying strain.

THEME 3: CRUCIAL SUPPORT STRUCTURES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE WORK

Managers emphasised the stabilising effect of supportive relationships, level-headed line managers who make or break you, peers who hold each other’s hands through a merger and share practical know-how, and subordinates whose reliability reduces firefighting load. Outside work, family and faith-based communities were described as charging stations that restore perspective and energy. Support was often portrayed as bidirectional; interviewees fight for their staff with store managers and reps, and in turn rely on those staff for execution under tight timelines.

This networked view of coping is compatible with contemporary Job Demands–Resources formulations in which social support, feedback and role clarity are core resources that buffer demands and foster engagement (Bakker et al., 2023). It also resonates with post-pandemic work on belonging and resilience, where high-quality connections dampen rumination and sustain prosocial motivation in high-demand settings (Baktash et al., 2025; Kahn, 2022). A tension appears around store-embedded power; managers often negotiate with host-store management over access, standards, and hours. Where these relationships are adversarial, emotional labour rises, and where they are collaborative, the same constraints feel navigable. The dataset cannot adjudicate causality; however, it suggests that resilience is partly a property of the relational field and not solely the individual.

Supportive ties turn solitary strain into shared problem-solving. Emotionally, they absorb shock and reduce rumination; informationally, they provide scripts and options; instrumentally, they unlock hands and time. This combination widens the coping repertoire and normalises help-

seeking as professional practice. In COR terms, these networks are resource caravans, such as affiliation, advice, and efficacy, that travel together. These active coping strategies increase the likelihood that managers will be more resilient, proactive and productive in the South African retail industry.

THEME 4: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON THE MOVE

Interviewees consistently described adaptive emotion work across stores and stakeholders, reading the room, separating one interaction from the next to avoid contaminating tone, and apologising promptly for over-reactions. Several accounts foregrounded identity-safe leadership talk: “I see myself as a leader, not a manager, put myself in their shoes,” alongside firm boundary-setting where needed. Emotion regulation was framed as learned and effortful, not innate, for example, “I have to remind myself to reset before I walk in the store”.

This travelling emotional intelligence accords with evidence that affect-improving emotion regulation, especially cognitive reappraisal, predicts daily engagement and service quality while rumination predicts depletion and spillover (Kadović et al., 2022; Madrid et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2025). Diary work also suggests that resilience may moderate the exhaustion links on high-demand days (Mazzetti et al., 2024). A pragmatic concern is energetic cost; constantly showing up fresh across stores can be depleting if not buffered by short recovery episodes, which is documented in Theme 1.

Emotion regulation is the bridge between recovery and performance. By pausing, reappraising, and separating interactions, managers keep arousal within a productive band, which protects judgment and relationships. This makes active coping possible in the moment, as managers can apologise, re-contract expectations, or problem-solve without escalating conflict. Paired with Theme 1, these skills prevent depletion spirals across stores; paired with Theme 3, they are reinforced by a climate where perspective-taking and repair are modelled and reciprocated.

THEME 5: ORGANISATIONAL CONDITIONS-STRAIN AND GROWTH LEVERS

Interviewees converged on two clusters of organisational conditions. First, structural drag features, time debt from switching between admin and field demands, last-minute changes, unclear store-access norms, and the cognitive load of constant messaging. Second, growth levers, clear processes and role expectations, realistic store coverage, simple connection structures, job-embedded coaching, and regular, actionable feedback. Where the latter are present, people described breathing better and being able to apply their personal coping playbook, and where absent, even robust personal strategies fray.

In Job Demands-Resources terms, Theme 5 recasts resilience as a design property. Demands such as fragmentation, time pressure, and emotional labour can be shaped by adding resources such as autonomy, clarity, coaching, and feedback that enable energy restoration and focused effort (Bakker et al., 2023). Contemporary recovery scholarship also highlights how work design can enable or disable at-work recovery, including the feasibility of short, uninterrupted micro-breaks that are associated with lower end-of-day strain (Sonnentag, 2022). Conversely, always-on messaging undermines boundary control and detachment (Junker et al., 2025; Otto et al., 2025). A fair counter-reading is that, in lean retail operations, slack is scarce; however, the data suggest that small design adjustments, for example, predictable admin windows and explicit norms for response latency, may reduce switching costs without adding headcount.

Resilience is not only inside the person. It is materially shaped by the design of work, specifically whether processes, bandwidth and connection structures allow managers' personal strategies to take. Work design either enables or disables the personal playbook. Clear processes, predictable admin windows, realistic coverage, and timely feedback lower friction so that micro-recovery, planning, and regulation can take root during work. Under chronic misalignment, managers are forced into conservation mode and even robust personal strategies fray (COR loss spirals). Thus, organisational levers are not background; they set the ceiling on how far individual resilience can translate into sustained, approach-oriented coping.

THEME 6: WINNING MINDSET THROUGH SELF-TALK AND PURPOSE

Interviewees repeatedly grounded their persistence in identity and meaning, pride in representing the client well, a values-based commitment to fairness and apology, and the desire to model steadiness for staff and family. For some, faith was integral to meaning and boundary rituals. For others, a leadership identity – seeing themselves as leaders rather than managers – shaped daily conduct and justified effort in difficult interactions.

Meaning making can be construed as a personal resource that colours appraisal of demands, supports reappraisal during conflict, and sustains prosocial motivation (Bakker et al., 2023). It likely interacts with Theme 3 (social scaffolds) and Theme 4 (emotion regulation). Leaders who see themselves as stewards of relationships appear more willing to invest in the patience and repair work those roles demand. A limitation is the risk of self-presentation bias; identity talk may be partly aspirational, yet its recurrence across interviews suggests it forms part of how managers make hardship worthwhile.

Identity and meaning supply the 'why' for persistence. A leader-identity and values-anchored purpose reframes hassles as role-consistent challenges, which strengthens willingness and perceived ability to continue under pressure. This meaning frame legitimises boundary-setting and repair work as part of being "who I am at work," increasing the probability of approach strategies by engaging, clarifying, and apologising, rather than disengagement, especially when combined with the resource base created by Themes 1–3.

Positioning the findings against recent studies

Our data's emphasis on within-day recovery converges with post-2020 evidence that micro-breaks enhance well-being and can aid performance by short detachment episodes, preventing strain accumulation (Albulescu et al., 2022). The role of job resources and leadership context aligns with recent JD–R research showing how resourceful climates enable resilience and performance, mirroring our Theme 4 pattern that organisational levers can either drain or unlock coping (Claes et al., 2023). In retail, case evidence from supermarket operations during COVID-19 highlights the importance of managerial preparation, rapid response, and development under pressure, which is consistent with our findings on growth levers (Yang et al., 2021). From high-strain health settings, post-pandemic nursing studies reinforce that resilience is strengthened by collegial support, structured recovery, and a broad coping repertoire, echoing Themes 1–3 (Chipps et al., 2025; Crişan et al., 2024). Finally, recent syntheses on psychological detachment report robust associations with mood, energy, sleep, and stress, underlining the centrality of detachment in any resilience architecture (Blake et al., 2025).

In summary, as seen from previous studies, the personal resilience and coping strategies of employees and managers have been explored, especially after COVID-19, in various industries. Most of these studies were based on employee level, not management level, across different industries. One study focused on managers in the retail industry of China. The limited literature is focused on the personal resilience and coping strategies of managers in the South African retail industry. This gap in the literature has been identified as the problem statement of this study.

5.2.2 Discussion of the willingness and ability to actively cope and persist

Managers in the South African retail industry sustain approach-oriented action under pressure by applying cognitive structuring that keeps attention on controllables (Theme 2). These Managers also implemented emotional regulation as a coping strategy (Theme 4); lastly, a

winning mindset (Theme 6) contributed to the willingness and the ability to actively cope in the South African industry. These three themes connect with Chapter 2, as this constellation aligns with Job Demands–Resources principles (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Bakker et al., 2023), Psychological Capital (Avey et al., 2010; 2011; Luthans et al., 2006; 2007; 2017), and the People Capacity Solutions (PCS) resilience framing (Lombard, 2025; PCS, 2023), which treat resilience as developable capacities supported by resources in context.

Managers use simplistic, repeatable cognitive routines, such as night-before lists, morning planning, sequence rules, and brief end-of-day reviews. Managers utilise these strategies to prioritise and plan the actions required, and to reduce uncertainty during the busy, unpredictable days in the South African retail industry. These habits function as attentional technology: they shrink ambiguity at the start of the day, keep focus on controllables during waves of interruption, and seed rapid re-planning after setbacks. In JD–R terms, such structuring increases available resources (clarity, autonomy, self-efficacy) relative to demands, enabling motivation, and buffering strain (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Bakker et al., 2023). The pattern is also consistent with active, problem-focused coping in the PCS framework, which highlights resilience as a practical sequence of understanding the problem, identifying causes, and selecting next actions (Lombard, 2025; PCS, 2023).

The willingness to persist is sustained by moment-to-moment emotion work: fresh-start cues before entering stores, de-escalation through tone control and pacing, perspective-taking to reduce defensiveness, and disciplined non-personalisation. These skills prevent “contamination” from one interaction to the next and keep arousal within a productive band. Recovery theory suggests that such short re-appraisals and boundaries rely on conserved self-regulatory resources; they are strengthened by brief detachment opportunities and protected sleep (Sonnentag, 2018; Sonnentag et al., 2022). This is precisely how our interviewees described it: regulation was learned and effortful, and it worked best when paired with the micro-recovery repertoire reported elsewhere in Chapter 4 (Theme 1).

Interviewees grounded persistence in duty and ownership, self-talk that focuses on what is controllable, disciplined conduct such as pausing before replying and sticking to facts, and meaning anchors in faith, service, and family. Psychological Capital frames these as state-like capacities of hope, efficacy, resilience and optimism that can be developed and that predict engagement and performance (Luthans et al., 2006; 2007; 2017; Avey et al., 2010; 2011). Managers’ identity talk as leaders rather than managers, together with values-based repair through apology and fairness, appears to mobilise those HERO resources in the moment, particularly efficacy, the belief that one can influence the next step, and optimism, the view

that a setback is not the end state. Behaviourally, this presents as quick error-recovery scripts, proactive help-seeking and consistent follow-through – hallmarks of active coping (Martson & Martson, 2018; PCS, 2023).

The combined mechanism of cognitive structuring, emotional regulation, and identity-anchored action maps closely onto the competence-plus-capability view of resilience in Chapter 2: trait-like orientations (optimism, self-control) are insufficient without practised competencies (planning, re-appraisal, help-seeking) and supportive relationships (Afifi et al., 2016; Lombard, 2025; Luthans et al., 2006; 2007). Under JD–R, these mechanisms raise personal and job resources (clarity, autonomy, feedback, belonging), which in turn support engagement and persistence when demands spike (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Bakker et al., 2023). Recovery theory explains the energetic substrate: short detachment episodes and protected sleep replenish the self-regulatory fuel that those mechanisms draw on (Sonnentag, 2018; Sonnentag et al., 2022).

Heavy switching between field execution and admin/reporting, late changes, and constant messaging create time debt, elevating cognitive load and leaving fewer windows for planning or reset. JD–R predicts that, under sustained high demands without compensating resources, strain accumulates and motivation drops (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). Our data showed that even strong personal routines fray when fragmentation eliminates buffers. Chapter 2's work-design levers (clarity, predictable admin windows, realistic coverage, actionable feedback), therefore, act as enabling conditions for active coping to take place during work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Martinelli et al., 2019; Robertson et al., 2022).

Perceived under-staffing and ad-hoc relief compress recovery, collaboration opportunities, and increase emotional labour. Conservation-of-resources logic implies loss spirals: scarce bandwidth reduces recovery, which weakens regulation, in turn raising conflict risk and rework (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Sonnentag, 2018). Chapter 2 emphasises internal support and capability building, which refers to manager accessibility, peer exchange, and job-embedded coaching. These internal support structures limit managers' emotional spirals by converting solitary strain into shared problem-solving (Dimoff et al., 2021; Gallup, 2020, 2022; Lombard, 2025; Meintjes, 2016).

Where store-embedded power is adversarial (access, standards, hours), emotional costs rise, and willingness to persist can be undermined. The Theory of Resilience and Relational Load (TRRL) suggests that predictable, supportive communication within key relationships reduces relational strain and preserves the emotional resources needed for coping (Afifi et al., 2016).

Practically, our interviewees' quick, disciplined channels (brief calls, Teams, and WhatsApp with clear norms) embody this principle by turning uncertainty into next steps, stabilising affect and enabling follow-through.

These boundary conditions reinforce a central Chapter 2 claim: resilience is co-produced by people, practices, and the design of work. Personal agency, such as planning, regulation, and identity, requires a minimum viable context, such as clear targets, feasible schedules, accessible managers and peers, and recovery-friendly norms, to sustain approach strategies at pace (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Lombard, 2025; PCS, 2023; Sonnentag, 2018).

The emphasis on within-day recovery and portable resets complements meta-analytic evidence that micro-breaks and psychological detachment are associated with better vigour, mood, and performance proxies (Albulescu & Sulea, 2022; Sonnentag, 2018; Sonnentag et al., 2022). Our finding that leadership accessibility and resourceful climates unlock coping echoes JD-R-aligned evidence linking resources to well-being and performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Claes et al., 2023) and aligns with Gallup's observations on manager support and engagement (Gallup, 2020; 2023). Case material from retail during COVID-19 similarly highlights managerial preparation, fast problem-solving, and development under pressure as keys to continuity (Yang et al., 2021; Martinelli et al., 2019; Robertson et al., 2022). Finally, in high-strain sectors, such as healthcare, converging on the same trio, we observe collegial support, structured recovery, and broad coping repertoires predict better resilience and functioning (Cabrera-Aguilar et al., 2023; Chipps et al., 2025; Crişan et al., 2024).

In summary, managers' willingness and ability to actively cope and persist arise when cognitive structuring (Theme 2), mobile emotion regulation (Theme 4), and identity- and purpose-based activation (Theme 6) operate together on a replenished energetic base (Theme 1) and within enabling work design (Theme 5) and support structures (Theme 3). The result is sustained approach behaviour, such as rapid re-planning, help-seeking, de-escalation, and repair. Despite workload peaks, staffing gaps, and competing priorities, the pattern is squarely within the Chapter 2 architecture: JD-R and recovery theory explain how demands, resources, and detachment shape daily functioning (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Sonnentag, 2018), Psychological Capital explains why identity-anchored hope, efficacy, and optimism matter (Avey et al., 2010; 2011; Luthans et al., 2006; 2007; 2017), and TRRL clarifies how predictable, supportive ties reduce relational load and keep coping communally (Afifi et al., 2016). Practically, this suggests that interventions should target all three mechanism layers simultaneously: simple planning cadences and self-talk scripts; brief, protected reset windows

and sleep hygiene; and leadership routines that increase availability, clarity, and coaching. In contexts like South African retail, which is fast-paced, interruption-heavy, and relationally complex, such an integrated approach is what turns willingness into sustained ability to cope and persist (Lombard, 2025; PCS, 2023).

5.2.3 Discussion of internal and external support structures

Building on 5.2.1, Theme 3 shows that managers' willingness and ability to persist are not only individual achievements; they are co-produced in networks that absorb shock, shorten sense-making, and convert uncertainty into the next set of workable actions. Across interviews, the same five anchors recur: supervisors, peers, subordinates, family, and community and faith. These ties do more than feel supportive. They provide rapid informational cues that narrow ambiguity; offer emotional containment that prevents rumination from spiralling; and unlock instrumental capacity that makes action feasible. Read with Chapter 2, this pattern reflects JD–R's resource pathway, which refers to resources enabling motivation, buffering strain, and COR logic, such as resources clustering and protecting against loss spirals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Bakker et al., 2023). It also accords with the TRRL view that predictable, supportive exchanges reduce relational load and preserve energy for coping (Afifi et al., 2016), as well as the Psychological Capital lens in which efficacy and hope are socially scaffolded in the moment (Avey et al., 2010; 2011; Luthans et al., 2006; 2007; 2017).

Interviewees described "level-headed" supervisors who frame ambiguity ("what matters now"), sequence the work (what first, what can wait), and legitimise boundaries (it's okay to say no to low-leverage pulls). Supervisory accessibility turns vague pressure into a clarified task order, shrinking cognitive load and enabling approach coping (ask, prioritise, act). In JD–R terms, supervisors supply clarity, autonomy support and feedback, increasing motivational resources relative to demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Bakker et al., 2023). Through a PsyCap lens, the same acts raise efficacy and hope, which sustain effort under adversity (Luthans et al., 2006; 2017).

Peer WhatsApp groups and quick calls accelerate sense-making: colleagues offer scripts for difficult conversations, share pattern matches, and surface workarounds. This widens the coping repertoire while dampening affectively loaded rumination. In COR, peers are part of a resource caravan: affiliation + advice + validation move together, reducing the cost of re-engaging after a setback (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). TRRL helps explain why predictable, respectful peer exchanges matter: they lower relational strain and free attentional bandwidth for problem-solving (Afifi et al., 2016).

Reliable staff reduce firefighting by closing loops (stock checks, display fixes, follow-through). Their local feedback (“this plan will clash with delivery windows”) allows earlier course correction, preventing rework. In JD–R, this is participation and competence as resources, stabilising day-to-day functioning (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). PsyCap is again visible: small wins generated by capable teams replenish efficacy and optimism, strengthening willingness to persist (Luthans et al., 2006; 2017).

Family debriefs and boundary rituals reframe events, reduce spillover, and restore energy through connection and sleep routines. Recovery theory in Chapter 2 explains the mechanism: detachment and restorative experiences replenish self-regulatory resources, which managers then spend on the next day’s coping (Sonnentag, 2018; Sonnentag et al., 2022). JD–R reads this as extra-organisational resources buffering demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018).

Faith groups or community anchors provide meaning frames, as per PsyCap, strengthen optimism and resilience in the face of volatility (Luthans et al., 2006; 2017). TRRL’s emphasis on predictable supportive bonds clarifies why these ties calm arousal and reduce relational load, preserving capacity for approach-oriented coping (Afifi et al., 2016).

In combination, these ties convert into sequenced actions by supplying clarity, co-thinking, and capacity, exactly the resource engagement route posited in JD–R (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Bakker et al., 2023). COR explains their multiplicative effects: when advice, validation and access co-occur, managers enter the next episode with more resources than they had previously, interrupting loss spirals. TRRL accounts for the process dimension, which is predictable, respectful exchanges reduce relational strain, while recovery theory explains how family/community support anchors detachment and sleep, the energetic substrate for self-control (Afifi et al., 2016; Sonnentag, 2018; Sonnentag et al., 2022).

Where relationships with host-store management or internal stakeholders are adversarial, interviewees reported heightened emotional labour, withholding of information, and second-guessing. In JD–R terms, demands rise while resources fall, which is a classic strain configuration (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). TRRL predicts that unpredictable, low-trust exchanges increase relational load, depleting energy available for coping (Afifi et al., 2016). When supervisors are slow, inconsistent, or unavailable, uncertainty lingers; managers delay action, over-index on self-protective caution, or oscillate between tasks. This blocks the resource-to-action conversion described above. Under COR, delayed guidance permits

resource loss spirals: time bleeds into rumination, weakening regulation, which increases the risk of error and further delay (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018).

If peer groups are fragmented or risk-laden, help-seeking drops and rework increases. JD–R reads this as the removal of a key social resource, while TRRL suggests that unpredictable interaction norms raise interpersonal vigilance costs, reducing bandwidth for problem-solving (Afifi et al., 2016).

Where the bench is thin, managers lose execution capacity; small issues balloon into firefighting. Without credible staff feedback, course corrections arrive late. This matches JD–R’s view that low participation/competence reduces resources and elevates demands; PsyCap predicts that repeated failures erode efficacy and optimism, undermining persistence (Luthans et al., 2006; 2017).

When after-hours communication or unresolved conflict follows managers home, detachment drops, and sleep is disrupted. Recovery theory predicts next-day self-regulatory depletion, raising the probability of reactive coping (Sonnentag, 2018; Sonnentag et al., 2022).

Linking back to Chapter 2, these failure modes are precisely the conditions under which JD–R expects exhaustion and disengagement to rise (high demands, low resources), COR expects loss spirals, and TRRL expects relational strain to cannibalise coping capacity. The antidotes named in Chapter 2, which refer to clear norms, accessible leadership, peer reciprocity, predictable channels, and protected detachment, are the same design levers interviewees implicitly requested (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Afifi et al., 2016; Sonnentag, 2018; Bakker et al., 2023).

Findings here align with post-2020 evidence that micro-recovery and supportive climates materially improve well-being and functioning. A meta-analysis shows micro-breaks enhance vigour and reduce fatigue (Albulescu et al., 2022), consistent with our account of family/community and peer support enabling detachment and “reset” capacity (Theme 3 plus Theme 1 link). JD–R–aligned work indicates that resources and leadership are associated with better well-being and performance (Claes et al., 2023), echoing the role of accessible supervisors and competent teams in converting ambiguity into action. In retail operations during the COVID-19 pandemic, case evidence highlights the importance of managerial preparation, rapid response, and development as resilience enablers of our support structures (Yang et al., 2021). Health-sector studies report that collegial support and structured recovery are central to coping and resilience (Crişan et al., 2024; Chipps et al., 2025), mirroring our

peer/family/community findings. Finally, recent syntheses have linked psychological detachment with improved mood, sleep, and stress, in terms of the energetic dividend that enables social support to translate into sustained action (Blakeet et al., 2025).

Theme 3 demonstrates that support is not peripheral; it is the mechanism that turns uncertainty into action. Supervisors frame and legitimise; peers accelerate sense-making; subordinates provide execution and early warning; family/community restore energy and meaning. When these strands are predictable and accessible, managers exit ambiguity faster and re-enter the task with higher-quality attention and affect, sustaining approach coping through peaks. When trust, feedback, or access falter, JD–R, COR, and TRRL predict precisely what interviewees described: strain rises, regulation weakens, and willingness to persist is tested (Affifi et al., 2016; Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Bakker et al., 2023; Sonnentag, 2018). Practically, the implication is to design support structures, such as leadership availability, peer reciprocity norms, reliable staffing, tight communication channels, and protected detachment. The support structures will help managers navigate from uncertainty to certainty in high-pressure moments within the South African retail industry.

5.2.4 Discussion of effort–recovery during and after work

This section elaborates on Theme 1 and shows how managers utilise micro-breaks during work, psychological detachment after hours, and sleep, which all operate together to stabilise next-day functioning. As reported in Chapter 4, interviewees described short, feasible “step-outs” during the day (car/office pauses, breathwork, music, brief walks), deliberate “end-of-day cut-offs” (“leave it at the door”, brief prayer, driveway quiet), and active protection of sleep as the anchor for next-day working memory and composure. Read in conjunction with Chapter 2, these practices enact core mechanisms from recovery theory and the JD–R/COR frameworks: momentary detachment and restoration interrupt resource loss spirals, rebuild self-regulatory capacity, and thereby enable approach-oriented coping in subsequent episodes (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Sonnentag, 2018; Sonnentag et al., 2022).

Managers emphasised feasibility: stacking two or three low-friction behaviours (sit, breathe exercises and water breaks; music and self-talk strategies) rather than elaborate routines. These stacks are micro-scripts that quickly downshift arousal and reset attention, consistent with Chapter 2’s account of psychological detachment as a short, repeatable state that protects executive control for the next decision (Sonnentag, 2018; Sonnentag et al., 2022). JD–R reads these as personal resources that replenish under demand. At the same time, COR explains why small restorations compound, which leads to recovered attention, enables

better prioritising, which prevents additional resource loss (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). Interviewees' micro-reappraisals, such as a fresh start and control of the controllables, reflect the emotion-regulation repertoire reviewed in Chapter 2, where reappraisal sustains engagement and reduces spillover when paired with detachment and sleep hygiene.

Accounts in Chapter 4 distinguish between during-work recovery and after-work recovery. During work refers to micro-breaks that convert a volatile day into a series of manageable sprints, preventing contamination between consecutive interactions and stabilising judgment in the next customer, supplier, or store conversation (Sonnentag, 2018). After-work detachment and sleep extend and consolidate those gains: evening psychological detachment limits rumination, enabling deeper sleep; sleep, in turn, replenishes working memory and inhibitory control, which are the fuel for next-day planning and emotion regulation (Sonnentag et al., 2022). In JD–R terms, the two-time windows cooperate during work resets, ensuring resources remain above a minimum threshold so work can continue. At the same time, after-work detachment and sleep rebuild the stock for the next cycle (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). Interviewees' boundary rituals, such as no-phone moments before entering home, brief prayers, and family debriefs, align with Chapter 2's guidance that detachment is easier when rituals mark a role transition and when communication norms support off-switching.

Chapter 4 also highlighted tensions: digital catch-up can displace resets, such as “just checking WhatsApp,” and always-on messaging blurs boundaries, eroding evening detachment and sleep. Recovery theory predicts next-day depletion under such conditions, and JD–R anticipates loss spirals when demands (fragmentation, message load) chronically exceed resources in terms of clarity, autonomy, and recovery-friendly norms (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Sonnentag, 2018). The practical implication, as seen in Chapter 2, is to pair personal micro-scripts with contextual supports, such as predictable administrative windows or explicit response latency norms, so that effort–recovery can occur during and after work.

Evidence after 2020 converges with our findings. A systematic review indicates that micro-breaks enhance vigour and reduce fatigue, which aligns with our interviewees' emphasis on brief, feasible resets throughout the day (Albulescu et al., 2022). Recent syntheses report robust links between psychological detachment and mood, energy, sleep, and stress, underscoring why boundary rituals and off-switching are important for next-day steadiness (Blake et al., 2025). Studies relating job resources to well-being and performance reinforce the idea that recovery is easier, hence more effective, when leadership and work design support it (Claes et al., 2023). Findings from healthcare and retail operations similarly highlight

the role of brief recovery and structured routines during crisis conditions in sustaining functioning (Crişan et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2021).

5.3 DISCUSSION OF THE STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE AND CREDIBILITY CHECKS

The purpose of this section is to assess how convincingly the evidence underpins the study's objectives and claims, consistent with the trustworthiness criteria outlined in Chapter 3. Indicators and a strength rating across objectives have been assessed across interviewees, internal consistency within themes, and the presence of disconfirming cases. These ratings speak to the credibility of the patterns reported in Chapter 4 and integrated in Chapter 5.

The table that follows condenses the evidentiary strength by secondary and third objective. For each domain, it lists the observed indicators, a strength rating grounded in cross-case consistency (rather than statistical prevalence), and the practical implication for managers' personal resilience and active coping. Read from left to right, the table shows how empirical signals translate into resilience-relevant consequences.

Table 5-1: Secondary Objective 2 and 3

Secondary Objective 2: To identify the internal and external support structures that influence managers' resilience.			
DESCRIPTION	INDICATORS	STRENGTH	IMPLICATION FOR PERSONAL RESILIENCE AND COPING STRATEGIES
Line management	30% felt supported	Limited	Patchy supervisory access limits clarity; it slows conversion of ambiguity into action.
Colleagues	60% felt supported	limited	Peer scripts exist but are inconsistent across regions/teams; help-seeking norms vary.
Subordinates	35% felt supported	limited	Thin bench strength reduces execution capacity and early warning feedback.
Friends and family	40% felt supported	Moderate	Home debriefs and boundary rituals enable detachment and reduce spillover. Broader ties provide emotional containment and perspective.
Church/community groups	60% felt supported	Strong	Faith and community anchors strengthen meaning and optimism during volatility.
Secondary Objective 3: To discover managers' effort recovery strategies during and after work hours.			
DESCRIPTION	INDICATORS	STRENGTH	IMPLICATION FOR PERSONAL RESILIENCE AND COPING STRATEGIES
During work	40% implemented recovery strategies during work	Moderate	Feasible micro-breaks stabilise tone and judgement across interactions.
After work	60% implemented recovery strategies after work	Strong	Detachment and sleep consistently replenish self-regulatory capacity.
Both after and during work	30% implemented recovery strategies both during and after work	Limited	Integrated routines are less common; boundary and scheduling constraints persist.

Note: Strength ratings reflect convergence and consistency across interviews rather than statistical prevalence.

In summary, the table shows that personal resilience among managers is strongest when support is community-anchored outside of work, colleague-anchored inside work, and recovery occurs after work, as indicated by 60%, which corresponds to a strong rating. Managers provided a moderate rating, indicating that home support structures and micro-breaks during work are present, each at 40%. The weakest across core work-based supports, with line management at 30% and subordinates at 35%. Then, managers also did not integrate during and after routines (30%).

Managers need to prioritise the table's signal: safeguard the strong rows, standardise the moderate ones, and remediate the limited work support so integrated recovery and approach coping can take hold consistently.

5.4 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS BY OBJECTIVE

This section translates the study's findings into practical steps that transform willingness and ability to cope into sustained active coping. Actions are organised by the study objectives and specified at three levels: individual, line manager, and organisational. Consistent with Chapter 2, each practice is anchored in the concepts of effort–recovery and detachment, JD–R, social support/TRRL, Conservation of Resources, and Psychological Capital. Importantly, the plan integrates both inside and outside work support structures, as the evidence shows these are among the strongest contributors to next-day steadiness and persistence.

5.4.1 Primary objective: To explore and identify managers' perceptions of their personal resilience and coping strategies in a South African retail company

Responsibility is distributed across the individual, the line manager, and the organisation. At the individual level, managers take ownership of brief, repeatable planning and self-regulation routines. Line managers reinforce a shared vocabulary for resilience during team touchpoints. The organisation supplies simple, standardised templates that normalise reflection and prioritisation.

Two short routines are recommended individually. First, a reflective planning cadence that closes the day with a five-minute note on wins, learning, and following priorities, and opens the next day with a five-minute triage of the top three tasks. Second, self-talk prompts are

placed on the phone or home screen, for example, “*Control the controllables*”, “*Pause, then respond*”, and “*What matters first*”. For line managers, a one-page resilience vocabulary is introduced in regular team interactions, covering terms such as detachment, micro-breaks, boundary rituals, and help-seeking. Organisationally, lean templates are issued for a daily or weekly Top 3 and a brief After-Action Note, which together standardise reflection and reduce cognitive load.

Progress is tracked through simple adherence measures. Individuals complete their planning routine on at least four out of five days and report using self-talk prompts on at least four days per week. Line managers document that the resilience vocabulary has been shared and is referenced at least once a week. The organisation monitors template uptake, aiming for at least an 80% weekly completion rate.

5.4.2 Secondary objective: To explore managers’ perceptions of their willingness and ability to cope and persist in challenging situations actively

All three levels are implicated. Individuals embed micro-recovery and a pause-then-respond protocol into daily practice. Line managers provide in-the-flow micro-coaching and enforce a light but reliable coaching cadence. The organisation protects short daily windows for planning and recovery, signalling that feasibility is a design choice, not a personal luxury.

For individuals, two micro-recovery stacks at work are encouraged: for example, taking a short walk, listening to music, or engaging in activities such as sitting, breathing, and drinking water, and receiving cognitive reappraisal. A pause-then-respond protocol is adopted for pressure moments: count to five, label the issue, ask for specifics, and propose the next step. Line managers follow up with immediate, brief micro-coaching after tough interactions, using prompts such as “What is your next move?” and maintain a weekly fifteen-minute priorities check-in, along with a monthly thirty-minute coaching session that focuses on one live case. Organisationally, a protected thirty-minute daily admin window is instituted to enable planning, tidy-up, and recovery.

Adherence is measured through simple counts and cadence checks. At least 70% of shifts include two micro-breaks, and the pause-then-respond protocol is used on at least four out of five days. Line managers complete at least one micro-coaching moment per week, maintain at least 90% adherence to the weekly and monthly coaching rhythm, and log one clear next step per check-in. The organisation verifies that at least four out of five days include the protected admin window.

5.4.3 Secondary objective: To identify the internal and external support structures that influence managers' resilience

Support is built deliberately across personal networks, supervisory availability, peer reciprocity, and broader organisational scaffolding that includes relief capacity and community linkages.

Individually, two practices are emphasised. A deliberate help-seeking rule is introduced: when stuck for more than ten minutes, the manager sends a brief three-line message to a peer or supervisor, setting out the issue, likely cause, and the request. In parallel, a partner or family support pact is created, which includes a ten-minute evening debrief with a no-phone entry and a weekly twenty-minute housekeeping planning chat. For line managers, accessibility is formalised through published office hours and a commitment to respond to operational queries within two hours. Peer reciprocity norms are reinforced by a knowledge, skills and experience exchange during a fortnightly huddle. Organisationally, a regional peer case huddle runs for twenty minutes every two weeks, featuring two live mini-cases and one tested script. A bench-strength plan names relief or stand-ins by route, and a community or faith engagement option is offered through a monthly sixty-minute slot, with local opportunities shared.

Managers log at least one help-seeking instance per week. The partner pact is observed on at least four evenings per week, with three of the four weekly planning chats completed over two months. Line managers respond to at least 85% of messages within two hours and exchange two scripts per fortnight. Organisationally, at least 80% attendance is achieved for the regional huddles, and outputs are recorded. Additionally, 100% of routes have named relief, and at least one activation occurs without service loss. Participation in community options is logged, accompanied by a one-line reflection.

5.4.4 Secondary objective: To discover managers' effort recovery strategies during and after work hours

Recovery is framed as a shared responsibility. Individuals maintain clear boundaries and good sleep hygiene. Line managers model off-switching and protect leave. The organisation designs schedules that create credible recovery slots and offer low-friction ways to connect with restorative community activities.

Individually, managers adopt an evening boundary ritual with sleep hygiene, such as a no-phone policy, a quick debrief, and a consistent lights-out time. A weekend micro-plan with

family is prepared, including one restorative activity, one admin block, and one social connection. Line managers model off-switching, discourage late-night chats except for emergencies, and protect leave patterns. Organisationally, scheduling creates recovery slots through credible coverage, realistic travel and visit cadences, and maintained admin windows. A quarterly community partnership bulletin lists vetted opportunities, and a flexible hour is provided for participation.

Ritual adherence is tracked through simple behaviours. Individuals complete the evening ritual on at least four nights per week and average at least seven hours of sleep on at least four nights. The weekend micro-plan is completed on at least three of four weekends across two months. Line managers reduce after-hours messages with exceptions documented. The organisation publishes the cadence and achieves at least 85% adherence, issues the community bulletin, tracks uptake, and captures one story per region per quarter.

5.4.5 Conclusion

The implementation logic is straightforward and cumulative. First, protect the energy base through short, repeatable routines and boundary rituals. Second, make feasibility visible in the schedule by safeguarding planning windows and realistic cadences. Third, render support predictable through clear supervisory availability, peer reciprocity, and family or community anchors. Finally, lock in habits using short feedback loops and light metrics that are easy to observe and hard to ignore. Because each practice has a named level of responsibility and a near-term measure, progress becomes transparent and compounding. With consistent application, these moves convert resilience from a personal aspiration into a system capability that enables managers to cope actively and sustain performance under pressure.

5.5 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study reframes managers' personal resilience from a predominantly trait-based property to a layered, practice-based capability that is co-produced by people, routines, and context. Across Themes 1 to 6, resilience emerges from the interaction of three elements: micro-practices such as planning, micro-recovery, reappraisal, and boundary rituals; relational scaffolds including supervisors, peers, subordinates, family, and community or faith groups, as well as work design conditions such as SOPs, coverage, scheduling, and coaching. The account extends the Chapter 2 architecture by showing how cognitive mechanisms, such as prioritising scripts, and emotional mechanisms, such as mobile regulation, operate in sequence and in tandem with behavioural mechanisms, such as identity-anchored action. Recovery supplies the energetic substrate, and organisational levers set the ceiling on what

personal strategies can achieve. In short, resilience is not only who managers are, but it is what they repeatedly do within a context that enables those practices.

The findings translate into a portable, low-friction repertoire that managers can adopt without new systems or headcount. At the individual level, use two micro-recovery stacks per shift, apply a pause–then–respond protocol, and complete a five-minute start-up and close-down plan each day. At the line-manager level, maintain a reliable cadence through weekly priority check-ins, micro-coaching after tough episodes, and visible office hours that clarify ambiguity and provide next steps. At the organisational level, deploy simple SOPs and templates, protect daily admin windows, ensure credible coverage, and run short peer case huddles. The repertoire intentionally includes outside supports, such as a partner, friends, or family members, for evening detachment and optional community or faith engagement, since these were among the strongest and most reliable contributors to next-day steadiness. Taken together, these practices raise resources faster than demands accumulate, turning willingness into sustained, approach-oriented coping.

Methodologically, the study presents a transparent theme-to-evidence map that enhances credibility and facilitates transfer. Claims are anchored in verbatim accounts, negative cases are reported, and cross-case convergence is made explicit, allowing readers to see how interpretations were reached and to judge fit for their own settings. By pairing each theme with mechanisms that explain how the practice works, conditions that specify when it holds, and observable behaviours that show what to do next, the study provides a replicable analytic template that other retail contexts and adjacent high-demand sectors can use to diagnose gaps and design targeted interventions.

5.6 LIMITATIONS

This study offers a focused account of managers' personal resilience and coping strategies in a South African retail company. Nevertheless, several limitations qualify the claims and their transfer to other settings.

The research was conducted in a single company within the retail industry, which constrains sectoral and organisational variation. All interviews were conducted in Gauteng province, which was selected because it houses the largest team. However, this geographic concentration limits exposure to regional differences in store access, travel patterns, and stakeholder dynamics elsewhere in South Africa. The qualitative, purposefully sampled design prioritised depth over breadth, which supports analytic generalisation but does not enable

statistical inference. Readers should therefore assess the applicability of these findings to their own contexts, particularly where operating models, regional conditions, or leadership practices differ.

Data reflect a specific period with its own operational pressures, staffing realities, and communication norms. Interviewees' accounts may have been shaped by recent events such as workload peaks, seasonal trading cycles, restructures, or leadership changes. Emotional tone and recall can vary with proximity to high-pressure episodes, which may amplify specific experiences while muting others. The findings should be read as time-bound and contingent, rather than fixed features of the work.

As noted in Chapter 4, the analysis emphasised patterns that were recurrent across interviews and foregrounded mechanisms that interviewees could describe in concrete terms. This choice risks underrepresenting less articulated or emerging practices. The study relied on self-reported perceptions without parallel observation or objective performance indicators, so causal attributions remain tentative. Coding and theme development followed a transparent audit trail, searching for negative cases. However, different analytic lenses could have highlighted alternative framings, such as a stronger focus on power dynamics within host-store relationships or on gendered experiences of resilience. Finally, the study did not include customer or host-store perspectives, which could have triangulated interactional dynamics and recovery feasibility in situations.

Taken together, these limitations suggest that the findings should be viewed as credible within-company explanations that are based on analytic similarity rather than statistical representativeness. They highlight the value of future work that samples multiple provinces and companies, incorporates observational and behavioural data, and explicitly examines how regional conditions and work design choices influence the feasibility of recovery, support, and active coping.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should move beyond a single retail firm in Gauteng, deepen the understanding of how recovery is measured in real-time, and test what causes strategies to be effective. Three connected strands follow from the findings and stated limits: comparative studies across formats and regions, longitudinal tracking of adoption, and field tests of mechanisms and organisational levers. All three should use the PCS practice language so that evidence speaks to lived work, not abstract constructs.

A priority is to compare recovery feasibility across various retail formats, such as grocery, pharmacy, speciality, and big-box. Formats differ in assortment complexity, foot traffic swings, and service intensity, which shape the space managers must manage, plan, and seek help. Research should sample managers in both urban and rural provinces, allowing for the examination of travel distance, store-access norms, and regional labour markets. Sampling across companies will help separate firm routines from sector patterns, including leadership cadence, SOP maturity, and coverage models. The vertical lens matters too. Studies should compare store-level habits with those of regional and senior leaders to identify where practices scale and where bottlenecks in the chain of command hinder recovery. Using the MAPS metaphor will help interpret why some routes through pressure are well paved while others remain gravel, and how primary roads, like upbringing and professional socialisation, interact with secondary connecting roads, like daily team norms, to enable or block recovery in the flow of work.

A second strand should follow managers for three to six months as they adopt the core PCS stack, including micro-recovery sequences during work, pause-then-respond scripts for pressure moments, and a reflective planning cadence that closes the day and triages the next. Monthly check-ins can help document habit formation, identify barriers, and track local adaptations. Diary methods should capture micro-breaks, emotional tone, and periods of psychological detachment. Low-burden digital traces, such as meeting loads and after-hours message volume, can index effort–recovery cycles without adding administrative overhead. Linking these to near-objective outcomes, such as attendance reliability, task closure, escalation rates, complaint recovery time, and turnover intent, will show the organisational value of simple habits like off-switching and boundary rituals. Where possible, studies should incorporate partner or family “support pacts” because home-side anchors, like a no-phone entry and a brief evening debrief, often determine whether next-day steadiness returns.

A third line of work should test how specific practices produce effects. Candidate mediators include sleep duration and quality, perceived role clarity, and a sense of efficacy. Field trials can randomise teams or regions to different scheduling and coverage designs, for example, protected admin windows, credible relief rotas, and response-latency norms, and then compare recovery feasibility, end-of-day strain, and rework. A/B tests can evaluate lean SOP packs and a structured coaching rhythm, as well as weekly priorities, and a monthly deep dive into one live case, tracking the speed of ambiguity resolution, error loops, and perceived support. Peer designs should compare structured case huddles with script exchange against ad-hoc forums, observing changes in help-seeking behaviour, shared language, and the

breadth of coping repertoires. Multilevel modelling will help partition variance at individual, store, regional, and company levels to locate the strongest levers. Throughout, the language of scripts, huddles, and bench-strength should be retained so that interventions are legible to line managers and their teams.

Studies should recruit across provinces and companies, with balanced representation by gender, tenure, and route. A mixed methods design that integrates qualitative interviews and observations with quantitative diaries, field experiments, and operational indicators will strengthen inference and transferability. Instruments should use your plain terms, for example, “micro-recovery stack completed”, “boundary ritual done”, “off-switch used”, alongside brief scales of detachment and energy.

In short, future research should test a layered, practice-based model of resilience in real-world retail conditions, using the same everyday language that teams already use. By comparing formats and regions, tracking adoption over time, and experimenting with specific levers, we can demonstrate how coping routines transition from good intent to routine behaviour. The prize is practical and humane, protecting the energy base, making the schedule feasible, making support predictable, and then locking in habits with short feedback loops. Done well, managers sustain performance without burning through their people, and resilience becomes a system capability rather than a personal wish.

5.8 CONCLUSION

The study shows that managers perceive personal resilience as a set of small, repeatable practices rather than a fixed trait. Managers rely on portable micro-recoveries during the workday, brief boundary rituals before returning home, and sleep as the anchor for composure the next day. A light planning cadence, including night-before lists, morning priming, and short evening reflections, helps managers to stay focused on what they can control in volatile conditions. Emotional regulation in the moment, such as pausing before replying, lowering tone, and reading the room, protects judgment and relationships across stores.

Managers link willingness to persist with identity and meaning, for example, “*owning*” their stores, modelling steadiness, and serving customers and teams. Ability is sustained by fast cognitive cues that direct attention to the following practical action and by disciplined self-control when pressure rises. When setbacks occur, they use brief error-recovery scripts and practical help-seeking rather than rumination. These patterns support an approach behaviour under strain and convert difficult days into sequenced, workable steps.

Resilience is co-created through dependable ties inside and outside work. Accessible line managers provide quick framing and next steps, while peers exchange tested scripts and reduce isolation. Reliable teams lower firefighting and offer timely feedback from the field. At home, family routines, friendships, and faith or community groups restore perspective and energy, which in turn stabilise next-day conduct.

Managers take short work breaks to reset their attention and emotions between visits or interactions. They treat the drive between stores as a recovery space using quiet, breathing, hydration, or selected audio to regulate state. Simple boundary rituals at the gate, brief debriefs with family, and consistent sleep hygiene limit spillover from work into home and support overnight restoration. When work design allows credible coverage and predictable admin windows, these recovery strategies are easier to sustain.

Taken together, the findings indicate that personal resilience in this retail context is layered and practice based. Objective 1 highlights an everyday repertoire of planning, regulation, and reflection; Objective 2 shows that identity, quick reframes, and help-seeking keep effort active under pressure; and Objective 3 confirms that recovery during and after work is the energetic base that sustains the system. These layers align with PCS's resilience framework in which individual routines, multi-source support, and recovery interact with enabling conditions to produce steady performance and constructive relationships in a high-demand environment.

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ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE A: LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

RUAN FOURIE

COPYEDITING CERTIFICATE

EXPLORING MANAGERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PERSONAL RESILIENCE AND COPING STRATEGIES IN A SOUTH AFRICAN RETAIL COMPANY

by Sebastian Lombard

Be it hereby certified that the abovementioned mini-dissertation has been copyedited and proofread for accuracy, clarity, and proper English usage.



ruanfourie23@gmail.com
082 068 6077

ANNEXURE B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Title: Exploring managers' personal resilience and coping strategies in a South African retail company.

Introduction:

Greet and give Purpose Briefing:

"Thank you for participating. This interview aims to explore your perceptions of personal resilience. Your insights will be appreciated."

Confidentiality Assurance and gain consent to proceed and record:

"All responses will remain anonymous. May I record this interview for accuracy?"

Refer to compliance with the POPIA Act and confidentiality.

Outline and understand Participants' Roles and Perspectives.

Demographics:

1. Age:
2. Gender: Male/Female/Prefer not to say/Other:
3. Position/Role in company:
4. How many years have you been with the company?
5. Where are you based for work?.....

Core Questions

In your opinion, what does personal resilience mean for a manager in the retail industry?

In your opinion, what does personal resilience mean in your personal life?

Section 1: Own willingness and ability to actively cope and not give up

1. Please describe a challenging situation you have faced as a retail manager. How did you persevere?
2. How do you stay motivated and committed to your role, even in difficult times?
 - Refer to strategies
 - Refer to qualities
 - Refer to skills

Section 2: Support Structure Inside and Outside of Work:

3. What support do you receive to guide you through workplace challenges?
 - your supervisor's
 - colleagues'
 - sub-ordinates
4. How do your external relationships contribute to your ability to remain resilient in your managerial role?
 - Family
 - Friends

- Community groups

Section 3: Effort Recovery During and After Working Hours

5. How do you recover during working hours? (examples- tea breaks, strategic breaks, time with peers etc.)
6. How do you recover after a demanding workday and what helps you recover for the next day? (examples- exercise, reading, resting, cleaning, hobbies and social etc.)

Section 4: Recommendations for Improvement

7. What recommendations would you give the company to improve managerial support in building and maintaining personal resilience?

Probing Questions

- *Can you elaborate on that example?*

Closing

1. *Is there anything else you'd like to share about the above questions?*
 2. *Thank you for your time. Your input is invaluable to this study.*
- Thank the participant for their time and valuable insights.
 - Mention any follow-up steps if necessary.
 - Reiterate the confidentiality of their responses.

ANNEXURE C: INFORMED CONSENT



NWU Business School
Private Bag x6001
Potchefstroom, 2520
<http://commerce.nwu.ac.za/business-school>

Ethics Number: NWU-00636-25-A4

DEAR PARTICIPANT

INFORMED CONSENT TO COMPLETE INTERVIEW

You are invited to participate in a research study that forms part of a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this study. Please ask the researcher or person explaining the research to you any questions about any part of this study you do not fully understand. You must be fully satisfied that you understand this research and how you might be involved. Also, your participation is entirely voluntary, and you are free to say no to participating. This will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You can also withdraw from the study at any point, even if you agree to participate now.

This study has been approved by the NWU Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC). It will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the North-West University and other international ethical guidelines applicable to this study.

Title of the study: EXPLORING MANAGERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PERSONAL RESILIENCE AND COPING STRATEGIES IN A SOUTH AFRICAN RETAIL COMPANY.

Institution: NWU Business School

Ethics Reference Number:

Names and contact details of project staff

	Supervisor	Researcher
Title, name & surname	Prof PA Botha	Sebastian Lombard
Full Names	Prof Petrus Albertus Botha	Sebastian Pieter Lombard
Function in Study	Principal Investigator	Researcher
Contact details	Petrus.Botha@nwu.ac.za	basslombard@gmail.com

What is this research study all about?

Exploring managers' perceptions of personal resilience and coping strategies in a South African retail company.

What will be expected of you?

You will be expected to:

- Participate in an interview, which should take approximately 45-60 minutes.
- Respond to the questions openly and honestly.
- This interview will be conducted at your most comfortable times.
- Expected to sign the consent form, you are willing to participate in this research willingly.

The interview will be recorded to ensure accuracy and preserve the essence of your responses. You will have the option to review or listen to the recorded information upon your request. Please note that your identity will remain confidential, and all identifying information will be replaced with codes during data analysis.

The recorded interviews will be transcribed and securely stored on a password-protected computer. All collected data, including transcripts and recordings, will be retained for three years and subsequently deleted. Any information shared during the interview will be anonymised to ensure your confidentiality.

DECLARATION

Declaration by participant

By selecting the option below, I agree to participate in the research study: EXPLORING MANAGERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PERSONAL RESILIENCE AND COPING STRATEGIES IN A SOUTH AFRICAN RETAIL COMPANY.

1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that as I have completed the study anonymously, it will not be possible to remove any information I have provided, as you will not be able to identify me in any way.
3. I understand that I can decide to withdraw from the study at any time.
4. I understand that this interview will be recorded.
5. I understand that individuals from the University may review anonymous research data collected during the study to ensure that it is conducted appropriately.
6. I agree that my anonymous information can be shared with individuals from the abovementioned project team.

I agree to take part in the above study

Yes	No
1	2

Participant -----

Date -----

ANNEXURE D: ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER



Private Bag X1290,
Potchefstroom South
Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Fax: 018 299-4910
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Senate Committee for Research Ethics

Tel: 018 299-484

Feziwe.Mseleni@nwu.ac.za

1 April 2025

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **North-West University Economic and Management Sciences**

Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC) on 1 April 2025, the Economic and Management

Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-REC) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title:	Exploring Managers' Perceptions of Personal Resilience and Coping Strategies in a South African Retail Company														
Study leader/Supervisor (Principal investigator/Researcher:	Prof P.A. Botha						University no.:	12772356							
Student:	S.P Lombard						University no.:	24108936							
Ethics number:	N	W	U	-	0	0	6	3	6	-	2	5	-	A	4
	Institution			Study number					Year			Status			
Status: S = Submission; R = Re-submission; P = Provisional authorisation; A = Authorisation															

Application type:	Single study - Postgraduate research	Risk level:	Low/minimal risk
Commencement date:	4/1/25		
Expiry date:	4/1/26		
Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.			

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

None.

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- The study leader/supervisor (principal investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the EMS-REC:
 - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and
 - without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.
- The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the EMS-REC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-SCRE and EMS-REC reserves the right to:
 - request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;
 - to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;
 - withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;
 - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the EMS-REC or that information has been false or misrepresented;
 - submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or
 - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.
- EMS-REC can be contacted for further information or any report templates through the secretariat. Botlanyana Maluleka (Botlanyana.Maluleka@nwu.ac.za / +27 18 2852436) or the chair Prof Diana Viljoen-Bezuidenhout (Diana.Viljoen@nwu.ac.za / +27 16 9103403).

The EMS-REC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the EMS-REC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Diana
Viljoen-
Bezuidenhout

Digitally signed by Prof
Diana Viljoen-
Bezuidenhout
Date: 2025.04.04
10:30:41 +02'00'

Prof Diana Viljoen-Bezuidenhout

Chairperson: NWU Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee

ANNEXURE E: TURNITIN REPORT

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