

THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF A FLOOD ON WORKERS AT A PRETORIA HOTEL

By

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SUMMARY AND KEY TERMS

In South Africa, January 2011 was characterised by above average rainfall which resulted in many provinces being flooded. On the 17th of January 2011, the government of South Africa declared the City of Tshwane a National Disaster Area. It is in the city of Tshwane where a hotel was flooded causing great damage and disruption to the lives of the hotel workers. Given the lack of existing research focusing on the social dimensions of natural disasters, this provided an opportunity to study the social impact of the flood on the community of hotel workers at a Pretoria hotel. Four sub-aims were set for the study, which involved an exploration of the strengths that were exhibited, discovered or developed as a result of the flood; investigating the subjective experiences in relation to the flood; exploring the interactional patterns and relationships of the hotel workers; as well as investigating how the leadership of the hotel impacted on the manner in which the hotel workers dealt with the flood. A qualitative methodology, guided by a social constructivist epistemology was adopted as basis for the study. Data was gathered by means of individual semi-structured interviews, semi-structured questionnaires, and a focus group interview with a number of employees at the hotel. The data was subjected to qualitative content and grounded theoretical analysis. Five main themes emerged from the analysis, which include: Emotional responses, which included negative emotions such as shock, fear, frustration and anger, as well as positive emotions such as happiness and appreciation; a variety of interactional patterns and relationships; increased cohesiveness; enhanced leadership, and the development of group resilience.

Key terms: Natural disasters, floods, group resilience, group cohesion, sociology, social constructivism

OPSOMMING EN SLEUTELTERME

In Suid-Afrika was Januarie 2011 gekenmerk deur bogemiddelde reenval wat tot gevolg gehad het dat baie provinsies oorstrom het. Op die 17e Januarie 2011, het die regering van Suid-Afrika die stad van Tshwane 'n nasionale rampgebied verklaar. Dit is in die stad van Tshwane waar 'n hotel oorstrom was, wat groot skade en ontwrigting in die lewens van die hotel werkers veroorsaak het. Gegewe die gebrek aan bestaande navorsing wat op die sosiale dimensies van natuurlike rampe fokus, het dit die geleentheid gebied om die sosiale impak van die vloed op die gemeenskap van hotel werkers by 'n Pretoria hotel te bestudeer. Vier subdoelwitte vir die studie was daargestel, wat ingesluit het die verkenning van die sterkpunte wat tentoongestel, ontdek, of ontwikkel is as gevolg van die vloed; die verkenning van die interaksiepatrone en verhoudinge van die hotel werkers; asook 'n ondersoek na hoe die leierskap van die hotel die wyse waarop die hotelwerkers met die vloed gedeel het beïnvloed het. 'n Kwalitatiewe metodologie, gerig deur 'n sosiaal-konstruktivistiese epistemologie was gebruik as basis vir die studie. Data was ingesamel deur middel van individuele semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude, semi-gestruktureerde vraelyste, en 'n fokusgroep onderhoud met 'n aantal werknemers by die hotel. Die data was onderwerp aan kwalitatiewe inhouds en *grounded theory* analyses. Vyf hoofemas het uit die navorsing voortgespruit, wat insluit: Emosionele response, wat negatiewe emosies soos skok, vrees, frustrasie en woede, asook positiewe emosies soos geluk en waardering ingesluit het; 'n verskeidenheid interaksionele patrone en verhoudings; verhoogde kohesie; verbeterde leierskap, en die ontwikkeling van groepsveerkragtigheid.

Sleuteltermes: Natuurrampe, vloede, groepsveerkragtigheid, groepskohesie, sosiologie, sosiale-konstruktivisme

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVE

1. INTRODUCTION

Disasters of any type result in the adaptation of behaviour and outlook by society and members of society. Globally there has been an increase in natural disasters in the form of flooding. The last quarter of 2010 and the first quarter of 2011 were characterised by natural disasters around the globe. This was evident in the earthquakes that ravaged New Zealand and Japan, heavy snowfalls in Europe and North America, as well as the floods which wreaked havoc in Australia (9News, 2011)¹. South Africa has also seen its fair share of floods. These have resulted in many communities needing to rebuild their lives after being forcibly removed from their homes, workplaces and communities because of the flooding. Between 1980 and 2010, 57% of deaths of South Africans in natural disasters have been due to floods (Prevention Web, 2011)², highlighting the vulnerability of society in the face of nature (Lever-Tracy, 2008:448). Heavy rains in South Africa resulted in the flooding of an upmarket hotel in Pretoria in January 2011, causing great damage to the hotel and upheaval in the daily lives of the hotel workers.

This study will investigate and discover how the flooding of the Hennops River in Pretoria affected these hotel workers in terms of their behaviour, perception of the flood, and the relationships between colleagues. In the past, the hotel had been flooded to a lesser degree, with minimal damage. As a result of the continual flooding from the increased level of the river flowing behind the hotel, the hotel has addressed this rising water issue with the town council, but to no avail. The town council's lack of maintenance of the lake behind the hotel resulted in the rising river waters flooding the basement and first level of the hotel. The hotel was not operational for a week while repair and maintenance work was undertaken. Fortunately, no employees or guests of the hotel were injured or killed during the flood. However, it was during these floods and the evacuation of people stranded in the Centurion area that a fire-fighter lost his life (Anon, 2011).

¹ This reference is in HTML format from the internet and does not have a page number.

² This reference is in HTML format from the internet and does not have a page number.

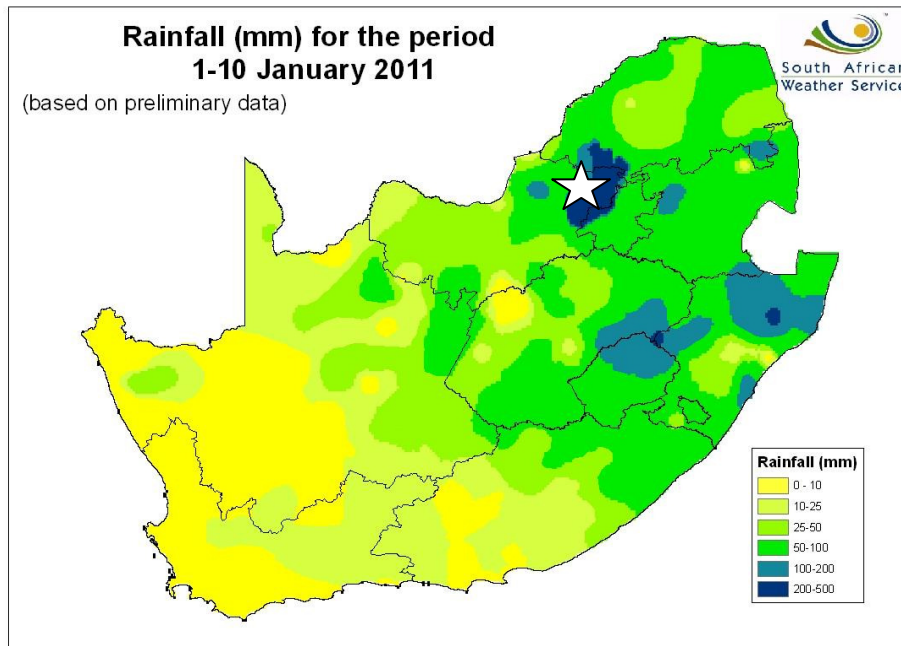


Figure 1: Rainfall in millimetres for the period 1 – 10 January 2011 (South African Weather Service, 2011)³

The origins of the flood can be traced to the above-average levels of rainfall that occurred in January 2011. Figure 1, courtesy of the South African Weather Service, highlights the rainfall that South Africa received during the first ten days of 2011. It shows that the majority of the country experienced 200–2000% of normal expected rainfall. This figure graphically depicts, in millimetres, the amount of rainfall received as well as all the areas in South Africa that received rain in the first week of January. It also indicates the excessive amounts of rainfall experienced in the area surrounding the Hennops River. The star in Figure 1 highlights the Hennops River Valley, which received between 200ml and 500ml of rain during the first week of rain; the hotel that was flooded and is the focus of this study is situated in this area. .

At the beginning of January 2011, people living on the banks of the Vaal and Orange rivers were warned by the Department of Water Affairs to be extremely vigilant regarding water levels. This was because four main South African dams were filled to above 100% capacity. The dams that had reached capacity were the Vaal (105.5%), Bloemhof (101%), Gariiep (109.8%) and Vanderkloof (105.8%) dams (Anon, 2011⁴; South Africa, 2011:1).

³ This reference is in HTML format from the internet and does not have a page number.

⁴ This reference is in HTML format from the internet and does not have a page number.

TIMELINE LEADING UP TO FLOODS OF 17 JANUARY 2011

5 January 2011	Flood warning
6 January 2011	Department of Water Affairs raises flood warning level
7 January 2011	Update on dam levels
10 January 2011	Update on dam levels
11 January 2011	Update on dam levels
12 January 2011	Update on dam levels
13 January 2011	Minister Molewa warns on floods
17 January 2011	FLOODING OF HOTEL
17 January 2011	Declaration of a National Disaster
21 January 2011	Declaration of disaster area – City of Tshwane

Table 1: Timeline leading up to floods of 17 January 2011 (South Africa, 2011)⁵

On the 21st of January 2011, the government of South Africa declared the City of Tshwane (Pretoria) a disaster area (Government Gazette, 2011:3), as the flood had caused infrastructural damage which amounted to millions of rands (Qinga, 2011:2). The South African Disaster Management Act (57/2003) describes disasters as being an interruption of the usual functioning of society. Disasters produce or result in danger and damage to people and the environment within which they live. An event is considered a disaster if its magnitude exceeds the capacity, capability and resources of the affected community to deal with it. Figure 2 highlights the extent of the areas that were declared disaster areas by the South African government. The disaster areas are highlighted in orange.

⁵ This reference is in HTML format from the internet and does not have a page number.

the displacement of people which is the case in developing countries (Ferris, 2007:2).

As a consequence of climate change and the long-term effects of natural disasters, people are not able to sustain their livelihoods and are forced to relocate to other areas where they can sustain a livelihood. As people migrate to areas with scarce resources, it is inevitable that the scramble for these resources will result in conflict. The crux of the study by Ferris and her team is that climate change and its effects on the environment affect people by causing their displacement from their own communities (Ferris, 2007:4).

Ebi *et al.* (2006:1957) conducted a study of the health effects of floods in small island communities, indicating that floods have a significant impact on the health of community members. The study identified unique aspects of small island communities which limit their ability to adapt to climate change and its long-term effects. These include aspects such as the distance from larger land masses, the actual size of the islands, and the access to scarce resources. Furthermore, many small island communities often have rare and distinctive fauna and flora. These communities are also susceptible to extreme weather events and natural disasters. The study highlighted the fact that the limited availability of water during the El Nino occurrence of 1997/1998 resulted in health issues for the inhabitants of small island communities. This was with specific reference to waterborne and vector-borne health issues. Owing to the limited access to clean water, programmes were initiated to educate the people of small island communities in ways of reducing the likelihood of waterborne and vector-borne diseases.

In South Africa, limited research regarding flooding has been undertaken from a sociological and social science perspective (Gruntfest, 1995:1), resulting in a gap in our understanding of the social and sociological impact of floods in the South African context. The study of flooding and the impact it has on society has not been investigated from a medical sociological perspective. The importance of exploring this topic from such a perspective can be linked to the definition of medical sociology which contends with the relationship between health and the social factors which can impact on health. Although the definition highlights that medical sociology focuses

on health and the health care system, it also places emphasis on the multidisciplinary nature of medical sociology (Anon, 2004) as this research will show. The focus on wellbeing and resilience in relation to this study bears relevance to the field, this lies in health being defined as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”, by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 1946).

The present study intends to address this gap. The purpose of this study is to explore, discover and describe the social impact of a flood on workers at a Pretoria hotel. Social impact can be defined as the disruption of individuals, households and communities (Twigger-Ross, 2005:25). The following questions guided this study:

- What were the subjective experiences of the hotel workers in relation to the flood?
- How were the interactional patterns and relationships of the hotel workers affected by the flood, if at all?
- What effect did the leadership of the hotel have on the hotel workers' experience and management of the flood?
- What strengths were exhibited, discovered or developed as a result of the flood experience, especially in regard to resilience?

The general aim and specific research objectives will be discussed briefly in the following section.

3. AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

3.1 General aim

The purpose of this particular research study is to explore, discover and describe the social impact of a flood on workers at a Pretoria hotel. This will be done by exploring and describing the subjective experiences of the community of workers with regard to how the flood at the hotel has affected them. The emphasis will be on the effect of the flood on the group dynamics and the relationships between the various hotel staff members. In addition, the researcher aims to identify whether positive aspects such as resilience and wellbeing were experienced by the hotel workers.

3.2 Specific research objectives

The following specific research objectives will be explored in this study:

- To explore and describe the subjective experiences of the hotel workers in relation to the flood.
- To investigate how the interactional patterns and relationships of the hotel workers were affected by the flood, if at all.
- To investigate the effect that the leadership of the hotel had on the hotel workers' experience and management of the flood (if any).
- To explore what strengths were exhibited, discovered or developed as a result of the flood experience, especially with reference to resilience.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study will be approached primarily in a sociological context, and within a social constructivist framework. In essence, social constructivism is the process whereby notions and ideas about the world are formed and re-formed. In order to be able to apply social constructivism to social issues and social processes, it is important to understand the suppositions that underlie the theory. Social constructivism postulates three suppositions:

- **Reality:** Reality is constructed through actions of people. Societal members create the fibres of society. This implies that reality does not exist prior to a particular situation, thus reality cannot be uncovered.
- **Knowledge:** Knowledge is also an invention of people in society and is formed by means of cultural and social constructs. Meaning is initiated by means of interaction with other people in society as well as with the environment.
- **Learning:** From a social constructivist perspective is considered a social process. Learning occurs when people interact with others and specifically when engaging in social activities with others (Kim, 2009⁶).

Given this theoretical framework, a qualitative approach to research will be adopted, as the underlying epistemological assumptions that guide this mode of inquiry are social constructivist in nature. This is true in reference to the significance that is

⁶ This is HTML page and thus has no page reference.

placed on ensuring an accurate documentation of the subjective realities of the research participants (Rubin, 2011). In doing this, the researcher will be able to recreate for the reader of this paper a rich and clear image of the world of the hotel workers at the time of the flood.

The research objectives identify four key constructs to be investigated in the course of this research study: resilience, group dynamics, wellbeing and leadership, which will now be discussed briefly.

4.1 Resilience

Resilience can be defined as being the positive adaptation and health of people even while facing situations of significant risk, adversity or trauma (Ungar, 2004:342; Adger, 2000:349). This suggests that balance is aimed for and attained by people facing stressful situations (Ambriz *et al.*, 2011:1). Adger and Brown (2009:111) further clarify the concept of resilience as people's ability to cope with adverse situations. Resilience is also expressed in how well people adapt to a situation in light of changes that are experienced. The resilience of hotel workers during and after the flood will be investigated and explored throughout the research study.

4.2 Group dynamics

Group dynamics can be defined as being a topic of inquiry which is committed to the development and increase of knowledge of the nature of groups, the laws that surround their development and their interrelation with other people, other groups and larger establishments and institutions (Forsyth, 2010:14). The researcher will explore, discover and describe the manner in which the hotel workers interacted with one another in their altered environment and reacted to the behaviour of their colleagues in light of the flood.

4.3 Wellbeing

One can say that the wellbeing of people is related to a sense of contentment and fulfilment which is permanent and ongoing (Rauschmayer *et al.*, 2011:9). Wellbeing can be divided into three further subsections, namely emotional/subjective wellbeing, psychological wellbeing and social wellbeing. Psychological and social wellbeing are associated with subjective wellbeing (Carr, 2004:36).

Although the study is conducted from a sociological perspective, it is important to include psychological wellbeing as it does have a bearing on this study which relates to the wellbeing of the community of hotel workers. Carol Ryff conceptualised a six-dimensional model of psychological wellbeing (Compton, 2005:178; Ryff & Singer, 2003:275). It is touched on briefly in the next paragraph, but will be expanded on in greater detail in Chapter 2.

Psychological wellbeing refers to aspects such as purpose in life, environmental mastery and positive relations with others (Rauschmayer *et al.*, 2011:9; Ryff & Singer, 2003:276). In relation to this study, purpose in life concerns the manner in which the hotel workers view their function and reason for work. Environmental mastery relates to how the staff members adapted to their work environment following the flood. Lastly, a key focus area of the study is positive relations with others, which will be explored and described in greater detail in Chapter 2.

Social wellbeing refers to characteristics such as:

- **Social actualisation:** This refers to how people view the potential of the society and community they function in;
- **Social contribution:** Social contribution is the belief that people make a meaningful contribution to the community they live and work in; and
- **Social integration:** The belief that people have a sense of belonging in their community (Rauschmayer *et al.*, 2011:9; Cicognani & Zani, 2009:104).

Subjective wellbeing in essence is the ability to assess and express one's life in a positive manner. It is also described as the predisposition to give precedence to positive influences over negative influences (Diener, 1984:543).

The investigation of wellbeing is central to the study, as the researcher aims to identify how people appraise the circumstances in which they find themselves and how they behave in relation to these circumstances.

4.4 Leadership

Leadership is defined by Lussier and Achua (2010:5) as the manner in which influence is exerted on others in order to achieve the goals of a company or induce a change. Leadership is one of the constructs to be investigated in the course of the study. Therefore the researcher will investigate whether the leadership of the hotel had an effect on how the hotel workers experienced and managed the flood.

In order to investigate the constructs mentioned, the researcher will make use of a qualitative research methodology, which will be expanded on in the next section.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In terms of achieving the research goals as specified in this dissertation, the researcher will employ a qualitative approach to research, which is in line with the social constructivist sociological perspective which has been selected to guide this study. This section will include a brief explanation of qualitative research as well as the motivation for employing this particular methodology.

Qualitative research is a form of research methodology whereby researchers aim to discover the private and personal experiences of research participants in response to an occurrence or event. In addition, it is used to investigate aspects such as interactions between people and the experiences encountered between people (Strauss & Corbin, 2008:12), as well as obtain insight into human systems (Savenye & Robinson, 2003:1046). Qualitative research attempts to uncover and explain the social world of people (de Villiers & van der Wal, 2004:236).

Epistemologically, qualitative research has its basis in phenomenological-interpretivist tradition as well as underlying notions of constructivism. This implies that the interactions between people are not only studied, but also constructed by the participants and researchers undertaking the study. The underlying ideas of qualitative research within a social constructivist framework suppose that people attempt to make sense of the world around them. As they do this, they continually interpret and provide meaning for their actions and the actions of others towards them (de Villiers & van der Wal, 2004:239).

Qualitative research is most suited to this study as it aims at uncovering and explaining the social world of people, such as that of the community of hotel workers, and the nature of that world. The first phase of the research study involves handing out the questionnaires to selected employees. The selection is based on specific criteria identified in 5.2 “Research participants”. The second phase involves individual interviews with eight key employees from senior management. The third phase involves focus group interviews with staff members who consented to be part of the study. The fourth and final phase of the research study involves a follow-up questionnaire which will be e-mailed to consenting participants a year after the occurrence of the flood to further probe its social impact. The following sections are devoted to a brief overview of the prominent methodological aspects pertaining to the study.

5.1 Data collection

A qualitative research approach allows the researcher to use many forms of data sources, such as interviews, newspapers, observations and documentation, among others (Strauss & Corbin, 2008:27). The data collection for this study will be done by means of the following methods:

- A literature study will be conducted regarding natural disasters with reference to floods in South Africa. Furthermore, an in-depth review will also be done regarding social constructivism, group dynamics, leadership, resilience and wellbeing within the context of the study. This will be carried out by making use of electronic data bases, sociological journals and internet resources.
- Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with eight key employees from senior management who were present at the time of the flood or immediately thereafter.
- A semi-structured qualitative questionnaire will be circulated to forty staff members of the hotel, with the aim of having 30 staff members participating in the questionnaire portion of the study.
- Pending the results of the individual interviews, one or two focus group interviews will be arranged with hotel workers who indicated their prior consent to further participation in the research study.

- The researcher will also keep a research journal of the events experienced, events observed and ideas proposed during the course of the research.

The objectives will be investigated by means of a preliminary questionnaire given to selected hotel workers, and in the course of the individual interviews and focus group interviews with selected hotel workers. Allowing social interaction between hotel workers could result in areas of concern and interest being brought to the fore. The focus group interview will also be used for the purpose of validating information that was analysed in the questionnaire, and will be recorded visually with the aid of a camcorder.

5.2 Research participants

The hotel employs one hundred staff members. Forty staff members will be approached to take part in the study. The aim is to have at least 75% of the forty staff members participate in the study. This serves the purpose of obtaining information on and insight into the actual occurrences on the evening of the flooding and the immediate aftermath, in line with the research objectives.

The participants in the study need to meet the following criteria for inclusion in the study:

- Participants had to be on the premises at the time of the flooding or immediately thereafter.
- Participants must be full-time employees of the hotel.
- Participants have to participate voluntarily and have to be willing to be honest and open in answering the questions posed to them.
- Participants must provide consent to having the interview recorded.

5.3 Role of the researcher

Qualitative research is highlighted by a personal dimension, and this key aspect centres on the researcher (Lambert, 2008:57). The researcher is considered to be the instrument for collecting and evaluating the data collected (Neuman, 2007:283). In this case, the researcher is viewed as the primary instrument of data collection. It

implies that the researcher will need to adjust throughout the interviews in order to obtain the information necessary for the research study (Lambert, 2008:57).

The researcher will compile the questions to be used in the questionnaire, the semi-structured interviews as well as the focus groups. The researcher will also be accountable for collecting the completed questionnaires and conducting and recording the interviews.

The participant–researcher relationships that develop have a bearing on qualitative research. Thus, it is imperative to bear in mind that the personal and subjective experiences of the researcher at the hotel premises are to be included in the research study, and are also to be considered as data. Furthermore, the researcher must be attentive and responsive to the social interactions of the research participants (Neuman, 2007:283). The researcher notes that preconceived notions and opinions can arise during the course of the research study.

5.4 Data analysis

Jorgensen in Boeije (2010:76) aptly defines the analysis of data as follows:

“Analysis is a breaking up, separating, or disassembling of research materials into pieces, parts, elements, or units. With facts broken down into manageable pieces, the researcher sorts and sifts them, searching for types, classes, sequences, processes, patterns or wholes. The aim of this process is to assemble or reconstruct the data in a meaningful and comprehensible fashion.”

The analysis of data is a process whereby themes and concepts are created, expanded on and validated, a process which occurs and grows over the course of time and through the obtaining of data. The first step in creating themes and concepts involves the coding of data obtained in the questionnaires, and in the individual and focus group interviews. The themes and concepts can be described as the story the researcher wants to convey regarding the research participants' experiences, words and interactions. Data analysis also entails re-examining data for further themes or concepts until no further themes and/or concepts result (Strauss & Corbin, 2008:57).

5.5 Ethical considerations

Any research study, whether it is qualitative or quantitative research, requires that ethical considerations need to be taken into account (Savenye & Robinson, 2003:1064). When dealing with people and their emotional responses to trauma and disaster, such as the flood at the hotel, it is imperative that the researcher adheres to the following ethical guidelines when conducting the research, and ensures the safety and dignity of the research participants (Marvasti, 2004:135):

- ***Voluntary participation and informed consent*** – the research participants take part in the research study completely of their own will (Marvasti, 2004:136). They will not be coerced into the research study; this implies that the research participants will be legally competent to participate in the study (Anon, 2010:56). The research participants will also be requested to sign a consent form, as explained by Burnett (2009:89).
- ***Confidentiality and anonymity*** – anonymity refers to the fact that the identities of the participants are not made known (Savenye & Robinson, 2003:1061) to people that are outside of the research study group. Confidentiality, on the other hand, refers to the fact that the identities of the participants are not referred to in any reports or presentations once the study has been completed (Burnett, 2009:89; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:67).
- ***Protecting the researcher from harm*** – researchers are at risk when they conduct research in the field and thorough preparations must be made in order to minimise the risk to the researcher. This is especially true when the researcher is required to conduct the study in a community or in the private home of the participants (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:70). The researcher will not be in any danger while conducting the study at the hotel.
- ***Protecting the research participants*** – this refers to harm on a psychological level, levels of uneasiness experienced during the semi-structured interviews and an invasion of privacy in the course of the research study (Israel & Hay, 2006:95). The researcher does not anticipate that the research participants will feel any stress that is greater than the daily stress encountered by them at work. This is especially likely in light of the fact that none of the participants were harmed or subject to personal loss during the course of the flooding.

- ***The written consent form*** – the researcher has already obtained permission from the General Manager and Human Resource Manager of the hotel for the study to be conducted on their premises and to approach their employees to be part of the study. A written consent form will be drafted, which is in line with the guidelines of the Optentia Research Department of the North-West University.

Full ethical clearance to proceed with the research study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the North-West University.

6. DISSERTATION SYNOPSIS

The dissertation consists of the following five chapters.

Chapter 1 – Introduction, Problem Statement and Objective

The research study is introduced in chapter 1. It describes the scene in January 2011, and how the hotel in question came to be flooded. The general aim of the study and the specific research objectives will be discussed briefly. The chapter highlights the research paradigm, methodology of research and explains the constructs to be investigated in the course of the study.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Chapter 2 comprises a literature study, which deals specifically with natural disasters and floods, group dynamics, wellbeing, resilience, leadership and social constructivism.

Chapter 3 – Research Design and Methodology

This chapter focuses on the methodology that has been employed to carry out the study. Explanations and descriptions are provided regarding the research process, data analysis and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 – Research findings and Discussion

In this chapter, the research findings are discussed in relation to the general aim and the specific research objectives set out at the beginning of the research study.

Chapter 5 – Concluding Perspectives, Recommendations and Limitations of the Study

Finally, chapter 5 provides an overview of the main research findings. Recommendations for future research are made, and the limitations of the study are considered.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will focus on the existing literature and research regarding natural disasters and flooding, group dynamics, wellbeing, resilience, leadership and social constructivism. All the theoretical aspects will be elaborated on with each concept defined and the significance of the theory to this research study will be explained. The theoretical perspectives guided the formulation of the research objectives as well as the formulation of questions for the questionnaires and interviews that are to be conducted.

The first area of discussion will comprise natural disasters and flooding and how these can be included in the field of sociology. This is followed by a discussion of group dynamics, which will encompass the definition, the formation of groups and cohesiveness. The third area of dialogue will focus on wellbeing; psychological, social and emotional wellbeing form sub-parts of Corey Keyes' Theory of Flourishing (2007:98), which will be discussed in greater detail. The fourth area of discussion concentrates on resilience, as this construct underpins one of the sub-aims that underlie this study. The fifth area of consideration centres on leadership, one of the research objectives. The different types of leadership will be addressed from a sociological perspective. The final theoretical concept will centre on social constructivism; this is especially pertinent as this research study is conducted within the framework of social constructivism.

2. NATURAL DISASTERS AND FLOODS

2.1 What are natural disasters?

In general, disasters, according to Landau and Saul (2004:2) are defined as being catastrophic and cataclysmic happenings which cause great disturbance, interrupting daily lives and bringing hardship to the people who experience the disaster.

Natural disasters are defined as being specific intense natural events such as earthquakes, volcanic activity, floods and other weather incidents. In the twentieth century, 45% of the deaths resulting from natural disasters have been caused by

floods, along with earthquakes and cyclones (McBean & Rodgers, 2010:873), and floods have been shown to be the most costly (Mustafa, 2009:461). This may be because floods affect a large group of people, such as a community (Stimpson, 2005:27). With the recent spate of natural disasters (McBean & Rodgers, 2010:872) that have occurred globally, researchers have shown a greater interest in discovering how natural disasters affect societies (Stimpson, 2005:27). Research has shown that disasters interrupt the social structure of the daily lives of people (Warheit, 1985:30), and that they can strike at any time without prior warning. In addition, they may result in a further sequence of disasters which may be as overwhelming as the first, original disaster (Coenraads, 2006:11).

Natural disasters such as floods span the divide between the natural and the effects of human intervention. This is especially true in relation to degradation of the environment, which can bring about floods (Coenraads, 2006:11). Human intervention has resulted in worsening environmental problems in addition to creating environmental problems, such as global warming (King & McCarthy, 2009:2).

Growing evidence shows that the rate of natural disasters is increasing on an annual basis (Gruntfest, 1995:2), over longer and more unpredictable time periods than in the past (Coenraads, 2006:11) and that the rate of hydro-meteorological disasters show the greatest increase. For the purposes of this study, the graph depicts hydro-meteorological events, referring to floods, severe storms and related disasters, which are depicted in Figure 3 (Ferris, 2007:6).

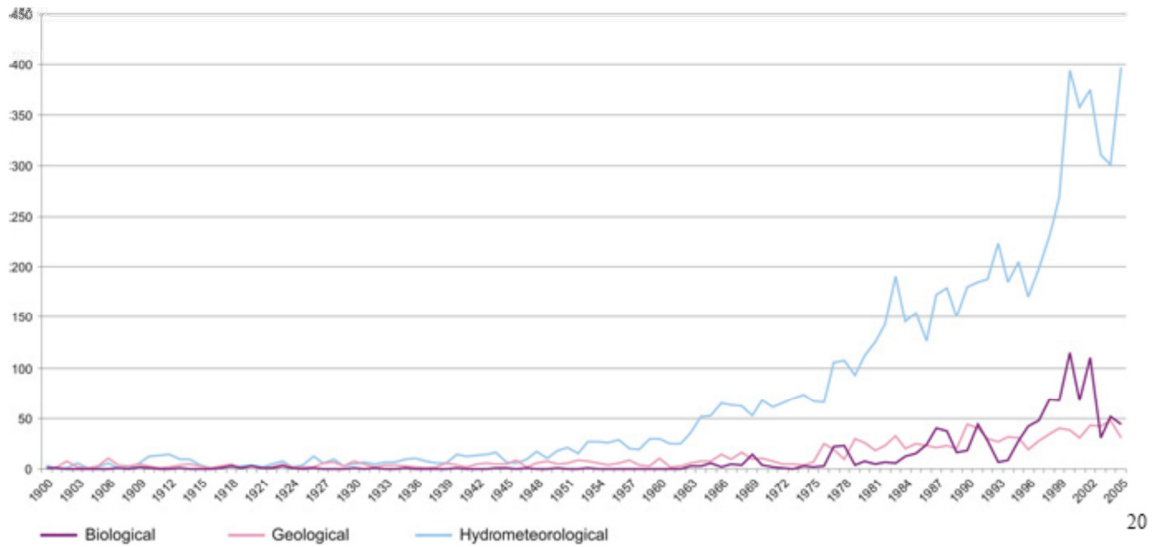


Figure 3: Graph depicting the increase in disasters which are hydro-meteorological in nature (Ferris, 2007:7)

Of the hydro-meteorological disasters, those events which are flood-related are the most frequently occurring, as is shown in Figure 4.

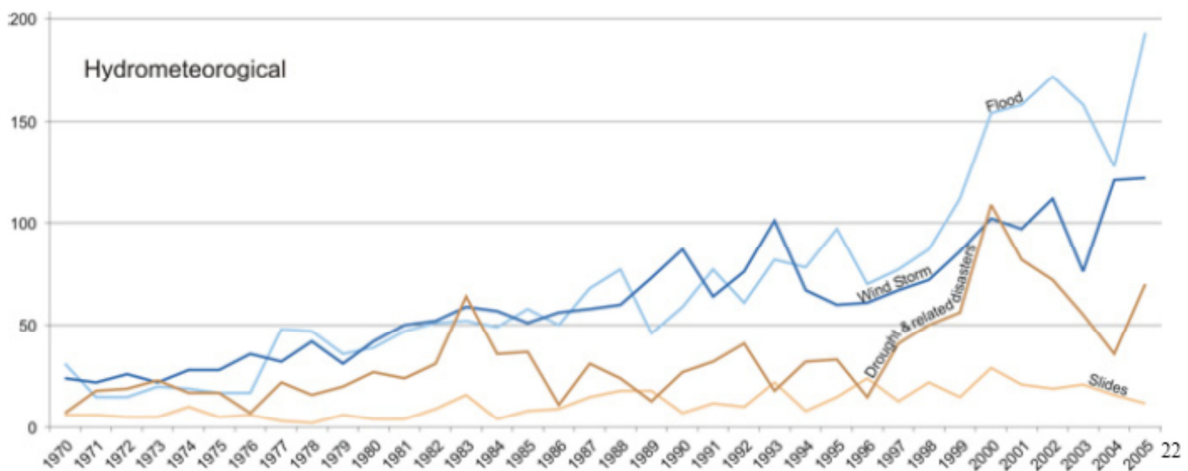


Figure 4: Frequency of hydro-meteorological events (Ferris, 2007:7)

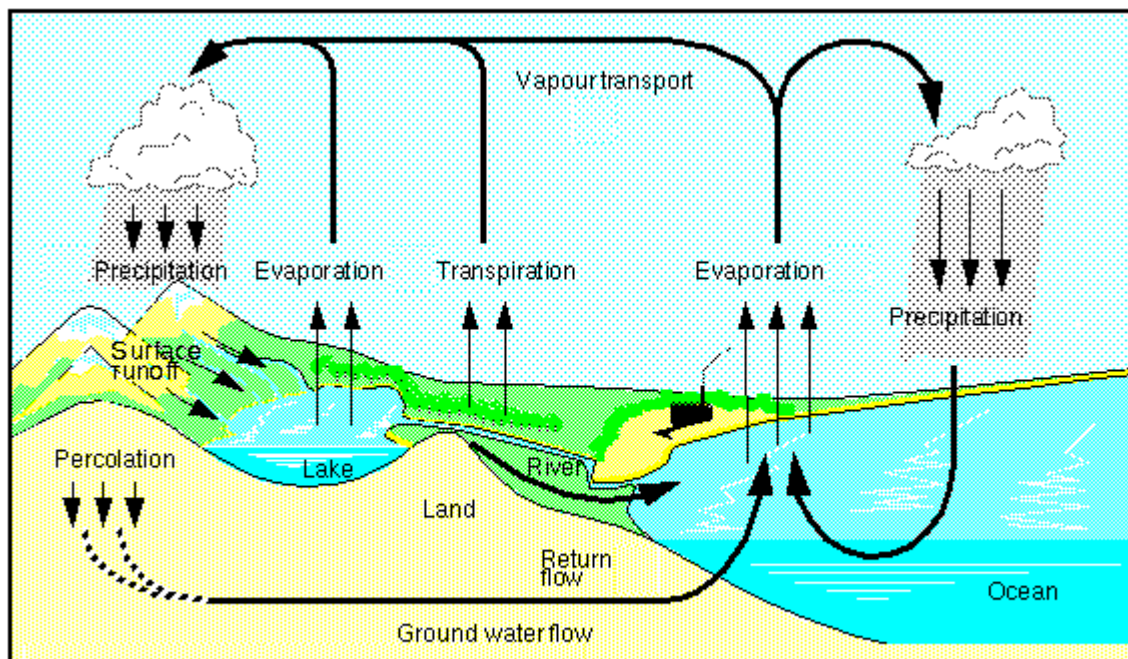
The increase in hydro-meteorological events may be due to greater accuracy in the recording of data, although it may also in part be due to climate change (Ferris, 2007:7).

In conclusion, this section has focused on natural disasters and their causes, how they affect society and the effect that people have on the environment. A discussion

of floods follows, which includes an explanation, from a meteorological perspective, of how floods occur as a result of the hydrological cycle, as well as a brief description of the types of floods that occur.

2.2 What are floods?

The earth experiences a continuous hydrological cycle (Baskar & Baskar, 2009:103) which includes precipitation, evaporation and condensation amongst other aspects which are graphically depicted in Figure 5. The hydrological cycle as depicted renews the water supply, which in effect is the process of water evaporating from rivers, lakes, streams and oceans. The water vapour cools and through the process of condensation, water and clouds are formed. The water returns to the ground in the form of rain and snow (which in South Africa occurs infrequently) (Thakur, 2006:54). The hydrological cycle depicts the process of rainfall, which in January 2011 was above average for South Africa.



Courtesy Erich Roeckner, Max Planck Institute for Meteorology

Figure 5: Hydrological Cycle (Roeckner, 2010)

Floods occur as a result of various factors, such as precipitation in the form of torrential storms or episodes of heavy rainfall. During heavy rainfall, the water courses through the path of the river; after some time, the drainage basin is no

longer able to sustain the increased water levels. Flooding occurs when rivers break their banks as they can no longer contain the increased volume of water (Baskar & Baskar, 2009:103) and spill over into the surrounding terrain (Gifford, 2009:16) submerging the immediate area (Baskar & Baskar, 2009:103). Heavy rainfalls result in flooding levels ranging from a few centimetres to many metres, capable of submerging a single-storey house (Gifford, 2009:16). The duration of the rainfall has an impact on the saturation levels of the ground around the river channel. These involve technical aspects relating to ground saturation and soil permeability (Gifford, 2009:16), which will not be discussed in this paper, as they bear no direct relevance to the overall research study.

Developing countries are often severely ravaged by floods (McBean & Rodgers, 2010:871) owing to the high population densities surrounding rivers, inadequate flood control measures and poor early warning systems. Floods pose a greater risk to communities that live in close proximity to rivers or in low lying areas (Baskar & Baskar, 2009:105).

Baskar and Baskar, 2009:105) highlight five main types of floods, described briefly as follows:

- **Riverine:** There are two types of riverine floods. Slow riverine floods occur as a result of rains from monsoons and hurricanes. Severe thunderstorms cause fast riverine floods.
- **Estuarine:** Estuarine floods occur when estuaries are flooded by tidal surges caused by extreme winds.
- **Coastal:** Coastal areas are flooded by phenomena such as tsunami's, hurricanes and sea storms.
- **Catastrophic:** These floods are associated with catastrophic events such as earthquakes, eruptions and bursting dams.
- **Muddy:** Muddy floods occur as a result of runoffs into croplands.

It has also been shown that human intervention, even actions attempting to remedy drainage systems may have adverse effects, such as flooding in other areas (Baskar & Baskar, 2009:116).

In summary, this section has focused on floods, how they occur and their effects on people, while the types of floods were touched on briefly. Next, consideration is given to how natural disasters and floods fall within the field of sociology.

2.3 Natural disasters, flooding and sociology

From a sociological perspective, disasters are referred to as being collectively stressful situations. They occur as a result of a change of catastrophic proportion in the physical or social environment of the people involved. This results in an interruption of the social context and daily routine (Kreps & Drabek, 1996:130) of people and groups. The severity of a disaster is reliant on the situational context within which the event has occurred (Bardo, 1978:88).

Barton in Bardo (1978:88) categorises disasters in relation to four widespread aspects, the extent of the impact, rapidity of onset of the disaster, the length of time of the impact and social awareness, and attentiveness to the disaster. Barton further characterises five specific stages through which disasters advance. Stoddard in Dombrovsky (1995:245) also postulated a similar five stage model, which is described as follows:

- **Pre-disaster period:** This stage is characterised by the formulation of disaster-management plans (Bardo, 1978:88), as well as emergency drills from time to time to assess the responsiveness of staff, and to ensure that all are aware of the escape routes. This would also encompass being aware of the plans and procedures of the greater community and local authorities (Coenraads, 2006:21).
- **Time of detecting and communicating the warning of the impending threat:** In this stage it is apparent in the initial action responding to the impending threat, including mobilising necessary resources where required.
- **The time of immediate, comparatively unorganised reaction to the threat:** During this stage, people would be mobilised and activities for disaster management would be coordinated (Bardo, 1978:88). At this stage it would be of benefit to have emergency leadership in place to prepare for the next phase (Coenraads, 2006:21).

- **The time of organised social response:** Interactions between people would be maintained during this stage, along with the on-going coordination of activities in disaster management.
- **The post disaster stability:** At this point, the management team would assess the effects of the flood on the people involved (Bardo, 1978:88).

Sorensen *et al.* (1985:34) provide a general idea of the determinants of response to disaster, both before and during a disaster; these are depicted in Table 2 on the next page.

<u>DETERMINANTS OF RESPONSE TO DISASTER</u>		
Time period	Intraorganisational factors	Interorganisational factors
<i>Preparedness phase</i>	Communication Perceived probability of disaster Flexible decision making	Communication Defined roles
<i>Disaster phase</i>	Flexibility Role definition Resources Information and communication Cohesiveness Knowledge Priority setting	Interaction Flexibility Knowledge Resources Communication and information Conflict resolution

Table 2: Determinants of response to disaster (adapted from Sorensen *et al.*, 1985:34)

Sorensen's determinants of the response to disaster, as well as Stoddard and Barton's model, provide a description of the process of disaster preparedness, response and management. At any given time, the successful outcome of any disaster situation is dependent on the ability of all people involved in the situation to heed the commands of those authorities and emergency personnel who are trained and skilled in emergencies and natural disasters (Coenraads, 2006:21). The extent to which people employ any of the activities in the five-stage model of Barton is dependent on a number of variables, including, among others, the leadership at the

time of the disaster, pre-planning in terms of disaster management, and the accessibility to resources required to manage disasters (Bardo, 1978:89).

Disasters are not necessarily viewed as social problems (Kreps & Drabek, 1996:137). Nonetheless, sociologists focusing on the environment presuppose that people form part of the environment. It can be concluded that the environment and society can be fully appreciated only in relation to one other (King & McCarthy, 2009:1).

The first sociologist who attempted to study disasters from a sociological perspective was L.J. Carr. Carr identified four different types of disasters (Carr, 1932:226), which are:

- **Instantaneous-diffused disaster:** These disasters occur very rapidly, most often without warning, and are usually over very quickly with far-reaching effects on the community.
- **Instantaneous-focalised disaster:** This tends to be localised to a specific area, causing minimal damage, such as an explosion.
- **Progressive-diffused disaster:** This type of disaster continues for extended periods of time, ranging from a few hours to a several weeks, and can affect entire communities.
- **Progressive-focalised disaster:** This disaster tends to affect a single community or group of people, yet has the propensity to range in length of time.

Carr also highlighted the complexity of disasters, which relates to the various forces of nature occurring at a given time, their speed, and the magnitude of destruction wreaked (Carr, 1932:226). He proposed that not every naturally occurring event deemed disastrous is to be considered catastrophic. Furthermore, he identified the fact that social and non-social factors play a role in disasters, and that human intervention also plays a role in the generation of a disaster. Carr attempted to describe disasters as being part of a social process and being interconnected with natural and cultural aspects (Dombrovsky, 1995:249).

The causes and the resultant effects of natural disasters are associated with the social structures and processes of the society within which the disasters occur (Dynes, 1988:111). Disasters are an element of collective stress situations (Kreps & Drabek, 1996:130). Collective stress occurs when a group of people experience tension, trauma or strain at the same time. It has been indicated that experiencing collective stress may result in shared emotional responses and may instigate a collective coping action to manage the situation (Peiro, 2008:299).

Globally, a movement has emerged which aims to build a society which is disaster-resilient, and thus is able to deal with situations of collective stress. Resilient societies would be sustainable, and this sustainability is based on social values which occur as a result of decisions being made and effectively acted upon. This implies that because society is sustainable, it will be resilient enough to recover from natural hazards (Corotis & Enarson, 2005:2).

In summary, the discussion in this first section has explained the concepts of natural disasters and floods. These concepts were further expanded on in relation to sociology. The essence of this discussion is that people form part of their environment, and, to some degree, also has a hand in creating several environmental issues in their attempt to remedy ecological problems. However, it has also been shown that people do not always respond to disasters in a negative manner. To build an understanding of the collective response to natural disasters, it is important to take into consideration group dynamics, which will be discussed in terms of what groups are, their formation, the nature of groups, and cohesion between group members.

3. GROUP DYNAMICS

The segment encompasses the fundamentals of group dynamics, starting with a description of each concept, the formation of groups, and a discussion of cohesiveness.

3.1 What is a group?

Before one can understand the concept of group dynamics, it is important to understand the concept of groups. A group can be defined as two or more people

who are connected by social interactions and relationships (Levi, 2011:4) and who have shared values and norms with the aim of working towards a common purpose or goal (Haynes, 2012:1). Three key aspects are highlighted in the definition: the common purpose, the shared values, and norms, all of which will be explained briefly in the next paragraph.

The common purpose refers to the group members who share activities in order to achieve similar objectives. Shared values are maintained by group members who strive to preserve the integrity of the group and share fundamental beliefs regarding the structure and spirit of the group. Lastly, shared norms refer to the guiding principles that direct or influence the group's behaviour and interactions (Haynes, 2012:1).

The shared connections of group members result in shared experiences because of collective experiences (Levi, 2011:3). Strong familial ties, or less strong ties, such as those found amongst work colleagues, form the foundation of the connection that is shared between group members. It is these ties that aid in the positive outcomes, such as personal growth, which are not always associated with adverse situations. These ties between members form the basis of the social unit that is known as the group, which is based on social interactions and relationships (Forsyth, 2010:3).

The shared connections between group members enhance the decision-making abilities of groups in certain situations, so that they are more effective than decisions individuals would make in similar situations (Shepard, 2010:151).

Groups are classified into categories depending on the purpose they serve: functional groups and identity groups, of which there are many different types. Functional groups are identified by their purpose and identity groups are categorised by the nature of the relationship of the group members (Haynes, 2012:4). The hotel workers belong to the social group which is characterised by slight interaction levels over a lengthier time period (Forsyth, 2010:14), such as goal-focused scenarios. In a large group, relationships and functions are more complex and as such are more clearly structured (Forsyth, 2010:3). Thus, the hotel workers are a group who are connected to one another by their shared goal of cleaning up the debris after the

flood, and, in a way, through their interpersonal relationships with one another. The larger group, comprising one hundred staff members, is divided into subgroups of various departments with specific roles that are fulfilled by the hotel workers.

3.2 Group development

The formation of groups is an integral part of group dynamics, and the manner in which they develop in an organisational setting provides an in-depth view of the overall decision-making behaviour of the organisation (Backstrom *et al.*, 2006:44). At the outset, the group will rely heavily on the appointed leader, and as the group progresses through the various stages, which will be discussed in the next few paragraphs, the group focuses on outcomes and the interpersonal relationships at play within group members (Mercer *et al.*, 2010:68).

Groups usually develop in response to realising an assignment. There are several perspectives of group development, with Bruce Tuckman's theory probably being the most popular (Stolley, 2005:87). In 1965, Tuckman proposed his theory on group development, which supposes that all groups progress through five stages, as listed below (Forsyth, 2010:19). Tuckman's theory highlights the first four stages, and only later did he add the fifth stage (Mercer *et al.*, 2010:68), which has also been mentioned in several alternative models of group development (Stolley, 2005:87):

- **Forming:** This stage is characterised by the group members coming together (Forsyth, 2010:19; Stolley, 2005:87).
- **Storming:** Storming is characterised by matters which have become contentious and now cause conflict. The resolving of conflicts between team members can be viewed as a constructive process rather than a destructive process (Stolley, 2005:87). In addition, the members of the group compete against one another for status within the group. It is at this point that the group sets down its goals and aims for achievement (Forsyth, 2010:19).
- **Norming:** Conflict subsides between team members and a focus on the interactions between members becomes more standardised and structured (Forsyth, 2010:19). It can also be the phase of group cohesion if group conflict is resolved and a greater understanding between group members occurs (Haynes, 2012:9; Stolley, 2005:87).

- **Performing:** Performing happens when group members focus on the work that must be completed, and very little disagreement typically occurs (Forsyth, 2010:19).
- **Adjourning:** The group that was created disbands in order to solve the problem/issue that arose (Forsyth, 2010:19; Mercer *et al.*, 2010:69).

Taylor and McKirnan (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994:142) propose a five-stage model which aids in explaining the stages of group dynamics from their perspective and is graphically depicted in Figure 6 on the following page.

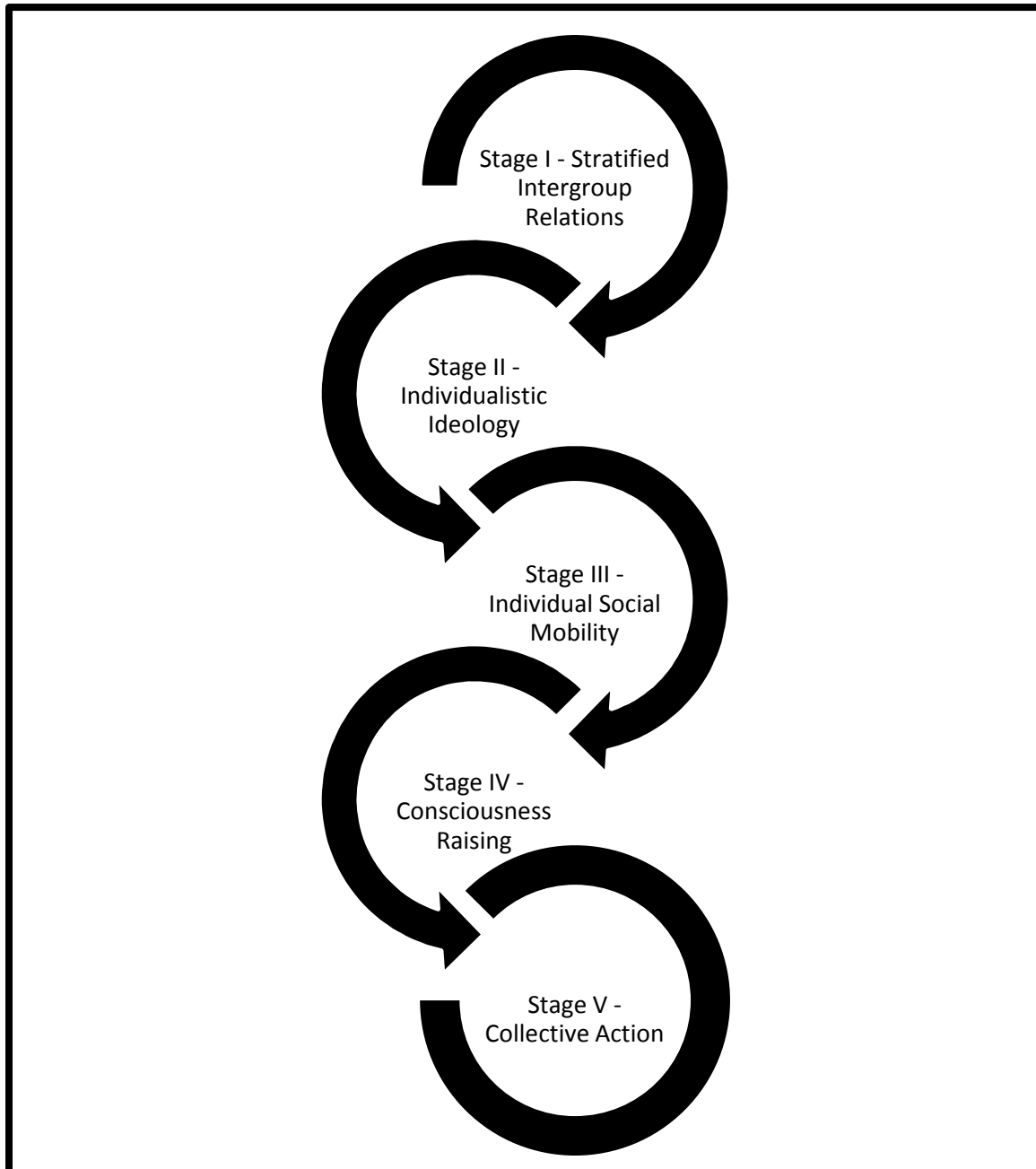


Figure 6: Adapted Five Stage Model of Taylor and McKirnan (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994:142)

Figure 6 graphically depicts the five stages that groups typically experience in their formation. The model of Taylor and McKirnan (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994:142) has been adapted for use in this research study, and will be expanded on in the following paragraph:

Stage I – Clearly stratified intergroup relations

Groups in Stage I are characterised by people who are clustered together owing to similarities in their characteristics (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994:143). At this stage,

the social comparisons and attributions are determined by the relations of power exhibited between groups (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994:143) and the function that the roles perform within the context of the organisational setting; thus the status between groups remains fairly static at this stage (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994:143).

Stage II – Individual ideology

At this stage, the status of the group is a result of the effort and ability of individual people within the group, and would be associated with the work that is performed in context of the individual roles within the various organisational departments (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994:144).

Stage III – Individual social mobility

At this stage, people who are in a perceived role of disadvantage within an organisational setting will adopt as many of the salient characteristics of the perceived advantageous group in order to be fully accepted by the group, yet they will continue to retain certain characteristics in order to maintain their original identities. The social mobility of individuals within groups will occur only in a handful of individuals, and not necessarily the whole group. Thus, collective action will only occur at a later stage, once the “acculturation” process has been completed (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994:145).

Stage IV – Consciousness raising

Of the people who attempt upward social mobility, only a few will be successful, and in this success lies the strength of the social system. As this occurs, there will be a mind-set change from interpersonal to intergroup social associations, and thus the group members come to realise that the position of the individual person is enhanced through the enhancement of the position of the group as a whole (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994:147).

Stage V – Collective action

This stage refers to the collective proceedings of the perceived disadvantaged group in order to improve the position of the group as a whole. At this stage, an approach known as “social originality” takes place, whereby new ways of social comparison are designed (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994:148).

The preceding discussion has delved into the formation of groups with reference to Bruce Tuckman's model, the nature of groups, and how groups react in response to various situations. Next, the concept of group dynamics will be introduced.

3.3 What are group dynamics?

In 1951 Kurt Lewin explained group dynamics as “the scientific study of groups; also the actions, processes, and changes that occur in social groups”. An alternative definition of group dynamics was proposed by the forerunners of the field, Cartwright and Zander, who defined group dynamics as a topic of inquiry which is committed to the development and increase of knowledge of the nature of groups, the laws that surround their development and their interrelation with other people, other groups and larger establishments and institutions (Forsyth, 2010:14). In the field of sociology, group dynamics was further researched by Robert Bales, who sought to understand social systems through the use of small groups (Levi, 2011:15).

Kurt Lewin further expanded the theory of group dynamics by his field theory of group dynamics, which suggested that groups are comprised of more than the sum of their parts; this is based on the premise of interactionism, which states that the behaviour of people in groups is influenced by the interaction of the person and the environment within which the person functions, such as the hotel workers within the environment of the hotel. Interactionism is represented in a formula as $B = f(P, E)$, which can be explained as follows: the behaviour (B) of the person is a function of the qualities (P) of the person, the social environment (E), as well as the interaction between the personal qualities and social factors (Forsyth, 2010:17).

The concept of groups was encountered by sociologists at the start of the twentieth century. They tried to explain how certain social systems, such as religion and politics, behaved in maintaining society. This in turn brought to light the role that groups play in maintaining the social order of society. This implies that in order to understand how society at large functions, one needs to understand how groups function. It can be said that a group tends to mould the actions, thoughts and feelings of people who belong to a specific group. This can be explained by group members all subscribing to a certain set of prescribed norms (Forsyth, 2010:17).

Although sociology and psychology share the concept of groups, there is a marked difference in the level of analysis from the two disciplines. The sociological level of analysis is based on group-level analysis, which supposes that each person in a group is an element of a larger system, group, organisation or society. In contrast, the psychological level of analysis is based on individual-level analysis which pays attention to the individual in the group (Forsyth, 2010:18). As this research study is conducted from a sociological perspective, the researcher will focus on the group-level analysis of research participants.

A particular sociological aspect of group dynamics that has received a great deal of attention from scholars is the cohesiveness of groups, which will be explored in depth in the next section.

3.4 Cohesiveness

Another important element to consider is the degree of cohesiveness that group members feel amongst one another (Baron & Byrne, 1997:323). Cohesiveness refers to the unity that people experience, as well as the intensity of the emotional bonds group members have with one another (Forsyth, 2010:14; Levi, 2011:63). This can also be associated with the collective efficacy (Levi, 2011:61) that people in disasters exhibit because of their focus on their shared and common goal.

Cohesiveness is also displayed relative to the common tasks to be performed or goals to be achieved (Forsyth, 2010:142; Levi, 2011:62), which are known as locomotion goals (Van der Zee & Paulus, 2008:279) and as a result of which *esprit de corps* is exhibited. This is also reflected in the light-hearted but committed and professional approach with which a group of people can tackle the tasks of reorganising the organisational structure after a disruptive situation.

Group cohesion has also been shown to impact positively on the overall performance of a group, and this impact is greater if the group is committed to completing an assigned task as opposed to solely relying on group attraction. The overall cohesion effects are found to be greater when the task to be completed by the group is based on elevated levels of interaction as well as greater task

coordination and a dependence on other group members (Levi, 2011:63). Yet cohesion between group members declines if members do not have clarity regarding what is expected of them and others (Sorensen *et al.*, 1985:27).

Group members who are currently experiencing cohesion with other group members tend to accept the group goals, norms and decisions far more readily than group members who do not experience levels of cohesion. It has been found that in successful work teams, high levels of quality performance are encouraged and expected. It is this level of cohesion which aids in the social support experienced by group members of the cohesive group. The level of cohesiveness exhibited by a group has an effect on how members of the group interact socially. If members are able to interact well with other group members on a social level, they will also have a greater ability to handle issues and conflicts as they arise, and have the ability to solve problems effectively. In stressful situations, group cohesion plays an important role; because group members show a willingness to support one another, the stress experienced by group members is reduced (Levi, 2011:62). There are different types of cohesion, which are highlighted and explained briefly in Table 3 on the following page.

COMPONENT	DESCRIPTION
COHESION AS ATTRACTION	
Member-to-member attraction	How many friends in the group, characterised by the bonds of friendship between members.
Attraction to the group	Partiality for the group as a whole.
COHESION AS UNITY	
Unity	Coherence of the group, and the degree to which the group is seen as a single unit.
Belonging	This is a feeling of community amongst group members.
COHESION AS TEAM WORK	
Task cohesion	The ability of the group to perform together successfully as a single, organised unit.
Esprit de corps	This refers to the team spirit exhibited and observed, as well as the understanding and compassion exhibited and observed between group members.

Table 3: Various classes of cohesion (Forsyth, 2010:144)

It is also noted that the intensity of cohesion between group members tends to strengthen and heighten in relation to the successful completion of tasks (Forsyth, 2010:155). This means that the group needs to have attained the cohesion goals of relational belonging and safety before they move to attaining their locomotion goals (Van der Zee & Paulus, 2008:279). Mullen and Copper, as cited in Levi (2011:63), further clarified this aspect by stating that, although cohesiveness in a group does have an impact on group task performance, the successful performance and execution of a task has a greater impact on cohesiveness, as is graphically depicted in Figure 7 (Forsyth, 2010:155).

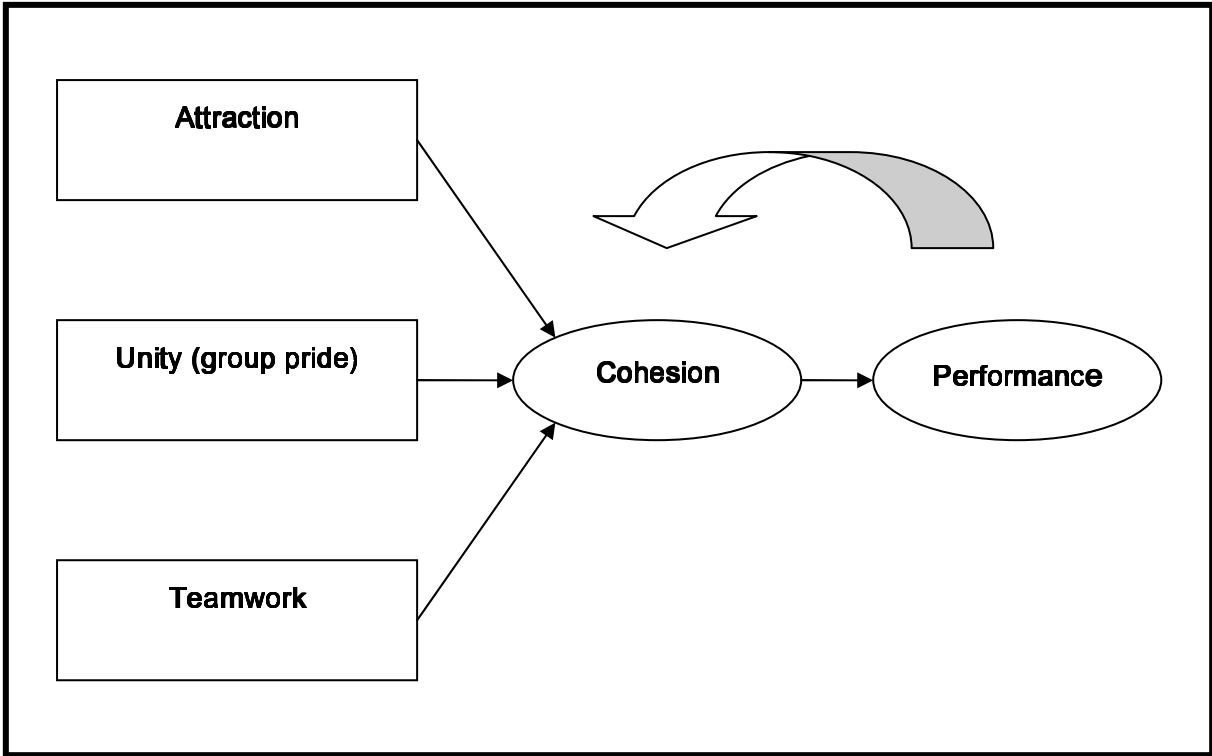


Figure 7: Cohesion and its effects on group performance (Forsyth, 2010:155)

However, a different view proposed is that cohesion is linked to a willingness to work together in order to achieve common goals, rather than relying on positive relations with others or a sense of unity (Forsyth, 2010:141). Furthermore, a belief exists that if the differences between group members are highlighted and recognised, a conformist approach to group cohesion does not occur (Uys, 1995:110).

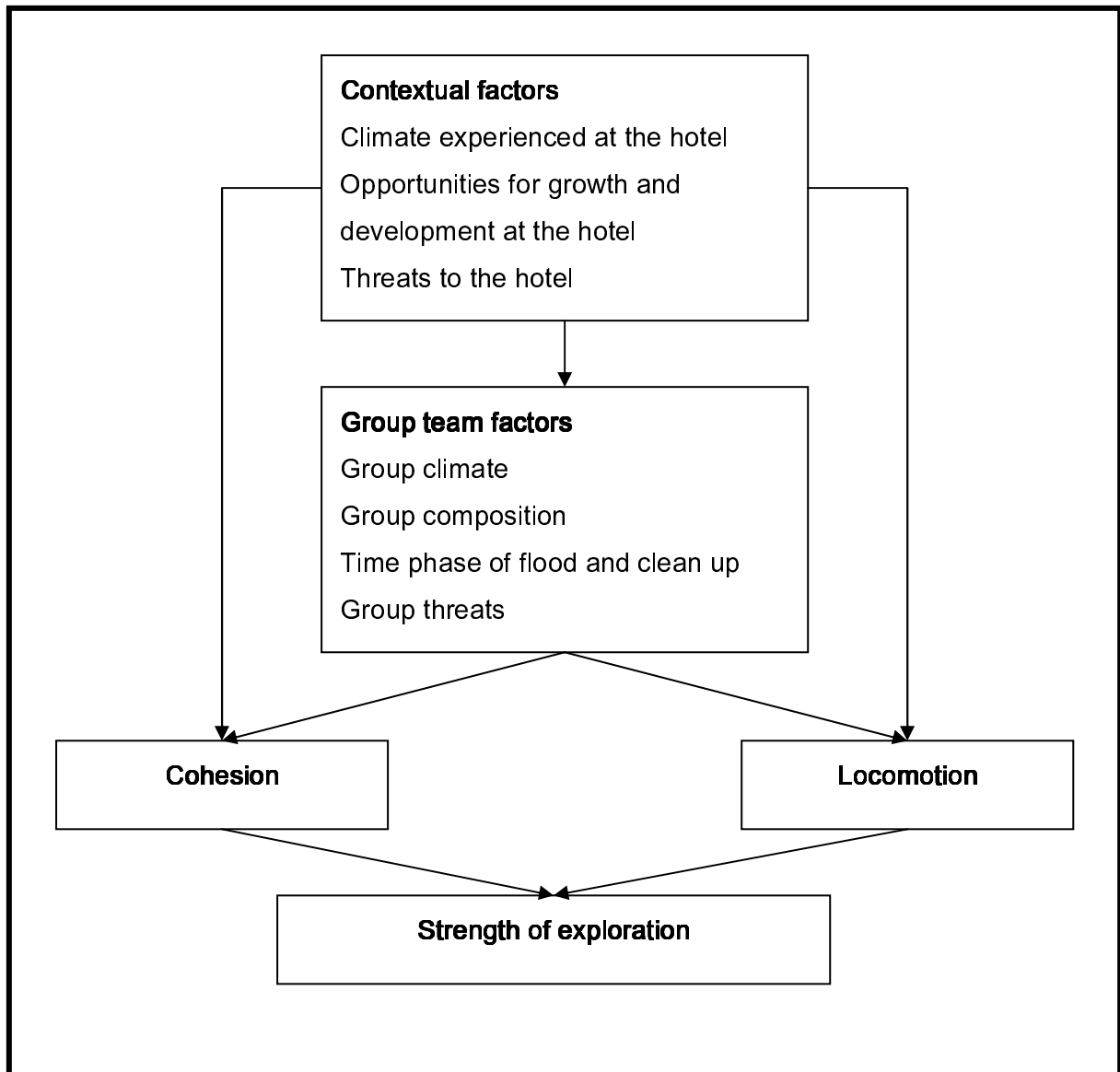


Figure 8: Cohesion and locomotion process at the hotel as a function of the hotel environment and team context (adapted from Van der Zee & Paulus, 2008:280)

Figure 8 is a graphical depiction of the cohesion and locomotion processes and the context within which group members function with reference to the organisational climate fostered in the workplace community.

The processes highlight the opportunities that exist for the community and its group members. These may have an impact on the manner in which the group members interact with one another. A flood may be deemed to be a threat to the group members. The threats experienced by the group members would be viewed as external to the situation. In turn, threats have a bearing on relational belonging and the sense of safety that would be experienced by the group members. This results in

the group members alternating from cohesion to locomotion as the need arises during a time of stress. All these aspects have an effect on the group processes which, in turn, encourage locomotion (Van der Zee & Paulus, 2008:279).

The interactions of the group members are affected by the cohesiveness that is exhibited between group members, which, in turn, impacts group performance. This implies that the less cohesive a group is, the less able the group is to work together. On the other hand, the more cohesive a group is, the more the communication and coordination of actions is enhanced in completing and attaining common goals (Levi, 2011:63). It has also been shown that if communication between group members is clear, definite, timeous and prompt, effectiveness in dealing with the disaster is greatly enhanced (Sorensen *et al.*, 1985:31).

A last point takes into account Kurt Lewin's concept of situationism, where the context of the social environment can result in strong and powerful forces which produce certain behaviours (Ross & Nisbett, 1991:9).

In summary, this section has focused on cohesiveness, including an explanation of the concept, how cohesiveness aids group functioning, and the process of the development of cohesion through interactions with others.

3.5 Socioemotional interaction and social support

Socioemotional interaction and social support are discussed in brief in the context of group dynamics, as these have a bearing on the relationships between people. Socioemotional interaction refers to the ability of group members to interact with others in terms of their emotions, and is dependent on the type of relationship between members, such as being work colleagues (Emmitt & Gorse, 2007:178). Socioemotional interaction assists in supporting and sustaining the emotional bonds that connect group members to one another and to the larger group. This implies that group members are able to support and help one another during a stressful situation and thereafter (Forsyth, 2010:11).

One of the greatest strengths that people have is in their interpersonal relationships with one another, and these interactions with others may result in many other human

strengths being developed (Aspinwall & Staudinger, 2003:15). Having repeated interactions and more contact between people provides the prospect of greater accuracy in interpreting the behaviours and affective reactions of others. This would imply that people will place emphasis on being members of their respective groups in order to be able to communicate emotion more openly and effectively (Hess & Philippot, 2007:9). It has been shown that socioemotional interaction is used by team members in order to influence the behaviour and actions of other group members (Emmitt & Gorse, 2007:178).

The second aspect of this section is social support, which is defined as being verbal or non-verbal information which is imparted to or inferred by other group members and has the benefit of emotional and behavioural consequences experienced by the group members receiving the support (Armstrong *et al.*, 2005:271).

Social support aids people in coping with stressful situations in more constructive ways (Argyle & Martin, 1991:85). Shelley E. Taylor (2006:273), proposed the tend-and-befriend response to a stressful situation, which results in people, particularly women, tending to others (nurturing, protecting and supporting) or befriending them (looking for relationships with others). There are four types of social support that are offered by groups to their members, which include:

- **Emotional support:** Emotional support refers to offering and receiving encouragement between group members, offering friendship to group members, as well as paying attention to the problems of others without offering advice or suggestions (Forsyth, 2010:119).
- **Informational support:** This type of support is characterised by advice, propositions and behaviours that result because of problems (Forsyth, 2010:119).
- **Instrumental support:** This occurs when group members assist each other in performing their roles in the workplace (Forsyth, 2010:119).
- **Spiritual support:** Lastly, this occurs when group members assist other members in relation to hazards posed to the group members' perception of the world and existential issues (Forsyth, 2010:119).

Social support is also linked to the wellbeing of people, especially when people interact with others for more than six hours per day. This has an effect on the enhancement of levels of wellbeing in people and in reducing levels of stress experienced (Rath & Harter, 2010b)⁷.

The concern exhibited towards others is based on an underlying need for others. In turn, others need to be considered as they play an important role in the construction of a firmer experiential reality (von Glasersfeld, 1995:127). It has been found that the relationships between people play a key role in the prevention of further distress (Argyle & Martin, 1991:83).

Social interaction is vital for people; positive relationships with others refer to social support and intimacy on an emotional level. Emotional intimacy with significant others and friends, even in work-related friendships, aids in enhancing the subjective wellbeing of people, and these relationships lead to people being happy (Compton, 2005:52).

Social contact also fosters a need to be with others who are happy, and similarly, people want to be with others when they are happy. An adverse situation might be deemed quite distressing; people facing difficult situations would want to be with others who are happy, because wellbeing will be further enhanced by positive social contact with others (Compton, 2005:53). Furthermore, it has been found that people with wide familial and social networks have the ability to recover faster from stressful situations than those people with few or no familial networks (van Willingen, 2001:62).

Leading on from the discussion on socioemotional interaction and social support, the following segment discusses intergroup behaviour and intermember relations, further augmenting the discussion on socioemotional interaction and social support.

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3.6 Intergroup Behaviour and Intermember Relations

Group members identify socially with fellow group members, which results in bonds being created between them. This also results in the individual group members adopting the characteristics of the group. In relation to cohesiveness, the more cohesive a group is, the greater the likelihood of conforming to group norms (Levi, 2011: 49). As their identification with the group intensifies, group members tend to find personal significance in social identification. As a consequence, individual group members tend to base their definition of themselves on the group's qualities and attributes (Forsyth, 2010:90).

Groups are bound by the norms and roles assigned to the various members within the group (Forsyth, 2010:189). These norms also serve certain functions, such as the following:

- The core values of the group are articulated, which aids the group members in having a sense of who they are.
- They aid the organisation of the group's activities so that common ground is determined and particular group behaviour is expected.
- The norms that a group subscribes to specify what is deemed appropriate or inappropriate, so as to promote participation in group activities by all group members.
- A unique group identity is created which assists the group's survival, and aids the group members in understanding how they are different from other groups (Levi, 2011: 48).

This section has provided an overview of group dynamics and the several concepts which are linked to the study of groups, such as the formation of groups and cohesion. The following section centres on wellbeing, which is a construct that is highlighted in one of the sub-aims of this study and for this reason is included in this chapter.

4. WELLBEING

What makes life worthwhile? This section explores the concept of wellbeing in relation to subjective, psychological and social wellbeing, as one of the sub-aims guiding this study involves the investigation of the subjective experiences and the interactional patterns and relationships of the hotel workers.

4.1 Introduction

The concept of wellbeing assists in explaining the positive aspects of people's experiences (Ryff & Singer, 2003:276). It is necessary to distinguish between hedonic wellbeing and eudemonic wellbeing. Hedonic wellbeing refers to the cognitive assessment of daily life in relation to its positive and negative outcomes. It is also associated with how satisfied one is with one's life (Keyes, 2007:6; Keyes *et al.*, 2002:1008). Eudemonic wellbeing has its origins in the Aristotelian era where life actualisation was based on a good and meaningful existence (Rauschmayer *et al.*, 2011:9). It is also associated with the potential that people have, the contribution that one can make to society, environmental mastery, having positive relations with others, and growth on a personal level as well as having a purpose in life (Keyes, 2007:6; Keyes *et al.*, 2002:1008). Social and psychological wellbeing fall in the category of eudemonic wellbeing (Rauschmayer *et al.*, 2011:9).

While the concept of wellbeing is often associated with the field of psychology, it is important to note that the major contributions to wellbeing and its science were initiated by sociologists and economists, such as Cantril and Bradburn, as early as the 1960s (Schimmack, 2008).

Tom Rath and Jim Harter (2010)⁸ have identified five essential components which comprise wellbeing in people. These components go beyond any cultural or religious boundaries, and are considered to apply across cultures. The five components are explained as follows:

- **Career wellbeing:** This refers to how one spends one's time during the day and to enjoying one's time while in the workplace.

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- **Social wellbeing:** Social wellbeing is the affiliations and connections that people have with significant others, as well as the love that is felt in people's lives.
- **Financial wellbeing:** The ability one has to manage one's finances, which in turn is related to increasing feelings of security and reducing feelings of stress.
- **Physical wellbeing:** This refers to being in excellent health and feeling sufficiently energised to complete daily tasks.
- **Community wellbeing:** A sense of being involved and engaged in the community within which one lives; in relation to this study, the concept of community will also be extended to that of the hotel.

Researchers have found that severe and serious events impact negatively on the wellbeing of people (Stimpson, 2005:29). However, globally there has been a move from focusing on negative aspects such as distress to focusing on positive aspects. These positive aspects that are investigated are wellbeing, societal factors that promote a positive outlook on life, coping with stressful situations, and resilience (Aspinwall & Staudinger, 2003:9). Interestingly, wellbeing increases in relation to helping and aiding others to meet their needs as opposed to meeting one's own personal needs. Wellbeing is affected by internal and general characteristics (Nakazato *et al.*, 2010:2).

4.2 Keyes' model of flourishing

Corey Keyes created the model of social wellbeing, which is an element of his theory of human flourishing (Keyes, 2007:98; Keyes, 1998:121). Table 6 charts the three individual models of wellbeing which form sub-parts of Keyes' model of flourishing. The table identifies the 13 factors and dimensions which encompass all aspects of wellbeing, and which are explained in greater detail under the subheadings of subjective wellbeing (4.3), psychological wellbeing (4.4), and social wellbeing (4.5).

SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING	PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING	SOCIAL WELLBEING
Positive affect	Self acceptance	Social acceptance
Avowed quality of life	Personal growth	Social actualisation
	Purpose in life	Social contribution
	Environmental mastery	Social coherence
	Autonomy	Social integration
	Positive relations with others	

Table 4: Keyes' model of flourishing (Keyes, 2007:98; Keyes, 2005:541)

A detailed discussion of each sub-part of wellbeing follows.

4.3 Subjective wellbeing

Subjective wellbeing in essence is the ability to assess one's quality of life (Diener *et al.*, 2008:39) in terms of how satisfied, fulfilled and balanced one feels with regard to negative and positive influences (Keyes *et al.*, 2002:1007). In addition, subjective wellbeing is a reflection of the events that happen to people in relation to the emotions and moods that are exhibited (Diener, 2000:34). Subjective wellbeing is dependent on many aspects, but of particular relevance to this study are optimism and positive relationships. Optimism is associated with how people view themselves and others in terms of positive expectancies (Aspinwall & Staudinger, 2003:12) and as a result tend to have more successful social interactions with others and are usually more hopeful, viewing the future in a positive light (Compton, 2005:47) while having a belief that pleasant things will occur (Rasmussen & Wallio, 2008:132), and continuing to try to attain the pleasant objectives that they have set out to achieve (Aspinwall & Staudinger, 2003:12).

Diener *et al.* (2008:42) suggest that people who show positive degrees of subjective wellbeing have a tendency to perform optimally, especially in the areas of relationships and work. Negative emotions are also considered to be an integral part of human adaptation, yet prolonged exposure to negative emotions can wreak havoc on people's mental and physical health. It has been shown that trust and subjective wellbeing are linked. As a result, people who show high levels of happiness and, in turn, high levels of subjective wellbeing, have the ability to act in ways that benefit society.

Subjective wellbeing is dependent on a variety of factors, which include the following determinants:

- **Individual**, such as personal characteristics, e.g. optimism;
- **Socio-demographic**, referring to gender, age and education, amongst others;
- **Economic**, referring to the income or financial status of the person; and
- **Situational**, relating to social relationships (Binder, 2012:4).

Studies have shown that there is a link between people that are optimistic and the positive manner in which they cope when experiencing stressful life events. Optimistic people tend to deal with issues directly and play an active role in adopting suitable coping mechanisms to manage stressful events. Furthermore, humour has also been found to aid coping in difficult situations (Rasmussen & Wallio, 2008:141).

In 1984, Ed Diener developed his Top-Down Theory and Bottom-Up Theory of Wellbeing. The Bottom-Up Theory states that incidents in life affect wellbeing (Nakazato *et al.*, 2010:5), but that these incidents usually occur in a small number of life areas (Schimmack, 2006:2). Furthermore, subjective wellbeing is a product of the total of positive and negative occasions contained in a person's life (Diener & Ryan, 2009:394).

The Top-Down Theory emphasises that people's level of wellbeing of people, enables them to make judgements on the situations presented to them in life (Nakazato *et al.*, 2010:5). A further explanation is that people who are generally satisfied with their lives tend to be satisfied with all aspects which pertain to them (Schimmack, 2006:7). The top-down theory proposes that the inclination that people have towards experiencing the world in a particular manner has an effect on how the person interacts with the social world. Simply stated, a person who has a more positive frame of mind than a person with a more negative viewpoint will tend to have happier experiences. Therefore, one can say that the positive mind-set is the precursor for wellbeing, as opposed to the experience of an objective event (Diener & Ryan, 2009:394).

Subjective wellbeing is also associated with the positive or negative manner in which people think back on the experiences that they have had. The evaluation process of experiences or situations is an automatic response. The reflection on the past has a bearing on how people view what their life should be like (Veenhoven, 2008:3).

Martin Seligman (Compton, 2005:51) proposed that people can become skilled at being more optimistic. This is in relation to being aware of how they personally account to themselves for the events that occur in their lives, and is known as learned optimism. Learned optimism focuses on the emphasis that is placed on the attribution direction (i.e. internal or external attribution) in an adverse situation. This means that the person in the adverse situation will aim to move away from any negative outcome the situation may hold and prefer to aim towards a positive outcome (Snyder *et al.*, 2011:176). In contrast, realistic optimism focuses on thoughts that are optimistic, but are reality-based (Compton, 2005:51). This means that people have the ability to be optimistic about their lives and their environment, while still having the ability to grow and learn, despite the adverse situation in which they find themselves (Seligman, 2011⁹).

Optimism can also refer to the manner in which people describe their experiences, including stressful life events, and their belief that these life events are often temporary. The experiences are external to the persons facing the events and are linked to identifiable causes (Rasmussen & Wallio, 2008:132). Optimists are more inclined to adapt their behaviour, depending on the actual properties of the problems that are encountered. Positive beliefs, such as optimism, are likely to develop as a result of past experiences in adverse situations (Aspinwall & Staudinger, 2003:12).

From the discussion it can be concluded that subjective wellbeing concerns the way in which one views one's own wellbeing. The concept was also defined as the effect of positive beliefs on the outcomes of adverse situations. The next section concerns psychological wellbeing, which is based on the work of Carol Ryff (Ryff & Singer, 2003:275).

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4.4 Psychological wellbeing

Although this research study is conducted from a sociological perspective, it is important to add the psychological dimensions of wellbeing, as these have relevance to the research study, and wellbeing forms one of the core elements of this study. Psychological wellbeing is the awareness that one is engaged with the challenges that are presented to one throughout one's life (Keyes *et al.*, 2002:1007). Carol Ryff conceptualised a six-dimensional model of psychological wellbeing (Rauschmayer *et al.*, 2011:9; Compton, 2005:178; Ryff & Singer, 2003:275), which is encompassed in Keyes' model of flourishing, and is adapted and depicted diagrammatically in Figure 9.

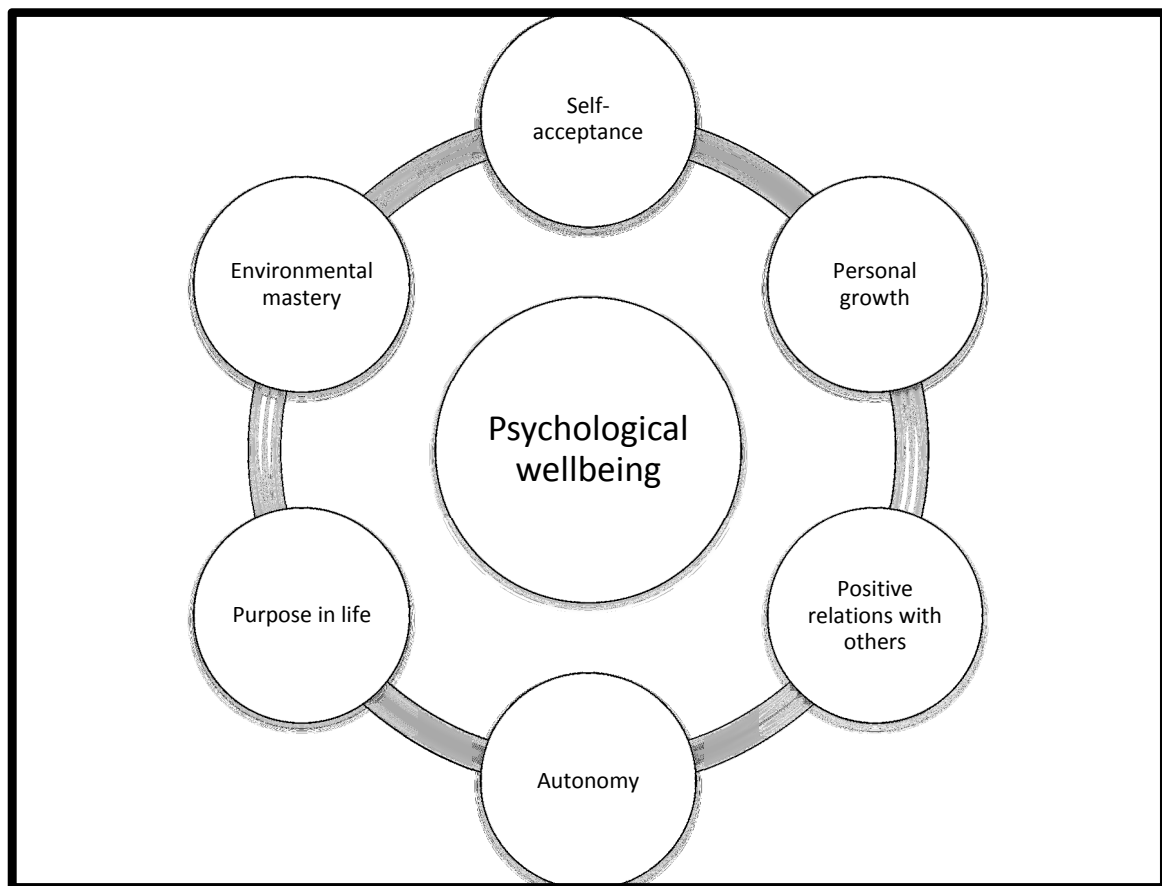


Figure 9: Six dimensional model of wellbeing by Carol Ryff (adapted from Compton 2005:178; Ryff & Singer, 2003:276)

The factors of the six-dimensional model of wellbeing are clarified below;

- **Self-acceptance:** This refers to the ability to evaluate oneself in a positive manner, while acknowledging the various aspects which comprise one, and

being able to balance positive and negative aspects of one's ability (Compton, 2005:178). This does not refer to an egotistic self-love, but rather to the manner in which one's self-regard is based on one's own positive and negative characteristics (Ryff & Singer, 2003:277). Self-acceptance is also related to a person's being able to evaluate positively his or her life and previous experiences (Ryff & Keyes, 1995:720). This is also based on accepting and acknowledging the various aspects which comprise the whole person, and the ability to reflect positively on past experiences (Cavanaugh & Blanchard-Fields, 2011:345).

- **Personal growth:** This is the capacity to grow and build on potential and be open to new experiences (Ryff & Keyes, 1995:720). Acceptance of change in oneself reveals growth in the knowledge of self (Compton, 2005:178) and the ability to view oneself as an enhanced and better version of one's previous selves (Cavanaugh & Blanchard-Fields, 2011:345). Personal growth occurs frequently when a person is faced with situations of adversity and stress. These situations require one to search deeply within oneself to find one's inner strength (Ryff & Singer, 2003:278).
- **Positive relations with others:** Positive relations with others refers to having significant and quality relationships (Ryff & Keyes, 1995:720) with others, and being concerned about the wellbeing of others while showing empathy and affection towards others (Compton, 2005:179). It is also related to the strengths, pleasures and delights that are associated with interpersonal contact with other people (Cavanaugh & Blanchard-Fields, 2011:345; Ryff & Singer, 2003:278).
- **Autonomy:** Autonomy is the ability to be independent and self-determined (Ryff & Keyes, 1995:720), standing firm against social pressures, and having the ability to control one's own behaviour (Cavanaugh & Blanchard-Fields, 2011:345; Compton, 2005:179; Ryff & Singer, 2003:278).
- **Purpose in life:** This refers to the feeling of having a purpose and finding meaning in one's life (Ryff & Keyes, 1995:720) and having a sense of direction and ambition in life (Compton, 2005:179). It has its basis in confrontations with adversity throughout life (Ryff & Singer, 2003:277), as well as in viewing past experiences and probably future experiences as having meaning (Cavanaugh & Blanchard-Fields, 2011:345).

- **Environmental mastery:** This denotes having a feeling of mastery and competence in fulfilling roles (Compton, 2005:179) while managing the surrounding environment (Ryff & Singer, 2003:278; Ryff & Keyes, 1995:720). It is the ability to select situations and environments that will aid in achieving the ambitions and goals set (Cavanaugh & Blanchard-Fields, 2011:345; Compton, 2005:179). It is also related to the aspect that it is the environment which lays the experiential foundation (von Glasersfeld, 1995:122). Environmental mastery also entails being able to create and sustain an environment which is suitable for attaining and maintaining one's needs (Ryff & Singer, 2003:278; Ryff & Keyes, 1995: 720).

From the detailed discussion on psychological wellbeing, which includes all six factors comprising the theory, one can see that people have the ability to influence their outlook on life if they adapt and continue to enhance their lives. Finally, the next segment elaborates on the concept of social wellbeing and what it encapsulates.

4.5 Social wellbeing

Corey Keyes is the originator of the concept of social wellbeing, which is an element of his theory of flourishing. There are five dimensions of social wellbeing (Rauschmayer *et al.*, 2011:9; Compton, 2005:229; Contarello & Sarrica, 2005:2; Keyes, 1998:121), which are depicted diagrammatically in Figure 10 and expanded on in the subsequent paragraph.

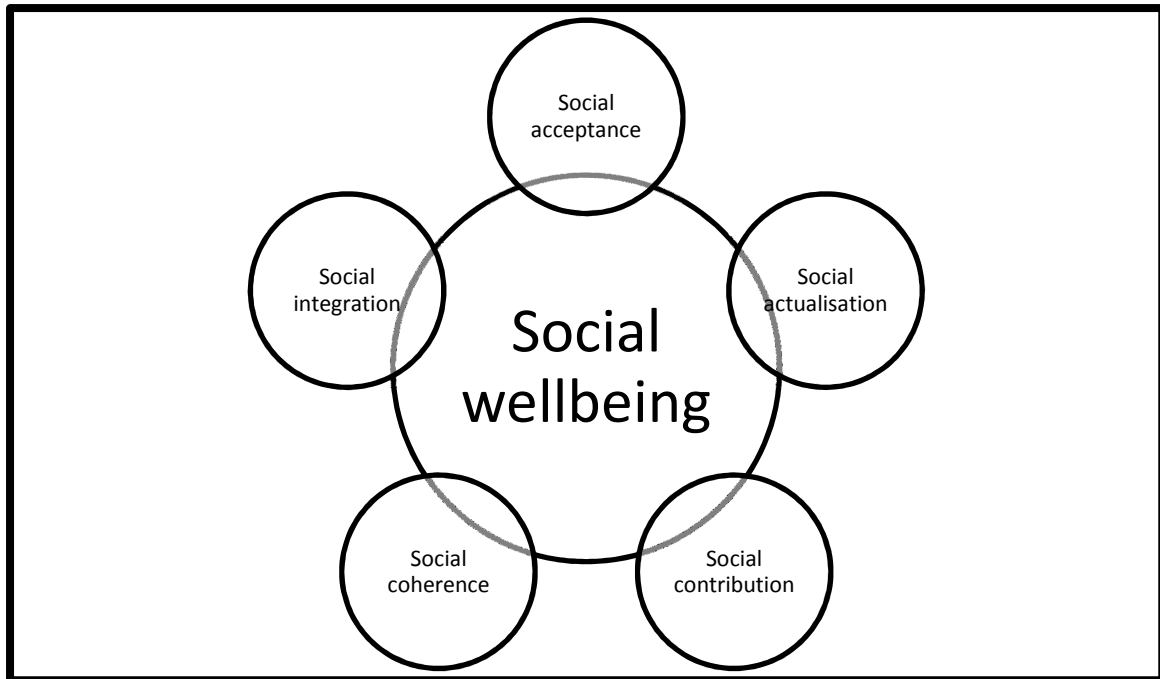


Figure 10: The five dimensions of social wellbeing (adapted from Compton, 2005:228; Keyes, 1998:121)

The five dimensions of social wellbeing in the above diagrammatical representation can be described as follows:

- **Social acceptance:** Social acceptance is the extent to which people hold positive attitudes about and towards others (Keyes, 2007:98; Compton, 2005:228; Keyes, 1998:122).
- **Social actualisation:** This refers to the belief that people have regarding society's ability to grow and develop into a better society (Keyes, 2007:98; Compton, 2005:228; Keyes, 1998:123).
- **Social contribution:** The belief people hold that their involvement in society contributes to society and adds value to the community within which they function (Keyes, 2007:98; Compton, 2005:228; Keyes, 1998:122).
- **Social coherence:** Social coherence refers to the extent to which society is perceived as being understandable, conventional and rational (Keyes, 2007:98; Compton, 2005:229; Keyes, 1998:122).
- **Social integration:** This refers to the extent to which people feel they are part of their community and how much support they receive from their community, as well as their feeling of harmony and cohesion with other members of their community (Keyes, 2007:98; Compton, 2005: 229); Keyes, 1998:123).

Social wellbeing is the one wellbeing concept that is embedded in the field of sociology, as it encompasses all aspects which are social and the interactions with others. As a final word on wellbeing, positive coping is touched on briefly.

4.6 Positive coping

An effective way of dealing with unexpected events is through positive coping, which refers to alleviating the weight of stressful events. This means that in the future, positive coping aids the person in reducing or in cushioning the effects of stressful life events by stockpiling resources, which can be physiological, psychological or social. The outcome is thus that the people experiencing stressful life events, through positive coping, have an increased quality of life (Compton, 2005:117). It has been shown that people have a tendency to cope effectively even in situations that are quite serious. This is due to people in the situation assessing whether there is a real threat to themselves. They will also reach out to others to gain information, thus obtaining social support (Mikami & Ikeda, 1985:111).

Wellbeing, in the forms of psychological, subjective and social wellbeing, which constitute the Theory of Flourishing, explains how people have the ability to flourish in spite of negative events. These forms of wellbeing clearly describe the characteristics that people should exhibit in order to flourish. In particular, psychological wellbeing occurs when people knowingly engage in life's challenges, while subjective wellbeing is related to the ability to appraise one's emotions and moods in light of an adverse situation. Lastly, social wellbeing refers to the wellbeing experienced by people in relation to their social environment.

The next section in this chapter focuses on the concept of resilience, including the meaning of the concept as well as its importance for this research study.

4. RESILIENCE

4.1 What is resilience?

The capacity of people to cope with natural disasters is significantly influenced by their level of resilience. This aptitude is defined by the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction as *"the capacity of a system, community or society*

to resist or change in order that it may obtain an acceptable level of functioning and structure” (Gaillard, 2007:523). It can also be described as the ability to adapt in a positive manner in adverse, stressful or dangerous situations (Snyder *et al.*, 2011:94; Adger, 2000:349). Resilience also embodies characteristics which allow people to thrive despite unfavourable situations; these characteristics aid people in the successful management of stressful or dangerous events (Connor & Davidson, 2003:76). This implies that balance is aimed for and attained by people facing stressful situations (Ambriz *et al.*, 2011:1).

More generally, Magis (2010:401) defines resilience as pertaining to the system’s ability to sustain and maintain itself by means of adapting and transforming. This happens so that the system is able to deal with changes which occur frequently and constantly in society and in nature.

It is accepted that natural disasters cannot be prevented, but resilience does serve to reduce the extent to which people experience the adverse effects of a natural disaster (McBean & Rodgers, 2010:878).

Resilience as a concept encompasses the following four characteristics:

- **Robustness:** This is the ability to withstand adverse situations.
- **Rapidity:** This refers to the speed with which one recovers from adverse situations.
- **Redundancy:** This implies that people have other methods of goal attainment.
- **Resourcefulness:** This is the capacity that people have to involve the community in dealing with the difficult situation or event while drawing on the use of internal resources in order to accomplish set objectives (McBean & Rodgers, 2010:878; Kendra & Wachtendorf, 2008:74).

Ambriz *et al.* (2011:2) have identified from various studies as well as their own study, that the following traits, amongst others, are characteristics of people who are highly resilient:

- Perceiving stressful or adverse situations as an opportunity for growth and a learning curve (Connor & Davidson, 2003:77).

- Capable of engaging the support of others (Connor & Davidson, 2003:77).
- Having close, strong interpersonal relationships with significant others (Connor & Davidson, 2003:77).
- Exhibiting a sense of humour (Connor & Davidson, 2003:77).
- Planning and an action-oriented approach to solving issues and problems (Ambriz *et al.*, 2011:2; Ungar, 2004:349).
- Adaptability and flexibility (Connor & Davidson, 2003:77).
- Optimism (Ambriz *et al.*, 2011:2; Ungar, 2004:349).
- Having been successful in the past in dealing with stressful or adverse situations (Connor & Davidson, 2003:77).
- A realistic sense of what can be controlled (Connor & Davidson, 2003:77).
- The ability to deal with emotions which arise during the situation.
- Patience (Connor & Davidson, 2003:77).
- Hope (Ambriz *et al.*, 2011:2).
- Empathy (Ungar, 2004:349).
- Personal control in the situation (Ambriz *et al.*, 2011:2) or internal locus of control (Ungar, 2004:348).
- Positive feelings and emotions (Ambriz *et al.*, 2011:2).
- Social support and the willingness to accept social support (Ambriz *et al.*, 2011:2).
- Ability to gain new skills and acquire new information as the existing skills and information become dated (Warner, 2008:21).

People are deemed to be resilient if, after a stressful situation, there has been positive growth (Ungar, 2004:349) and they emerge strengthened (Landau & Saul, 2004:2), with the ability to be even more resourceful (Warner, 2008:20). In the workplace, resilience is considered the ability to maintain focus in completing tasks and being productive while experiencing a stressful situation (Warner, 2008:20).

Resilience in people has also been postulated to be stable and unchanging over a period of time. However, situations may arise where people are required to draw on their ability to be resilient, which is changeable depending on the personal, familial and social resources available to the person. These two views propose that

resilience can be viewed as a risk factor while being part of the developmental process (Ambriz *et al.*, 2011:1).

Resilience is also comprised of social components which are associated with the ability of a group of people or a community to adapt to social or environmental stressors. Communities become more resilient when aspects such as trust, a feeling of inclusion, social norms and relationships are supported and encouraged (Adger & Brown, 2009:112). Furthermore, resilience also echoes the scale to which a system can organise itself, as well as the extent to which learning and adaptation occurs (Adger *et al.*, 2005:1036).

The next section focuses on theoretical perspectives of resilience and gives a background to the study of resilience.

4.2 Theoretical perspectives of resilience

This section is devoted to the theories of resilience, explaining the development of resilience in people.

Michael Ungar (2004:344) expands on his concept of the two discourses on resilience, tabulated in Table 5, where one is based on the ecological model of resilience and the other on constructionism. The ecological model of resilience focuses on the ability to maintain health even in unfavourable situations. The constructionist approach is a postmodernist interpretation of resilience and attempts to explain how people in stressful situations realise and foster resilience. The discourses on resilience provide the background for the development of the ecological model and constructionist approach to resilience. This is pertinent to this research study which employs a qualitative research approach and explains the study from a constructionist perspective, which is the theoretical framework for this study.

DISCOURSES ON RESILIENCE		
	Ecological Model	Constructionist Approach
<i>Definition</i>	Resilience is health despite adversity	Resilience occurs as a result of interventions with the environment for the reserves to define health despite adversity in a person
<i>Theory</i>	Systems theory – risk and protective factors have predictable relationships; circular causality; transactional	Nonsystemic; risk and protective factors do not have a hierarchical relationship, and are chaotic, complex and contextual
<i>Research methods</i>	Qualitative or quantitative; knowledge is empirical and generalizable	Can be quantitative, usually qualitative or use mixed designs; interpretation is dialogical, relativistic and constructed
<i>Resilience factors</i>	Compensatory, challenging, protective.	Multidimensional, unique to each context; challenges build capacity for survival relative to the lived experience; protection against threats to well-being

Table 5: Discourses on resilience (adapted from Ungar, 2004:344)

In becoming resilient, people will still feel negative emotions, such as anger, pain and frustration. The difference with people who are resilient is that growth occurs as they move forward, attending to the matters that concern them and the situation in which they find themselves, and they in turn become stronger. An interesting feature of resilience is that if people have the ability to cope well, they will flourish and this will, in turn, augment resilience and will result in the ability to cope better with adversity and stressful situations in the future (Warner, 2008:21; Adger, 2000:348). Table 6 depicts how people react to situations which result in change.

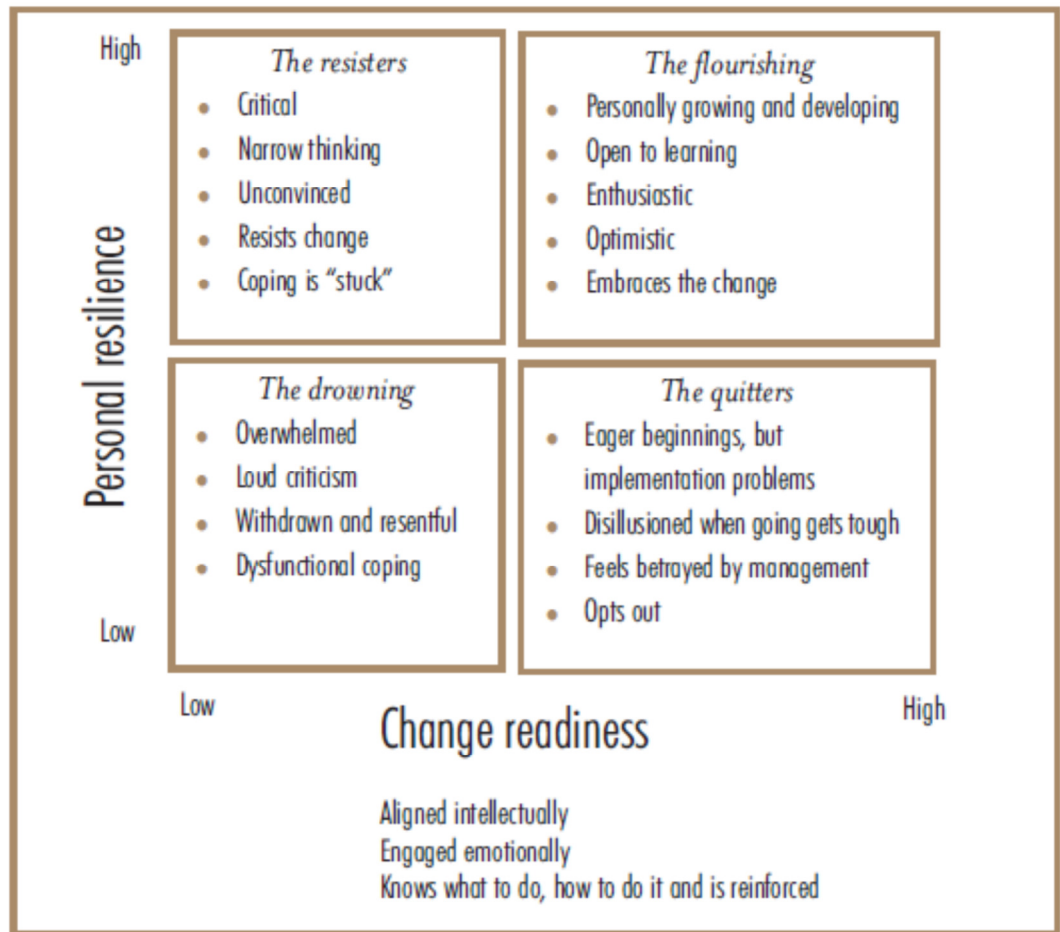


Table 6: Resilience and the willingness to change (Warner, 2008:21)

Warner (2008:22) has identified the resilience levels of people when facing stressful situations and adversity, and this is depicted in the following two graphs:

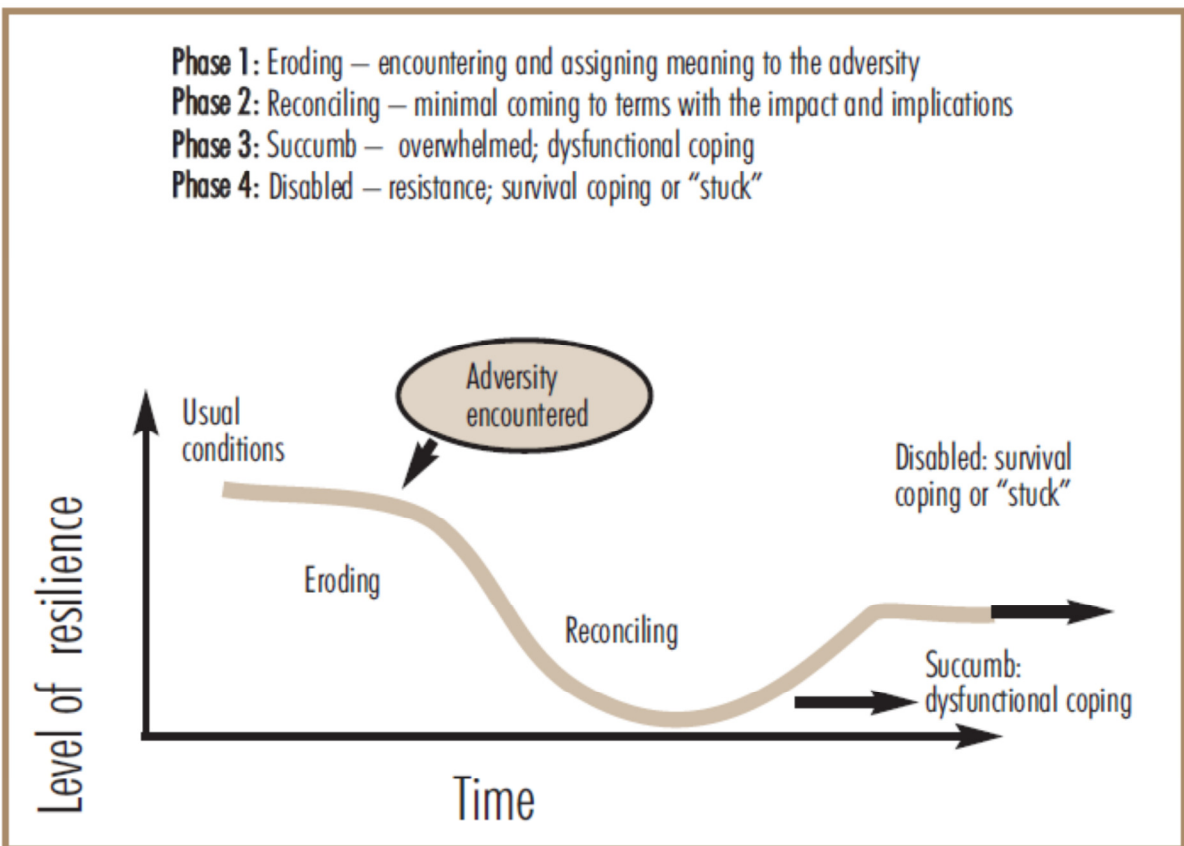
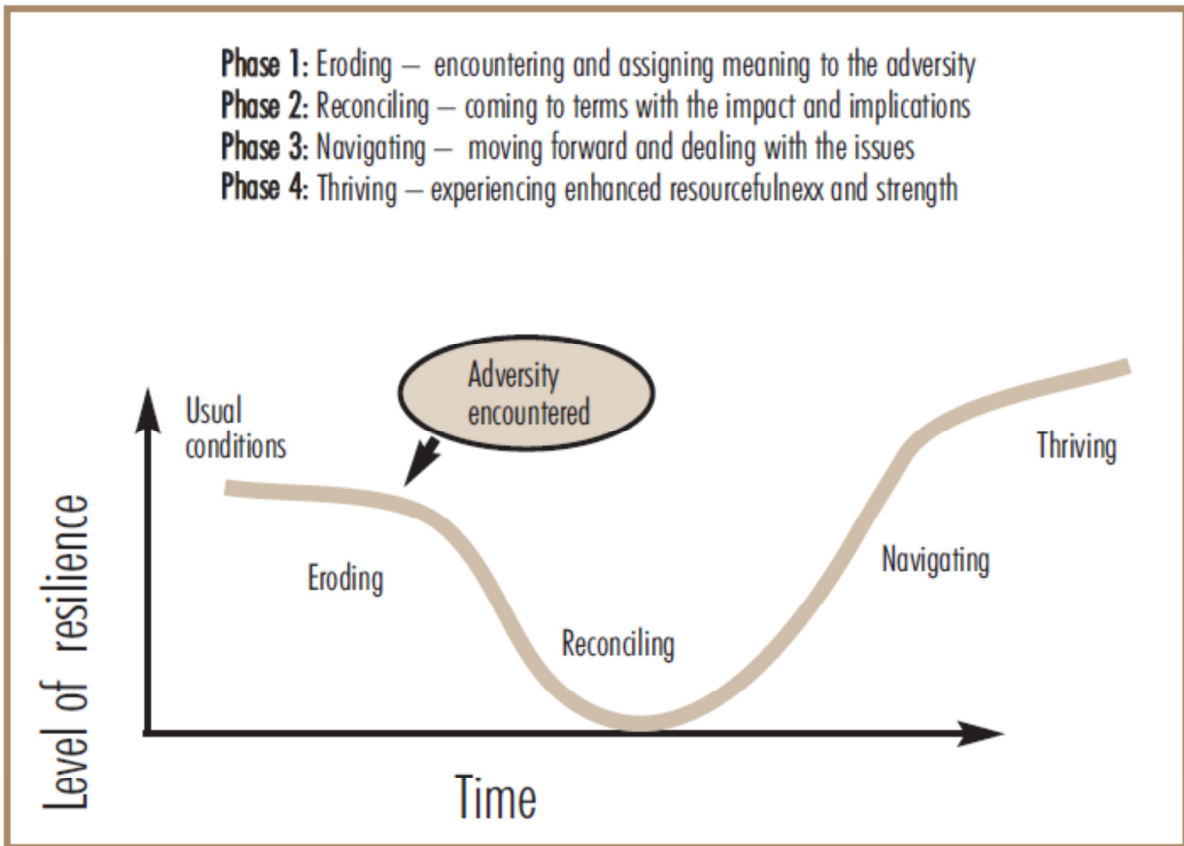


Table 7: Resilience levels when dealing with stressful situations and adversity (Warner, 2008:22)

Fazio *et al.* (2008:11) created the OTHER(S) model which incorporates eight factors, explaining how people handle and deal with traumatic events in a positive and effective manner, and have the ability to grow from the event by building on the strengths that people have. The OTHER(S) model is depicted in figure 11:

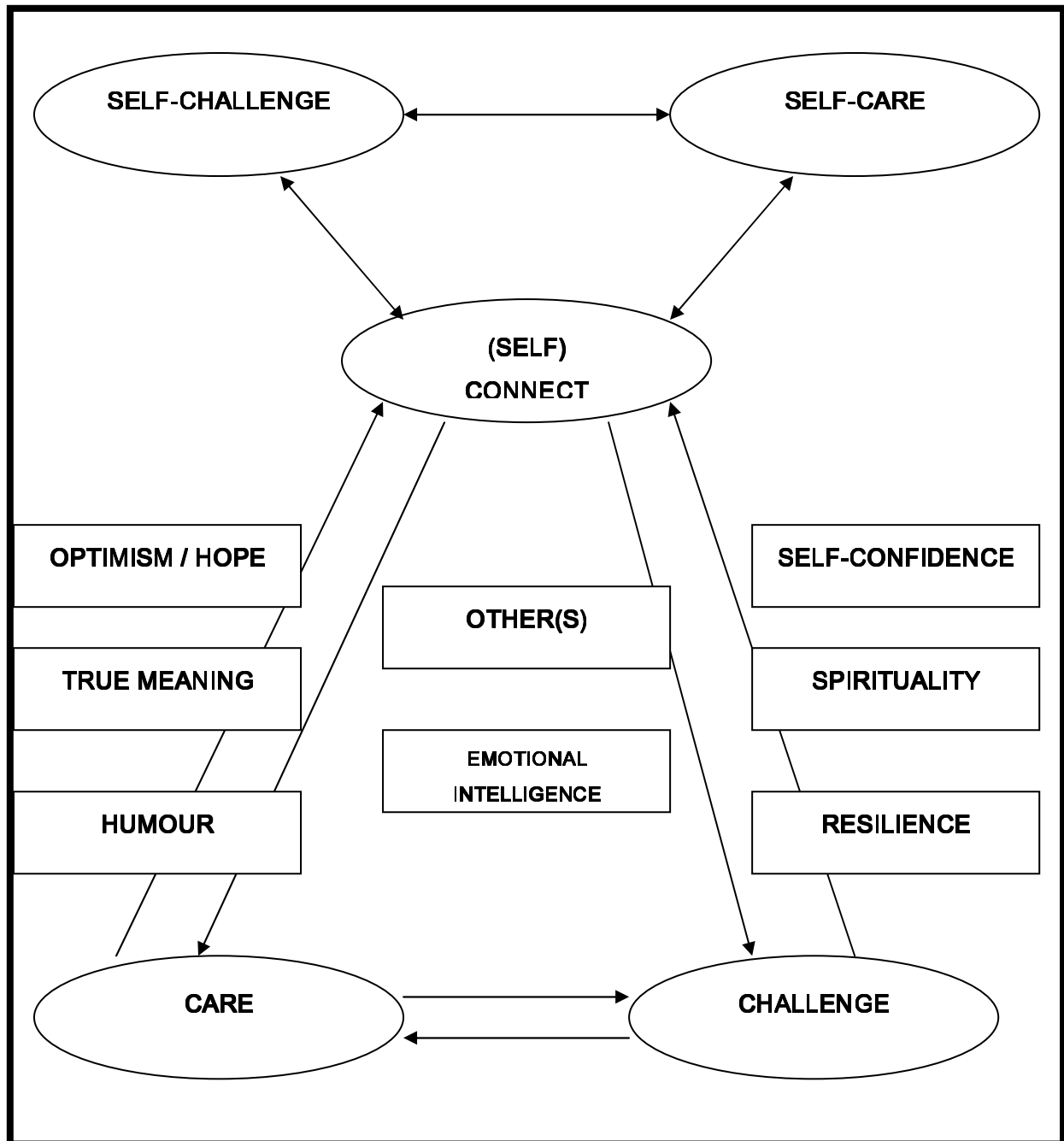


Figure 11: OTHERS(S) model of Fazio and Fazio (Fazio *et al.*, 2008:12)

Figure 11 clearly shows that when people are faced with events that are challenging to them, such as the flood, they tend to use their strengths more than during times when there are no challenges. The model highlights the fact that people learn and

grow from their experiences, even under difficult circumstances, while still having the ability to care and connect with others (Fazio *et al.*, 2008:12).

The eight core factors of the OTHERS(S) model are explained in further detail below:

- **Optimism/hope:** The capacity that people have to develop and sustain an attitude and feeling of hope despite challenges (Fazio *et al.*, 2008:13); it is also referred to as a mode of thinking which has in mind goals and ideals and their continual attainment, based on the expectation of the best outcome (Snyder *et al.*, 2011:30).
- **True meaning:** True meaning is the ability that people have to make meaning of and to understand the traumatic events they experience and to find a purpose for their future (Fazio *et al.*, 2008:13).
- **Humour:** Humour is being able to view things in a light-hearted manner, and to laugh (Snyder *et al.*, 2011:48) despite adversity; humour is used to lessen the effects of the trauma experienced (Fazio *et al.*, 2008:13). Humour also assists in dealing with and adjusting to challenging and difficult situations (Watson, 2008:305).
- **Emotional intelligence:** Emotionally intelligent people are aware of their emotions, have the ability to connect and link with others and are able to read the emotions of others successfully, while also being able to communicate their emotions to others (Fazio *et al.*, 2008:14).
- **Resilience:** In essence, resilience is being adaptable and having the ability to react with strength in the face of adversity (Fazio *et al.*, 2008:14).
- **Spirituality:** One's own experience of spirituality can be explained only by oneself, as it is a deeply personal aspect (Fazio *et al.*, 2008:14).
- **Self-confidence:** Self-confidence is the unwavering belief that people have in their own ability to use their own resources to face certain situations (Fazio *et al.*, 2008:14).
- **OTHERS(S):** Lastly, this is the connection between all of the factors, where the emphasis is on the relationships existing between people while building relationships with others and healing by way of helping others (Fazio *et al.*, 2008:14).

Through his study on resilience in South Africa, Warner (2008:23) has identified the characteristics of people who are resilient, which is known as the Personal Resilience Building Block Model, and is shown graphically in Figure 12.

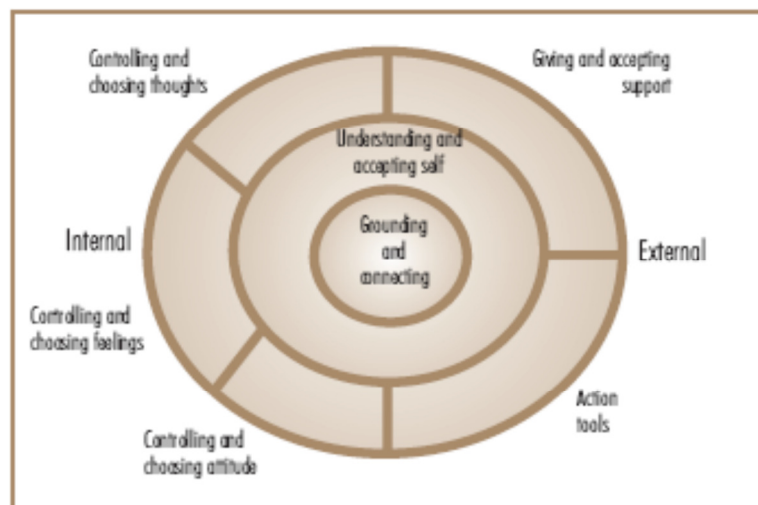


Figure 12: Personal resilience building block model (Warner, 2008:23)

Warner (2008:23) identified three main spheres in his Personal Resilience Building Block Model:

- Sphere 1 relates to the purpose one has in life and the meaning attributed to it. It also relates to accepting and appreciating oneself.
- Sphere 2 relates to the internal processes of the person, which comprise the choices one makes in relation to cognitions, emotions and attitudes.
- Sphere 3 relates to the external aspects of the person, which comprise taking action and offering and receiving support from others.

This section has provided an overview of the concept of resilience in relation to several models of resilience that have been put forward by various researchers. Resilience is pertinent to this study as it forms part of one of the sub-aims, which investigates the strengths that were exhibited, discovered or developed as a result of the flood, especially with regard to resilience.

The next section comprises the penultimate discussion in this chapter, which will centre on leadership.

5. LEADERSHIP

“The leader is characterized by a strong drive for responsibility and task completion, vigor and persistence in pursuit of goals, venturesomeness and originality in problem solving, drive to exercise initiative in social situations, self-confidence and sense of personal identity, willingness to accept consequences of decision and action, readiness to absorb interpersonal stress, willingness to tolerate frustration and delay, ability to influence other persons’ behavior, and capacity to structure social interaction systems to the purpose at hand.”

Ralph Stodgill

Ralph Stodgill’s definition of leadership, as cited in Shepard (2010:151), highlights the characteristics that are necessary for leaders to be effective in any given situation. Leadership is the manner in which groups of people are directed in order to achieve goals, objectives and/or change, and is dependent on the situation that presents itself and the group that is to be led (Kotter, 2011:38; Shepard, 2010:151) and so, leaders are expected to adapt when faced with change and adversity (Heifetz & Laurie, 2011:57). This section centres on leadership, as it forms one of the sub-aims of this research study which investigates whether leadership had an effect on the way the hotel workers experienced the flood and the management of the flood.

A great deal of research has been undertaken in regard to relational leadership theories and the types of leaders that exist. For the purposes of this dissertation, only a few of the current notions of leadership will be discussed, namely, the motivational leader, the transformational leader, the adaptive leader, and the emergent leader. The researcher selected these particular theories from the many leadership theories that abound based on the descriptions of how these types of leaders cope with adverse or difficult situations.

5.1 The motivational leader

Motivational leadership rests on some of the components of emotional intelligence, in that leaders who exhibit a high level of emotional intelligence have a tendency to face situations with greater confidence. Research has shown that positive emotions tend to be emotionally contagious, which results in team members mimicking the

emotion expressed by the leader. However, the opposite is also held to be true: negative emotions can also be contagious, yet this has a detrimental effect on the team (Prati *et al.*, 2003:26).

Emotionally intelligent leaders also act as a catalyst for collective performance. Motivational leaders have a knack for promoting supportive interactions between team members by creating a supportive environment in the workplace. Team members feel emotionally safe, and this cultivates the growth of coordinated effort. Thus, conflicts are managed in an effective and constructive manner and an atmosphere of cooperation and trust is established, which, in turn, boosts the collective motivation of the team members (Prati *et al.*, 2003:28). In times of change, employees need to learn to work together and act as a unified team. This can be done only by the generation of trust in the organisation (Heifetz & Laurie, 2011:57).

Daniel Goleman proposed five components of emotional intelligence at work. Although emotional intelligence is not one of the key aspects of this research study, it does have a bearing on the research study in terms of the characteristics of leaders. The five components are: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skill (Goleman, 2011:3). These components are summarised in Table 8.

	Definition	Qualities
Self Awareness	The ability to recognise and understand moods and emotions of oneself and their effect on others.	Self confidence Ability to reassess oneself realistically The ability to look at oneself with a sense of humour
Self Regulation	The ability to think prior to acting. The ability to control and redirect impulses and moods that may be disruptive.	Trustworthiness and integrity Open to change and is dynamic
Motivation	Fervour in engaging in work which go beyond the reasons of money or status. A predisposition to chase goals with energy and passion.	Strong desire to achieve Optimistic even when facing adversity Commitment to the organisation
Empathy	The ability to understand the emotions of others as well as managing the emotions of others according to their reaction in a situation.	Focus on client service Build and retain talented people Sensitivity in dealing with diverse groups of people
Social Skill	The ability to manage relationships with others as well as building networks. The ability to find common ground with others and building rapport with others.	Leading change effectively Ability to persuade others Build and lead teams effectively

Table 8: The five components of emotional intelligence at work (Goleman, 2011:6)

The following is a more detailed explanation of the five components which contribute to emotional intelligence:

- The first component is **self-awareness**, which entails a complete understanding of oneself and the effect of one's behaviour (Prati *et al.*, 2003:24). This is in relation to one's emotions, strengths, areas of development, needs and what drives them. People with a high level of self-awareness have the ability to be completely honest with themselves and others. They also acknowledge how their feelings affect them, the people around them and the work that they need to undertake (Goleman, 2011:7).
- Secondly, **self-regulation** entails the ability to regulate and manage one's emotions by understanding the social expectations of one's actions (Prati *et al.*, 2003:25). In essence it is the ability to control one's emotions, as opposed to being controlled *by* one's emotions. This also assists in choosing one's approach in a particularly difficult or adverse situation. Self-regulation is important in a work environment in that leaders with the ability to self-regulate are able to instil trust and are fair with their employees. Self-regulation often has the effect of filtering down to all the employees (Goleman, 2011:8).
- **Motivation** inspires the ability to achieve beyond what is expected, and is a key characteristic of almost all effective leaders. They are motivated to achieve the goals they set for themselves, and to exceed them, while showing an enthusiasm for exploring different ways of doing things. It has been shown that people with high levels of motivation also have the ability to maintain their optimism, even in the face of adversity (Goleman, 2011:15).
- Fourthly, **empathy** involves the capacity to recognise other people's emotions and accurately appraise them (Prati *et al.*, 2003:25) while making decisions. In being able to recognise and consider another person's emotions, an effective leader can reciprocate by communicating openly and honestly about his/her own emotions (Goffee & Jones, 2011:78). Empathy also assists the effective leader in treating each employee fairly, while being able to take into account the opinions and values of other people. It also aids in understanding cultural differences and being sensitive to cultural nuances which are present in the diverse workforce (Goleman, 2011:16); this is especially true in South Africa, which is known as the Rainbow Nation because of its diverse population groups.
- Lastly, **social skill** in conjunction with empathy involves having an aptitude for managing relationships with others. Social skill entails the ability to be

purposeful in one's interactions with others, and to propel them in the direction that is required. Being socially skilled means that a person has the ability to build rapport and relationships with others (Goleman, 2011:18).

Research has found that leaders who exhibit high levels of emotional intelligence are outstanding in performing their roles as leaders (Goleman, 2011:7). In addition, findings in leadership research have also shown that social effectiveness is a predictor of the success and performance of leaders (Prati *et al.*, 2003:22).

5.2 The transformational leader

The transformational leader aims for goal attainment by encouraging others to go beyond what is expected of them in order to create an organisation that is different from the norm. Team members are inspired by the enthusiasm and optimism that their leader exhibits openly. An organisation that is led by the transformational leader is one which is characterised by creativity and innovation and an environment where trust is fostered (Stolley, 2005:88).

Transformational leadership is comprised of four central attributes, the first is associated with the observance of professional standards and interactions; this is also known as charisma, which is related to enhanced social and emotional skills (Prati *et al.*, 2003:27). The second attribute is motivation, which has been elaborated on in the section on the motivational leader. The third characteristic is intellectual stimulation, which refers to the ability of a leader to stimulate the intellectual and professional development of team members. The purpose of the leader is to promote effectiveness and productivity in completing tasks. Lastly, transformational leadership entails focusing on individual team members, which serves to foster a feeling of being a crucial and necessary part of the overall team. The focus for transformational leaders is on the development of nurturing relationships with team members (Prati *et al.*, 2003:28).

Transformational leadership is also characterised by exhibiting leadership through raw enthusiasm; work is done by inspiring team members rather than by making demands or ordering people to obtain results, while also making the emotional and

intellectual stimulation of employees possible. At the same time, the leader holds a strong vision, which is filtered down to all team members (Prati *et al.*, 2003:28).

Being able to identify with the team facilitates and intensifies overall effectiveness and performance. Thus, leaders who apply charismatic authority and transformational influence achieve improved performance of the team (Prati *et al.*, 2003:28).

The transformational leader adheres to organisational norms, and persuades team members to espouse those norms (Prati *et al.*, 2003:27).

5.3 Adaptive leadership

Bennis and Thomas (2011:97) have discovered that a steadfast gauge and forecaster of true leadership is the ability to deal with negative and adverse occurrences while trying to find meaning in and learn from adverse and negative events and occurrences. During adverse and stressful situations, urgent action is needed in order to deal with the ensuing calamity (Boin & Hart, 2008:1). It is this aspect of leadership which is related to resilience.

Such adverse, negative events test leaders' skills and are the crucibles which transform good leaders into strong, and even extraordinary, leaders; they are stronger because they have learnt something meaningful despite the circumstances (Bennis & Thomas, 2011:99).

Bennis and Thomas (2011:99) highlight four key skills required in leading through adversity; these include:

- **Connecting through others via a shared meaning:** This means that employees are convinced of the leader's vision.
- **A characteristic, gripping and convincing voice:** Through the power of words, the employees are moved in the direction the leader wants them to go.

- **Integrity:** This value is described as holding on to one's moral and ethical values despite the circumstances that one finds oneself in (Merriam-Webster, 2012¹⁰).
- **Adaptive capacity:** This means being able to assess the various options available in the situation as well as having the ability to continue in the situation and the strength of character to keep going.

Furthermore, Heifetz and Laurie (2011:65) identify five important responsibilities of leaders faced with adverse situations. These are depicted in Figure 13.

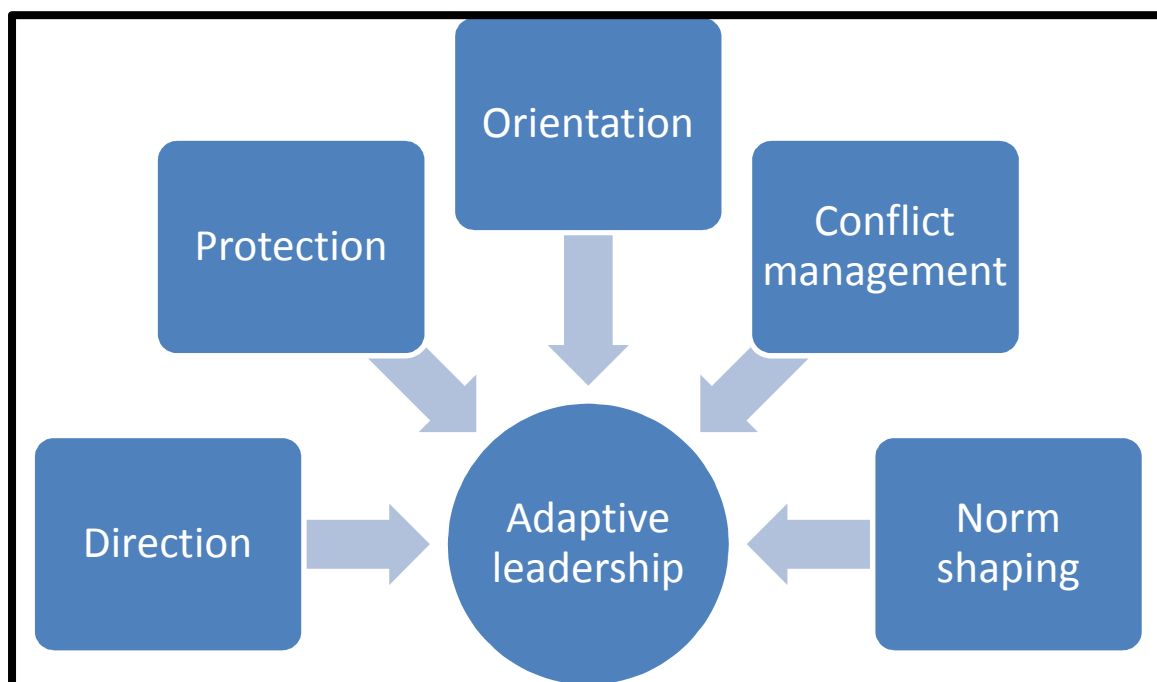


Figure 13: Five key elements of adaptive leadership (adapted from Heifetz & Laurie, 2011:66)

Figure 13 graphically depicts how each element of adaptive leadership plays an integral part in leading employees through a difficult situation. The five elements are each discussed below:

- **Direction:** In an adaptive situation, the leader is required to ask crucial questions.
- **Protection:** Adaptive leadership entails permitting the employees to experience adverse situations instead of shielding them.

¹⁰ This is HTML page and thus has no page reference.

- **Orientation:** In an adaptive situation, current employee roles are tested while withstanding the pressure to define new roles as soon as the situation arises.
- **Conflict management:** The adaptive leader does not shy away from conflict, but allows it to emerge, or exposes tension, discord or conflict.
- **Norm shaping:** Existing norms that are counterproductive are confronted by the adaptive leader (Heifetz & Laurie, 2011:65).

The work of Heifetz and Laurie (2011:66) on adaptive leadership links with the work of Goleman (2011:3) on emotional intelligence in the workplace because the adaptive leader needs to have the ability to be emotionally prepared to endure ambiguity and difficulties.

5.4 Emergent leadership

Another type of leadership is that of the emergent leader. This type of leader emerges from the group, adopts the leadership role (Levi, 2011:167), and is able to persuade others to move in a particular direction towards an event or objective. Not all leaders lead in the same manner; some leaders adopt the approach of being instrumental in achieving results while others are concerned with the wellbeing of their team members (Stolley, 2005:88).

Heifetz and Laurie (2011:57), in their article “The Work of Leadership”, state that in times of adversity and crises, the resolutions to problems do not stem from management, but rather from the collective of the workforce. This entails employees undertaking new roles, new associations, new principles and ideals, as well as new modes of conduct and methods of work.

In summary, leadership is the ability of one or more people to take charge in a situation and deal with a changing environment while having the ability to maintain control of their emotions. The three types of leaders discussed – motivational, transformational and adaptive – differ in the manner in which each type would deal with a natural disaster.

The final section of this chapter pertains to social constructivism, which is the theoretical perspective that frames this research study.

6. SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

“If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences.”

W.I. Thomas

This research study is based on the philosophical orientation of social constructivism, which will be discussed in greater detail in this section. In essence, social constructivism is the process whereby notions and ideas about the world are formed and reformed (King & McCarthy, 2009:12). The notions and ideas, also known as knowledge, are constructed in a process which is interactive and dynamic and is impacted on by social and cultural ethos (Ali, 2011:1621). As a result, meaning is attributed to various aspects and occurrences (King & McCarthy, 2009:12). Peter Berger advanced the concept of social constructivism in the 1960s, and, in conjunction with Thomas Luckmann, delved into the probability that subjective experiences had the possibility of growing into objective realities (Gerber, 1995:11). The concept was introduced in their innovative work *The Social Construction of Reality* (Weinberg, 2009:283).

People are born predisposed to being social. As the baby progresses towards childhood, then towards adolescence, adulthood and old age, there is a chronological order whereby the person is introduced into society by means of societal dialectic. The first step is known as internalisation. Internalisation refers to the process whereby the instantaneous analysis or understanding of an objective occurrence is revealed by another person's subjective process which, in turn, is converted into a personal subjective experience for the person in question. Once internalisation has occurred, the person can become a member of society (Berger & Luckmann, 1987:149).

The second step is known as socialisation, which refers to the process whereby the person is completely and unfailingly inducted into the objective world of society. Primary socialisation occurs during childhood, when the person initially becomes a member of society. Secondary socialisation occurs when the person is inducted into the objective world of other societal sectors. During socialisation, the person's reality is constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1987:153). Social constructivists would maintain that the world we experience and the people we find ourselves to be are the product

of social processes. Thus, society in itself is the promulgator of experience (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999:4).

The constructivist perspective emphasises the nature of the social construction of reality differentiating the study of people from studies of other natural phenomena. As such, social constructivism postulates underlying suppositions which must be understood in order to be able to apply social constructivism to social issues and social processes:

- **Reality:** Reality is constructed through actions of people, and these members of society create the societal fibres. This implies that reality does not exist prior to a particular situation, which means that reality cannot be uncovered as it is socially created.
- **Knowledge:** Knowledge is also an invention of people in society, formed by means of cultural and social constructs, and is an active, not reactive, aspect of people. So, people do not discover knowledge; rather they construct knowledge by means of formulating concepts, models and schemes to understand their experiences (Strauss & Corbin, 2008:10), from which meaning is created through interaction with other people in society as well as with the environment.
- **Learning:** Learning from a social constructivist perspective is considered a social process, which occurs when people interact with others, specifically when engaging in social activities with others (Kim, 2009¹¹).
- **Truth:** Truth regarding a situation is established through consensus of the people involved in a particular situation or event and not through substantiation with objective reality (Patton, 2002:98).
- **Phenomena:** Phenomena can be appreciated and identified only within the context in which they are studied, which means that findings from one research study cannot be generalised to another study (Patton, 2002:98).

Social constructivism, in relation to the environment in which the hotel workers found themselves, states that the knowledge that the hotel workers have regarding their environment is constructed and is not realist representation. The construction of

¹¹ This is HTML page and thus has no page reference.

knowledge by people is dependent on the encounters that they have with the environment as well as what can be discovered of the social environment (Scholz, 2011:38). The knowledge that is constructed by people is characteristically based on outer experiences (Moore, 2009:2). In relation to nature, personal experiences embed themselves into their own views (Rikoon, 2009:111) of nature and floods.

People construct reality based on their viewpoint of the social and subjective in their environment. The emphasis on the subjective viewpoint acknowledges that the environment and the problems associated with the environment are observed through personal and/or cultural filters (Scholz, 2011: 248). In addition, the emphasis is placed on the cultural and social aspects which result in the construction of reality and of the meaning attributed to it. Meaning, therefore, is not found readily in phenomena, but is an aspect which is constructed by people (Afdal, 2008:22).

Through the interaction of people of similar and dissimilar cultures, the social construction of reality can be defined (Rikoon, 2009:111); this implies that meaning is attributed to the world which may exist beyond language barriers (Watson, 2008:58). It is this social interaction which, in turn, constructs the person (Gerber, 1995:8). The construction of social reality is extremely reliant on the language that is used to describe the encounters and experiences that people have (Ungar, 2004:342). Through language and communication, people make sense of the world and environment within which they function (Watson, 2008:58). It is the culturally shared treatises between people that are constructed through social practices and social acts between people (Wiggins & Riley, 2010:138).

Social constructivism is explained by the fact that the experiences that people have of the world are a result of social forces, and what was previously considered a natural process of life is viewed as the outcome of societal and cultural aspects (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999:114). The key focus of social constructivism is on intersubjectivity. This means that through the use of symbols and words which explain and describe the social world, the social world is thus constructed as a significant social object that is considered when interacting in the social world. From this statement, it can be deduced that constructivism falls within the broader context of

symbolic interactionism, which, in turn, is linked to the sociology of action (Fuller & Loogma, 2006:1).

Though the terms constructivism and constructionism are often interchangeable, each term has a different nuance of meaning, as is explained below:

- **Constructivism:** This is the construction of reality from an individual or psychological perspective.
- **Constructionism:** The interactions between people result in meanings and understandings that arise from these interactions, which are inter-subjective.
- **Social constructivism:** Social constructivism refers to the proposition that people construct their reality based on interactions with others (Fuller & Loogma, 2006:3).

An advocate of social constructionism, Kenneth Gergen, contends that meaningful reality is created through the power of human and social interaction (Fuller & Loogma, 2006:4). In addition, Kreps and Drabek (1996:129) have suggested that social constructionism enlightens rather than undercuts theoretical aspects of disasters as non-customary social issues.

The experiences that people share on a daily basis are based on their perception of their reality. These experiences are most often shared in a one-on-one social interaction with others (Fuller & Loogma, 2006:3). There is a constant appresentation between the people interacting with one another which predates discourse involvement (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999:136).

The construction of reality is founded on the experiences of people which are set in the social world that people live and function in. Yet, experiences are subjective, and no two people can experience the same event in the same manner (von Glasersfeld, 1995:1). The constructivist viewpoint explains that people cannot go beyond the limits of individual experience; it also does not exclude the effect of social interaction on people, and how these interactions mould people (von Glasersfeld, 1995:2).

The interactions between people are also characterised by the emotions that are infused into the interactions, and the perception of a situation is affected by the

emotional shade attached to the interaction (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999:136). The emotional display of the hotel workers gives a clear indication to their colleagues of their intention, and thus communication occurs on a non-verbal level between hotel workers.

The social construction of reality is also linked with the social interaction that people have with past and future associates (Berger & Luckmann, 1987:48). One can expand this by saying that people seem to exist in the experiences of others, or at any rate, in what is presumed to be the experiences of others (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999:136).

It is important to note that the various experiences that people live through should be considered subjectively meaningful to people (Berger & Luckmann, 1987:110). However, subjectivity does not openly reveal the circumstances surrounding the source of the subjective experience, as some meanings are made possible by certain conditions (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999:40).

The workplace environment within which the hotel workers find themselves, the hotel, is shaped the way it is socially, based on the culture that is derived from the hotel workers themselves (Watson, 2008:57). This means that the hotel workplace is part of the socially constructed reality through which the hotel workers can relate to their world and social environment.

Quarantelli (1989:244) explains that the concepts that arise from situations usually occur as a result of the reality that is constructed.

In relation to this research study, one can conclude that the social reproduction and establishment of various structures pertaining to meaning, conventions, morals and discourse predominantly comprise relationships with others (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999:4).

Because reality is subjective, it is imperative that society puts reality-maintaining features in place in order to ensure that a measure of symmetry is maintained between subjective and objective reality. This reality-maintenance assists people,

such as the hotel workers, to distinguish between significant others, and non-significant others. In essence, all people that are encountered function to reaffirm the subjective reality of the person in question. These significant others are the driving force behind the maintenance of the person's subjective reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1987:168).

When one encounters problems with consistency, one can either adapt one's relationships or adjust one's reality-maintaining relationships. Subjective reality is dependent upon definite plausibility structures, such as the social base and social processes which are needed for the maintenance of this reality. An interruption of communication with the intermediaries of the particular plausibility structures jeopardises the relevant subjective realities of the person in question (Berger & Luckmann, 1987:174).

Situations of crises or trauma require the same procedures as in standard subjective reality maintenance, with the exception that the reality-confirmations need to be uninhibited and rigorous. Although the person will attempt subjective reality-maintenance, society will also implement procedures for situations deemed hazardous to the collapse of reality. Various marginal situations are incorporated into the specific procedures set up by society (Berger & Luckmann, 1987:175).

Social knowledge of the world and the society within which people function can be considered as socially constructed. This implies that in the development of knowledge creation, the practices of acceptance or rejection are considered to be social processes; this does not mean that the cause of knowledge creation or that the external phenomena do not exist (Fuller & Loogma, 2006:5).

This means that the researcher needs to be aware of her own and the research participant's subjective perceptions. Attention should be given to how the research participants give meaning to and appreciate their experience (Marvasti, 2004:5). This implies that the interaction between colleagues, as well as between managers and staff, is inter-subjective, meaning that the two parties share in each other's world (Appelrouth & Desfor-Edles, 2008:561).

The researcher adopted a qualitative research approach as it supports the view of reality that social constructivism puts forward and as such is based on many of the basic blocks of the theory of social constructivism. In essence, the theory states that people construct knowledge through their encounters with others and with their environment. Each person's construction of knowledge differs from the next person's, even if people have shared an experience. This is dependent on the personal characteristics of the person, as well as on certain demographic factors, such as culture, background, gender. The next chapter concentrates on the research methodology, research design, data analysis, and the ethical considerations required when conducting a research study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1. INTRODUCTION

In terms of achieving the research goals as specified in this dissertation, the researcher employed a qualitative approach to research, which is in line with the social constructivist sociological perspective which was selected to guide this research study. This chapter will provide a detailed explanation of the qualitative research methodology employed to achieve the aims of this study, and will serve to elucidate the various aspects related to the research process, such as methods of data collection and analysis.

2. WHAT IS QUALITATIVE RESEARCH?

Qualitative research involves a methodology whereby researchers aim to discover the private and personal experiences of research participants in response to an occurrence or event (Strauss & Corbin, 2008:12) by examining choices and behaviours which happen naturally (Johnson & Christensen, 2010:35). In addition, it is used to investigate aspects such as interactions between people and the experiences encountered between people (Strauss & Corbin, 2008:12), as well as to obtain insight into human systems (Savenye & Robinson, 2003:1046). Qualitative research attempts to uncover and explain the social world of people (de Villiers & van der Wal, 2004:236).

Epistemologically, qualitative research has its basis in phenomenological-interpretivist tradition as well as underlying notions of constructivism. This implies that the interactions between people are not only studied, but also constructed by the participants and researchers undertaking the study. The underlying ideas of qualitative research within a social constructivist framework suppose that people attempt to make sense of the world around them by repeatedly interpreting and providing meaning (Arksey & Knight, 1999:9) for their actions and the actions of others. It is of special interest to social scientists to discover the meanings that are attributed to the social practices of people (de Villiers & van der Wal, 2004:239). Accordingly, qualitative researchers attempt to discover how meanings attributed to certain occurrences or events are created. This type of research is smooth, flowing,

developing and dynamic, in contrast with quantitative research, which tends to be more firm and unyielding (Strauss & Corbin, 2008:12).

Research designs for qualitative research are not stated as a series of steps (Strauss & Corbin, 2006:6) that need to be followed precisely; this is due to the nature of qualitative research, which entails probable reconsideration, refinement (Savenye & Robinson, 2003:1050) and modification during the study as a result of new information which is gleaned during the study. Therefore, it is important to note that the methods used to collect and analyse data can change during the course of the study depending on the information that is received during the study (Savenye & Robinson, 2003:1050). Joseph Alex Maxwell (2005:2) best describes this process in the following manner *“The activities of collecting and analyzing data, developing and modifying theory, elaborating or refocusing the research questions, and identifying and addressing validity threats are usually all going on more or less simultaneously, each influencing all of the others. This process isn’t adequately represented by a linear model, even one that allows multiple cycles, because in qualitative research there isn’t an unvarying order in which the different tasks or components must be arranged.”*

The explanation regarding research design highlights the constant interaction and reflection between the various components of the research study, which is an ongoing process, meaning that the components are interconnected, interactive and systemic (Maxwell, 2005:3). In essence, the research design is the plan which presents a set of guidelines linking theoretical paradigms (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999:62) with research strategies and methods of data collection (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009:25) for the research study, and these can take many forms depending on the variables and factors that are to be studied. The research design consigns the researcher to the empirical world and links the researcher to various situations, people and information pertinent to the research study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009:25).

The intricacy of qualitative research lies in the fact that in probing, more information is gleaned which adds to the research study, unlike quantitative study, which focuses only on the limited variables set at the start of the study (de Villiers & van der Wal, 2004:237). As is characteristic of qualitative research, an inductive qualitative

approach was adopted for this study, which entailed starting with observations of the world of the hotel workers, and then moving towards more theoretical generalisations and ideas (Neuman, 2007:30) regarding the social impact of the flood on the hotel workers. This implies that during the study concepts are refined, experiential generalisations are developed and initial relationships between concepts are identified (Neuman, 2007:30).

Qualitative research, and in particular, grounded theory, is also referred to as theory-generating research, in that social science researchers or investigators proceed from observations to wide-ranging notions, whereby a new theory or concept is formed (de Villiers & van der Wal, 2004:239).

The rest of this chapter is dedicated to a discussion of the various components of the research methodology that were followed in this study, including the research participants, the methods of data collection and analysis and the ethical considerations taken into account while undertaking a qualitative research study.

2.1 Research participants

The hotel employs one hundred staff members, of which forty staff members were approached to be part of the study. Of the forty approached, only eleven staff members completed the questionnaire. The members that were approached were chosen based on their being at the hotel at the time of the flood and/or during the clean-up process. In addition, eight staff members who were not part of the questionnaire process were identified for interviews in order to glean further information and insight into the actual occurrences on the evening of the flooding and its immediate aftermath. In addition to the questionnaire and one-on-one interviews, a focus group was also arranged with nine staff members who had not participated in the questionnaire phase or individual interview phase of the research study, to expand on information obtained from the questionnaires. In order to finalise the study, one year after the study, a follow-up questionnaire was emailed to research participants who had consented to be part of further study.

The participants in the study were required to meet the following criteria in order to participate:

- Participants had to be on the premises at the time of the flood or immediately thereafter.
- Participants had to be full time employees of the hotel.
- Participants were required to participate voluntarily and to be willing to be honest and open in answering the questions posed to them.
- Participants needed to provide consent to having the interview recorded.

The general manager of the hotel functioned as the gatekeeper and in this capacity provided formal written consent for the study to be conducted at the hotel. Furthermore, the human resource manager also accompanied the researcher around the hotel premises while introducing the researcher to the hotel workers. This provided the researcher with the opportunity to explain the study, and ethical matters related to it, in person and to clarify any concerns that the hotel workers might have had regarding possible participation in the study.

2.2 Role of the researcher

In terms of a qualitative approach to research, the main role of the researcher is to function as the primary research instrument (Yin, 2011:25) which includes collecting and evaluating the data collected. Furthermore, the researcher must be attentive and responsive to the social interactions (Neuman, 2007:283) of the hotel workers with each other while conducting the research study. This meant that the researcher had to note what the nature of the interactions between colleagues was, and whether this would have had any bearing on the outcome of the research study. The researcher also kept a research journal of the events experienced and observed, as well as of ideas developed during the course of the research.

A skilled researcher will have developed certain fundamental capabilities and skills which are indispensable in the research process, which include: listening, asking quality questions, knowledge of the research topic, concern about the data collected, ability to undertake parallel tasks and being persistent and persevering (Yin, 2011:26). The researcher was able to demonstrate listening and questioning skills while interviewing the hotel workers. Concern was displayed regarding data collected by the manner in which the questionnaires were returned in envelopes that were sealed by the research participants once they were filled out. Furthermore, the visual

recordings were saved and stored on discs. In addition to the previously mentioned skills, there are particular character traits which are found in most qualitative researchers:

- Inquisitiveness.
- Inspiration and imagination.
- Ability to make sense of data and enjoyment in working with data.
- Risk-taking aptitude.
- An aptitude for working through issues that occur during the research study.
- An aptitude for accepting oneself as an instrument of research.
- The ability to trust oneself implicitly and to recognise that one's research study is of value (Strauss & Corbin, 2008:13).

In addition to the above, the researcher has the ability to reflect on the information obtained during the course of the data collection. Through this, the researcher is able to be attuned to and recognise issues, events and occurrences which are relevant to the research study. In this way the researcher is able to provide greater insight with regard to the interpersonal relationships shared between research participants. This also facilitates the research process, method and results (Strauss & Corbin, 2008:31).

2.3 Data collection

Data collection is the gathering and accumulation of information relevant to a research study. A qualitative research approach allows the researcher to use many sources of data (Strauss & Corbin, 2008:27), which in this study included books, numerous research journals, internet research sources, government and media reports, semi-structured individual and focus group interviews, semi-structured questionnaires, newspaper reports, and observations. In qualitative studies, it is often found that researchers prefer to use multiple methods for the purposes of data triangulation (Burnett, 2009:124; Flick, 2009:444), which is used to counteract weaknesses from one source by collecting data from various sources (Tabler, 2008:24). The data collected will be in the form of words and images (Neuman, 2007:88) sourced from the questionnaires, transcripts of visual recordings, visual recordings, photographs taken on the day of the flood, as well as the researcher's own notes made during the interviews.

The data for this study were obtained by means of a semi-structured questionnaire, as well as semi-structured interviews with eight key employees and members of senior management. Additionally, one focus group interview was conducted with nine individuals from various departments who were present at the time of the flood or immediately thereafter. The focus group interviewees also included hotel workers who wanted to be part of the research study, but preferred not to complete the semi-structured questionnaires.

The following sections are devoted to an overview of each of these methods that were employed to collect data for this study.

2.3.1 The semi-structured questionnaire

A questionnaire is a self-report method of data collection used by researchers in order to obtain information about the thoughts, emotions, attitudes, behaviours and perceptions of research participants regarding a particular topic or event (Johnson & Christensen, 2010:169). The questionnaire aimed to discover how the flood impacted the hotel workers in terms of resilience, wellbeing and their relationships with others. The basis of the questionnaire was found in existing literature dealing with coping mechanisms and interpersonal relations.

In the first phase of the research study, the researcher employed a semi-structured questionnaire, which is a well-structured and sequential data collection tool which has a clear focus, with a chain of questions which allow research participants to answer or comment in the manner they deem best. Thus the hotel workers were able to respond to the questions in their own way. The advantage of the semi-structured questionnaire is that it sets the plan for the research study but does not in any manner presume the nature of the answers provided by the research participants (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:321).

The core of qualitative research embraces the use of open-ended questions, which provide rich information and explore the personal world of the research participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2010:169; Foddy, 1994:91). The researcher utilised open-

ended questions in the questionnaire distributed to the research participants in the first phase of this research study.

In the process of constructing the questionnaire, the researcher followed the principles mentioned by Johnson and Christensen (2010:185), which included the following key factors:

- The questions that were used in the questionnaire aligned with the research aims of the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2010:164), and were structured in such a manner that one question flowed to the next (Neuman, 2007:169).
- A screening question (Johnson & Christensen, 2010:185) was used in order to identify whether the hotel workers had been present at the time of the flood.
- The researcher ensured that sufficient white space was included for each respondent's replies to the open-ended exploratory questions, which were constructed in language that would be neutral and familiar to the research participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2010:186; Neuman, 2007:170). The use of white space is not included in the questionnaire in Table 6 in the next section in order to avoid large areas of blank pages.
- The questionnaire was developed with the goal of having a data collection instrument that was well structured and easy for research participants to use (Johnson & Christensen, 2010:164; Burnett, 2009:137).

The questionnaire that was distributed to the research participants can be found in Appendix A.

2.3.2 The individual semi-structured interviews

Typical of qualitative research (Arksey & Knight, 1999:7), individual semi-structured interviews were based on a semi-structured format where the researcher had a set group of planned, open-ended questions (Burnett, 2009:162) which could be improvised upon (Arksey & Knight, 1999:7) by means of free-flowing questions (Burnett, 2009:162). This was done in order to glean in-depth information and probe areas of interest (Arksey & Knight, 1999:7) from the interviewee. Meanings and areas of interest which arose during the course of the interviews could then be investigated, as opposed to reporting the actions and behaviours enacted during the

situation. This means that the researcher was able to provide a conceptual account of what was experienced as a result of the flood

At the outset of the focus group and individual interviews the researcher explained the purpose of the study (Hugh-Jones, 2010:94) and its benefits as well as the importance and value of the participants' observations about the flood. The manner in which the interviews were to be conducted was also explained. Participants had the opportunity to clarify any aspects they might have been unsure of in relation to the research study. Importantly, consent was obtained regarding the audiotaping and videotaping of the interview session, while explaining the purpose of the video recordings (Hugh-Jones, 2010:94). The interviews started with the introduction of all persons involved in the focus group and a brief explanation of their role at the hotel, and whether they were at the premises at the time of the flood or immediately thereafter.

All of the interviews were conducted in one of the hotel's conference rooms, which had been pre-arranged with the human resource manager of the hotel. During the interviews the researcher aimed to be relaxed (Hugh-Jones, 2010:94), friendly, open and courteous towards the participants (Arksey & Knight, 1999:102), as well as non-judgemental and unbiased, and to take into account cultural sensitivities that could have arisen. It was important that the researcher maintained a serious and objective tone (Neuman, 2007:191) throughout the interview while still being open and courteous.

Following the suggestions proposed by Yin (2011:26), the researcher functioned as a facilitator for the discussions and listened attentively to what was being said, demonstrating attentiveness and interest, allowing the interview to progress in such a manner that the participants felt comfortable in disclosing information. Arksey and Knight (1999:102) propose that the researcher should be aware of emotional distress which could be experienced by the research participants.

The questions that were developed for the semi-structured questionnaire were also used to guide the interviews. Where deemed appropriate, these questions were

supplemented by additional probing questions to clarify responses made by participants, and to obtain additional information.

The semi-structured interviews and the focus group interviews were videotaped for the purposes of transparency and transcription. The videotaping was agreed to by all persons involved in the interviews.

2.3.3 The focus group

A focus group is defined as a group, usually consisting of between five and seven people, approached to further expand on questions previously answered (Arksey & Knight, 1999:77). Burnett (2009:163) suggests that focus groups aid the understanding of events in society. In the focus group setting people are able to express themselves and their opinions and experiences unreservedly. Another advantage of focus group interviews is that research participants have the ability to query each other as well as to clarify answers given and their viewpoints regarding an event (Neuman, 2007:301). This is mainly due to the interaction that occurs between research participants in a focus group. Gibson and Riley (2010:61) indicate that focus group participants tend to be less reserved amongst their peers than if they were interviewed on a one-on-one basis. The fact that focus groups are comprised of several participants offsets, to some extent, the researcher's influence on the group. Given these advantages, it was decided to make use of this data collection method for the purposes of the present study.

The focus group consisted of nine hotel workers, from various departments, who were involved during the flood and in the clean-up process, and who had not completed the questionnaire. The focus group provided the opportunity for additional exploration and clarification of what the participants thought, felt and said in relation to the flood. In this manner it was hoped that the focus group would aid in validating the research study (Arksey & Knight, 1999:77).

The focus group interview was conducted at the hotel premises in a conference room which was reserved for this purpose. The researcher conducted the interview after explaining its purpose and clarifying ethical matters related to the focus group interview, such as confidentiality. As one of the purposes of focus group interviews is

to clarify and deepen understanding already gained during the course of the research, the questions devised for the original questionnaire were once again used as a basis to guide the interview. These questions were followed up by probes to obtain additional clarification of participants' responses. As was the case with the individual interviews, the focus group interview was also recorded on video. The video recording was subsequently transcribed as a prelude to data analysis.

According to the guidelines suggested by Arksey and Knight (1999:102), at the close of the interview, the researcher evoked a feeling of success at the outcome of the interviews, and thanked the participants for their involvement in the research study.

2.3.4 The follow-up questionnaire

A year after the flood occurred on 17 January 2011, a follow-up questionnaire was emailed to eleven research participants who had indicated that they wished to be part of possible further investigation in this research study. These participants had been part of the questionnaire, individual interviews or focus group interview phases. Of the eleven staff members emailed, only four responded in the follow up survey. The follow-up survey focused on aspects of interpersonal relations, cohesion, and wellbeing. The aim of this questionnaire was to investigate whether any changes had occurred as a result of the flood, along with hotel workers' perceptions of the reasons for these changes (if any), and also to ascertain whether the changes had been sustained a year later. Appendix B contains the follow-up questionnaire that was sent to the participants.

Section 2 of this chapter has been dedicated to the discussion of the research participants and the data collection methods. What follows is a discussion of the process of data analysis followed during the course of the study.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

3.1 Introduction

Jorgensen in Boeije (2010:76) aptly defines the analysis of data as follows:

“Analysis is a breaking up, separating, or disassembling of research materials into pieces, parts, elements, or units. With facts broken down into manageable pieces, the researcher sorts and sifts them, searching for types, classes, sequences, processes, patterns or wholes. The aim of this process is to assemble or reconstruct the data in a meaningful and comprehensible fashion.”

In essence, data analysis involves answering the research questions through the processing of data obtained in the data collection phase (Lapan *et al.*, 2012¹²; Boeije, 2010:75), which in this study included questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and a focus group. The processing of data involves segmenting the data into portions of information and then reconstructing the fragments into a logical and coherent whole. It is during the process of reassembly or reconstruction that patterns are searched for in the data, with the aim of finding meaning in relation to the research questions posed at the beginning of the research study (Boeije, 2010:75).

The process of data analysis will be explored in this section and will include a discussion of the coding procedure and types of coding that were utilised in this research study. In addition, the Conditional/Consequential Matrix of Strauss and Corbin (2008:94) is explained and the relevance of the matrix in relation to how it guided the coding process is expounded.

3.2 Data analysis

The categorisation of data does not occur in a predetermined manner; rather, it occurs during the process of analysis through the discovery of what emerges from the data. It is during this process that preliminary categorisation occurs, which follows from the data interpretation and from which the basic blocks of information are created (Boeije, 2010:76). It can be said that data interpretation through the process of analysis forms the theoretical core of a qualitative research study (Flick, 2009:306).

¹² This is HTML page and thus has no page reference.

Boeije (2010:83) provides a framework for the analysis of data which is based on the constant comparison of data, analytic induction and theoretical sensitivity, which will be elaborated on next.

- **Constant comparison:** In grounded theory, constant comparison forms the basis of data analysis, and serves the purpose of expressing the differences that occur within a phenomenon and, where possible, of highlighting the circumstances under which the differences occur. Webster, as cited in Boeije (2010:84), identifies four stages of constant comparison, which are: exploration (discovery of concepts); specification (concept development); reduction (deciding the core concept); and integration (development of a final theory).
- **Analytic induction:** During this stage, definite observations are made regarding data obtained and general patterns are constructed. Categories emerge as the researcher identifies and understands the patterns that are present in the phenomena investigated in the course of the research study. Analytic deduction does not presuppose which dimensions will emerge and, instead, allows the significant dimensions to emerge from the patterns identified. As a result, the researcher aims to understand the several associations between dimensions which arise without having any preconceived ideas about the supposed comparative relationships between categories (Patton, 2002:56).
- **Theoretical sensitivity:** Theoretical sensitivity takes place through the process of data collection and analysis. The researcher is able to identify relationships between concepts which, in turn, allow for a grounded theory to develop. Furthermore, knowledge of the literature can enhance sensitivity to slight nuances present in the data, as well as provide a basis for comparison with the data, while inspiring questions during the data analysis process (Lapan *et al.*, 2012¹³).

During the segmentation process, the researcher continually contemplates and interprets portions of information. Subsequently, the data segments are then

¹³ This is HTML page and thus has no page reference.

compared with each other to identify similarities and differences and decide how they should be grouped, if at all (Boeije, 2010:77). It is at this stage that themes and concepts are created, developed and validated, and this is repeated and expanded on over the course of time, and through the obtaining of data. An evolution occurs through which notions, themes, topics, events and other aspects which are pertinent to a research study are classified. This classification process is known as coding (Lapan *et al.*, 2012¹⁴), which is a method whereby the data obtained from research participants are developed into themes/concepts with varying properties and dimensions in order to try to analyse the data (Flick, 2009:435; Strauss & Corbin, 2008:58). The first step in creating themes and concepts involves the coding of data obtained in the questionnaires and in the individual and focus group interviews (Strauss & Corbin, 2008:57). In the process of data analysis, the researcher should continually and consistently aim for research integrity, which refers to the accuracy and truthfulness of the perceptions, in this case, of the hotel workers regarding the flood (Yin, 2011:41).

As part of the data collected during this research study was in the form of visual recordings, the data first had to be transcribed and coded by the researcher. Coding forms the foundation of data analysis, which means that information obtained is analysed in a text format (Neuman, 2007:227) after transcribing the visual recordings. The process of coding entails naming each data segment and indicating how the researcher selected, sorted and accounted for each piece of data (Charmaz, 2006:43).

Coding that is done exceptionally well is qualified in terms of the research participants' meanings during the data collection phase and should fit the data with relative ease. The researcher should aim to comply with the following criteria while coding data:

- Remain open
- Remain close to the data
- Codes should be simple and precise
- Short codes should be constructed

¹⁴ This is HTML page and thus has no page reference.

- Actions should be preserved
- Data should be compared with data
- Data should be moved through quickly (Charmaz, 2006:49).

The coding process which was employed in this research study is based on Strauss and Corbin's (2008:58) coding methodology, which usually involves three distinct steps, each with its own objectives (Flick, 2009:435), which are described next:

- **Open coding:** The process of coding the information collected starts when a code is assigned to each piece of information received (Burnett, 2009:191; Flick, 2009:435). It is during this step that deeply embedded themes are brought to the fore (Neuman, 2007:330).
- **Axial coding:** In this step the coded sections are sorted (Burnett, 2009:191) and labelled according to themes (Neuman, 2007:331); this is done by linking sub-themes to themes (Flick, 2009:312) and not to the data (Burnett, 2009:191). The relation between concepts and themes is revealed during axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 2008:195) by asking questions and making comparisons which are more focused than in open coding and focus on the discovery and linking of themes in relation to the Conditional/Consequential Matrix (Flick, 2009:311).
- **Selective coding:** This last step of coding is seen as an extension of axial coding, where the most practical and constructive pieces of information are identified and chosen for further investigation (Burnett, 2009:191; Neuman, 2007:332). In this step, the researcher refers again to the original data set and scans the information for further concepts/themes that may emerge. This step occurs at an elevated, abstract level and focuses on possible core concepts while still searching for additional examples of themes which substantiate the discussion of a particular concept which directs the researcher in the conceptualisation of the story of the event that has befallen the research participants. Lastly, the theory is conceptualised in greater detail and rechecked against the data obtained during the research study, until the level of theoretical saturation occurs, which refers to the inability to gain new information or knowledge through further coding or category enrichment (Flick, 2009:435; Strauss & Corbin, 2008:57)).

Coding that is done exceptionally well will not only be used for descriptive purposes, but show an in-depth analysis of the data obtained (Burnett, 2009:191). However, the coding course of action is very flexible, allowing the same source texts and codes to be reinserted with different research questions in mind with the objective of formulating a new grounded theory (Flick, 2009:312). The grounded theory concept is discussed in greater detail further on in this chapter in section 4.

The next section centres around The Conditional/Consequential Matrix, which provided a framework for the analysis of data, and especially the coding of data, in the research study.

3.3 The Conditional/Consequential Matrix

Strauss and Corbin (2008:91) introduced their concept of The Conditional/Consequential Matrix in an attempt to aid the analysis of data, specifically the coding process. This tool assists in the logical sifting and arranging of the data, giving the researcher a guideline for arranging the conditions or consequences relating to events or occurrences. The researcher employed the matrix in the coding phase of the data analysis process. The matrix is graphically depicted in Figure 14, which is followed by an explanation.

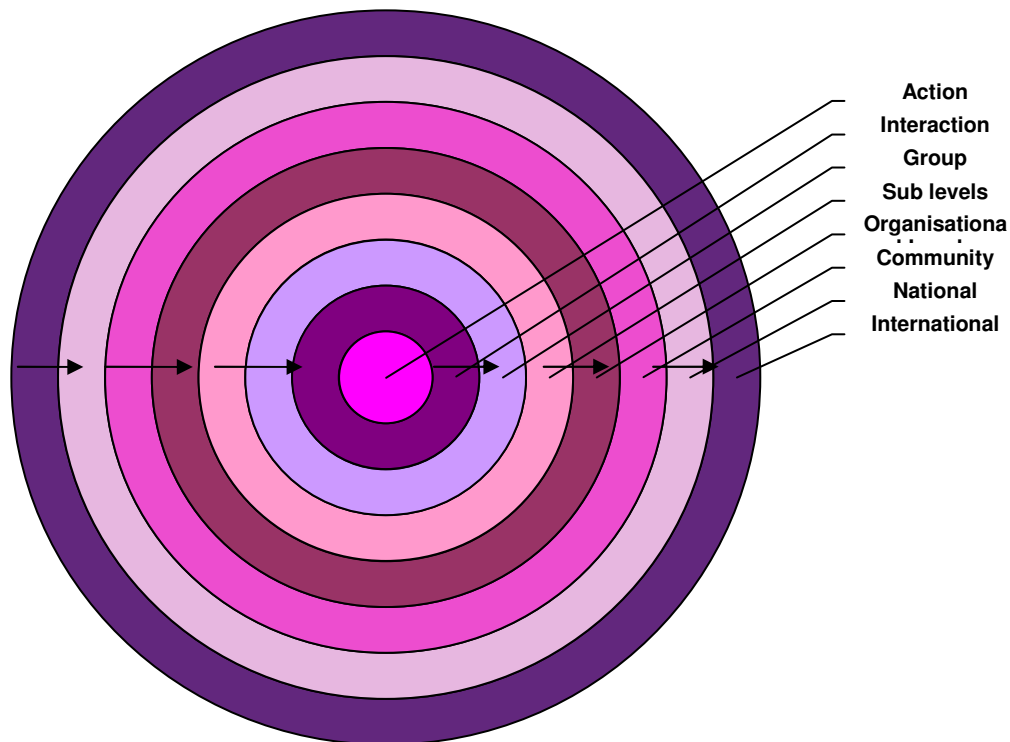


Figure 14: The Conditional/Consequential Matrix (adapted from Strauss & Corbin, 2008:94)

The Conditional/Consequential Matrix of Strauss and Corbin (2008:94) can be explained as follows:

- The conditions or consequences which result from an event or occurrence do not exist in isolation. They are connected by means of actions/interactions/emotional responses to the event or occurrence.
- There is no clear division between the conditions that exist on a micro level, close to the people involved, and those conditions that exist on a macro level, such as environmental policies.
- The array of relationships and their interactions is not always clear to the research participants.

- The responses on an emotional level are not restricted to those of individual persons involved in an event or occurrence (Strauss & Corbin, 2008:92).

The graphic depiction of the matrix shows that there are concentric circles which are also interrelated. The arrows that are shown on the matrix indicate that events have an effect from the most external aspect of an event to the individual person. In turn, the individual person also has an effect on and at various other levels (Strauss & Corbin, 2008: 93).

In order to articulate the associations between categories, the researcher employs Strauss and Corbin's model, which clarifies the links between phenomena, their causes and consequences, the context within which a phenomenon occurs, and approaches undertaken by the people involved in the phenomena. The model is founded on two axes: the first axis identifies a sequence which is comprised of causes, the phenomena and the consequences of the phenomena; the second axis relates to the context, the mediating conditions and the actions and interactional approaches adopted in dealing with the phenomena (Flick 2009:311).

This model aids the researcher's data analysis, in that the researcher will view the data obtained through the course of the study as a sequential process. In viewing events sequentially, the researcher was able to portray an accurate representation of the flood and the clean-up process. In addition, the model assists in pointing out how seemingly isolated events are linked by the emotional and interactional responses to the event (Strauss & Corbin, 2008:93).

3. GROUNDED THEORY

In 1967, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss proposed their idea of Grounded Theory, which is founded upon the premise that theory originates from data collected in the course of theory (Strauss & Corbin, 2008:viii). Simply stated, Grounded Theory is a detailed method and process of building a theory from the raw data obtained in a study (Strauss & Corbin, 2008:1), and can complement various types of qualitative data analysis (Charmaz, 2006:9).

Grounded theory methodology entails the use of a systematic but flexible framework for data collection and analysis in order to construct theory which is “grounded” in the data obtained. The data form the basis of the theory and the analysis of data generates the concepts that are constructed (Charmaz, 2006:2). Theory generation stems from comparative analysis, which can be used on any research unit size (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:21).

The methods employed in grounded theory promote a fresh approach to the examination of the data by directing, working with and reorganising data in a manner which results in an original construction of the analysis. The data obtained are reviewed over and over until the data are refined (Charmaz, 2006:2).

The focus of grounded theory is the study of the phenomena and not of the setting within which the phenomena occur (Charmaz, 2006:22). Thus, the process of making sense of their world relative to a specific event, through which research participants construct their reality, is embedded in the premise of social constructivist and grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 2008:10).

As a methodology, the researcher opted to use grounded theory as a basis for the formulation of the proposed notion of group resilience which is discussed in greater detail in chapter 4, section 2. The concept of group resilience arose as a result of the data analysis process.

4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Any research study, whether it is qualitative or quantitative research, requires that ethical considerations need to be taken into account, which also relate to the quality of the study (Savenye & Robinson, 2003:1064). Furthermore, it is imperative that the researcher adheres to strict ethical guidelines guided by the researcher’s strong moral code (Neuman, 2007:48), which implies that the researcher will conduct research in a morally defensible manner (King, 2010:98), thus ensuring that the researcher does not behave unethically at any given time (Neuman, 2007:48).

When dealing with people and their emotional responses to trauma and disaster, it was imperative that the researcher adhered to the following ethical guidelines when

conducting the research, ensuring the safety and dignity of the research participants (Marvasti, 2004:135):

- **Protecting researchers from harm:** Researchers are at risk when they conduct research in the field and thorough preparations and evaluations must be made in order to minimise the risk to the researcher (Burnett, 2009:179). This is especially true when the researcher is required to conduct the study in a community or in the private home of the participants (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:70). The researcher was not in any danger while conducting the study at the hotel.
- **Protecting the research participants:** Harm to the research participants refers to any distress on a psychological level, any uneasiness (Neuman, 2007:51) or invasion of privacy, as well as actual physical harm experienced by the participants (Israel & Hay, 2006:95). This means that the participants should not be placed in any situation where they will be at risk during the study (Burnett, 2009:89). If, during the course of the research study, it is found that the research participants are taking strain and are facing emotional trauma due to repressed feelings coming to the fore, it is important to end the interview and also to recommend counselling sessions (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007:62) to assist the research participants to deal with the issues that have arisen. This means that the researchers must apply the principle of beneficence (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007:62). At no time in the course of this study did any of the research participants exhibit any feelings of distress or indicate that they were traumatised by the process.
- **Voluntary participation:** Research participants should take part in the research study completely of their own will (Marvasti, 2004:136) and not be coerced into the research study (Neuman, 2007:54). This also means that the research participants should be legally competent to participate in the study (Anon, 2010:56). Furthermore, the participants are informed of their right to withdraw from the study without providing a reason for doing so; this is elaborated on later in this section. The researcher ensured that the research participants voluntarily took part in the study by providing information regarding the nature of the study as well as by requiring a consent form, which will be discussed next.

- **Informed consent:** The research participants should be aware of the nature of the research study and accede willingly to being part of the study (Marvasti, 2004:136). This requires the researcher to explain the purpose of the study and the manner in which the participants' responses will be used and reported (Burnett, 2009:89). Informed consent was obtained by means of a written consent form which was completed and signed by the research participants, indicating their voluntary participation in the study.
- **Confidentiality and anonymity:** Anonymity refers to the fact that the personal information (King, 2010:101) of the participants should not be made known to people that are outside of the research study group (Savenye & Robinson, 2003:1061). Confidentiality, on the other hand, refers to the fact that the identities of the participants should not be mentioned in any reports or presentations once the study has been completed (Burnett, 2009:89; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:67). However, qualitative research, by means of methods such as interviews, makes the aspect of anonymity and confidentiality rather difficult, as the researcher often builds a relationship with the research participants (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007:65). Although the researcher was in personal contact with the research participants during the interviews and focus group interviews, confidentiality was assured as the information divulged by the participants was known only to the researcher and not revealed to any other party.
- **Right to withdraw:** As required by the ethical guidelines, the research participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw their participation in the research study at any time without needing to provide an explanation for withdrawal, and also without the fear of repercussions for non-participation in the research study (King, 2010:101).
- **Gatekeepers:** In some cases, access to research participants may be controlled by individuals known as gatekeepers (Seidman, 2006:43), and in such instances the permission of such persons must be obtained prior to conducting the study. This was the case in the present study, where the general manager and human resource managers acted as gatekeepers. Formal written consent to conduct the study was obtained from the general manager (see Annexure A).

5. TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

In a research study, researchers are responsible for conducting their work in a manner that is characteristic of the epistemological foundations of research, so as to ensure the quality, validity and reliability of their work (Marx, 2008:128). Trustworthiness and credibility in qualitative research refers to the transparency of the methodology used, which entails documenting and describing the processes employed and ensuring that the data obtained in the research study are available for review. Secondly, qualitative research needs to be undertaken in a methodical manner which aims to diminish inexplicable bias and distortion, and thus aids the completeness of the research study (Yin, 2011:20).

Validity is dependent on the skill of the researcher in interviewing, the time that is allocated for the interview, and the ability of the researcher to allow the interviewees to be as revealing and enlightening as they are able to be (Arksey & Knight, 1999:8). Validity refers to the truthfulness of the study, and in light of this principle, qualitative research aims to identify and explain the social world of people and give a true account of their experiences (Neuman, 2007:120).

Validity in qualitative research can be further augmented in the following manner:

- The researcher should build rapport, while fostering an environment that creates trust and openness and in which the participants will be willing to participate honestly during the interviews.
- The questions asked during the interview should cover all aspects of the research study, and ensure that time is not wasted on questions that are not pertinent to the research study (Arksey & Knight, 1999:52). Accordingly, the questionnaire used in this study guided the semi-structured individual interviews and focus group interviews and provided the frame for the interview process.
- The researcher should be able to skilfully probe participants in order to gain information that will clarify and expand on the initial replies to the questions, and thus elaborate on the specifics (Arksey & Knight, 1999: 52).

In qualitative research, reliability refers to lowering interviewer bias in order to ensure that the findings are reliable (Arksey & Knight, 1999:53). Reliability in the study is

dependent on the training that the researcher has had in interviewing participants, supervision of the research study, as well as the adherence to strict codes of operation (Arksey & Knight, 1999:53).

5.1 Triangulation

Methodological triangulation, specifically between-method triangulation, as is used in this research study, employs various methods of data collection in order to investigate and measure the identical phenomena from a variety of approaches (Lapan *et al.*, 2012:99). The underlying principle behind between-method triangulation is that the limitations identified in a research method will be offset by the robustness of another research method (Flick, 2009:445; Arksey & Knight, 1999:23). Triangulation results in an increased confidence in the outcomes of the research study, as well as strengthening the totality of the research study.

In qualitative studies, it is often found that researchers prefer to use multiple methods for the purposes of triangulation (Burnett, 2009:124) in order to counteract weaknesses from one source by collecting data from various sources (Tabler, 2008:24).

In this research study, triangulation was undertaken by means of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews with the hotel workers. In addition, the hotel workers that participated in the research study were drawn from various departments, which aided the researcher in further triangulating the study, as the data were obtained from various research participants employed in different roles and departments.

Triangulation can also be used in the process of data analysis, and includes adopting different approaches in analysing the same data set owing to the different characteristics that are present in the various data collection methods. The third aspect pertinent to triangulation concerns how connections are made between data sets in the overall data analysis process. This manner of analysis allows the researcher to investigate and discover whether patterns exist in a specific data set and then between various data sets (Flick, 2009:449).

In summary, chapter three was devoted to an explanation of the qualitative research methodology that was employed to conduct this study. After a general discussion of the nature of qualitative research, and the role of the researcher in this type of research, the methods of data collection and analysis that were utilised in this study were clarified. The chapter concluded with a discussion on ethical matters as they pertained to this study, and to an overview of the manner in which the credibility and trustworthiness of the study was ensured. In the next chapter, the findings that were made during the course of the research will be elaborated upon.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. INTRODUCTION

This qualitative study aimed to investigate the social impact of a flood on workers at a Pretoria hotel in order to explain how the hotel workers dealt with the flood and its aftermath from a sociological perspective.

The research findings are the product of the analysis of data collected from the questionnaire, the semi-structured individual and focus group interviews and the follow-up questionnaire which was distributed to consenting research participants a year after the initial study.

The questionnaire was distributed to forty hotel workers of which only ten responded. The semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with eight key employees of the hotel who were not part of the initial questionnaire phase; while the focus group comprised nine employees from various departments who were present at the time of the flood or immediately thereafter. The selection criterion for research participants has been described in 5.2 in Chapter 1.

Each interview began with an explanation regarding the confidentiality of the research participants and an assurance that the hotel workers reserved the right to withdraw from the research study at any time without giving an explanation. Once the ethical considerations of the research study had been discussed and explained, the consent letter was signed by the research participants. Two copies of the consent form were distributed and were then signed by each research participant. Of the two copies, the research participants kept one copy while the researcher retained the other. The interviews were then transcribed and the information received underwent qualitative content analysis. This chapter will now focus on the findings of the analysis of data, which be discussed thematically.

This chapter is divided into three sections, and throughout the three sections, the excerpts with the comments which have been quoted verbatim from the research participants will be differentiated from the text by the use of italics within quotation

marks. In order to distinguish the various participants the excerpts will be followed by a letter denoting from which phase of research the excerpt is taken, e.g. (Q3), which represents the third questionnaire respondent. The only exception is the focus group, of which only one was conducted, hence the abbreviation (FG).

- FG – focus group
- I – individual interview (this will be followed by a number indicating which participant's interview is referred to)
- Q – questionnaire respondent (this will be followed by a number indicating which respondent's questionnaire is referred to)
- S – survey questionnaire sent to participants who indicated that they wanted to be part of further study. This questionnaire was sent a year later by means of an internet survey tool.

The data and research findings provide a reconstruction of the flood which occurred in the early hours of 17 January 2011 and its immediate aftermath, from the point of view of the research participants. This chapter, which focuses on the research findings and describes the results thematically, is divided into three sections. The first of the three sections focuses on describing the social impact of the flood on the hotel workers, which emerged during the qualitative data analysis. Four main themes emerged which centred on the emotional responses of the hotel workers, the interactional patterns and relationships of the hotel workers with others, the presence of cohesiveness during the flood and the aftermath, and lastly, the hotel leadership which steered the hotel workers during the situation. The second section focuses on group resilience, a theoretical concept proposed by the researcher on the basis of a grounded theoretical analysis of the data. Finally, the third section describes the thoughts and feelings of the hotel workers a year after the flood of 17 January 2011.

During the data analysis process, it was frequently noted that certain concepts cut across various themes. Accordingly, where relevant, such concepts are discussed in relation to more than one sub-theme.

SECTION 1

THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF A FLOOD ON WORKERS AT A PRETORIA HOTEL

1. INTRODUCTION

As the heavy rainfall continued through the evening of 16 January into the early hours of 17 January, the water in the Hennops River began brimming over into the surrounding area. At the same time, the lake situated behind the hotel spilled over into the hotel located nearby. At first, the basement filled with water. When the basement was completely submerged, the reception level and elevator shafts were flooded, which meant that the entire lobby area had to be completely redone and restored. The damage to the hotel was extensive, and required hotel closure of three days while the renovations and reconstruction took place. This is this situation in which a community of hotel workers found themselves, and which sparked an interest in investigating the social impact of a flood on workers at a Pretoria hotel.

At the beginning of the research study, the researcher aimed to discover how the flooding of the hotel affected the hotel workers in terms of their behaviour, their perception of the flood, and the relationships between colleagues. The following specific research objectives were set for this study:

- To explore and describe the subjective experiences of the hotel workers in relation to the flood.
- To investigate how the interactional patterns and relationships of the hotel workers were affected by the flood, if at all.
- To investigate the effect that the leadership of the hotel had on the hotel workers' experience and management of the flood (if any).
- To explore what strengths were exhibited, discovered or developed as a result of the flood experience, especially with regard to resilience.

The social impact of the flood on the hotel workers is graphically depicted in Figure 15 and highlights the relationships between the various main and sub-themes. The sub-themes that featured most strongly are noted in the diagram. The illustration highlights the reciprocal relationship that exists between the main theme, which was identified as being the emotional responses of the hotel workers, and the interpersonal relations of the workers, the leadership of the hotel and the cohesiveness demonstrated and experienced among the hotel workers. The model

depicts the reciprocal nature of the relationships between themes. The emotional responses elicited have an effect on the interpersonal relations, which in turn have an effect on the levels of cohesion experienced by the hotel workers. The leadership of the hotel has an effect on the interpersonal relations of the hotel workers. Leadership and cohesiveness can be considered as an extension of the interpersonal relations, yet they too have a reciprocal relationship, in addition to sharing some sub-themes.

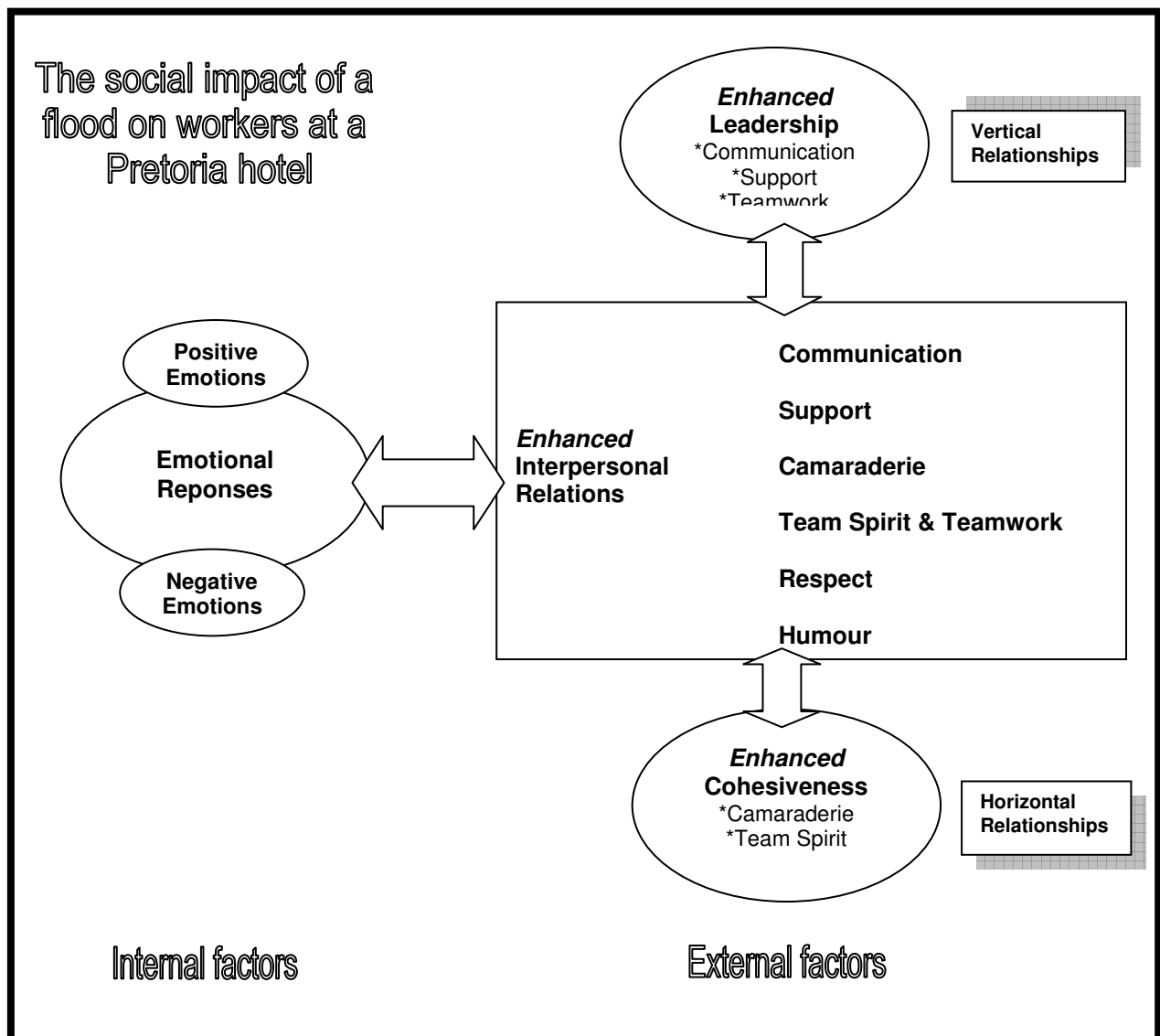


Figure 15: Conceptual model of the relationships between main themes and sub-themes

The following sections are devoted to an in-depth discussion of each of the themes and sub-themes as outlined in Figure 15.

THEME 1 – EMOTIONAL RESPONSES

The research findings highlighted the varying types and intensities of emotions which were felt by the hotel workers. A progression from negative to positive emotions emerged during the course of the flood and its aftermath. Initially, as the waters began flooding the hotel premises, very strong negative emotions, such as anger, shock and sadness, were experienced. However, once the initial shock and fear of job insecurity wore off, positive emotions such as happiness, enjoyment and appreciation emerged among many of the hotel workers.

Emotional responses featured strongly in the research findings and were characterised by the varying degrees of intensity of the emotions experienced. The reactions ranged from very mild to very strong. In turn, various sub-themes surfaced in relation to each type of emotion, which will be discussed in each respective sub-section.

1. NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

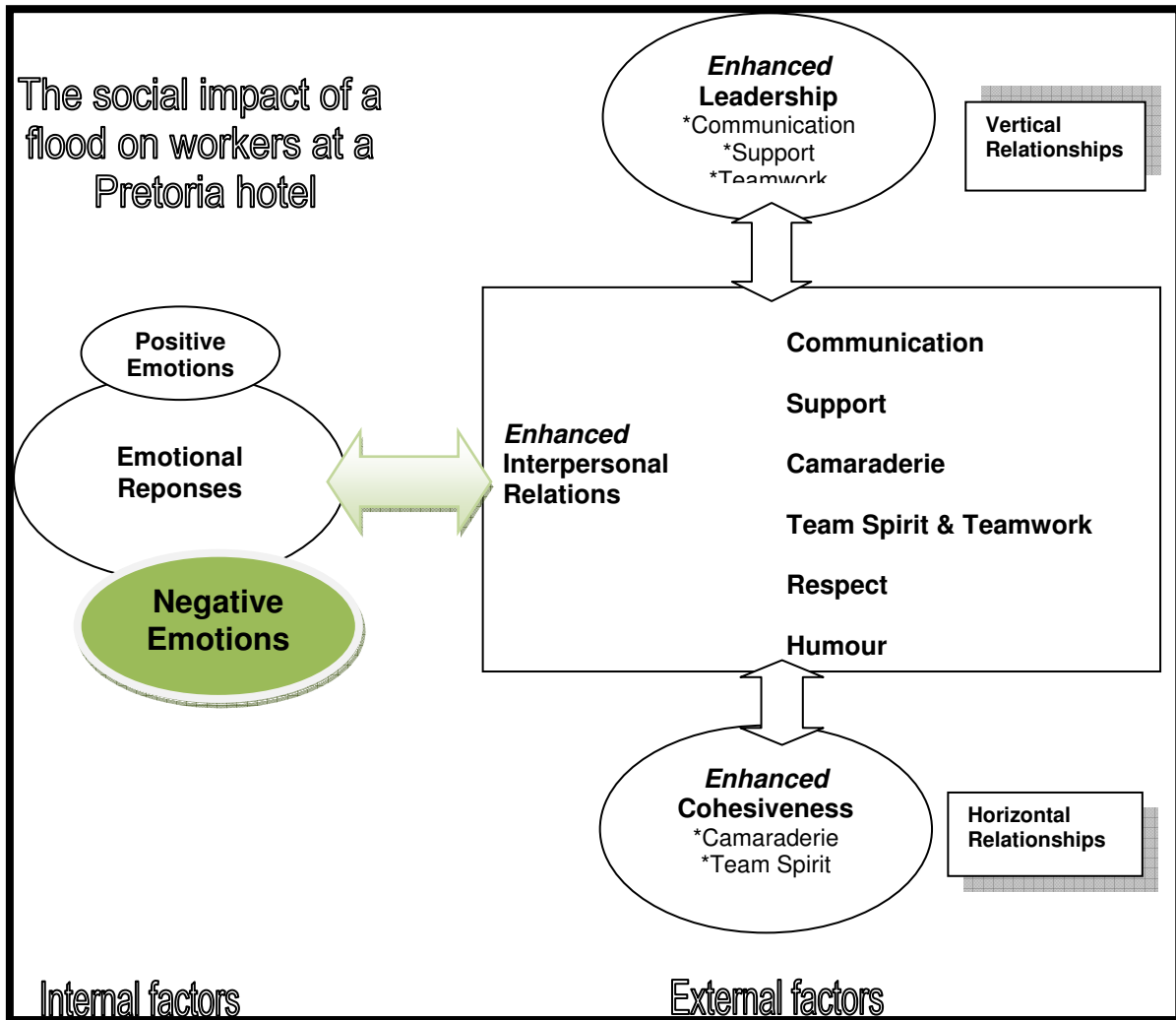


Figure 16: Negative emotional responses

In relation to the model of the relationships between main and sub-themes in Figure 16, the first discussion focuses on negative emotions, and where applicable the association between the negative emotional responses and the interpersonal relations will be highlighted.

The negative emotional responses experienced by the hotel workers were mainly fear, helplessness, confusion, sadness, and anger. These emotional reactions also ranged in intensity from very mild to very strong and the following sections are devoted to an in-depth discussion of these negative emotional responses.

1.1 Fear

One of the first emotions evoked in the hotel workers upon arriving at the workplace was that of fear. Various reasons existed for the experiencing of fear and were related to fear of the flood waters, fear at not having experienced a flood in the past and fear in relation to the flood event.

Fear in relation to the flood waters: One of the reasons for the eliciting of fear in the hotel workers was in relation to the flood waters. In particular, the fears pertained to observing the rising flood waters and to falling into the water. For some hotel workers, the inability to swim evoked feelings of fear which may be due to the possibility of drowning as they would not be have been able to reach safety if they had fallen into the water, as is described in the next excerpt:

"I was scared because I can't even swim, because I'm very, very scared of water. So that day, I mean, we've got a lake here, which is very dirty. You don't even know what's inside the water there. So, I was very scared. And we had the reception carpet there, so you didn't know what you were pulling with your legs because you can't, you couldn't even see through the water there. So I was, I admit that I was very, very scared that day" (FG).

The experiencing of fear may also be associated with a fear of the unknown, specifically the uncertainty of what would be present in the muddy water and in the remaining debris, which was considered to be "... a little bit disgusting" (FG) by a hotel worker.

Furthermore, a sense of anxiety and danger was evoked with regard to the water level continuing to rise, as illustrated by the following comment made by an interviewee: *"I wanted to come down to the staff entrance where my parking, where my office is, and I was halfway there and I backed out and I was scared, the water level was so high"* (I5). This may also indicate a concern for their personal safety because of the unabated rising of the water levels. This sentiment was also expressed by another research participant in the following excerpt: *"...I think he was scared, I don't know. Think he was scared or something else, but he didn't want to come to the reception and do something cause he did see that how the water rising in reception"* (I6).

Lastly, the experiencing of fear was also noticed in others and is indicated by the following extract: *“Definitely, the people were scared... they were nervous and very scared. Um, keeping in mind that water is helluva strong and we don’t really realised how strong it is until... We’re used to just seeing it in the swimming pool.”* (I7). This excerpt also draws attention to the research participant’s realisation of the power of nature, specifically water and the strength of flooding waters. The comparison of the flood waters with the swimming pool is given consideration. A swimming pool may be deemed to have waters that are calm, contained and controlled, unlike the flood waters which may seem to be fierce and overpowering.

Fear due to inexperience in a flood: Some hotel workers experienced fear which was associated with their inexperience in managing floods, with specific reference to the safety and stability of the structure, and this is conveyed in the following excerpt: *“...actually I was scared, because it was my first time since I, I, started working here in 1997. So it was my first time to see the flood. So I was so scared, you see, that maybe the hotel can fall (laugh)”* (FG). This may be associated with a lack of knowledge and understanding of structural engineering and what would be required for a building to collapse. The hotel had been considered structurally safe, so the fear regarding the hotel falling would be considered unfounded.

Fear in relation to the flood event: The majority of the focus group participants stated that *“I was scared”*, the degree of fear among the hotel workers varying from *“...it was a bit scary”* (FG) and *“...it was a little bit scary when I come across that water”* (I6) to being *“...so scared”* (FG) which was due to the perception of the hotel workers that *“...water is very, very dangerous”* (FG), while another participant stated *“I admit that I was very, very scared that day”* (FG). With reference to the flood event, a questionnaire respondent described his experience of the situation as follows: *“The flood was very scary; I have never seen so much water...”* (Q10).

These feelings were dispelled once the hotel workers had been reassured that they were in no immediate danger and that all would be all right, as is indicated by the next two excerpts: *“...we are safe, there is no danger for coming here...”* (I2) and *“...at the end of the day, we started to be fine”* (FG). In addition, a questionnaire

respondent's perception of the hotel was that *"I still view my workplace as a safe environment..."* (Q1).

Last of all, another facet to the degree of fear experienced was in relation to the safety of the guests and hotel workers present in the hotel at the time of the flood. As soon as each person in the hotel was considered to be safe, the level of fear waned, as is indicated by an interviewee in the comment: *"My personal emotion was, I was scared, up until I could evacuate the people, the staff, get them out..."* (I7).

From the above discussion, it would appear that feelings of fear were evoked in the hotel workers in response to seeing the flood waters rising, because of inexperience in dealing with natural disasters in the past, and as a reaction to the actual flood event, which had a negative effect on the hotel workers, especially in relation to personal safety.

1.2 Job insecurity

As a result of the flood, many of the hotel workers experienced an overwhelming sense of job insecurity related to their fear of termination if the hotel were to be closed indefinitely, and the effect of their own performance during the clean-up operation on their job security.

Job insecurity in relation to the hotel being closed indefinitely: Much of the fear experienced by the hotel workers was linked to job insecurity, as the hotel workers were worried that the hotel would be closed down, and they would no longer be employed. These feelings of job insecurity are indicated in the subsequent quotes from the research participants, describing their feelings: *"I was so scared. I think maybe, we're going to lose jobs"* (FG) while the question on the minds of some of the hotel workers was *"...are we still going to have our job or not..."* (FG), and *"I was still going to have a work? You see, I was very, very scared, to be quite honest with you"* (I3). The last excerpt suggests an association with the fear of termination, which was dispelled once the hotel workers had been reassured about their employment and is indicated in the next excerpt: *"Hey, I was so scared. I think maybe, we're going to lose jobs. But after when I see everything is ok, I know, I know there some*

other countries you can see flood, lot of damages, but this one as little bit not damaged” (FG).

Job security affected by the actions of the hotel workers: Despite the fear, several participants expressed the notion that their own actions in assisting with the clean-up process after the flood could positively impact their job security and secure their employment, as these participants succinctly state: *“And, yeah, when we arrived there, we had to do, I mean, anything in our powers just to help. Because actually we weren’t helping because we were doing anyone a favour because we knew we had to save our job” (FG).* *“...if we are going to solve the problem, then our job is going to be secured. But I mean, what affected us like, firstly we’ve been interrupted by thinking about losing job. That’s the first thing that came to our mind” (FG).* Specifically, it was shown that the hotel workers believed that the manner in which they conducted themselves during the flood and clean-up process created a positive impression on the senior management and ensured that they would be employed in the future. *“But my job secured because from this day the impression been given to the manager...” (FG).*

Job insecurity related to guests’ understanding the situation: For another participant, job security was related to ensuring that the guests at the hotel understood the situation: *“If I can convince the guests to understand, then my job is secure” (FG).* This referred to ensuring that the guests who were in the hotel at the time of the flood were safe, whilst offering guests the service that was still expected of them regardless of the situation.

Job insecurity in relation to fear of water: One of the research participants noted that he felt he needed to conquer his fear of water in order to secure his employment at the hotel, as is noted in this excerpt: *“I was so scared of water, but I had to...through water to keep my job. So I did it” (FG).*

From this it would appear that natural disasters such as floods will in some instances evoke feelings associated with job insecurity, especially when such disasters cause damage to individuals’ place of employment in a manner that might jeopardise the security of their employment. However, it also emerged from the data that

reassurance from the management of the hotel was very effective in allaying such fears. Other hotel workers coped with the fear by believing that their contribution to the clean-up process would ensure their continued employment.

1.3 Shock

As a result of the flood, an initial sense of shock was experienced when the hotel workers arrived at work and witnessed their changed environment and realised that the preventative measures they had put in place had proved to be ineffective.

Shock as a reaction to a changed work environment: The main causes of shock were in relation to arriving at a workplace that had changed significantly because of the rising water levels; this is articulated in the next comment: *“...and when people started arrived at work they were in complete shock, cause the, place was under water”* (I7)..

The shock was felt relative to the situation that had arisen overnight and was one of the first emotions experienced alongside fear. This is stressed by the following comments by research participants: *“...initial shock...”* (Q1), which wore off after arriving at work: *“the flooding happened during the night; I was shocked when I arrived next morning”* (Q10), *“...this was a shock what is happening...”* (FG), and *“...you are just absolutely shocked at what you see...”* (Q1).

Shock in relation to ineffective preventative measures: This was the worst flood experienced at the hotel as the water entered the basement and then flooded the first level, something that did not occur during previous floods at the hotel. Preventative measures had been put in place, but as is mentioned by one of the participants, it proved to be ineffective: *“but others, ja, they were shocked. Cause they never thought that the water will come in reception. Cause they thinking of those bags, maybe can block it...even this water push all the bags inside. They were like shocked. Ja, they were shocked”* (I6).

Shock as a reaction to the work that was required to be completed: Shock was experienced not only in reaction to the flooding situation but also as a reaction to the realisation of the vast amount of work that needed to be done in order to repair the

damage wreaked on the hotel by the water. The following extract describes this sentiment in the words of a research participant: *“Everyone was shocked and had a lot of work cut out for them”* (Q5). In addition, the hotel workers realised that they would need to prepare mentally for the physical and emotional challenges of the days ahead, indicated by a questionnaire respondent as *“Yes, I was shocked at first, but once I walked into the property and realise the chaos, I knew I had to prepare myself for a hectic day”* (Q5).

From the above discussion it would appear that the flood evoked a strong emotional response and that one of the first reactions among the hotel workers – shock – was, caused mainly by the sight of the water levels that continued to rise in the hotel. Additionally, the failure of the preventative measures that had been put in place and that resulted in the flood waters causing the tremendous damage gave rise to the feeling of shock by the hotel workers. Lastly, the sense of shock appeared to have been exacerbated by the realisation of the amount of work that would need to be undertaken in their changed work environment a consequence of the flood damage.

1.4 Sadness

As the initial feeling of shock wore off, hotel workers commonly experienced a feeling of sadness, which ranged from mild feelings of being *“upset”* (I7) to feeling *“depressed”* (Q8, FG). The sadness evoked was caused by a variety of reasons which will be discussed in the next few paragraphs.

Sadness caused by damage and loss: The sadness experienced by the hotel workers seemed to centre on the sense of damage and loss that was experienced at witnessing the destruction caused to various parts of the hotel by the flood. In particular, this was due to the extensive damage done to the recently renovated reception area by the mud and debris which had entered the hotel in the course of the flood. The sadness was possibly related to the recognition of the gravity of the situation, and the following extract from one of the research participants emphasises this aspect: *“...I think some people was sad, I mean, we’ve just redone the whole reception area two and half years ago. So everything was quite new still”* (I2); and *“...this time the water came through the front door of the hotel, flooding our reception*

and surrounding areas. I checked the areas affected and was saddened by the damage and loss caused by the water...” (Q1).

Sadness caused by personal losses: A research participant who stored his tools at the hotel found that these were damaged beyond repair in the flood; they were items that had been inherited and carried great sentimental value and memories associated with the person who had bequeathed them to him. This loss is evident in the following quote, *“I was very sad about my tools, some of my tools had very sentimental value to me, uh, it’s stuff that I’ve inherited...”* (I6).

Sadness caused by feeling helpless: In the flood, some of the hotel workers felt powerless in their ability to control the situation and it appears that these feelings of helplessness are related to the sadness experienced, as the following extracts from the interviews illustrate: *“I was really sad and upset and there’s nothing I can do. I mean, I actually just wanted to cry, because it was the most...up until that stage, the most helpless I had actually felt...”* (I7). As a result of the feelings of sadness arising from the feeling of helplessness, a question was asked by the one of the research participants *“...how will we survive?”* (FG). The statement appears to lean towards a sense of desperation in light of the feeling of helplessness experienced in the situation that unfolded before them.

While this section focused predominantly on the negative emotions experienced by the research participants, it should be noted that such emotions did not preclude the simultaneous experience of positive emotions, as the next excerpt illustrates: *“Although it was sad and devastating, everyone was excited to do as much as they can to make the process go quicker”* (Q5). Excitement and other positive emotions will be discussed further on in this chapter.

From the discussion above, it would appear that natural disasters such as floods have the potential to elicit varying degrees of sadness among the people involved. The sadness experienced by the hotel workers stemmed mainly from witnessing the damage caused by the flood, from experiencing personal losses, and from a sense of helplessness experienced in the wake of the flood.

1.5 Anger

The flood evoked a feeling of anger, mainly at the inaction of others, which will be discussed in the next paragraph.

Anger caused by the inaction of others: The researcher has mentioned in Chapter 1 that the lack of maintenance of the lake by the municipality situated behind the hotel exacerbated the flooding of the hotel. As the rain continued to fall on the night of the 16 January 2011, the Hennops River broke its banks as the lake behind the hotel could no longer sustain the increased volume of water. The swelling of the lake caused the water to spill into the neighbouring area and it began filling the basement of the hotel until the rain stopped, by which point the water had risen to the first floor, flooding the reception area. On numerous occasions after heavy rainfall the hotel had notified the municipality of the rising water levels in the lake situated behind the hotel. The hotel workers believed that the flooding of the hotel could have been prevented if the lake had been cleaned and maintained regularly, and this is indicated by the following comment: “...*anger that the City of Tshwane took so long to take heed of the hotel’s concerns regarding the lake and the condition of the Hennops River, especially upstream*” (Q1). Several other research participants expressed their sentiments regarding their anger, which was directed at the local municipality which had, in their opinion, done nothing in addressing the maintenance situation of the lake situated behind the hotel. The following extracts describe these feelings: “...*I was angry because we had been suggesting so many things for so long and no one had listened to us. Including the lake, which is out of our control*” (I7) and “*I was angry with the municipality for not cleaning the lake and prevent this from happening*” (Q9).

The discussion above about the anger which was directed at the City of Tshwane indicates that the flood impacted negatively on the hotel workers with regard to anger.

1.6 Devastation

Upon arriving at work and witnessing the water and the damage that had been caused, the hotel workers considered it to be “*devastating*” (I7). These feelings of devastation were caused by the realisation of the damage caused by the flood and the ineffectiveness of the preventative measures which had been put in place.

Devastation as a result of the damage caused: This sentiment arose as the first group of hotel workers arrived at work after they had been telephoned by the night duty staff, who had been present from the beginning of the flood until the rain eventually stopped and the water receded. This meant that the night shift staff experienced the flood in its entirety and the intensity of the reactions was expressed as follows: “*It was a very emotional experience. The damage caused is devastating...and also knowing the tough future ahead...*” (Q5) and “*I was devastated, the degree of which the flood caused damage was too much*” (Q7). These extracts also indicate their realisation of what the immediate future held and what would be required in order to reopen the hotel in the allotted time.

From the above it would appear that the feeling of devastation resulting from the flood had a negative impact on the hotel workers with regard to the volume of work that would be required in order to restore the hotel to its former condition.

1.7 Frustration

Natural disasters such as floods have the potential to elicit feelings of frustration, which are associated with anger, dealing with the expectations of others, and the messy and dirty workplace.

Frustration associated with anger: One of the reasons that the hotel workers experienced frustration is also associated with the anger which has been discussed earlier on in this section. The anger was directed at the local municipality which was believed not to have attended to the cleaning of the lake timeously and regularly, as is conveyed in the next extract: “*It is frustrating to know that it took that huge amount of damage to get the municipality to intervene*” (Q5). The frustration stems from the fact that the hotel and surrounding area had to be badly affected by flooding waters before the municipality decided to take action regarding the maintenance of the lake.

Frustration in dealing with the expectations of others: A further cause of the frustration experienced was that guests were not willing to accept explanations given for the reduced functionality of the hotel which was due to flooding of the basement and first floor, and this is indicated in the following quotation: “...*frustration, you do get some of the guests that don't accept anything you tell them*” (I2). Furthermore, one of the research participants found that she encountered some resistance in dealing with others, especially guests, and this resulted in feelings of frustration. The next extract articulates this sentiment: “...*the only difficult part for me was dealing with customers. I felt that I got a more, uh, resistance from certain customers than I did from my colleagues*” (I4). This gives the impression that in addition to dealing with their own emotions, the hotel workers had to manage the emotions of others, a situation that appears to have caused significant frustration to at least some of the participants.

Frustration in relation to the disordered and dirty workplace: Frustration was also experienced in connection with the actual work that had to be done in order to clean up the mud and debris which was found in and around the hotel premises, as well as the inconvenience caused by the remains of the flood. Specifically, a research participant indicated that “*it was frustrating to work in a muddy ground floor...*” (Q8).

The above discussion highlights the feeling of frustration which arose because of the hurdles encountered during the clean-up process of the debris remaining after the flood.

The first part of the theme of emotional responses has been devoted to the negative emotions that were elicited as a result of the flood, which included feelings of fear, job insecurity, shock, anger, sadness, devastation and frustration. The second part of this theme will focus on the positive emotions that arose during the flood.

2. POSITIVE EMOTIONS

This subsection centres on the positive emotions experienced by the hotel workers. The positive emotions which emerged through the data analysis process were happiness, enjoyment, gratitude, confidence, concern, comfort and enthusiasm, as will be discussed next.

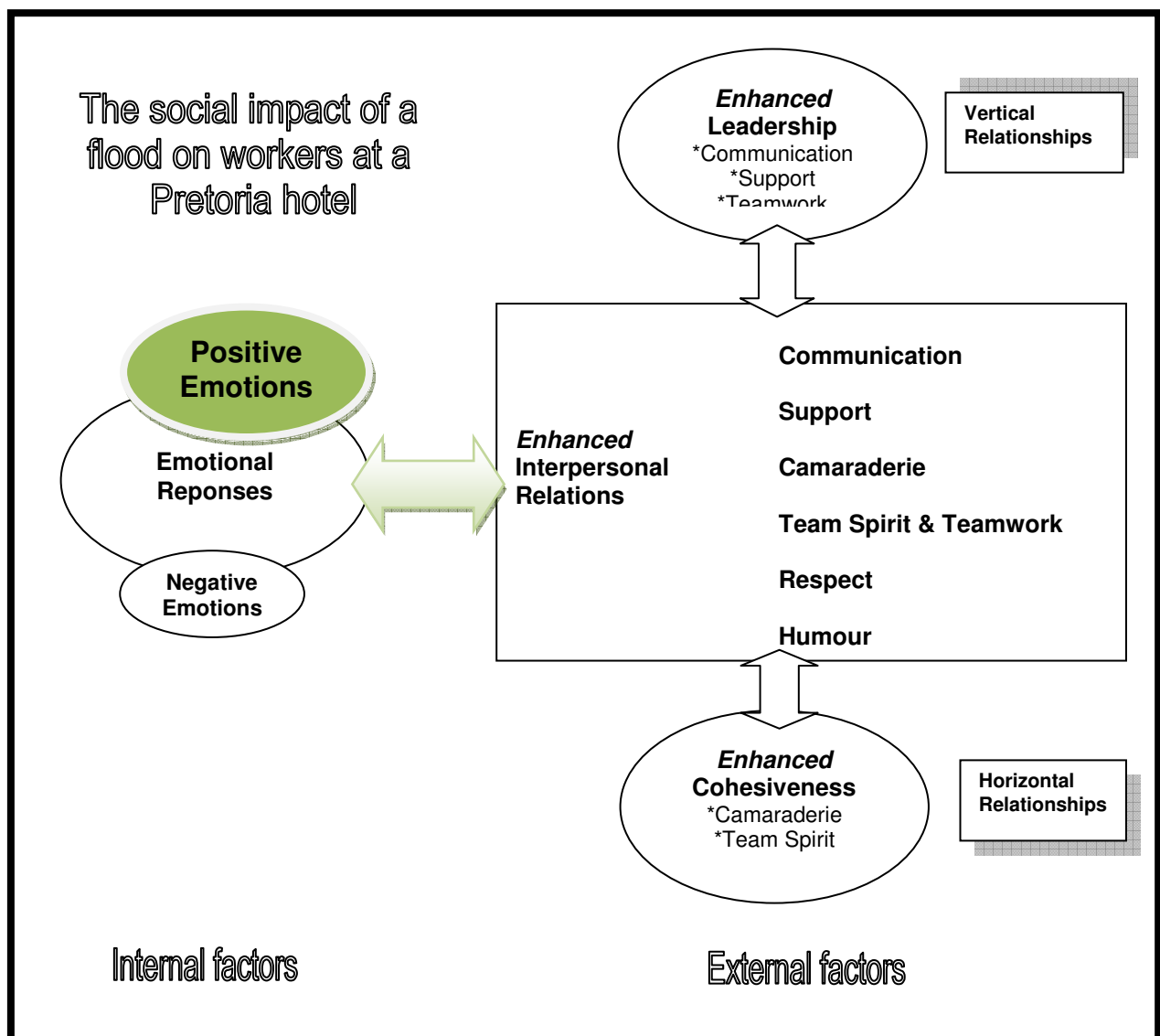


Figure 17: Positive emotional responses

In relation to the model depicted in Figure 17 of the relationships between main and sub-themes, the second discussion focuses on positive emotions, and where applicable the association between the positive emotional responses and interpersonal relations will be highlighted.

2.1 Happiness

As a result of the flood some of the hotel workers felt a sense of happiness which was characterised by the use of humour among the staff, and by smiling and laughter to express their happiness and enjoyment in working with colleagues.

2.1.1 Humour

The flood highlighted the sense of humour which was apparent among some of the hotel workers. The hotel workers employed humour and fun in order to deal with the unfolding events associated with the flood. Humour also assists in breaking down barriers, perceived and real, between people, and enhanced the interpersonal relations between the hotel workers, as conveyed in the following extract:

“...it becomes much more informal and personal. The jokes that’s made, I mean you’re standing there, you’re moving a pipe and everybody is in the water, and everybody is dirty and everybody is cold. So it becomes much more informal...it becomes almost a little game at the time. It’s not really work, it’s a little game that you are busy with, it’s jokes and I mean as it happened every time my cellphone fell in the water...so it’s those little things and then they’ve got plenty to say...” (I5).

As the formality of the hierarchy fell away, it became easier for the hotel workers to relate to one another. It is possible that they viewed themselves as equals with the same goal of completing the task of cleaning up the mud and debris and becoming operational as soon as it was possible to do so. They also had the ability to look at a situation in a light-hearted manner, as this extract shows: *“I mean the funniest part was the ladies walking with the high-heeled shoes in their hands through the foyer” (I5).*

The next quotation indicates that the hotel workers in a particular team communicated in a humorous manner without taking or causing offence, which is indicative of the type of interpersonal relations which existed among the hotel workers. The humour and humorous interactions, as they became evident, may have been a model for other hotel workers to emulate: *“And this team has actually got a sense of humour. They’ll actually pull practical jokes on each other which is something you don’t find often and I appreciate it, cause it makes for great spirit in the team...and chirping each other and ja, that’s nice, that was nice” (I5).*

The interviews emphasise the duality of emotions experienced, indicated by the simultaneous occurrence of positive and negative emotions. They also show that not all people view stressful situations negatively, but that people have the ability to be positive, this sentiment being illustrated by the statement: *“Well, it was a bit scary and fun at the same time”* (FG).

2.1.2 Smiling

As a result of the flood, an outward expression of happiness was required in order to allay fears in others, especially the guests, and this could be done by smiling. Exhibiting happiness outwardly may also have created a sense of security and calm for the guests, as is indicated in the next extract: *“...there were few guests in the hotel actually, and we try to cover the guests actually, but by smiling, you see we just did, not to show there’s floods but make the guests happy, smiling and everything...”* (FG).

Another reason that the hotel workers smiled during the flood and the clean-up was that they did not consider any task too unpleasant to carry out. This sentiment was expressed in the following quotation from the research participants: *“Most people from what I was told did it with a smile on their face...to do whatever was required of them”* (I1). In addition, their attitude towards work and life was a positive one, indicated by one of the hotel workers as: *“I generally go through life with a smile...”* (I5).

From the above it would seem that, in some cases at least, the flood enhanced the ability of the hotel workers to view situations in a positive light, demonstrated in this situation by smiling.

2.1.3 Laughter

The flood resulted in the expression of happiness through laughing. However, from the interviews it appeared that in this context laughter may in some instances have been a response to a stressful situation rather than an expression of genuine joy. Upon arriving for work, the initial reaction and response to the situation of one of the hotel workers was *“...laughing, hysterical laughter...”* (I5). In this case, laughter may

be, on the whole, not a positive emotion but rather a coping mechanism. The researcher classified this particular ability to use laughter in dealing with a difficult situation as a positive emotional response as it may have assisted in reducing the level of stress experienced. It may also indicate to others that the situation is manageable. It is also indicative of individual characteristics which lean towards being resilient. The following extract emphasises this aspect: *“I like to believe that I react pretty well under pressure and severe circumstances and ja, like I say, when I laughed, I honestly did laugh. Rather laugh than cry. I just said here we go again”* (15).

Laughter by the hotel workers once again shows the duality of emotional responses experienced by the hotel workers, which are indicated in the following statement: *“...we laughed a lot. We were tired, but we laughed a lot, we cried a lot...”* (17). The ability to view a situation in a positive light provides insight into the ability of the hotel workers to recover from stressful situations such as the flood, and points to their resilience.

2.1.4 Enjoyment

In dealing with the results of the flood, some of the hotel staff experienced a sense of enjoyment which was generated by having previously experienced similar situations, by working under pressure and by working with colleagues.

Enjoyment due to previous similar experiences: On arriving at the hotel, some of the hotel workers who had mentioned that this flood was not the first natural disaster they had experienced viewed the course of action in dealing with the flood as *“the third one, for me it was enjoyable...”* (FG).

Enjoyment in working with colleagues: There was a great sense of enjoyment related to working together, which is associated with a theme that emerged pertaining to interactional patterns and relationships, and is emphasised by the following excerpt: *“...the positive morale, the great team spirit, and people actually enjoying working together and do something different”* (14). Specifically, for one focus group participant, the enjoyment was related to working with managers responsible for other departments, as is described in this extract: *“...whatever happened to*

engage ourselves with other employees from other departments with other managers from other departments. It was, like, kind of enjoyment”.

This enjoyment is indicative of the types of relationships that the hotel workers had with one another, especially as the flood created an opportunity for hotel workers to work alongside colleagues from other departments, as the next excerpt makes clear: *“We sort of enjoyed cleaning up. So, it was great to see the interaction between myself and the team which was really a new team”* (14).

Enjoyment of working under pressure: One research participant indicated that she enjoyed working under pressure, and for some hotel workers the existence of pressure in the workplace acted as a motivator for performance, as is conveyed by the following: *“I actually enjoy that kind of thing, I like working under pressure...”* (15). The challenge of working under pressure may also enhance the feeling of enjoyment in dealing with the aftermath of the flood.

The above discussion highlights the enjoyment that the hotel workers experienced in working with their colleagues even while under the pressure of completing tasks in order to reopen the hotel as soon as was possible.

2.2. Appreciation

Natural disasters such as floods provide some people with the opportunity to experience and exhibit feelings of appreciation for others. In this research study this occurred as a result of hotel workers knowing that their colleagues would all assist in the clean-up process. In addition, there was an appreciation of the different roles that are required for the hotel to function fully, while a sense of gratitude and job security arose with the feeling of being appreciated. The reasons for appreciation mentioned by the research participants will be discussed in the next few paragraphs.

Assistance during the clean-up process: The flood caused considerable damage especially with regard to the debris that remained once the water had subsided. The amount of work that needed to be done in order to restore the hotel to its previous state meant that all employees of the hotel had to participate in the clean-up process. The general sentiment that arose was that the hotel workers were involved

willingly and there was a great sense of appreciation and tremendous respect for all people who contributed their time, especially as some of the hotel workers stayed after hours. The next excerpt also articulates this sentiment: *“For me I appreciate everyone who was there. Because I can’t point a person and say that one was not working. We were all working hard. So I think I appreciate everyone who was there. Because, we’re actually risking our lives then, we could have drowned...I appreciate anyone and respect anyone that was there”*.

Appreciation of different roles: There was a degree of role exchange between employees; this was due to guests still being present in the hotel. The hotel workers had to assist guests regardless of their actual position in the hotel. This meant that some of the research participants had the opportunity to increase their understanding of the roles fulfilled by other employees in the hotel, which led to their appreciation of the roles of their colleagues. This is expressed by the focus group participant in the following paragraph.

“Well, for me I think it, from my side it made me to respect and appreciate what other people are doing. Because I think at first we had that problem where we through that this department takes the other department. But, since from then, I think we learn to appreciate one another. Because maybe if you are a porter and you have to serve a guest at that time. And, you have to do it in two minutes time. You have to go and make coffee, build up, prepare toast, do this and that, then you’ll know that this people work hard. I think it make people appreciate one another” (FG).

Gratitude: There was a sense that some of the hotel workers did not *“take anything for granted”* (I3), which suggests an understanding of the notion that everything is finite and could disappear and thus one should appreciate all one has in life. Another dimension of gratitude that was expressed by some participants was their appreciation of their family and friends, which led the researcher to conclude that having significant others present in one’s life and having their support aids in the effective management of stressful situations or events. One participant mentioned that he *“...appreciate her support...”* (I5), which was in relation to the support provided by their significant others during the flood and clean-up process.

In addition, gratitude was expressed towards all the hotel workers by an employee function which was held to thank everyone for their dedication and hard work during the flooding and clean-up process; this was mentioned by a hotel worker who said that the hotel management, *"...gave us a braai to say thanks to us... [it made the participant feel] very good, we did feel appreciated, you know, at least there was a thank you. And you know that thank you word. Very, is a very strong word, especially after the clean-up and we did appreciate that thank you. Not sincerely the braai or whatever, for me it was only the thank you from my boss"* (I2).

Job security: The appreciation experienced and given to others was also related to job security. In this context, there was a great sense of appreciation for their secure employment in light of the situation that they were experiencing. In general it was more about *"I feel appreciated, because at the long run, we still have our job. That's all. And we must appreciate what we've got. Today it's there, tomorrow it might not be there"* (I3). This led to the hotel workers understanding fully that nothing is permanent: *"I learnt how quickly a situation can change..."* (Q1), that natural disasters like floods have an impact on their lives, and thus they need to appreciate each day and *"...not to take anything for granted"* (Q1), and *"...that we have to not take anything for granted especially not the elements which can change your life overnight"* (Q10).

For the maintenance department, job security is related to having situations like the flood so that it still have a role to fulfil, apart from the general role of maintenance of the hotel. *"It's my job. You know if things don't go wrong, I won't have a job... that's job security to me"* (I5). The appreciation in this instance would be in relation to the flood situation which provided a sense of job security by ensuring that there would be work to be undertaken by the maintenance department.

From the above discussion it can be seen that the flood provided the hotel workers with the opportunity to experience the roles played by their colleagues, and in some instances to express their appreciation for their colleagues, especially regarding their willingness and commitment in the clean-up process. Appreciation was also expressed regarding the roles that other employees fulfilled at the hotel, as some of the hotel workers had the opportunity to carry out tasks that were not part of their job

description. The last two reasons for the appreciation of others was in relation to the gratitude expressed by the general manager in having a braai to celebrate their work and the reopening of the hotel and lastly, appreciation was expressed for the peace of mind associated with job security.

2.3 Emotional support

The flood provided the hotel workers with the opportunity to experience emotional support from others. The sub-theme of emotional support encompasses comfort, concern and support, which will be elaborated upon in the next few sections.

2.3.1 Comfort

Comfort was experienced by the hotel workers from their senior management and their colleagues.

Comfort from management: During the flood and its aftermath, the management of the hotel was seen to comfort the workers while directing them in the tasks that needed to be completed, which gave the staff a sense of security and safety as is indicated in the next extract: “...*but through the comfort of the management to us. I mean this, what I started to say ok, we are winning. Then going back to normal to say, I don't have to worry about...*” (FG).

Comforting other hotel workers: During this time, the positive nature of the relationships that existed among the hotel workers was emphasised by the level of comfort experienced and observed among colleagues. Comfort also refers to the ability to reach out to others and to offer and receive support from others, which is conveyed by this excerpt; “...*when affected by this, but we are trying to comfort each other...*” (FG). This gives the impression that the hotel workers tried to alleviate the emotions felt by others by showing that all of them were in some manner influenced by the flood. The hotel workers would get through the situation as long as they relied on each other and it appears that they had the ability to reach out to others and gain emotional support during times of need. “...*if we talk to each other comfort each other, especially when supporting employees support, management coming together and support each other*” (FG).

2.3.2 Concern

The flood also focused attention on the concern for others that prevailed during the flooding and clean-up process, which may indicate that the hotel workers were concerned for their colleagues in relation to the huge amount of work that they would have to do in order to reopen the hotel on time. This was emphasised by a participant during the interviews in the following way: *“I think it was more concern and assistance for the other departments”* (11).

Another dimension was concern for the safety of the hotel guests and staff who were located in the hotel at the time of the flood and immediately thereafter, which is indicated in the next excerpt: *“...the idea was to protect people and get things organised...”* (17).

2.3.3. Collegial support

This last discussion on emotional support focuses on collegial support, characterised by the support offered by and received from management and colleagues and also by receiving encouragement as a form of support. This will be elaborated upon in the next few paragraphs.

Management support: The hotel workers observed the management team leaning on each other in order to support each other throughout the flood and clean-up process. This indicates the ability of management to create an environment where people know that they can rely on each other, and is brought to light in the next extract: *“Everybody just supported everybody. We are a hell of a team here. The management team here is a hell of a team together here. It’s, it’s honestly one of the better places I’ve worked at in my life”* (15).

Colleague support: Some of the research participants remarked that they knew that, among their colleagues, they could reach out to give and receive *“...employees support...”* (FG). The support was also linked with lending a hand to those who did not fully comprehend or grasp what was required of them during the situation. The support was described during an interview as follows: *“... it was excellent, people understand each other. And if a person didn’t understand, people were there to come and assist and to help”* (18).

Support as encouragement: From the analysis of the data, encouragement appeared to be associated with support, specifically when describing the behaviour of the hotel workers during the clean-up process. The hotel workers mentioned that their colleagues “*were so encouraging...that it was only for a while of walking in the wilderness*” (Q4). This indicates that the hotel workers felt guided by their colleagues through the clean-up process and aided by the support and encouragement of their colleagues.

From the above discussion it would appear that the flood provided the opportunity for the hotel workers to exhibit concern for colleagues as well as to experience levels of comfort, concern and support offered by senior management and colleagues.

2.4 Positive atmosphere

As a result of the flood it would appear that a positive atmosphere was experienced and was characterised by positive morale, sentiments of excitement, optimism and hope, and team spirit, all of which are discussed below.

Positive morale: “*Positive morale*” (I4) is associated with the attitude of the hotel workers regarding their ability to complete their allocated tasks and reopen the hotel in the allotted time. The ability to view stressful and adverse situations such as floods in a positive light was illustrated by the comments made by the research participants that the workplace had “*...such a nice atmosphere actually considering the circumstances we were under*” (I5), and that there were “*...more jokes and a lighter atmosphere...as the usual strict codes between management and staff were forgotten for the time*” (Q6). Positive morale is also associated with breaking down barriers between hotel workers, which aided the outcome of the clean-up process.

Excitement: Excitement was also experienced by the hotel workers when asked to describe the unfolding events of the flood and clean-up process; this was expressed as “*it was exciting*” (I4) and “*there’s some excitement happening again...I enjoy the excitement*” (I5), which was related to undertaking tasks which were different from their daily tasks. There was a degree of excitement felt in being able to contribute to the overall success of the clean-up process, which is noted in the next extract as “*...everyone was excited to do as much as they can...*” (Q5).

Optimism and hope: In addition, the hotel workers had a sense of optimism and hope in dealing with the situation, which points to their resilient nature. Optimism was noted by an interviewee who said that there was “...*no despondency...*” (I5) present among his colleagues, and that there was no time to wallow in the negative aspects of the situation and that there was “...*hope that the better will eventually come*” (Q8).

Team spirit: Team spirit will be discussed in greater detail in the next theme focusing on cohesiveness; however, aspects which are pertinent to the theme of a positive atmosphere are addressed in this section. Team spirit is closely linked to cohesion and camaraderie, and gives an indication of the unity and harmony that was observed and experienced among the hotel workers. The research participants noted that one of the positive outcomes of the flood was that the team spirit was intensified, which led to a positive atmosphere, and thus to improved interpersonal relationships, which is made clear by the next excerpt: “*What changed more really, the team spirit. Before the flood we used to work well together but I would say after the flood it was enhanced...one thing that was good out of the flood...*” and that “...*the team spirit growing stronger and stronger every day since the flood...*” (I4).

From this it would appear that natural disasters such as floods have the potential to create an atmosphere which is considered positive and is characterised by positive morale, excitement, optimism and hope, and that such situations, while negative, might enhance the ability to experience positive emotions.

2.5 Courage and bravery

This penultimate discussion of the positive emotions experienced in relation to the flood is on courage and bravery. The qualities of courage and bravery experienced or observed in the hotel workers were related to conquering personal fears during the flood situation and its immediate aftermath, which is discussed next.

Conquering personal fears: The section discussing negative emotional responses highlighted the fear experienced, particularly fear of the water, and especially in regard to being unable to swim. A focus group participant pointed out his own courage in facing his fear of the water by the following statement: “*I’m brave,*

because I was so scared of water..." (FG). The flood also facilitated the process of being able to demonstrate courage, as there was a need to find the strength and courage to face the uncertainty brought about by the flood.

The discussion pertaining to courage and bravery underlines the fact that the flood aroused the potential for exhibiting courage and bravery, especially with reference to conquering personal fears, and this may be linked to wellbeing and resilience.

2.6 Remaining calm

The last discussion within this theme of positive emotional responses pertains to remaining calm, which was associated with the ability to regain one's composure despite the challenging situation. This is expressed by a research participant in the following excerpt: *"...it's to remain calm, first one is to remain calm, just don't panic...To say that...the most important is remain calm, don't panic. Cause I wasn't panicking. I did panic but I did manage to calm myself down"* (I6). Panic was experienced by some of the hotel workers; however, the feeling of panic was associated with the ability to calm oneself despite the situation. This ability to calm oneself down in a stressful situation probably assisted the hotel workers to respond promptly and effectively to the situation as it unfolded.

From this it would appear that, although the flood elicited feelings of panic in the hotel workers, these feelings were associated with the ability to become composed quite quickly despite the situation.

Concluding remarks for Theme 1

The comments made in the preceding paragraph by a focus group participant indicate the multitude of emotions experienced by the workers when arriving on the scene. There is a sense of sadness as thoughts start going through the mind of the person as to the safety and stability of the structure of the hotel. An observation is made by the person that water is considered to be dangerous, which gives an indication of the threat the water posed on the day of the flood. On seeing the rising water levels, the hotel workers experienced confusion and helplessness with regard to what needed to be done first in the clean-up process.

“I arrived here around two/three. I saw so many people around the water...so when I came through I see a lot of water; it was for the first time. The first thing that comes to my mind, it was happening...I was so depressed of that, what was going to happen if the building can go down. Cause, obvious, water is very, very dangerous. So, when we get here, I start to work, I just knew that we will work harder, more than any days. So then I tried to ask to my colleagues, uh, what happened and then they can't explain, cause we can't see, there's water. But, uh, they were very, how can you say, confused, you know, uh, they just tell you that must get something that you have to do. Can't see that, you know, you don't even know where to start, or what to do, just, so, ja. What I can say that what happening now. So scared, scared. Ja” (FG).

This first theme centred on the emotional responses of the hotel workers to the flood and its immediate aftermath. The sequence of events associated with the flood appeared to parallel the sequence of emotions experienced by the hotel workers. The negative emotions experienced ranged from initial fear and related job insecurity, to shock, sadness, anger and a sense of devastation and frustration. These varying emotions to some degree had an effect on the people on an individual level as well as in their relations with others. Some of the negative emotions abated once information was provided to the hotel workers and they understood that the hotel would reopen in due course.

The second portion of this theme focused on the hotel workers' experiences of positive emotional responses, which varied from feelings of happiness, appreciation, and emotional support to a positive atmosphere and the courage and bravery that was observed and enacted.

The next theme focuses on the ways in which the flood impacted on the interactional patterns and relationships of the hotel workers.

THEME 2 – INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

The second theme that emerged from the analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires and the semi-structured individual and focus group interviews pertained to the interpersonal relations of the hotel workers present at the time of the flood. The researcher aimed to discover whether the flood had any impact on the relationships between these hotel workers. Three central relationships were noted in the analysis of the information: relationships with colleagues and management, relationships with significant others, and relationships with guests. Of the three types of relationships noted, the researcher will focus mainly on the relationships with colleagues and management, as these relationships featured much more strongly than those with significant others and with guests.

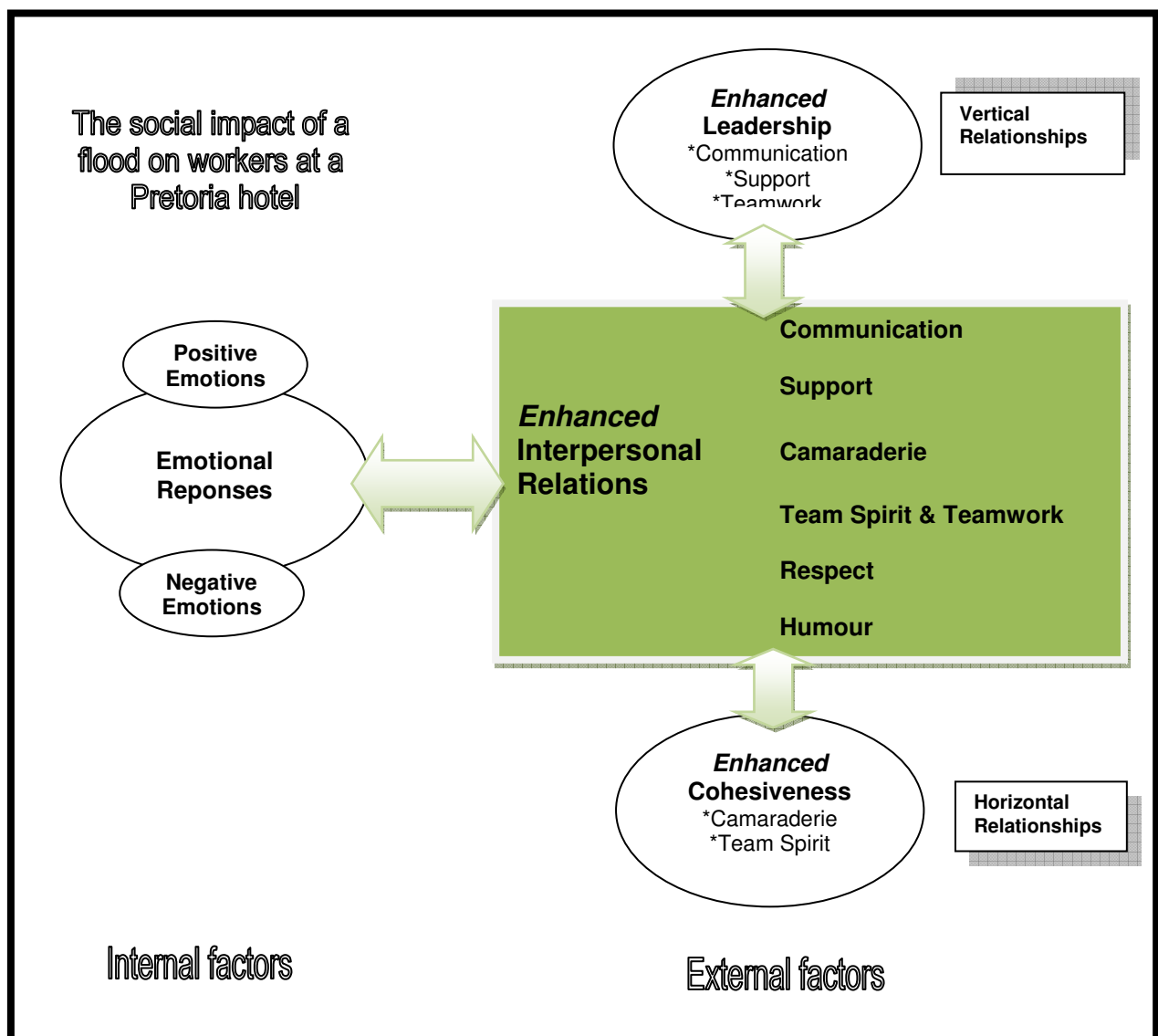


Figure 18: Enhanced interpersonal relations

Figure 18 graphically depicts the relationships between the main and sub-themes. Theme 2 focuses on the interpersonal relations between the hotel workers. The reciprocal relationship between all four themes will be highlighted where those relationships emerged.

1. Relationships before and after the flood

This sub-theme delves into the nature of the relationships before and after the flood. The information gleaned from the interviews and questionnaires indicates that there was a clear division between the character of relationships before the flood and those subsequent to the flood. The discussion in section 3 of theme 1 has already highlighted some characteristics of the relationships between colleagues.

Before the flood, the relationship between colleagues was one which was described as being professional, where each department focused on its own tasks with very little interaction with other departments unless necessary. This notion was held by a research participant who viewed their department as being a “...*separate entity and avoid front office...*” (I4), which may have created an “us and them” atmosphere; the impression was that each department functioned almost in isolation with little or no interaction with other departments. As a result of the flood, the hotel workers were placed in a situation which required cooperation between departments in order to achieve their common purpose of cleaning up the mud and debris which remained after the water subsided. This again leans towards the positive outcomes of the flood, as the hotel workers discovered more about their colleagues, and the relationships have since improved. This is further noted in the comment made by an interview participant that the flood “...*made a difference...*” (I2) to the relationships they had with colleagues.

One of the questions posed to the research participants attempted to explore the characteristics of the relationships between hotel workers and any differences noted after the flood. In describing this situation, a research participant said that: “*I think, I would've said yes cause, whereas before each department just gets on with it, but because of the situation, I think, I think that there was more of a camaraderie and, and, and that sort of feeling, cause, cause everybody just, you know, did what was necessary*” (I1). The sense of camaraderie will be discussed later on in section 5.4 in

relation to the interpersonal relationships. There is also an association with the main theme of cohesiveness which focuses strongly on camaraderie and will be discussed further on in theme 3.

As a result of the flood, the relationships between hotel workers progressed beyond the expected professional relationship of colleagues, and have been described as ranging from “...good...” (Q9) to “...excellent...” (Q5). Some of the research participants believed that the enhanced relationships with their colleagues have continued, as is conveyed by the following excerpts: “...relationships have improved...” (Q5), “...before the flood we used to work well together but I would say after the flood it was enhanced...” (I4), and “...the working relationships have improved and have been sustained...” (I4). The difference might be because the hotel workers “...now understand the significance of teamwork...” (Q7), which would imply that the hotel workers had to trust, rely and depend completely on others in order to complete tasks which were assigned to them as a group.

However, one of the research participants noted that, though a difference was experienced immediately after the flood, after some time had passed “...things are back to the way they were...” (I1). This indicates that for some people the enhancement of interpersonal relationships was not sustained, which may be due to “...not interacting as much...” (I1) with other hotel workers, alongside whom they had worked in the clean-up process.

Many research participants felt that the flood did not significantly affect their relationships. They said that the relationships either had not changed or that the difference noted in relationships before and after the flood was not major, specifically among the senior management team, as was described in the next excerpt: “Look the, the, senior management, we, we meet normally every day so the, the difference is not really that much compared to junior staff members” (I5). In addition, for some the “...difference was not as much...” (I4), “...the change was not obvious...” and the flood was “...not cause for major change...” (I7). This may be due to the hotel workers having being “...always close...” (I7) and that in the past “...relationships were always good...” (Q3).

An interesting aspect that arose was that a research participant noted that, prior to the flood, he *“...didn't like my managers...but get along well now...”* (Q5). Improved interpersonal relations occurred as a result of the flood, which, in providing the opportunity to bridge gaps between people may have allowed the hotel workers to learn more about their colleagues.

For some hotel workers the flood had no impact on their interpersonal relations with their colleagues, as is conveyed by the following extracts:

- *“...no change personally...”* (I2)
- *“...still the same...”* (I3, Q9, Q10)
- *“...nothing changed...”* (I3, Q9, Q10)
- *“...no negative effect...”* (I5)
- *“...hasn't changed...”* (I6)
- *“...remain the same...”* (Q1)
- *“...no change...”* (Q6, Q8)
- *“...no impact...”* (Q8)
- *“...didn't affect me...”* (Q10).

From the above discussion, it is clear that the flood provided the opportunity for relationships to be explored and described. Many research participants noted that their interpersonal relationships had improved because of the flood, while several hotel workers felt that the improvements in their relationships were minimal and some research participants found that there was no difference in their relationships before and after the flood.

2. Exemplary behaviour

As a result of the flood some of the hotel workers were noted as standing out from others, in behaving in an exemplary manner in the management of the flood.

Although the hotel workers perform their daily duties alongside their colleagues, in the midst of the aftermath of the flood some hotel workers outshone their colleagues and their strength of character was noted and admired, which enhanced interpersonal relations. The following extract from a research participant articulates this notion: *“I really think that the more difficult situations you get in, the more you*

test a person's character. I must say the characters that we found was, was quite good and I think that my team is as close as ever" (I2). This comment indicates that the strength of character that the hotel workers demonstrated was viewed favourably by their colleagues.

The general manager was mentioned favourably as one of two individuals who had behaved in an exemplary manner during the situation, and he and the maintenance manager were described as being *"...hands-on gentlemen..."* (Q1). The general manager was described as a person who was willing to assist where possible regardless of what it entailed, a quality which is described in the next extract: *"...as the general manager, uh, if I needed a spanner he said right where do I get it and run and go and fetch it"* (Q5). Of all the people employed at the hotel, the one who stood out significantly was the maintenance manager, who was often mentioned as being the most committed during the situation and as going beyond the obligations of his work role; this was highlighted by one interview participant in describing him as *"...most dedicated..."* (I7) and in mentioning that *"the maintenance manager...he has really gone on beyond the call of duty..."* (Q1). The quotes reflect the personal character of the maintenance manager and the impression he made as a person who was committed to his place of employment and who would exceed the expectations of others.

The characteristics of the two managers mentioned in the preceding paragraph will be further discussed in the next sub theme and in depth in theme 4 which centres on leadership.

From the discussion on exemplary behaviour, the flood called attention to the potential of the hotel workers to go beyond what was expected, which was considered an admirable quality.

3. Leadership

Leadership refers to the manner in which groups of people are led in order to achieve goals and objectives while having a clear vision in mind, which is dependent on the situation that presents and/or the group that needs to be led (Kotter, 2011:38; Shepard, 2010:151). Leaders, are therefore, expected to adapt when faced with

change and adversity (Heifetz & Laurie, 2011:57). Leadership, which has emerged as a main theme, is significant in this research study and is discussed separately in theme 4. However, as it has a bearing on interpersonal relations, it is discussed in brief within the context of this theme.

The manner in which the management of the hotel dealt with the flood and the clean-up had an impact on the hotel workers, specifically with reference to the ability to remain calm during the situation. Remaining calm in an adverse situation gave the hotel workers the perspective and clarity required to make the best possible decisions to benefit the whole group. This particular aspect was emphasised in the following extract: *“I think the way management handled it...that made the big difference as there was no panic or you know no despondency...”* (I5) and was further indicated in the next statement: *“The managers were surprisingly calm and accommodating. This helped us remain calm and focused so that we could meet our deadlines...”* (Q5). Thus the quality and type of management during a natural disaster such as a flood might be a decisive factor in the successful outcome of the situation.

In addition to the sense of calm inspired by the managers as in above statement, the hierarchical barriers were removed during the clean-up process, which resulted in relationships *“becom[ing] much more informal and personal”* (I5). This may also imply that the perceived disparities between people became less obvious and/or prevalent.

The flood at the hotel pointed out the fact that the type of leadership present during a natural disaster has an effect on the manner in which people respond to the situation, and may also make a difference in the outcome of the event.

4. Camaraderie and togetherness

Camaraderie can be considered as the solidarity and comradeship that groups have, while togetherness, which is associated with camaraderie, refers to the group of hotel workers functioning as one unit with one goal, an aspect which was mentioned often by the various research participants in this study. This aspect is characterised by camaraderie, feeling included, friendship and togetherness, which are discussed

in the subsequent paragraphs. This sub-theme is discussed at length in the next main theme, which is cohesiveness, and therefore the discussion in this section will be brief.

Camaraderie: The hotel workers found a greater sense of camaraderie with each other and connected with each other on a deeper personal level than they had prior to the flood. This means that the sense of comradeship in dealing with an adverse situation would not have occurred if the flood had not occurred. This is evident in the following statement: *“There has been a sense of camaraderie with everyone pulling together to assist in any way possible”* (Q1). This feeling of comradeship gives the impression of being together in the trenches, where new relationships are forged.

Feeling included: The sense of feeling included highlights the notion that some hotel workers felt a need to share in the experience of the flood and that it was important for some to be in the midst of the flood experience, as was expressed in the following excerpt, indicating that the hotel workers *“...wanted to be part of it...”* (Q5) and that they *“...stood up together...”* (FG).

Friendship: The relationships between hotel workers during the flood and its aftermath were described as being *“...like old-time friends...”* (Q2), which would indicate the informality and level of comfort felt between hotel workers.

Togetherness: Togetherness is associated with camaraderie and refers to the group of hotel workers functioning as one unit with a common purpose, as is expressed in the comments made by several research participants with regard to the team, who were *“...pulling together...”* (I1, Q6, Q10) and *“...getting together...”* (I2). There also seemed to be *“...an enjoyment working together...”* (I4). This indicates that, as a result of the flood, the hotel workers showed a sense of solidarity and fellowship which was viewed positively by the hotel workers.

As a result of the flood, some of the research participants felt that their relationships were enhanced and this is expressed in the following excerpts: *“...departments are closer...”* (I2), *“...very close knit...”* (I5), and this is because the floods *“...brought us closer...”* (I2, I5, Q5, Q10).

A final word on the camaraderie is that one of the hotel workers remarked that “...together we are strong...” (Q7). This demonstrates the belief of the research participants that the flood provided the opportunity to work together and create a unified, cohesive team.

From the above, it seems that the flood had the potential to enhance camaraderie and togetherness, which came about because of a sense of feeling included and friendship.

5. Communication

As a result of the flood, the manner in which the hotel workers communicated with one another during the situation came to the fore, and was characterised by open communication, listening and the sharing of emotions.

Communication between management and the hotel staff ensured that there was no ambiguity about the goals and objectives to be achieved in the days following the flood. It also refers to an understanding of what was required from the hotel workers and ensuring that tasks were explained clearly to ensure that objectives were met .in good time On the whole, it was noted that the communication between the hotel workers was “...good...” (Q3, FG) and that they “...communicated well...” (I2, I6) with and among one another. This may have been partly due to the “...morning meetings...” (I4) and the “...regular meetings...” (I2, Q7) held daily and throughout the course of the day; in addition, it was mentioned that “...every few hours we called a meeting together” (I2). When the managers had finished with their meetings they “...communicated to the team...” (I4), and “...emailed colleagues on a different shift...” (Q8).

Open communication: Clear and open communication entails being able to speak with clarity and impart meaning accurately; however, it also involves the ability to listen attentively (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008:3). This particular aspect of communication is mentioned by one of the research participants, who said that the hotel workers were “...open to suggestions...” (I5). This implies a reciprocal relationship which is

characterised by greater understanding of colleagues through taking time to listen to others and communicating openly with them.

In addition, one participant stated that “...before an instruction is handed out it was discuss[ed] with us what we were thinking and what ideas we have to overcome the problem” (Q2). This comment signifies the collaborative relationship that existed during the clean-up process.

Listening: The flood provided the hotel workers with a situation where they had to expand their communication skills, especially listening skills, which is illustrated by the following comment that people started “...listening more to each other...” (Q2). This is an interesting aspect as the hotel workers now pay greater attention to each other, which occurred as a result of the flood.

Emotions: The ability to communicate and share emotions openly and honestly with others, even in the workplace, had a positive impact on the manner in which hotel workers related to one another, as was noted by some of the hotel workers: “...we cried a lot” (I7). Furthermore, some of their colleagues did not feel ashamed to express or display the depth of their emotions “...I actually just wanted to cry” (I7), something which was also observed in others as is stated in the following excerpt, “...he started crying...” (I5).

The above discussion highlights the effect of the flood in enhancing communication between and among hotel workers and management, which was characterised by open communication, listening and emotions.

6. Support

Support, specifically receiving and offering social support, has the capacity to assist people in coping with stressful situations in constructive ways (Argyle & Martin, 1991:85). While emotional support refers to the encouragement offered and received among group members, it also entails offering friendship to group members, as well as paying attention to the problems of others without offering advice or suggestions (Forsyth, 2010:119). Support has been discussed in Theme 1, paragraph 3 in relation to the emotions that arose during the flood and the clean-up process. In

addition, a further dimension is added to theme of support which pertains to the interpersonal relations of the hotel workers.

This natural disaster provided the hotel workers with the opportunity to extend support to their colleagues in various ways, which include social support, support structure, assistance and teamwork, as will be discussed in the ensuing paragraphs.

Social support: An overall sense of support for each of the hotel workers prevailed as a result of the flood as was illustrated by the statement made by one of the interviewees that her colleagues were “...*supporting everybody...*” (15). Practical support was demonstrated to colleagues by providing meals and beverages for the hotel workers who were engaged in working in different areas. This indicated that there was a sense of duty in relation to the social support offered to their colleagues, as was emphasised in the following statement: “...*even the waiters, the porters they even bring us cold drinks, they bring us coffee, they bring us sandwiches...*” (18).

Support structure: One of the reasons for the successful management of the flood was a “...*really amazing support structure...*” (17). In addition an interviewee stated that he had “...*surrounded myself with good people...*” (17). This illustrates the hotel workers’ belief that they could rely on people around them to support them in difficult situations. The social support exhibited and experienced by the hotel workers assisted the group in coping with the stressful situation caused by the flood.

Assistance: Assistance is the help given to others where required, and was exhibited by the hotel workers, who showed “...*concern and assistance for the other departments...assisting where necessary*” (11) and believed that it “...*doesn’t matter what you’re doing, go there and see what everyone is doing and where you can help and assist*” (12). Even though the hotel workers may have completed their allocated tasks, there was a willingness to assist others so that everyone and each department would benefit from completing the tasks and reopening the hotel sooner than expected.

Although the hotel had been flooded before, this particular flood of January 2011 was the worst recorded, and caused the most damage. It was noted by one research

participant that *“Some of these people I’ve worked with for three, three and a half years and I’ve never seen a caring side like they’ve shown on those few days”* (I2). One can conclude that this particular flood may have prompted some hotel workers to reveal more of their emotional side to their colleagues which had not been expressed up until that point. This implies that the flood provided these hotel workers with the opportunity to reach out on an interpersonal level and connect with others.

There were also people who would not under normal circumstances give more than required. As a result of the flood, some of the hotel workers noticed that their colleagues eagerly volunteered their time, which appears to imply that new relationships could be forged as a result of the willingness to assist others. The following statement indicates this sentiment exactly: *“Normally people you think will never come will never stay after hours to help...my working hours is finished but please where can I still help, I want to stay here, I want to help. I want to be part of this, and I think that goes a long way”* (I2). Thus, one may conclude that the flood had the potential to unleash greater than usual levels of productivity, co-operation and assistance from the hotel workers.

Many research participants remarked positively on the eager and enthusiastic manner in which all their colleagues assisted where they could, which further links with the sense of camaraderie exhibited by the hotel workers. This sentiment is emphasised in the next statement that *“Everybody, honestly, I mean everybody pitched in and helped shoes off, carry furniture...”* (I5). Taken as a whole, almost everybody employed at the hotel helped where they could and were of the opinion that *“...we all helped each other”* (Q5) and that, as colleagues, they *“...have to help each other...”* (FG). This could also relate to a sense of the duty owed to others, which could be exhibited by assisting them.

The assistance that was given to others was also done voluntarily, indicating that the hotel workers felt that helping out was something they wanted to do of their own accord and they did not feel coerced into helping. This sentiment is indicated in the next few extracts: *“so they were really giving it out of their own hearts and wanting to do it”* (I4), the hotel workers *“...help[ed] with love...”* (I6), and *“...very willing to*

help...” (I7, FG). In addition, as they looked around, the hotel workers noted that *“they wanted to do everything; they wanted to say and try to carry stuff out”* (I7).

There were times when some hotel workers felt that they needed more help, and were able to ask for and accordingly receive the assistance they required, as is illustrated in this statement *“...I really needed help...”* and *“the guys; they helped me, help each other...”* (I6). This means that assistance was not only offered willingly, but that the hotel workers had the ability to ask for help from colleagues, which indicates a trusting and supportive relationship.

Teamwork: Teamwork will be discussed in greater detail in theme 3 – cohesiveness. During the research phase of this study and the process of data analysis, the sub-theme of teamwork emerged and was featured quite strongly by many of the research participants. It was one of many aspects commented on in a positive light and many participants felt that it really characterised the entire situation. This was conveyed by the statements made relative to the work that needed to be done, describing it as *“...a group effort...”* (I2), a *“...team effort...”* (I7) and remarking that *“...no one said no...”* (I2), and *“we did work together as a team”* (I3).

Some people had to learn to work with new team members, which created an opportunity for the development of new relationships with colleagues in other departments. This was because various tasks that needed to be completed required groups of people who were readily available to undertake the assignments. Thus, people who had not worked together in the past had to do so now, and managers had to *“...learn to work with them”* (I4). As the new team members observed how the existing team members interacted and worked, it was *“...easy for the new team...to fall in and do the same...”* (I4). This implies that observed behaviour acted as model for the new group members to emulate, which probably facilitated the successful clean-up process of the flood, in addition to providing the opportunity for the development of new relationships.

The flood provided the opportunity for increased interactions between colleagues and departments. It was noted by one of the research participants that there *“...were more interdepartmental interactions...”* (I4), and that they *“...all can work together...”*

(Q2), *“...as a team...”* (Q7, FG), and *“...really are a team...”* (FG). These extracts reflect a team that was able to function as a cohesive unit with interpersonal relations and team spirit that were enhanced as a result of the flood. This implies that after the flood the hotel workers reconceptualised themselves as a team rather than simply as a group of people who worked at the same hotel.

As a result of the flood, some of the hotel workers, after working side by side with their colleagues, realised that they enjoyed the relationships that had developed and wished to continue to nurture those relationships, and that they had a *“...relationship like never before...”*. However, prior to the flood, one research participant noted that because of the nature of their work, they *“...didn’t want close relationships with others...”* (I8), this was because they were *“...not working closely with others...”* (I8). This suggests that the flood not only increased a sense of team spirit in general, but that it also, in some instances, enhanced the quality of personal relationships between workers.

The last few excerpts highlight the type of teamwork involved and the involvement of everyone in the clean-up situation. Hotel workers showed that they *“...worked well together...”* (I4, I5), and that the *“...teamwork...”* (I4, I5, I7, I8, Q2, Q3, Q5, FG) increased and that it was *“...exceptional...”* (I5). In addition, it was mentioned that the attitude towards teamwork *“...starts with our GM...”* (I5), and that *“...the teamwork that I experienced, I mean I was not expecting it, so it was really great to see how people worked together in a messy and disastrous situation. From the general manager himself down to the guys on the ground who were doing the actual cleaning. It was great”* (I4). This last extract also shows that the general manager was willing to do the work, and that as a result of his work ethic and example, his team of hotel workers were willing to do the same. This suggests that the presence and behaviour of a leader might greatly facilitate a situation where workers constructively work together.

A last word on the teamwork experienced at the hotel in the days after the flood is that the attitude was one of *“...let’s do this...”* (FG) and we are *“...all in this together...”* (FG), which links with the sense of camaraderie, in that the hotel workers

felt that they were on the same level and that they all shared in the experience of the flood.

Paradoxically, the above discussion suggests that, in some cases at least, a seemingly disruptive event such as a flood has the potential to facilitate the development of closer and more supportive interpersonal relationships and teamwork than was the case before the natural disaster. It also suggests that in some cases such effects might persist beyond the initial event.

7. Respect and appreciation

Respect and admiration are closely associated in this study, and are conceptualised as being appreciated for the contribution to the work that had to be done as well as showing appreciation for others by celebrating the reopening.

Appreciation: As the hotel workers observed their colleagues arriving for work ready to deal with the challenges that each day brought, a sense of appreciation arose for the work ethic of others, as indicated in these participants' words: *"There's more respect for everyone, everyone's got much more respect for each other, for just no, uh, not whining and moaning, you know, just come to work and get the job done"* (I2). This was in relation to the hotel workers arriving for work with no complaints and getting the work done, as everyone had a vested interest in getting the hotel up and running again.

In addition to the appreciation of the work ethic observed, there was appreciation for colleagues who arrived and reported for work on time, aware of the work that had to be done, which involved cleaning up the mud and debris that remained after the flood waters subsided. This is conveyed by the following extract: *"They all coming to work, they respected the time"* (FG).

Another dimension of appreciation was for the work that the hotel workers' colleagues were doing, and this was indicated by the following statement that the workers were *"...appreciative of people..."* (I5), and had an *"...appreciation of what others do..."* (FG). Throughout the flood and the clean-up process, the hotel workers

“...learnt to appreciate one another...” (FG), which suggests that the hotel workers valued their colleagues and the work that they completed in the days after the flood.

Lastly, in order to celebrate the success in cleaning up after the flood, the general manager arranged a braai for the staff of the hotel, which was met with the following reaction: *“...we did feel appreciated...especially after the clean-up and we did appreciate that thank you”* (I3). The research participant emphasised that being thanked was important, suggesting that the hotel workers did not expect much in return for their contribution towards cleaning up the debris and mud.

Respect: Respect emerged in the data analysis process in references made to the *“...respectful...”* (Q6) manner in which the hotel workers related to each other and remarks that there was *“...more respect...”* (I2; Q5; FG) between people than existed prior to the flood. As a result of the respectful interactions, a sense of appreciation developed for the work and time that was given by hotel workers to their joint cause of cleaning up the mud and debris in the hotel.

Lastly, respect is also associated with communication; as work needed to be completed, the hotel workers demonstrated their ability to communicate and listen to others. Open communication was experienced and observed: *“...respect each other’s ideas about the flooding”* (Q2).

From the above discussion it emerges that the flood provided the hotel workers with the opportunity to develop and enhance their appreciation and respect for their colleagues; this led to improved interpersonal relationships that became more comfortable.

8. Humour

While humour has already been discussed in section 1.1 in relation to the emotional responses of the hotel workers, it also emerged as a relevant sub-theme in relation to the nature and types of relationships between colleagues, as will be discussed next.

During the data analysis process it was noted that the research participants frequently exhibited the use of humour during the clean-up process following the flood. This may have been a method that they utilised in order to cope with and manage the situation that unfolded before them, as demonstrated in this extract: *“At one stage, we even joked about these things”* (I4).

It has been noted that humour both characterises and promotes the positive team spirit which was observed and experienced, and in one of the departments it was described as follows: *“...and this team has actually got a sense of humour. They’ll actually pull practical jokes on each other which is something you don’t find often and I appreciate it, cause it makes for great spirit in the team”* (I5).

Upon reflection, the research participants noted that *“...we still making jokes about it...it gives us a better relationship”* (I8). This indicates that despite the flood, which may have been considered a negative situation, the use of humour had the effect of improving relationships and of enabling the participants to view the situation from a different perspective and in a positive manner.

9. Concern regarding safety

The flooding appeared to elicit feelings of concern with regard to safety, both in relation to the safety of others and in relation to the flood situation itself.

Safety of others: Concern for others was demonstrated specifically with regard to the safety of people present in the hotel at the time of the flood. This indicates that the hotel workers showed the ability to consider the wellbeing of others, as is illustrated by the next few extracts; one of the research participants noted that questions such as *“is everyone alright, is everyone safe”* (I2) were asked, which arose as a result of the *“...concern about our safety...”* (I3). Despite the personally challenging situation that the hotel workers were faced with, they still had the ability to show concern for the safety of others; this is noted in the next excerpt, where the hotel workers *“...make sure people are safe...”* (I5), and state that *“...my guest is my first priority to make sure that they are safe...”* (I8). The last extract shows that the hotel workers’ view of their duty at work was to place guests first.

Concern: The concern shown for others was exhibited only for a limited time, which would indicate that concern is felt or demonstrated only during the most difficult stage of the event, as indicated by the following statement: “...*people concerned at the time, but now lost interest*” (Q9). This would suggest that natural disasters such as floods might have the potential to elicit greater levels of interpersonal care and concern, but that such concern for the hotel workers was temporary and limited to the duration of the actual disaster and its immediate aftermath.

Concern was also shown for one of the hotel workers who worked night shift. His colleagues were aware that he could not swim and is quite short in stature; the comment made by the research participant was that “...*others thought I drowned...*” (16).

The preceding paragraphs show that the flood evoked feelings of concern for others in the hotel workers, and also in relation to the safety of others during the flood and its immediate aftermath.

10. Other sub-themes

In addition to the ten previous sub-themes that have been discussed, additional sub-themes emerged which were also considered noteworthy and are grouped together in this section. The sub-themes that will be discussed revolve around understanding the perspectives of others, exceeding expectations and relying on others.

Understanding others: This relates to being aware of the value of others and having the ability to identify with and empathise with others, qualities that were also found to lead to improved relations with others. In this regard, a questionnaire respondent felt that he had a “...*better understanding...*” (Q2), which occurred because of the flood. This sub-theme is twofold, and pertains both to understanding the situation, as well as to understanding of others. The first part was mentioned by one research participant as “...*most of them were understanding, very sympathetic...*” (14), and “...*everyone actually understand the impact of the flood...*” (14). In relation to colleagues, a research participant stated that “...*I would have to say that you understand your colleague better because now you have to work as a team and not alone...*” and that “...*people understand each other better...*” (18).

Exceeding expectations: When the flood began, some of the managers expected to encounter resistance when asking their teams to assist in cleaning up the mud and debris, especially from those hotel workers who do not usually work in roles that involve cleaning, maintenance and service. They were pleasantly surprised, and this is indicated in the next statement:

“...they [the hotel workers in question] do very little cleaning or no cleaning at all. So, it was exciting to see them being in the forefront of the cleaning project. It was really amazing because we were all expecting a whole lot of resistance. We were expecting them to say this is not in my job description I’m not employed to do this. But we were completely the opposite of that” and thus the hotel workers *“...exceeded expectations...”* (I4).

Relying on others: Relying on others entails being able to depend on others when situations become difficult. During the flood and the ensuing clean-up, there was a degree of reliance on colleagues to assist new team members where possible, *“I must admit it was difficult at first, but through the help of the existing team...”* (I4). Also there was confidence in dealing with suppliers who had been used in the past and had proven to be trustworthy *“...relying on the people that we have used in the past...”* (I7), as well as the need to *“...rely on each other...get through the day...”* (Q7). This emphasises the need of the hotel workers for support from others, which links with the sub-theme of support in this theme and emotional support in theme 1 – emotional responses.

Concluding remarks for Theme 2

This second theme focused on the interactional patterns and relationships of the hotel workers which occurred as a result of the flood and its immediate aftermath. The research findings showed a distinct difference in the types of relationships experienced before the flood and the enhanced and enriched relationships developed as a result of the flood. The sequence of events brought to the fore, developed, and in some instances enhanced, the relationships between colleagues. These relationships were enriched through a greater understanding and support of others, which led to camaraderie and togetherness while being respectful and appreciative of the work that others were accomplishing.

Some of the hotel workers exceeded the expectations of their managers and colleagues and, in some cases, even behaved in a manner that was considered to be exemplary. In addition, the leadership during the flood was highlighted as one of the key driving forces behind the successful outcome of the clean-up process and the speedy reopening of the hotel.

A characteristic of this group of hotel workers was the light-hearted approach to the cleaning up after the flood and its aftermath, a task which was performed with humour, fun and exceptional team spirit.

The next theme focuses on the cohesiveness of the hotel workers with specific reference to the flood.

THEME 3 - COHESIVENESS

Theme 3 focuses on the levels of cohesiveness experienced among the hotel workers, which can be considered as a strength and a positive aspect of the social impact of the flood on the hotel workers. Cohesiveness is encapsulated within group dynamics, and refers to the unity that people experience, as well as the intensity of the emotional bonds between group members (Forsyth, 2010:14; Levi, 2011:63). This can also be associated with the collective efficacy (Levi, 2011:61) exhibited by people in disasters as a result of their focus on their shared and common goal. The concept was explained in detail in chapter 2, section 3.4 *Cohesiveness*.

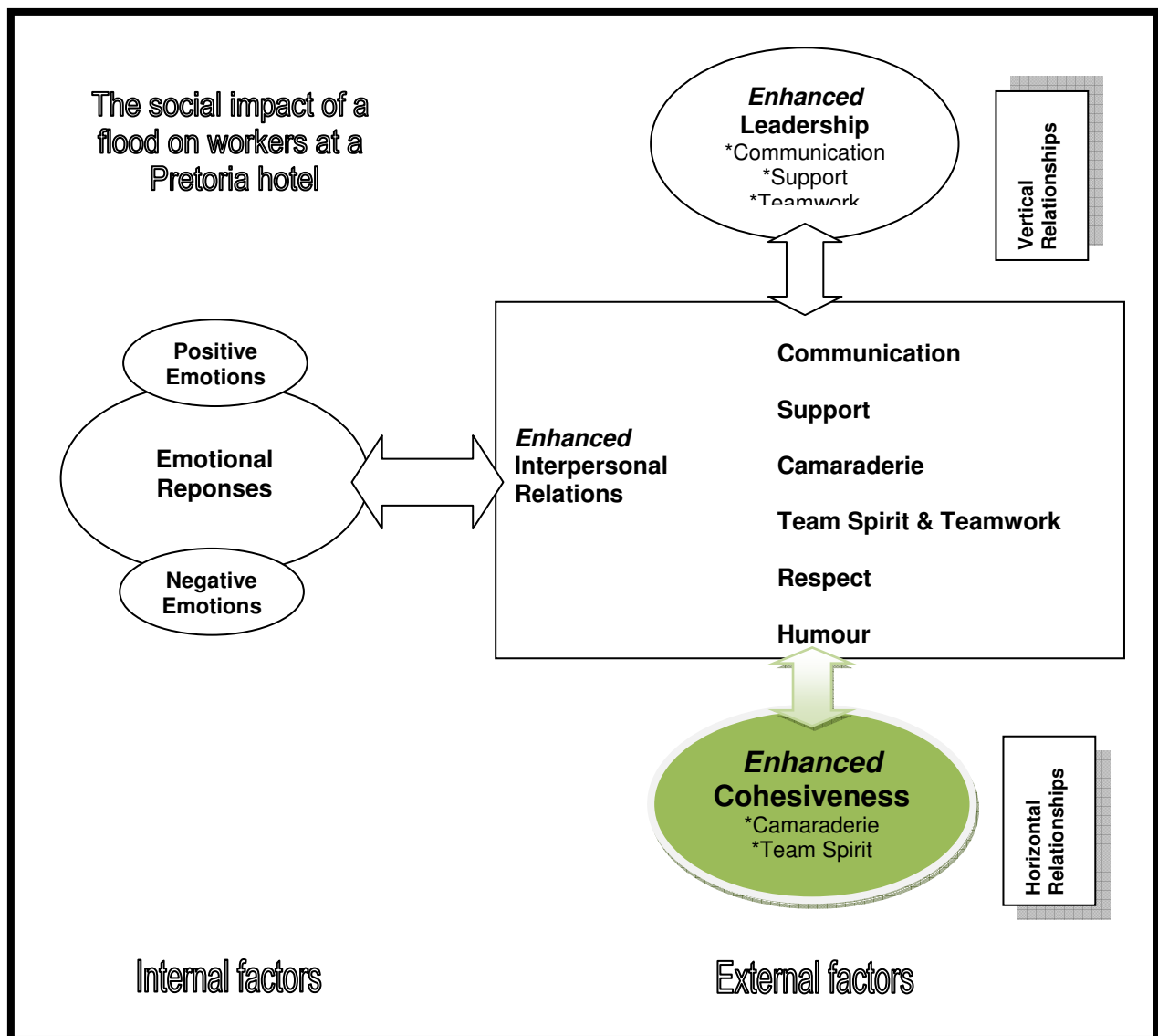


Figure 19: Enhanced cohesiveness

The thematic discussion of cohesiveness that follows will focus on the various factors that contributed to the development of cohesiveness for the hotel workers, including team spirit, camaraderie, bonds and teamwork.

1. Team spirit

Team spirit, while briefly touched upon in theme 2, is integral to the discussion of the theme of cohesiveness as it aids and fosters the development of cohesion between group members, and was enhanced and intensified as a result of the flood. The overall atmosphere in relation to team spirit was described by the participants as one of “...great team spirit...” (I4) and that “the spirit was wonderful” (Q10).

As a result of the flood, the hotel workers were provided with the opportunity to interact with their colleagues more frequently than had been the case prior to the flood, a situation which would not have occurred otherwise, and which seemed to facilitate the development of team spirit and cohesiveness. One of the research participants described the team spirit as “...*growing stronger and stronger every day since the flood...there’s more interdepartmental interactions than before*” (14). The heightened interaction between colleagues had the effect of building relationships with people from various departments. The flood provided the hotel workers with the opportunity to form a new group from the various departments and to work towards the common goal of cleaning up and reopening the hotel as quickly as possible. Team spirit was considered to be a trait of this newly formed group created to deal with the aftermath of the flood, and this is indicated by the comment of one of the participants: “...*that spirit’s there; it’s in the team...*” (15).

In light of the situation, the team spirit in completing the tasks set for them was completely unexpected and unanticipated. The impression created was that resistance was expected in light of the volume of work that was required in order to restore the hotel to its former glory and re-open it in the time allocated. This is illustrated by the comment of a participant who, when probed on the topic of the positive emotions which arose with regard to the flood, answered:

“Uh, obviously, the one that’s gonna come top is, is the team spirit and the team work that I experience. I mean I was not expecting it, so it was really great to see how people worked together in a, in a messy and disastrous situation ...So, the team spirit was really great” (14).

After what seemed to be many long hours, some of the hotel workers expressed their dissatisfaction and a sense of underlying tension was experienced which may have resulted in complaints. It was at this point that the general manager stated that it was time for a break, and for all the hotel workers to have a meal; he asked if they wanted to have the meal together or at their workstations, to which they replied “...*together. So, the team spirit was really great*” (14). From this one may conclude that the hotel workers wanted to continue spending time together and to develop their relationships beyond the scope of the clean-up operation itself.

A final observation on team spirit pertains to the association that it has with humour. The presence of humour created a light-hearted atmosphere which facilitated the process of cleaning up. Team spirit with the addition of humour seems to have the ability to bind teams together. This is reinforced by the following statement: “...*team has actually got a sense of humour...cause it makes for great team spirit in the team*” (15). The excerpt also indicates that, in some instances, humour can play a causative role in relation to team spirit, in that the presence and use of humour in a difficult or adverse situation can produce team spirit which will aid in the successful resolution of a situation.

From the above discussion it is clear that the flood provided the opportunity for enhanced team spirit which, along with a sense of humour, would enhance the sense of cohesiveness felt and demonstrated by the hotel workers.

2. Camaraderie and friendship

Camaraderie was the sense of comradeship that the hotel workers experienced as a result of facing a difficult situation together. This impression of togetherness emerged from the semi-structured and focus group interviews conducted with the research participants and is characterised by the camaraderie and friendship experienced between the hotel workers.

Camaraderie: The comments made by some of the research participants indicate that camaraderie was not only experienced but was also observed in others. In addition, there seemed to be a sense of satisfaction and enjoyment in experiencing the development of camaraderie through facing the impact of the flood together. In the words of the research participants “*there has been a sense of camaraderie with everyone pulling together to assist in any way possible*” (Q1) and “...*before each department just gets on with it, but because of the situation, I think that there was more of camaraderie...*” (11).

In addition, the flood brought about a sense of solidarity and comradeship between the hotel workers in that they had to stick together in order to get through the situation they were faced with, which is indicated by the following: “*There is a feeling of a team sticking together through a bad time*” (Q9). This may also be indicative of

the support experienced by the hotel workers and of their awareness that they could rely on their colleagues to get through the situation.

Friendship: The following excerpt is significant as it highlights an almost clinical aspect to the working relationships between departments and colleagues prior to the floods, whereas after the flood, the hotel workers considered some of their colleagues to be like friends. *“We were not like colleagues but like old-time friends...”*, *“...to look back at the flood we have and how we work together as colleagues and friends”* (Q2). The capacity to view people as friends, when only a professional relationship had existed prior to the flood, indicated that on an interpersonal level strong relationships without barriers were forged and this promoted the development of cohesiveness in this group of hotel workers.

From the discussion it would appear that the flooding of the hotel had the potential to enhance camaraderie which, in turn, appears to impact positively on the interpersonal relationships of the hotel workers.

3. Bonds

The third sub-theme that emerged during the analysis of data was that of the bonds experienced between the hotel workers. These bonds were characterised by the development of friendships, enhanced relationships, breaking down of barriers, greater understanding, leadership and trust, each of which will be discussed individually in this section.

Development of friendships: Some hotel workers had bonds with a few of their colleagues prior to the flood, but the flooding actually brought about a stronger sense of friendship and attachment between colleagues, and was also observed in colleagues, as is indicated by the following comments, *“...noticing some stronger bonds forming between people who worked together tirelessly...”* (Q1) and *“We were more openly to each other about our family and there were a bond between us, and the understanding”* (Q2).

Enhanced relationships: Throughout the course of the interviews and from the responses to the questionnaires, it became clear that the bonds between the hotel

workers either developed or strengthened as a result of the flood. This sub-theme reinforces the idea that the hotel workers' sense of cohesiveness intensified as a result of the shared experience of the flood as a group. *"The relationships between us, we were nearer to each other, because of the circumstances we were in because of the flooding"* (Q2).

One of the questions posed to the research participants inquired about the differences experienced in their relationships after the flood in comparison with those before the flood. Most of the research participants felt that their relationships had been enhanced and that their bonds with their colleagues had grown stronger. Some of the responses elicited were, *"I think a permanent change, but probably did bring us even closer... we work well together and the guys stick up for each other"* (15) and that *"we were more open to each other about our family and there were a bond between us and the understanding where each person fit in"* (Q2). The quotation from I2 indicates that the bonds between people were related to the openness between the workers and the open-minded approach that was used in dealing with others, *"to be open-minded to other people's departments and help...it was good"* (I2). This allowed the barriers between people to fall away, as the hotel workers began to talk about various other aspects of their lives apart from their work.

In order to glean more information about the bonds between the hotel workers within their teams, the researcher probed this aspect further, and received this response: *"...I think my team is as close as, well a close as ever to be honest", "we were a good team before and a close team. We work very closely in hand. So, yes, it made a difference. I think it brought us somehow closer together..."* (I2). *"...I've always been pretty close to most of them...I think we've maybe grown stronger as a team."* (I7). This excerpt reiterates the notion that relationships between the hotel workers were strengthened as a result of the flooding. It also indicates that this was true even for teams which already had a high level of closeness before the flood.

Breaking down barriers: Prior to the flood, some of the hotel workers believed that barriers existed between them, but as a result of the flood these barriers were done away with, which is illustrated by the following:

“I thought they felt I wasn’t capable and am inferior for my duties. I often had feelings of disapproval of their methods and formed a barrier between myself and them. We get along so well now. We’re much more comfortable around each other and respect each other more” (Q5).

The impression is that differences were set aside in order to achieve their goal of cleaning up and re-opening in time. As the barriers between departments fell away, the hotel workers felt that communication was no longer restricted by hierarchical and departmental barriers, and this seems to have increased the sense of cooperation and collaboration between colleagues.

Greater understanding: As a result of the flood, reciprocal relationships ensued, with stronger bonds formed between hotel workers and deeper levels of understanding. This had the effect of forging greater interdepartmental understanding as a result of the hotel workers performing various work roles during the flood and its immediate aftermath. This is indicated by the following comments made by one of the research participants that: *“...people understand each other better” (18)*, and that this intensified the bonds between the hotel workers: *“I must say with the floods that did take place, that there was a relationship like never before. Everybody did work together and help each other” (18)*. There also seemed to be a greater understanding of the roles and functions of other departments and a greater closeness and partnership in the work that was done in the hotel. *“I know what’s happening in other departments, and they know what’s happening in my department. We help each other. So, I would say that was ongoing, has been kept consistent and yes, we work together even more than before” (14)*.

Leadership: The bonds experienced between colleagues also links with the theme of leadership, which is discussed in greater detail in theme 4. Asked why relationships were so *“very close knit” (15)* some participants expressed the view that this was due to the quality of the leadership they were subject to: *“...it’s because of our boss. It’s just the way the whole team is being led” (15)*. This indicates that the general manager has the ability to foster close and meaningful relationships with his team.

Trust: The flood created the impression that trust in the emergent leader was required in order for the hotel workers to continue working as hard and as willingly as they did, and this is indicated in the next excerpt: “...people have trust now, in you” (I8).

Care: As a result of strengthening ties between colleagues, an atmosphere of caring and concern for others arose: “...and was looking after another” (Q2).

From the above discussion it emerged that the flood had the potential to enhance and further strengthen the bonds that existed between the hotel workers, and that this could occur specifically via the development of friendships, enhanced relationships, the breaking down of barriers, a greater understanding, leadership, trust and care.

4. Working in and with teams

The only remaining subtheme to discuss pertaining to cohesiveness is working with and in teams, an aspect which featured strongly with some of the research participants, and which arose in relation to willingness to assist, working well together, understanding what to do, and new teams and teamwork among the hotel workers. The increased cooperation and resulting teamwork indicated an enhanced level of cohesion in this group of hotel workers as a result of the flood.

Willingness to assist: In general, a great willingness to assist colleagues was evident in the hotel, which resulted in great teamwork where “everyone involved put in a great team effort” (Q1). Consequently, a sense of unity arose among the hotel workers as they felt that they were “...in it together...” (I4), particularly as “...they wanted to stay...” (I7) in order to ensure that they could do as much as possible to clean up the mud and debris as quickly as possible.

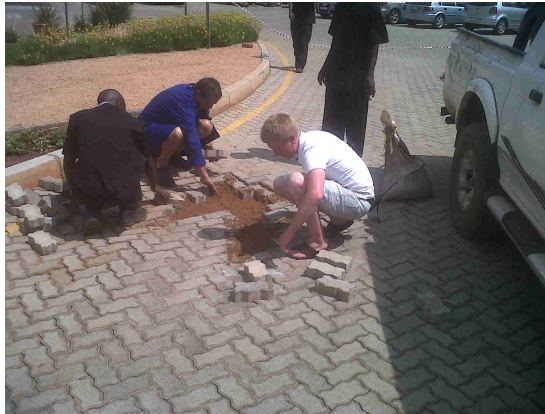


Photo 1: Helping out

The willingness was further demonstrated by the eagerness of the hotel workers to pitch in and help out readily and enthusiastically wherever necessary without being asked. This is shown in Photo 1, which depicts the food and beverage manager helping to repair the driveway which had been damaged during the flood. This is emphasised in the following excerpts from interviews with the research participants: *“that specific day, there was no questions asked, people just knew there was a job that had to be done and we were gonna do it. Unless I’ve got a better idea, we gonna follow instructions. Um and that’s nice, everyone was quite willing and had the opportunity to give their input”* (I5), *“...everybody pitched in...”* (I5), *“...we were willing to help each other...”*. There was a sense of duty to others: *“...we have to help each other...”* (FG). This is also associated with the keenness exhibited in wanting to exceed expectations, and is noted by the following comments that they wanted to go the *“...extra mile...”* (I3), while *“...willing to give extra...”* (I5) and that some hotel workers *“...stayed and helped...”* (I5) in order to assist where possible.

Working well together: Some of the research participants mentioned that they experienced good teamwork among themselves and observed it in others. An impression was created that ,prior to the flood, some of the hotel workers worked with their colleagues reluctantly but after the flood they put their differences aside and worked alongside and with each other to achieve the successful outcome of the clean-up and restoration of the hotel. This is indicated in the next excerpt: *“I must say it has been proven that we can work together as a team. We relied on each other to get through each day”* (Q7).

Understanding what to do: The team had a clear understanding of what was expected to be completed in the days immediately after the flood, *“as flooding has happened previously on more than one occasion, the team knows exactly what has to be done”* (Q1). This probably allayed many of the uncertainties and the anxiety associated with natural disasters. Because flooding had occurred previously, there was a clear plan of what had to be done and when it had to be done, and this guided the hotel workers through the process of cleaning up, and possibly enhanced the sense of cohesion among the hotel workers.

New teams: Like most organisations, the hotel is comprised of various departments, each with its own manager heading up the team. The flood, however, caused the various departments to cooperate and they had to *“...quickly come together...”* (FG) to ensure that the mud and debris was cleaned up as speedily as possible and to reopen the hotel. Consequently, cohesion increased not only within the separate departments, but also across departments, thereby enhancing the overall level of cohesion in the hotel.

As a result of the flood and the work that was required by the hotel workers to clean up the debris that remained after the waters subsided, new teams of hotel workers had to be formed, which meant that new relationships and attachments were formed between workers who had not worked together in the past. For managers this meant that they had to adapt quickly to their new team members and one would suppose that those most successful were likely to be most adaptable to new people. This characteristic is also highlighted in resilient individuals, and will be discussed in greater detail in section 2, group resilience. This aspect was highlighted in the words of a few of the research participants: *“I had to now deal with new people whom I didn’t really know...actually get them to work together...”* (I4), *“...now having to gather more people, get to learn to work with them...”* (I4), and *“...we had to work with other staff apart from our jobs...”* (FG).

Teamwork: The ability that the hotel workers had to work alongside each other in order to complete all tasks assigned indicates the level of teamwork that existed in the days after the flood, and this is depicted in Photo 2. This photo shows some hotel workers trying to move water and sweep debris out of a work area which had been

flooded with water. The teamwork experienced in this group of hotel workers was enhanced by the flood, and underscores the nature of the relationships that were encouraged in the situation. Many of the research participants mentioned that during the clean-up they “...all work as a team to try and just pick up where the flood has been affecting us so that we can just run the business back to normal...” (FG), and “...we did work as a team together and we know we must finish up because the hotel by then was empty and we do need business” (I3).



Photo 2: Cleaning the offices

The hotel workers considered it a privilege to work together with their colleagues, and for the hotel, as indicated by the following positive comments: “...we were lucky working together” (I6), there was a sense of “...enjoyment of working together...” (I4), the hotel workers are “...a great team together...” (I5), and the hotel workers form “...one of the greatest teams...” (I2) that they had worked with.

Most importantly, one of the questionnaire respondents noted that “...together we are strong” (Q7), which signifies that working as a unified, cohesive team they had the ability to be successful in their endeavours.

Concluding remarks for Theme 3

This section centred on the discussion of the development of cohesiveness among the group of hotel workers, a cohesiveness cultivated by the willingness of the hotel workers to work with each other and to complete the allotted tasks. The opportunity that was created by the flood was that people who had not worked closely in the past

now had to work alongside and with each other in order to achieve goals and objectives and to reopen the hotel in time. The overall impression created is that there was a sense of unity and togetherness among the hotel workers which was considered to be a positive aspect of the flood. This appears to be the case especially in relation to the finding that the heightened level of cohesiveness was also reflected in enhanced interpersonal and interdepartmental relationships and greatly improved worker productivity.

The next theme focuses on the leadership of the hotel during the flood and its immediate aftermath.

THEME 4 – LEADERSHIP

The fourth main theme that emerged in the process of data analysis is that of leadership. The concept of leadership as conceptualised in this study refers to the way that a group of people are led in a particular situation or setting.

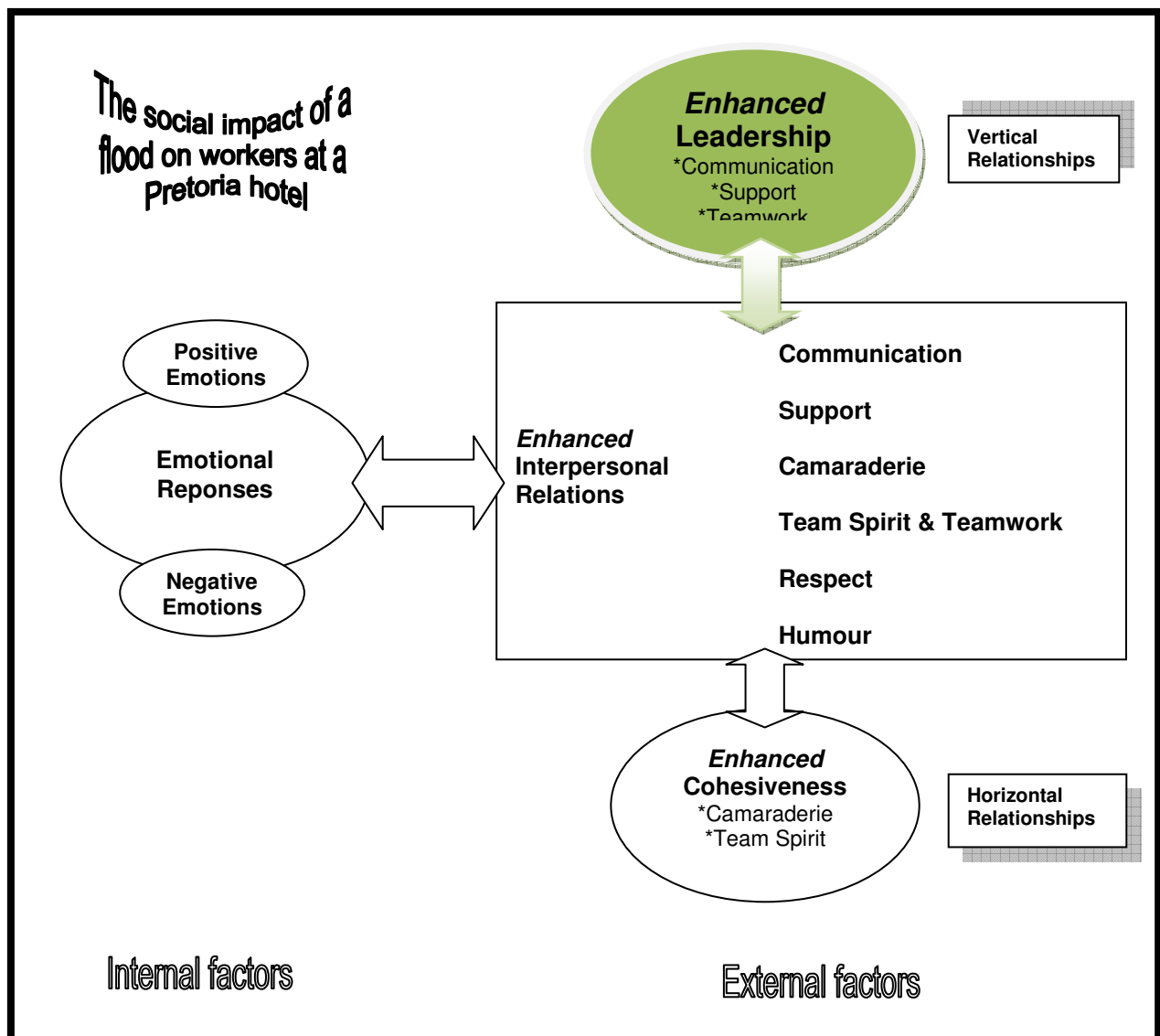


Figure 20: Enhanced leadership

The successful clean-up operation and speedy reopening of the hotel suggests that the type of leadership employed throughout the flooding situation contributed to the positive outcome of the hotel workers' efforts.

Leadership has many facets and several sub-themes emerged during data analysis. Each sub-theme will be elaborated upon separately and these include the leadership characteristics of the leaders of the hotel, other leaders that were notable for the manner in which they dealt with the flood situation, the fear and job insecurity surrounding the flood event, humour, communication, support, and management teamwork.

1. Leadership characteristics

The leadership exhibited during the flood and its aftermath was a key driving force behind the way in which the clean-up was tackled, and this is conveyed by the comment made by one of the participants that *"It starts with our general manager who's amazing. He's absolutely amazing. I mean, like I say, you know, he's not scared to get his hands dirty"* (I5)

The general manager of the hotel demonstrated the ability to relate to all hotel workers, regardless of their position; he showed genuine respect for his team and was willing to "dig in and do the work" and assist in the clean-up process. One of the participants mentioned that the general manager was a person who is *"not scared to get his hands dirty"* (I5), and was eager to *"do the job with them"* (I7) and that *"there is no class, no baas"* (I5) attitude with the general manager. Others noted his dedication in the fact that at *"about four o'clock [in the morning], uh, the GM was also here"* (I6).

From the information obtained in the questionnaires and individual and focus group semi-structured interviews, the researcher identified the general manager's approach to leadership as one of involvement and leading by example. Interviewee 1 stated that *"they just, just followed his lead"* and interviewee 2 stated that *"he leads by example, and all our other departments follow in, follow the same attitude as he does"*. His reply to the researcher's question on his style of leadership was:, *"...the most important one is lead by example...get stuck in and get things moving..."* The ethos of the general manager appears be that of not expecting his people to do something that he himself is not prepared to do.

During the interview with the general manager he remarked that in the past he *"has swept and mopped floors"* (I7). The manner in which he prefers to lead is by working alongside his team and to demonstrate how to complete a task; this indicates his level of involvement with his team and, as is noted in the following excerpt, he does *"...not tell them...[but] show them..."* (I7) how to do things, in addition to *"working with them"* (I7) to get things done. This has turned out to be a highly successful method of completing tasks, as the hotel was reopened three days after the flood, whereas the initial assessment for completion was two weeks. It may also be

indicative of the value that the general manager places on interpersonal relations with his team.

In general, most staff members were appreciative of seeing their managers being involved in the clean-up process, as illustrated by the comment made by one of the participants that it was *“nice to see managers getting their hands dirty”* (Q6). Interviewee 1 mentioned that the general manager and maintenance manager *“...are such hands-on gentlemen...shoes off, pants rolled up, wading through water”*. Interviewee 5, one of the senior managers at the hotel, commented that the general manager was *“...not scared to get his hands dirty”*. In the same interview, the general manager was characterised as a person who was involved and practical in his dealings; this had an effect on the way he was perceived, which was noted by the research participant in the comment: *“It makes a huge difference in the attitude towards the man”* (I5). As the hierarchical structure fell away and a sense of equality was fostered among the hotel workers, the probability of a successful outcome of the clean-up was realised by reopening within a few days.

Most notably, the maintenance manager (I2, I3), together with the general manager, showed great leadership in getting things started and ensuring that everything would be done when it needed to be done. This meant that *“others followed”* (I2) when being *“led by example”* (I2). Specifically, this filtered down to the maintenance team, where it seemed as if there were unwritten rules about how the process should be tackled. The manner in which the maintenance manager led his team was indicated by the fact that some of his team members willingly stayed after hours and worked long hours’ non-stop until they were told to stop working, a demonstration of the maintenance team *“following his lead”* (I2).

In particular, the general manager demonstrated characteristics and behaviours which were considered commendable by the hotel workers and his management team. Most notable was the manner in which the general manager *“reassure[d] staff”* (Q9) and *“t[ook] charge”* (Q2) of the situation that unfolded and ensured that *“safety [was] a concern”* (I1). In addition, he was considered to be a person who *“goes beyond”* (I1) what was expected and had an *“amazing”* (I5) *“attitude”* (I2).

Furthermore, as a person who was noted as being involved, the general manager would be *“next to me to see what I’m doing”* (I5) and *“he helped me”* (I6).

From the above discussion, it seems that the flood drew attention to the enhanced leadership employed during the flood and its aftermath. This was with regard to the leadership characteristics that existed at the time of the flood, with specific reference to the general manager and the maintenance manager. Overall, the hotel workers and senior management of the hotel indicated that they had great respect, appreciation and fondness for their general manager. The next sub-theme pertains to leaders who emerged during the flood from among the hotel workers.

2. Other leaders

The flood not only emphasised the leadership of the hotel, it also identified various other people who contributed significantly to the clean-up process from a leadership perspective. Leaders in this sense are characterised as those emerging from the ranks of the hotel workers and considered to be influential over their group.

In the course of the interviews and in the replies to the questionnaire, other individuals were also commended for their contribution in leading the clean-up process from other directions. The informal or emergent leader often has the ability to be influential over his or her group as he or she *“appointed”* to the leadership role by the group. The concept of the emergent leader is discussed in chapter 2, and is defined as the type of leader who emerges from the ranks of the group, adopts the leadership role (Levi, 2011:167), and is able to persuade others to move in a particular direction, towards an event or objective.

At the start of the flood, the security manager was asked to step into a leadership role, because *“they want you to take charge”* (I8). This was due to previous experience and also because he was at the hotel at the time of the flood. In addition, management was not able to attend to certain issues as *“management was busy”* (I8) and occupied with other tasks. The hotel workers would then look for guidance to others, who at this point would be one of their own colleagues, and this is conveyed by the comment that leadership *“comes from the employees”* (I8) and that the hotel workers *“accepted my leadership role”* (I4), which would imply that a degree of trust

would be placed in the person taking the temporary leadership role. That this trust was well founded showed in the leadership that these persons exhibited and in their ability to *“take charge”* (I8).

Some staff members indicated that they were impressed by their own ability in leading others, remarking that *“I could lead”* (I4) and that these emergent or informal leaders had the *“skills to lead”* (I4), especially in relation to new team members during the clean-up process. This might imply that a certain amount of personal growth was experienced and that new skills were learnt as a result of the flood, especially with reference to leading others.

In summary, it was evident from the data analysis that the flood not only elicited enhanced leadership from the members of the hotel management, but also stimulated previously latent leadership qualities in non-management workers at the hotel.

3. Fear and job insecurity

Fear and job insecurity are associated with the main themes of emotional responses and interactional patterns and relations. They are also discussed in this theme, as the leadership of the hotel attempted to dispel the fear that arose when the hotel workers arrived for work on the morning of 17 January 2011 and set their eyes on what had transpired in the night.

As the hotel workers arrived for work and saw the damage caused by the flood to their workplace, they seem to have experienced great fear for their jobs, a feeling which many of the interviewees attested to. Once the general manager had allayed their fear of termination from their employment, their fear subsided and an increased sense of security was experienced among the hotel workers. Interviewee 1 mentioned the following regarding this particular aspect: *“The people were basically not afraid, I think they were more positive than afraid, and once they knew, you know, it wouldn’t affect them at all”* (I1). Once the hotel workers understood that their employment was secure, the impression is that they could then focus on cleaning up the mud and debris and work towards the tasks and goals set.

This suggests that it might prove very valuable for leaders in similar contexts to be sensitive to, and to address, employees' possible fears in relation to job security.

4. Open communication

A significant aspect that arose from the research pertained to the open and honest communication that existed between the hotel workers and management. This aspect was further strengthened by the flood and the clean-up process.

It appears that the open communication that existed between hotel workers extended to include the ability to communicate emotions openly to others, which was also demonstrated in the ease with which the research participants expressed their emotions in front of their colleagues during the course of the focus group interviews.

The research participants felt that the communication was effective because of the nature of the information that was provided by the leaders of the clean-up teams to the hotel workers, and this is evident in the next quotation:

“Well, it was regular meetings and every few hours we called a meeting together and we say right this is what’s happening now and we divide the work amongst each other...you take care of that, you take care of that... Let’s report back to each other in another two hours and say where we are at the moment” (I2).

It can be surmised that the way the hotel workers communicated with each other is indicative of the collaborative nature of the relationships which existed between staff and management during the flood and its immediate aftermath.

The above discussion indicates that the flood provided an opportunity for the hotel workers to test their communication skills and calls attention to the open and honest communication that seems to be enhanced because of the flood.

5. Support

Support has been discussed earlier in this section with reference to the themes of emotional support and interactional patterns and relationships, and will be touched on again in section 2, group resilience. In this section, support will be discussed in regard to leadership and how the leaders of the hotel obtained and provided support.

On a physical level, during the focus group interviews, one of the research participants attested to the fact that the general manager was “...*holding our hands...*” and that “...*he tried to pull us...*” (FG) while wading through the water in the hotel to get through the hotel, as they “*could not swim*” (FG). Although it is a physical aspect, the handholding can be viewed as being emblematic of the fact that the general manager supported his team throughout the flood and clean-up. Furthermore, the focus group participants noted that the hotel workers also supported each other, and this is noted in the next extract: “*We talk to each other comfort each other, especially when supporting, employees support, management coming together and support each other*” (FG).

The general manager affirmed that he had surrounded himself with good people and this is noted in the next quotation: “*Look, at the time I realised that, um, I had surrounded myself with good people, it was a huge point. That’s still, probably the same thing that I can say to you today*” (I7). This implies that with the additional support from his management team, the ability to overcome the flood situation was improved. This indicates that he was able to rely on his team throughout the situation and may also hint at future support from the general manager’s team.

The above discussion focusing on support pertaining to leadership shows that the flood had the ability to highlight the type of support that was present during the flood situation, with specific reference to the physical, emotional and social support offered and received.

6. Management teamwork

The last sub-theme linked with the leadership theme centres on the teamwork that was demonstrated by the leaders in the management team of the hotel. Teamwork, as conceptualised in this study, is characterised by the manner in which people work together in order to achieve a particular goal.

The focus group participants noted that they witnessed the management team coming together and pushing themselves in order to complete the task of cleaning up as quickly as possible so that the hotel could be up and running. Interviewee 2

commented that the current management team was “...one of the best teams...” he had worked with, and another participant described the group as a “hell of a team” (17). This may be due to the leadership of the general manager and the manner in which he manages his hotel and staff. Specifically, the general manager felt that by working together there was a greater chance of success.

Concluding remarks for Theme 4

This theme highlighted the role played by the hotel leadership during the flood and its immediate aftermath. Specifically, it was shown that leadership at the hotel was effective because managers led by example, and were not afraid to get their “hands dirty”, thereby removing the hierarchical barrier that existed to some degree between the management of the hotel and the hotel workers. Furthermore, it also appeared that leaders played a very significant role in allaying the fears that the hotel workers had in relation to the security of their employment. Once the fears had been addressed, the hotel workers could focus and direct their energy to the clean-up process. It would appear that employees did this willingly and with significant dedication, influenced in part by the example set by managers.

In relation to the study, the flood had the potential to enhance the leadership that existed at the hotel during the flood. This is shown by the way in which all hotel workers were willing to be part of the clean-up process. The hotel workers wanted to work at the hotel, they wanted to be part of the greater plan, and they wanted to share in the success of the hotel after all the work they had put in.

During the process of data analysis, the leadership of the hotel was found to have played an integral part in the development of the resilience of the group of hotel workers an aspect which featured strongly in the data. The thematic discussion of group resilience will be discussed in the next section.

SECTION 2 – GROUP RESILIENCE

2.1 Introduction

Resilience as an individual competency has been defined as the capability that people have in positively adapting in the light of adverse, stressful or dangerous situations (Snyder *et al.*, 2011:95; Adger, 2000:349), which would include coping

with natural disasters (Gaillard, 2007:523). Resilience also embodies characteristics which allow people to thrive despite unfavourable situations; these characteristics aid people in the successful management of stressful or dangerous events (Connor & Davidson, 2003:76). This implies that balance is aimed for and attained by people facing stressful situations (Ambriz *et al.*, 2011:1). From a sociological perspective, natural disasters such as the flood are referred to as being collectively stressful situations, and as a result require a collective approach to describing how groups respond to disasters. As such, resilience is likely to have not only an individual, but also a collective component. In this regard, one of the most significant themes that emerged during the data analysis concerns the resilience of the group of hotel workers, which led the researcher to put forward the concept of **group resilience**. Two similar concepts have been proposed by various researchers which are collective resilience and community resilience.

Collective resilience focuses on large groups of people who are not known to each other yet have similar viewpoints and behaviours; and who will still want to help others in emergency situations (Drury *et al.*, 2009:66).

Community resilience involves the capacity of a community to develop competencies that will assist the community to prevent and survive adverse situations. In addition, the community is restored to a self-sufficient status or similar level which occurred prior to the situation while utilising knowledge from past experiences to strengthen responses to future adverse situations (Chandra *et al.*, 2011: 9). Furthermore, community resilience focuses on the interaction between people and the environment as well as the social environment within which people operate (Landau & Sau, 2004:2; Sonn & Fisher, 1998:3).

A perception exists that urban communities tend to exhibit a lesser sense of community than that of rural communities (Twigger-Ross, 2005:30). Contrary to this notion, this study has shown that urban communities such as a community of hotel workers do share a sense of community, have high levels of cohesion, and show the ability to be resilient as a group.

However, the concepts of collective and community resilience differ in several significant ways from the researcher's concept of group resilience.

Based on the analysis of the data, the researcher defines group resilience as the ability that two or more people who form a cohesive group and have a common purpose have to either revert back to their original form or to recover from an adverse situation and reconstruct an enhanced version of the group. In this context, the people who form the group will be known to each other, but not on an intimate, personal level. Such groups are referred to as social groups (Forsyth, 2010:14). Group resilience implies that relationships already exist between group members, and this differs from collective and community resilience.

The following sub-section centres on the discussion of the development of group resilience by explaining the internal and external factors which play a role in the cultivation of cohesion and group resilience. This theory represents the outcome of a grounded theoretical data analysis of the questionnaires, semi-structured individual and focus group interviews.

2.2 The development of group resilience

A situation, like the flood, resulted in the hotel workers coming together and forming one unified group with a common purpose. As the group developed they advanced through the group development stages which have been mentioned in Chapter 2. The group displayed specific characteristics, which the various individuals contributed to the group. These are denoted as the internal and external factors which were present in order for cohesion between group members to have happened and subsequently for the development of group resilience.

An important difference noted between individual resilience and group resilience is that the internal and external factors which must be present for resilience to develop do not have to be present in every group member. However, these characteristics should be present in the group, with some members typifying more than one factor.

Group resilience is set apart from individual resilience in that it does not detract from those individuals who are not resilient on an individual level, but they can draw on

the strength of the resilient group in order to rebound or reconstruct their lives after dealing with an adverse situation.

The research findings led the researcher to ask the following: What does resilience look like in groups, and what are the characteristics of resilient groups? Figure 21 depicts the development of group resilience, which was proposed by the researcher as a result of developing a grounded theory on the basis of the data accrued from the interviews and questionnaire responses.

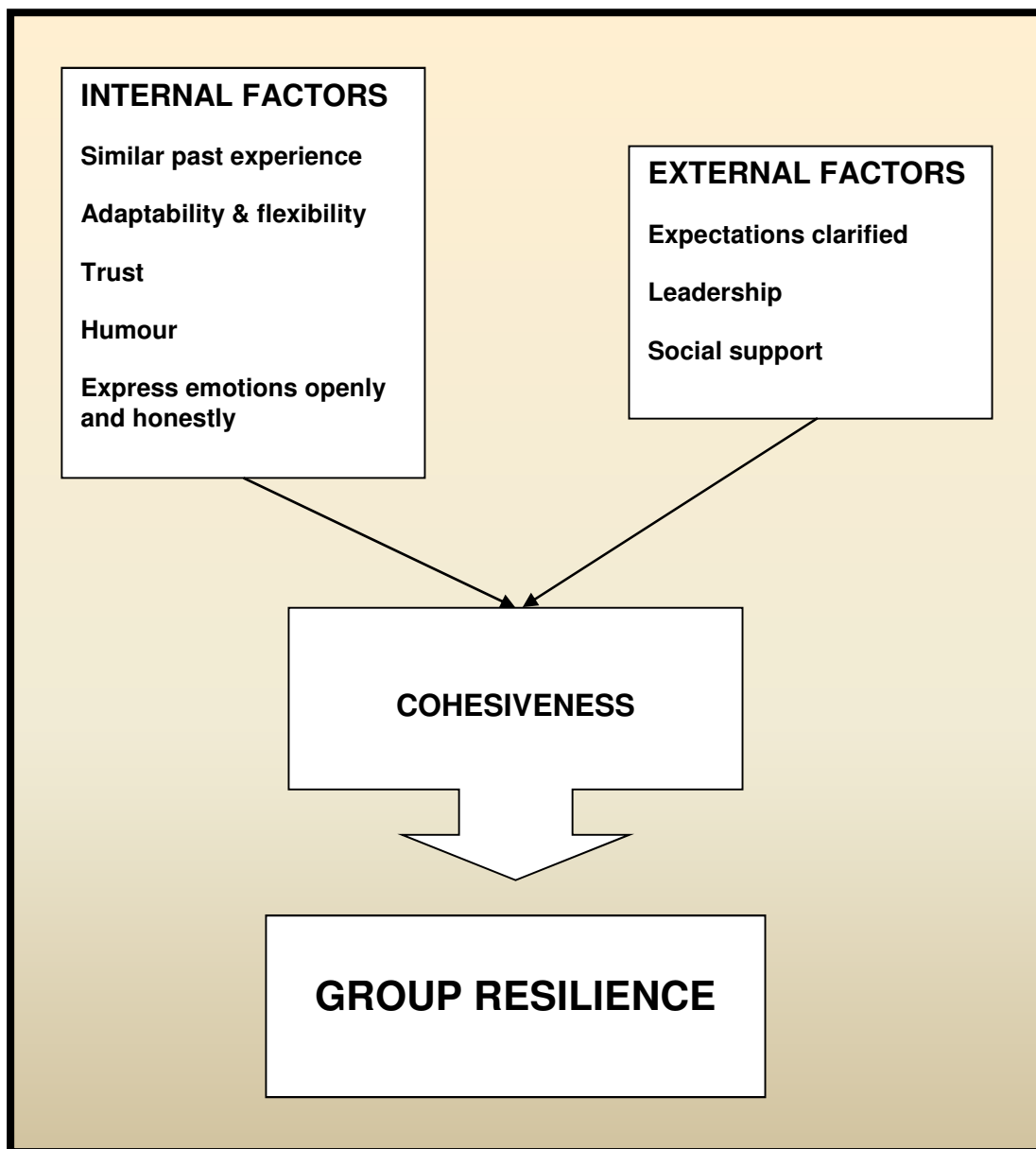


Figure 21: Model of the development of group resilience

Resilience has often been perceived as an individual competency (Gaillard, 2007:523). When one considers that work is undertaken in communities, organisations and society, it would be reasonable to state that work is undertaken within groups of varying sizes. As such, resilience should also be considered to occur at group level, which would imply that groups can develop their ability to be resilient in dealing with adverse situations and recovering effectively from such challenges.

The research findings suggest several internal and external factors at play which bolster cohesiveness and in turn foster the development of group resilience. The internal factors relate to specific individual characteristics that group members exhibit in the development of group resilience, which are: having had similar past experiences, adaptability and flexibility, trust, humour and the ability to express emotions openly and honestly. The external factors that play a role in the development of group resilience are: having expectations clarified, visible and effective leadership, and social support. The presence of these factors within the group appear to enhance the level of cohesion experienced in the group, which in turn seems to form the basis for the development of group resilience. Although some of these factors are individual characteristics, individual group members need not exhibit all of the characteristics. It appears that the presence of at least some of these characteristics within the group as a whole might be sufficient to enhance group cohesion, and thereby foster increased levels of group resilience.

From the above description of group resilience, it has been shown that group members identify socially with fellow group members, which results in bonds being created between group members. This also results in the individual group members adopting the characteristics of the group. In relation to cohesiveness, the more cohesive a group is the likelihood of conforming to group norms increases (Levi, 2011: 49). As the identification with the group intensifies group members tend to find personal significance for social identification. As a result, individual group members tend to base their definition of themselves on the group's qualities and attributes (Forsyth, 2010:90). These eventualities might in part underlie the development of group resilience.

In the following sections, the various elements involved in the development of group resilience (as depicted in Figure 11) will be discussed.

Similar past experiences: To begin the journey in the development of group resilience, some of the hotel workers indicated that they had experienced natural disasters before and that this assisted them in managing the flood that occurred on the 17th of January 2011. Importantly, not all group members had experienced flooding in the past, however some hotel workers had experienced other types of natural disasters, which aided their ability to understand and to an extent foresee what should be done. Having successfully faced and dealt with similar adverse situations that occurred in the past, is indicative of people who are highly resilient (Connor & Davidson, 2003:77). This is supported by the comment made by one of the interviewees in relation to previous flooding: *“maybe they knew what to expect this time, um and um, they just got on with it and everybody just helped out”* (I1). For those employees who had not experienced natural disasters prior to the flood, their observations of their colleagues who did have prior experience in this regard provided an example of how to behave in the situation. This can be likened to the minimal panic that was felt by the hotel workers and as the day progressed to the great teamwork and team spirit that was revealed, which appears to hint at a group that starts to form cohesive bonds with each other. A focus group participant further emphasised this particular aspect of past experiences by the following comment; *“by the first day, '97 years it did affect me, but this one, I will, just ok it's natural. It's nothing that we can do. Uh, but at the end of the day, we started to be fine because we all enjoying it”*.

Adaptability and flexibility: Adaptability is the inherent capability that people have to adjust to their changing environment. In the context of this study the hotel workers showed their capability in being adaptable and flexible with a situation that differed vastly from their usual daily routine. This creates the sense of “expecting the unexpected” at any time while having the knowledge that one can adapt to the unexpected situation. This also implies that there can be no rigidity in following a set procedure or plan which has been set out, as each situation encountered would be unique and would require the ability to “think on one’s feet”.

The data showed that some of the research participants had the ability to be adaptable in a stressful situation in light of the fact that they hadn't experienced a flood before. "...we've never experienced something like this, so you have to adapt, that's all." (I2). Adaptability is also linked to the nature of the work that the research participants do, "...in the hotel industry...you have to be adaptable to any situation and you have to be very open-minded..." (I2). The ability to be adaptable in light of adverse situations such as a flood highlights one of the characteristics of highly resilient people (Snyder *et al.*, 2011:94; Connor & Davidson, 2003:77; Adger, 2000:349).

Trust: The next factor is trust which relates to the belief that the hotel workers have in their colleagues and that they can rely, depend and count on their team mates in all spheres of work. Trust in community members has also been shown to foster the development of resilience, which also means that communities that are more trustworthy of their members also tend to be more motivated to complete tasks such as the tasks set out in the clean-up process after the flood. A research participant commented that the relationships that had been forged as a result of the flood and the role that he played was based on trust, and this made the hotel worker feel; "*well, it let you feel good. Very good, because of, it's like people have trust now, in you*" (I8).

In addition, in times of change, employees need to learn to work together and act as a unified team. This can only be done by the generation of trust in the organisation (Heifetz & Laurie, 2011:57), and this in turn will foster the development of cohesiveness between group members.

Humour: In analysing the information obtained from the research participants, it appears that some of the hotel workers reverted to the use of humour to manage the situation: "*And this team has actually got a sense of humour. They'll actually pull practical jokes on each other which is something you don't find often and I appreciate it, cause it makes for great spirit in the team...and chirping each other and ja, that's nice, that was nice*" (I5). This statement indicates that the hotel workers had good interpersonal relationships prior to the flood, which would indicate a certain level of cohesiveness present prior to the flood. After the flood their levels of

cohesion increased, specifically as the use of humour further lent a hand in breaking down barriers, perceived and real, between people, as the environment “*becomes much more informal and personal. The jokes that’s made, I mean you’re standing there, you’re moving a pipe and everybody is in the water, and everybody is dirty and everybody is cold. So it becomes much more informal...it becomes almost a little game at the time. It’s not really work, it’s a little game that you are busy with, it’s jokes and I mean as it happened every time my cellphone fell in the water...so it’s those little things and then they’ve got plenty to say...*” (15). The ability to view a stressful situation in a humorous and light-hearted manner allows the hotel workers to move forward and know that there can be positive aspects found in each situation.

This discussion has highlighted that humour has an effect on the levels of cohesion, which in turn might enhance group resilience. This notion is supported by (Connor & Davidson, 2003:77) who state that exhibiting a sense of humour is considered a characteristic of resilient individuals. It seems that when humour is present within a group, it can likewise foster a sense of resilience in the context of such a group.

Expressing emotions openly and honestly: The final internal factor contributing to the development of group resilience is the ability to express emotions openly and honestly. This was demonstrated specifically in the focus group interview where it was repeatedly noted that the hotel workers were at ease in describing their emotions in front of other participants when they reflected back on the flood and its aftermath. This implies that the hotel workers were able to impart how they felt to their colleagues without fear. This factor is shown in the following comment by one of the interviewees; “*and when I got here, the water turned, it started going into the basement and as I stopped him, my normal laughing, here we go again and he started crying, he cracked. At that moment he emotionally cracked and he couldn’t handle it anymore. Um, and he just came and leaned against me*”.

The greater the levels of cohesion within a group are, the more enhanced the communication and coordination of actions are in order to complete and attain common goals (Levi, 2011:63). It has also been shown that if communication between group members is clear, definite and done in a timeous and prompt

manner, effectiveness in dealing with the disaster is greatly enhanced (Sorensen *et al.*, 1985:31).

The ability to articulate emotions and to manage them during a situation also points towards people with the ability to be resilient (Ambriz *et al.*, 2011:2). As the expression of emotion occurred within the focus group setting, this leans towards the group exhibiting the characteristic of resilient.

Expectations clarified: The first external factor in developing resilience in groups revolves around ensuring that all persons involved in the situation are aware of what is expected of them. Once the expectations were explained and made clear, it was easier for the hotel workers to focus on the goal of cleaning up. Clarifying expectations was also related to explaining what tasks needed to be completed and the processes required to complete the allotted tasks. This factor is explained in the words of a research participant in the following comment; *“I’m a dedicated, hardworking, pro-active individual. My superiors knew they could rely on me. That is why they gave me a briefing on what’s expected of me and I followed suit. I fulfilled a very valuable role”* (Q5). Sorensen *et al.* (1985:27) pointed out that the level of cohesion between group members increases if the group members are informed of what is expected of them during the adverse situation. Conversely, cohesion between group members declines if group members do not have clarity regarding what is expected of them and others.

This also suggests that in similar contexts there might be value in establishing disaster management plans which would provide the guidelines for dealing with situations which aids the clarification of expectations.

Leadership: Visible and effective leadership is the second external factor which relates to leaders being present at the time of the situation and being able to manage the adverse situation successfully and effectively (Kotter, 2011:38; Shepard, 2010:151). In addition, leaders are expected to adapt when faced with change and adversity (Heifetz & Laurie, 2011:57), which is a characteristic associated with resilience (Snyder *et al.*, 2011:94; Connor & Davidson, 2003:77; Adger, 2000:349). Leadership as stated in section 1, theme 4 of this chapter, is not only limited to the

activities of the hotel management, but also to those individuals who functioned as emergent leaders in the situation as required by the demands of the post flood situation.

A research participant drew attention to his ability to *“remain calm and just try to get along the situation cause I’m the manager sometime I’m the manager in charge, manager in charge in the building”* (18). This type of leadership shows that some hotel workers were required to stand up and display their leadership abilities.

The following comment emphasises the willingness and eagerness of the management of the hotel to go beyond what was expected and required of them to ensure that goals were achieved. *“I think I can ask anyone of my managers anything and they’ll make sure it gets done. Without a fight, without an issue, unless they feel that it can’t happen, which is not very often. They get things done”* (17).

Motivational leadership has been discussed in Chapter 2 in greater detail; however, there are pertinent points that need to be discussed in light of the concept of group resilience. An association between leadership and the ability of leaders to express emotions, specifically positive emotions tends to be emotionally contagious, which results in team members mimicking the emotion expressed by the leader (Prati *et al.*, 2003:26). Expressing and experiencing positive emotions also leans towards individuals who are highly resilient (Connor & Davidson, 2003:77).

Motivational leaders have a knack for promoting supportive interactions between group members due to the creation of a supportive environment fostered in the workplace, while acting as catalysts for collective performance, which leans to the development of cohesion in the group. As such, group members feel emotionally safe which cultivates the growth of coordinated effort. Thus, conflicts are managed in an effective and constructive manner, and an atmosphere of cooperation and trust is established which in turn thrusts the collective motivation of the group members (Prati *et al.*, 2003:28).

Lastly, a significant predictor of effective leadership is the ability to deal with negative and adverse events while trying to find meaning and learn from such events (Bennis & Thomas, 2011:97), which also hints at the ability to be a resilient leader.

Social support: The final factor in external support is that of social support which refers to familial and social support received from significant others. The sense of knowing that one can rely on others during a difficult situation boosts the person's ability in dealing with the difficult situation at hand. This ability to engage the support of others indicates the presence of resilience in people (Ambriz *et al.*, 2011:2; Connor & Davidson, 2003:77). Although familial support was not focused on in this research study some of the participants did mention that the support of their significant others. In relation to the workplace, a research participant stated the following; *"at the time I realised that, um, I had surrounded myself with good people, it was a huge point. That's still, probably the same thing that I can say to you today. You know, you could see who the guys were who were willing to jump in and get the job done"* (I7). This factor links closely with the internal factor of trust, which in turn aids the development of group resilience.

An important aspect to consider in relation to social support is whether a new group member will adopt the resilient characteristics of the group. This is highlighted in this research study by the hotel workers that had not experienced natural disasters prior to the flood of January 2011. They may have observed their colleagues who had prior experience, and this guided them in the manner in which the situation should be dealt with.

Cohesiveness: The model of group resilience that has been proposed suggests that the presence of the internal and external factors discussed above foster the development of cohesiveness, which appears to precede the development of group resilience. The research findings suggest that the more cohesive the group is, as indicated by the exceptional levels of teamwork and team spirit exhibited by this group of hotel workers, the greater the possibility of group resilience developing. In relation to literature, it has been found that cohesiveness refers to the unity that people experience, as well as the intensity of the emotional bonds group members have with one another (Forsyth, 2010:14; Levi, 2011:63). This can also be

associated with the collective efficacy (Levi, 2011:61) that people in disasters exhibit due to their focus on their shared and common goal.

Cohesiveness is also displayed relative to the common task or goal that was required to be completed (Forsyth, 2010:142; Levi, 2011:62) and as a result *esprit de corps* is exhibited. This is also reflected in the light-hearted, but committed and professional approach with which a group of people can tackle the tasks of reorganising the organisational structure after a situation.

Group cohesion has also been shown to impact positively on the overall performance of a group, and this impact is greater if the group is committed to completing an assigned task as opposed to solely relying on group attraction. The overall cohesion effects are found to be greater when the task to be completed by the group is based on elevated levels of interaction, as well as greater task coordination and a dependence on other group members (Levi, 2011:63).

Group resilience: Group resilience appears to be the outcome of enhanced group cohesion, which in turn is fostered by the presence of a variety of internal and external factors, as outlined in previous sections. The internal factors were in relation to past experience which for some hotel workers assisted them in dealing with the situation as to some degree they knew what to expect; adaptability and flexibility entailed adjusting to events within the flood situation as they arose, trust, humour, and the ability to express emotions openly and honestly. The external factors related to having expectations clarified, effective and visible leadership which to a degree defines how the group responded to the situation; and the ability to offer and receive social support which is indicative of being able to have meaningful relationships with others.

The final discussion in this chapter focuses on the follow up questionnaire which was sent to research participants a year after the flood.

SECTION 3 – A YEAR LATER

In order to add greater depth to this study, the researcher compiled a questionnaire to be sent out to research participants who consented to be part of further study. The purpose of the follow-up questionnaire, which was sent to participants one year after the flood, was to investigate:

- how the hotel workers developed on a personal level as a result of the ensuing events of the flood;
- how the sense of camaraderie/togetherness was developed or enhanced since the flood, if at all; and
- what the thoughts of the hotel workers were when they reflected on the events of 17 January 2011.

Eleven questionnaires were sent via an internet survey tool to hotel workers who had provided their email addresses and stated that they wished to participate in a follow-up study. Of the eleven hotel workers emailed, only four participated in the follow-up study. The transcripts of these questionnaires have been subjected to qualitative content analysis, and the most significant findings are discussed below.

In the process of analysing the data from the follow-up questionnaire, three themes emerged, centring on cohesiveness, appreciation and personal learning and growth, as will be discussed next.

Theme 1 – Cohesiveness

The second main theme that emerged from the data analysis focuses on cohesiveness, which also featured as a main theme in the first phase of the research study, and has been discussed in section 1 of this chapter. A year after the flood, the questionnaire respondents felt that the *“degree of togetherness is greater”* (S1) and that there was *“a greater togetherness”* (S4). As a result of the flood there was a *“need to work together”* (S1), which was probably related to the hotel workers having shown the ability to work as a cohesive unit, which they were still able to do. This was reinforced by the hotel workers knowing that, should a problem arise, they could *“group together”* (S1) to solve the issue.

In addition, some of the new employees of the hotel had the feeling that the flood was *“something that they missed”* (S3). This may indicate that they would have wanted to be part of the situation so that they could feel part of the team which had shown the ability to build and sustain strong bonds since 17 January 2011.

From this it would appear that on reflection the flood had the potential to form a cohesive group in which teamwork and togetherness still featured strongly for the hotel workers and was sustained even a year after the flood.

Theme 2 – Emotional responses

A year later, the flood still elicited emotional responses in the hotel workers, mainly around feelings of appreciation. Some of the questionnaire respondents stated that their sense of gratitude continued to grow, especially in relation to *“appreciate what I have in life”* (S2), and this may have resulted in a more positive outlook on life.

Theme 3 – Personal learning and growth

The final theme that emerged in the data analysis of the follow-up questionnaire related to the personal learning and growth that were noted by the hotel participants when reflecting on the flood of 17 January 2011. Such views occurred mainly in relation to viewing the flood as an opportunity to learn and grow, while also having a better understanding of themselves, others and natural disasters.

The flood was viewed from the perspective that it was a *“learning curve”* (S2) as well as being *“an interesting event, interesting learning experience”* (S3). The comments emphasise the ability to grow even in situations that are deemed difficult and trying. In addition, one of the survey respondents drew attention to the realisation that *“bad times can become good times when looked at in a different perspective”* (S4). This remark indicates that some people still have the ability to be positive despite a negative situation. It may be indicative of personal characteristics of optimism, hope and resilience, which could also be associated with the collective characteristics of groups.

The remaining survey respondents developed the *“ability to take control”* (S2) and *“take ‘charge’ in a crisis”* (S4), which for this respondent was the result of a

background in military training. This was also due to having *“a better understanding of trying to handle pressure situations and crisis”* (S2). In having the ability to manage the flood, a survey respondent felt that it *“made me a stronger person”* (S2). This is pertinent in showing that people have the ability to improve themselves and grow on a personal level in light of experiencing a natural disaster.

However, despite these sentiments, one of the survey respondents felt that the view that they had of themselves had not altered since the flood, and that *“not much has changed”* (S3).

In light of the above discussion, the flood had the potential to provide at least some of the hotel workers with the opportunity to grow on a personal level, and despite the negative situation, from a different perspective it can be seen as a situation with many positive outcomes.

Concluding remarks on the follow-up questionnaire

In conclusion, the follow-up questionnaire indicated that, one year after the event, the flood was viewed in a mainly positive light, specifically in relation to the ensuing teamwork and sense of togetherness that was still experienced and exhibited among hotel workers who had been there at the time of the flood. The event showed that the group of workers experienced a learning process where not only did they discover and enhance their own personal skills, but they also grew as a group of people, became more cohesive and came to the realisation that in order to succeed they would need to work together. The final chapter of this dissertation follows and provides a summary of the research study, as well as recommendations for future studies and the limitations which were encountered by the researcher in the course of this study.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUDING PERSPECTIVES, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. Introduction

This study investigated and explored how the flooding of a Pretoria hotel situated in close proximity to a lake that spilled over its banks affected a group of hotel workers. In the past, the hotel had been flooded several times causing minimal damage. The hotel had addressed the rising level of water in the lake with the local town council, but to no avail. The town council's lack of maintenance of the lake behind the hotel resulted in the rising river waters flooding the basement and first level of the hotel on the 17th of January 2011. While repair and restoration work was undertaken, the hotel was not operational for a few days following the flood.

Given the lack of existing research on the social effects of natural disasters such as flooding from a qualitative sociological perspective, a study was designed to investigate this phenomenon. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to an overview of the study that was conducted. Following a brief review of the methodology that was followed during the course of this study, the most significant findings that have emerged from the study will be discussed in relation to the research aims that have guided the study. The findings will also be evaluated in relation to existing literature on the topic.

The summary of the research findings will be followed by a discussion of the recommendations for future study as well as the limitations encountered in the research study.

2. Overview of the research process

Existing studies investigating the social impact of natural disasters such as floods on communities were scant, and as such an exploratory approach to research was required, which was undertaken by means of a qualitative research methodology. Social constructivism formed the theoretical framework for this research, which is described in greater detail in chapter 2, section 7.

As explained in chapter 1, South African research regarding flooding from a sociological and social science viewpoint is quite limited, from which it was deduced that a gap existed for a study of the social impact of floods on people for the field of medical sociology. Thus, the researcher put forward the following as the main aim for the research study and that was to investigate *the social impact of a flood on workers at a Pretoria hotel*.

In order to realise the main aim, the following sub-aims were investigated:

- To explore and describe the subjective experiences of the hotel workers in relation to the flood.
- To investigate how the interactional patterns and relationships of the hotel workers were affected by the flood, if at all.
- To investigate the effect that the leadership of the hotel has had on the hotel workers' experience and management of the flood (if any).
- To explore what strengths were exhibited, discovered or developed as a result of the flood experience, especially with reference to resilience.

These sub aims will guide the discussion of findings later in this chapter.

In Chapter 2 a literature review was undertaken, which elaborated on the concepts of natural disasters and floods from a sociological perspective, and also investigated concepts such as group dynamics, wellbeing, resilience, leadership and social constructivism.

Chapter 3 explained the research design and methodology that were adopted in this study. A qualitative approach was utilised for this study which entailed an initial questionnaire phase, a secondary phase comprising of individual and focus group semi-structured interviews, and a final phase which entailed a follow up questionnaire a year after the flood occurred. The first phase of the research study involved the distribution of questionnaires to selected hotel employees. The selection was based on specific criteria identified in 4.1. Of the forty employees who received a copy of the questionnaire for completion, only ten questionnaires were returned to the researcher. The second phase entailed semi-structured individual and focus group interviews with staff members who consented to be part of the study.

In order to have a better understanding of the events of 17 January 2011, the semi-structured individual interviews were arranged over two days. A total of eight semi-structured individual interviews were conducted on the 6th and 7th of June 2011 and each interview was approximately thirty minutes in length. The focus group was arranged for the latter part of the morning of the 7th of June 2011 and lasted approximately an hour and included nine research participants. The research participants were selected by means of a purposive sampling method to ensure that all the hotel departments that were involved in the flood and the clean-up process were represented in the study.

The semi-structured individual and focus group interviews were all conducted in a conference room at the hotel premises.

The third and final phase of the research study involved a follow up questionnaire which was emailed to eleven consenting participants, of which only four replied, approximately a year after the flood occurred to further probe certain aspects of the social impact of the flood.

The final information used for data analysis was comprised of the:

- Focus group comprising of nine individuals from various departments involved in the flood and clean-up process.
- In-depth semi-structured individual interviews with eight members of senior management.
- Researcher observations and notes.
- Review of relevant literature sources, reports and media material.

Visual recordings formed part of the data that was collected during the study, thus, the data first had to be transcribed and coded by the researcher, which formed the foundation of the data analysis. Selective coding of the independent categories synthesised and linked the associations between categories until five themes remained.

In Chapter 4 the research findings from the investigation were presented and discussed thematically. The five main themes that emerged were elaborated upon,

and included the emotional responses of the hotel workers, the interpersonal relations of the hotel workers, cohesiveness, leadership and group resilience to which section 2 of chapter 4 was devoted.

3. Synthesis of findings

The objectives of the research study will now be addressed in terms of the four sub aims that were set out in chapter 1.

3.1 Sub-aim 1: What were the subjective experiences of the hotel workers in relation to the flood?

On the 16th of January 2011, rain in the City of Tshwane began to fall, and continued unabatedly throughout the night. Around two in the morning the lake situated behind the hotel spilled over and flooded the basement and the first floor of the hotel. In the past the hotel had been struck by minor flooding, however the flood of the 17th of January 2011 was the worst flood experienced at the hotel as the water entered the basement and then flooded the first level. Preventative measures had been put in place but they had proven to be ineffective. The first sub aim that was set for this study centered on exploring the subjective experiences of the hotel workers who were involved in this situation. The remainder of this section is devoted to a discussion of the findings that have been made in relation to this sub-aim.

On the whole, the reconstruction of the flood by the hotel workers paints a picture of a situation which was emotionally challenging for some yet had positive undertones for others. The subjective experiences of the hotel workers varied in nature and intensity, and included both positive and negative subjective experiences.

The emphasis of this sub-aim was on the subjective viewpoints of the hotel workers, which according to Scholz (2011:248) acknowledges that the environment and the problems associated with the environment are observed and experienced with personal filters. In line with this study, Quarantelli (1989:244) explains that the concepts that arise from situations usually occur as a result of the reality that is constructed.

It appears that for many participants, fear was the first emotion that was experienced. This fear was related to the danger posed by the rising waters, and also to the security of their employment. These feelings were evoked in relation to the possibility of the hotel closing indefinitely which would impact negatively on the employment of the hotel workers. These feelings were dispelled by the general manager who reassured the staff by saying that the situation would be resolved. This gave the hotel workers a sense of security and was able to focus on the task at hand.

As the initial subjective reaction of fear and job insecurity were alleviated, shock was experienced and was mainly caused by a workplace that changed significantly from the previous day due to rising water levels and the ensuing damage. Furthermore, the sense of shock appeared to be exacerbated by the realisation of the amount of work that would need to be undertaken as a consequence of the flood damage.

As the initial feeling of shock wore off, hotel workers experienced a feeling of sadness, which ranged from feeling mildly sad to depression. The sadness evoked was caused by a variety of reasons, which include:

- Sadness caused by damage to the reception area which had been recently renovated and was damaged excessively due to the mud and debris which had remained after the water subsided.
- Sadness caused by personal losses occurred when a research participant mentioned that their personal tools that had been inherited were damaged beyond repair due to the flood.
- Sadness caused by feeling helpless and powerless in the ability to control the situation.

In light of the flood that occurred on the 17th of January 2011, the lack of maintenance of the lake situated behind the hotel resulted in the hotel being flooded to the first level causing extensive damage. As a result, the hotel workers expressed their feelings of frustration which were associated with anger and was directed at the local municipality who did not attend to cleaning of the lake timeously and continually. In addition, frustration experienced was in conjunction with the actual work that had to be done in order to clean up the mud and debris which was found in

and around the hotel premises as well as the inconvenience caused by the mud and debris. A further cause of the frustration experienced was due to guests not being willing to accept explanations given regarding the reduced functionality of the hotel due to the basement and first floor being flooded. This gives the impression that the hotel workers had to manage the emotions of others while experiencing the flood and maintaining their areas in order to assist guests.

Two of the research participants mentioned that this was their first natural disaster experienced which may have resulted in a sense of helplessness and could be associated with the uncertainty regarding expectations about what needed to be done once the water had subsided and by having a sense of not having control over the situation that unfolded before their eyes. However, the observations by the hotel workers of their colleagues who had had prior experience may have assisted them in the way they handled the flood and the way that they reacted to the situation that they found themselves in. Sorensen *et al.* (1985:27) noted that once group members are informed of what was expected of them during a specific situation, the levels of cohesion between group members increase which in turn fosters the development of group resilience, which was discussed in section 2 of chapter 4.

Due to the flood, panic was experienced by some of the hotel workers; however the feeling of panic was abated by the ability to calm oneself despite the situation. This ability to calm oneself down in a stressful situation probably assisted the hotel workers in being able to respond timeously and effectively to the situation as it unfolded. Furthermore, the capacity for staying calm in light of the situation may have been connected to the realisation that no one was in danger.

Apart from the negative subjective reactions that the hotel workers experienced and demonstrated, positive subjective experiences were also encountered.

Happiness was expressed outwardly and assisted in abating the fears of others, especially the guests, and this was done by smiling. It may have also created a sense of security and calm for the guests by exhibiting happiness outwardly. However, it appears that displays of happiness via outward laughter and smiling might at times simply have been an attempt to deal with the stressful situation, rather

than being reflective of genuine happiness. However, on a positive note, laughter may also relieve stress experienced as a result of adversity and may have indicated to others that the situation was manageable. It may have also been indicative of individual characteristics which also lean towards resiliency.

Hotel workers also indicated that they felt a sense of appreciation, which was related to the role exchange between employees, which occurred because guests were still present in the hotel and meant that the hotel workers had to assist guests regardless of their actual position in the hotel. This meant that some of the research participants had the opportunity to increase their understanding of the roles fulfilled by other employees in the hotel.

Another facet to gratitude was expressed by some of the participants was regarding their family and friends, which led the researcher to the presumption that having significant others present in one's life and having their support aided the effective management of the situation. The support received from others in the community links with the fifth aspect of Keyes (2007:98; 1998:123) theory of social wellbeing regarding social integration which refers to the extent to which people feel they are part of their community and the extent of the support that is offered by the community to its members.

The flood provided the hotel workers with the opportunity to experience emotional support which was in the form of comfort from management which was done by directing the hotel workers in the tasks that needed to be completed which may have given them a sense of safety and security. This highlighted the positive nature of the relationships that existed, experienced and observed amongst colleagues and with guests.

As a result of the flood a positive atmosphere was experienced, specifically that positive morale amongst the hotel workers existed which was related to the confidence the staff had in their ability to complete their allocated tasks with enthusiasm and reopen the hotel in the allotted time.

Finally, some participants mentioned that they felt a sense of courage in dealing with the flood. Several workers acted fearlessly and daringly despite their own personal fears, such as those hotel workers who braved wading in the water despite their fear of water and their inability to swim. The flood also facilitated the process of being able to demonstrate courage, as there was a need to find the strength and courage to face the uncertainty brought about by the flood.

The findings in relation to this sub-aim suggest that in instances which may be relatively similar to the flooding situation experienced by the hotel workers that certain subjective experiences will be expected. This was characterised by positive and negative personal responses to the flood and indicated the way the hotel workers viewed the situation that unfolded before their eyes. The findings suggest that initial responses to a natural disaster, such as a flood, might include fear, job insecurity, shock, anger, sadness, frustration and devastation. The findings have also brought to light that although the flood may have been deemed to be a negative event initially, also elicited positive subjective experiences such as appreciation, happiness and courage.

3.2 Sub-aim 2: How were the interactional patterns and relationships of the hotel workers affected by the flood, if at all?

At the beginning of this study, the researcher set out to investigate how the interactional patterns and relationships were affected by the flood, and this emerged in the theme focusing on interpersonal relations.

Overall, for many research participants, there was a marked difference in the nature and quality of the relationships that existed prior to the flood than those that were described after the flood. In particular, there were more interdepartmental interactions than what had been experienced prior the flood. Before the flood, the relationships between colleagues was one which was described as being professional and where each department focused on their own tasks with very little interaction with other departments unless it was necessary. As a result of the flood the hotel workers were placed in a situation which required that they had to work together to achieve a common goal of cleaning up the mud and debris which remained after the water subsided. This again highlights one of the positive

outcomes of the flood, as the hotel workers discovered more about their colleagues and the relationships have improved.

The analysis of the research findings revealed the type of interactional patterns and relationships that occurred as a result of the flood. The relationships were enhanced specifically in relation to the stronger bonds and sense of unity and camaraderie that developed. The research findings suggested that the group of hotel workers were able to function as a cohesive unit with interpersonal relations that progressed beyond the expected professional collegial relationships. In particular, this was due to the opportunity created to learn more about colleagues by working side by side with them in newly formed teams. As well as fulfilling roles which were different to the usual roles the hotel workers functioned in, thus, by understanding what work was required of other departments this served as an opportunity to bridge gaps between people. These interactions probably contributed to the successful outcome of the clean-up operation which was undertaken in the days following the flood. The formation of the group from the various departments links with Bruce Tuckman's (Forsyth, 2010:19; Stolley, 2005:87) theory of group development and supposes that all groups progress through the developmental stages, of which the first stage being the forming stage where the group formed as it did at just after the flood occurred.

In the early hours after the flood, the hotel workers formed new teams, which created the opportunity for development of new relationships with colleagues in other departments. This was due to the various tasks that needed to be completed and undertaken, and required groups of people who were readily available to undertake the assignments. For many hotel workers, they had not in the past undertaken specific tasks that were now required of them, however in observing their colleagues, it is surmised that the observed behaviour acted as model for the new group members to emulate, which probably aided the successful clean-up process of the flood.

The interactional patterns and relations between hotel workers were noted with specific reference to the strength of character which was admired in some individuals, especially the general manager and the maintenance manager. They were mentioned to have behaved exemplary during the flood and its immediate

aftermath. The leadership qualities and style will be elaborated upon in sub-aim 4 further on in this chapter.

An environment of cooperation and solidarity was fostered and through the research findings suggested that stronger bonds between hotel workers developed as a result of the flood. The bonds that developed between the hotel workers was indicative of the socioemotional interaction which was present and helped in supporting and sustaining the bonds formed, and this is supported by Emmitt and Gorse (2007:178). In addition, Forsyth (2010:11) states that the presence of the strong bonds between people further encourages support and assistance of others during a challenging event.

There was a sense of camaraderie that developed and could be described as a feeling of being in the trenches together and that the research participants felt that they connected with each other on a deeper, personal level than they had done prior to the flood. The feeling of unity that was experienced by the hotel workers was also associated to the intensity of the emotional bonds that the group of workers experienced with each other, as has been stated by Forsyth (2010:14) and Levi (2011:63). This can also be associated with the collective efficacy (Levi, 2011:61) that people who are faced with natural disasters, such as floods exhibit due to their focus on their shared and common goal.

One of the research participants noted that the strength of the team was due to everyone working together, and that they believed that because of the flood, they had the opportunity to work together to create a unified, cohesive team. Groups become a cohesive unit when greater understanding occurred between the hotel workers, and this is typified by the norming stage of group development as mentioned by Haynes (2012:9). Group cohesion has also been shown to impact positively on the overall performance of a group. The overall cohesion effects are found to be greater when the task to be completed by the group is based on elevated levels of interaction, as well as greater task coordination and a dependence on other group members (Levi, 2011:63), which is associated with the support that was received by and offered to the hotel workers.

It appears that the hotel workers enjoyed working alongside their colleagues with whom they would not have had the opportunity to do so if it were not for the flood. Many comments were made pointing towards the teamwork which was commendable and admired by all, and that all hotel workers functioned as a unified group with the goal of cleaning up the debris as quickly as possible and ensure the speedy reopening of the hotel.

The findings in relation to this sub-aim indicates that in contextually similar situations, the presence of a support structure in relation to social support, and according to Taylor as cited in Forsyth (2010:119) there are four types of social support, which has been discussed briefly in chapter 2. It has been shown that social support will assist in the effective management of a natural disaster, as is supported by the views of Argyle and Martin (1991:85). The social support exhibited and experienced by the hotel workers assisted the group in coping with the stressful situation. In addition, support was expressed to colleagues by those who were not directly involved in the clean-up process to provide meals and beverages, which leans towards a sense of duty to others. This is indicative of a sense of wellbeing which would have increased when the hotel workers assisted their colleagues as opposed to only meeting their own needs, and this is supported by Nakazato *et al.* (2010:2). In addition, social support can be associated with the wellbeing in the hotel workers, especially when they interact with each other on a daily basis for extended periods of time. Rath and Harter (2010b) have stated that social support enhances wellbeing and in turn lowers the levels of stress which is experienced by people, such as the hotel workers experiencing the flood.

A characteristic noted of the hotel workers were that on arriving for work in the days following the flood, that complaints were not heard and the work was done, as everyone had a vested interest in getting the hotel up and running again. In addition, there was an appreciation for colleagues who arrived and reported for work timeously while being aware of the vast amounts and type of work that was required to be completed.

One of the characteristics of this group of hotel workers was the manner in which they used humour to deal with the flood, as well as the light-hearted approach taken

to manage the situation which also led to enhanced team spirit. Humour has been noted to promote a positive team spirit which was observed and experienced, which appears to hint at a team that enjoys working together and are comfortable around each other in order to pull practical jokes on each other. The use of humour in the flood situation may also hint at the ability at viewing a situation from a different perspective as well as in a positive manner.

The research participants indicated that concern for others did arise, specifically with regard to the safety of people present in the hotel at the time of the flood. This indicates that the hotel workers showed the ability consider the wellbeing of others. Although, the concern shown for others was also only for a limited time, which would indicate that concern exhibited is based on the time period of the situation considered. However, concern for others, according to von Glasersfeld (1995:127), is based on the underlying need for others, and that others need to be considered as they plan an important role when the experiential reality is constructed.

This discussion pertaining to the interactional patterns and relations of the hotel workers has indicated that the successful outcome and rapid reopening of the hotel after a few days could have been attributed to the high levels of quality performance which was encouraged and expected of all the hotel workers. This notion is supported by Forsyth (2010:144). Interpersonal relations between the hotel workers were found to be, on the whole, enhanced as a result of the flood, and this was mainly due to the increased interactions that they had with each other.

3.3 Sub-aim 3: What effect did the leaders of the hotel have on the hotel workers' experience and management of the flood?

At the onset of the research study, the researcher proposed four areas to investigate as research aims. In line with the third sub-aim of the research study, the researcher aimed to investigate the effect that the leadership of the hotel had on the experience of the hotel workers as well as on their management of the flood. The concept of leadership employed here refers to the way that a group of people were led in a particular situation or setting. Successful teams are often associated with the mutual trust and respect that team members and leaders have for each other. The trust and cooperation in turn boosts the collective motivation of the team members (Heifetz &

Laurie, 2011:57; Prati *et al.*, 2003:28). Effective leaders recognise and value team members and have the ability to inspire their people to achieve the goals set (Kotter, 2011:38; Shepard, 2010:151), especially in times of change or difficulty (Prati *et al.*, 2003:28). The remainder of this section is devoted to a discussion of the ways in which the leadership of the hotel impacted workers' experience and management of the flood, based on the analyses of the interviews and questionnaires.

The analysis of the data revealed that the type and quality of the leadership which was exhibited during the flood and its immediate aftermath was shown to be a key driving force behind the manner in which the clean-up of the mud and debris was tackled and the successful outcome of the entire process. Specifically, much of the success of the clean-up and the rapid re-opening of the hotel was attributed to the manner in which the general manager managed the situation. From the data, the researcher identified several leadership strategies and practices which appeared to contribute to the effective management of the flood and the hotel workers.

In the first place, it appears that the general manager recognised and addressed the hotel workers' fears regarding the possible termination of their employment as a result of the damage caused by the hotel which, in turn, affected the worker morale. Once the general manager had allayed the fears surrounding job insecurity, an increased sense of security was experienced among the hotel workers, which also seemed to positively affect their loyalty and motivation in relation to their contribution to the clean-up process.

Secondly, on a personal level, the general manager demonstrated the ability to relate to all hotel workers, regardless of their position, and showed what was perceived as genuine respect for his team. He also adopted a participative style of leadership, in that he was willing to "dig in and do the work" and assist in the clean-up process himself, which appeared to exert a positive influence on the morale of the hotel workers, as well as garner their appreciation and respect. With regard to the general manager's style of leadership, he noted that he preferred to lead by example and to work alongside his team members and show them how to do something as opposed to only providing verbal instructions to complete a task. In addition, the research participants also often referred to the maintenance manager by, who

together with the general manager, demonstrated great leadership in initiating the clean-up process and ensuring that everything would be done when it needed to be done, while remaining personally involved in the actual cleaning-up process.

A characteristic of the general manager is that, as he himself attested, he surrounded himself with people in his management team who would be able to support him regardless of the situation encountered, which is linked with the notion that a support structure aids in the effective management of adverse situations. Some of the hotel workers commented that they were appreciative of seeing their managers involved in the clean-up process, and that this style of leadership motivated them to remain at work willingly after hours to assist with the clean-up operation.

A key factor to be considered in the successful outcome of the clean-up process is that the leadership of the hotel demonstrated the ability to communicate openly with others. The management of the hotel met regularly throughout the day in the days following the flood in order to communicate which tasks had been completed and what needed to be done next.

The success of this approach to leadership was evident in the fact that the hotel was re-opened after three days, whereas the initial assessment for completion of the clean-up was two weeks.

The flood not only emphasised the leadership role played by the management of the hotel, it also elicited significant expressions of leadership from non-management employees who spontaneously emerged as leaders. Leaders in this sense are characterised as emerging from the ranks of the hotel workers and considered to be influential over their group. The informal or emergent leader often has the ability to be influential over his or her group as he or she is “appointed” to the leadership role by the group (Levi, 2011:167; Stolley, 2005:88). The concept of the emergent leader is discussed in chapter 2. This implies that a certain amount of trust would be placed in the person taking the temporary leadership role.

In addition to the above, some hotel workers were impressed by their own ability in leading others in that they acquired skills to lead their team, specifically in regard to new team members, during the clean-up process. This would imply that a certain amount of personal growth was experienced and that new skills were learnt as a result of the flood, especially with reference to leading others.

In relation to this sub-aim, the findings indicate, at least in instances that are similar contextually to the one that served as the basis for the present study, that a motivational and transformational style of leadership might be particularly effective in managing employees in a workplace affected by the aftermath of a natural disaster. The findings suggest that leading by example is effective in inspiring confidence, the expression of positive emotions, facilitating supportive interactions and motivating the hotel workers to go the proverbial extra mile. This is also associated with inspiring team members to achieve goals, rather than demanding that employees obtain results. These conclusions are supported by Stolley (2005:88) and Prati *et al.* (2003:27), who state that leading by example typically nurtures the manifestation of positive emotion, interactions based on social support and the motivation of employees.

From the above discussion, it appears that the leadership of the hotel fostered an environment of collaboration and cooperation. This form of leadership is characterised by Shepard (2010:151) as being effective, and has been found to motivate group members to achieve group and personal goals set. The data suggest that this was also the case among the hotel workers.

This study has highlighted the importance of having effective leadership and leaders at the helm of a situation in order to ensure a successful conclusion to a challenging event. In addition, it was also highlighted that the type of leadership present during the flood and the clean-up facilitated the successful outcome of the clean-up. Coenraads (2006:21) expresses a similar sentiment when he states that, at any given time, the successful outcome of any disaster situation is dependent on the ability of all people involved in the event to be mindful of the instructions of those holding positions of authority.

Next follows the discussion of sub-aim 4, which centres on the strengths that may have been exhibited, discovered or developed in light of the flood, specifically with regard to resilience.

3.4 Sub-aim 4: What strengths were exhibited, discovered or developed as a result of the flood experience, especially in regard to resilience?

This final sub-aim focuses on the strengths that may have been exhibited, discovered or developed in light of the flood, which will include the main points of the research findings that have been discussed at length in chapter 4.

A significant concept which emerged in the process of data analysis was in relation to group resilience. Resilience formed part of this final sub-aim, which was explored in the course of this study. On a global level, a movement has emerged aiming at building disaster-resilient societies, which would enable groups of people to deal with situations of collective stress, as has been argued by Corotis and Enarson (2005:2). Furthermore, the ability to manage a stressful situation while still completing tasks is associated with the ability to be resilient, which is supported by Warner (2008:20). The analysis of the data has shown that social components are associated with the ability of groups to adapt to a stressful situation, and further supports the development of group resilience among a group of people. These components are linked with the ability to trust other people, such as colleagues, and the feeling of being part of a group, which has been hinted at by the levels of cohesion experienced within this group of hotel workers. The relationships and support structure that exist among the hotel workers fostered the development of resilience in the research participants.

Resilience has often been recognised as occurring in individuals (Gaillard, 2007:523); however, people work in communities, organisations and society, and it would be reasonable to state that work is undertaken in groups of varying sizes. Therefore, resilience should also be considered to occur at group level, which would imply that groups can develop their ability to be resilient in tackling adverse situations and recover more quickly.

The interpersonal relations between the hotel workers have been discussed in relation to sub-aim 2. However, these still have a bearing on the strengths exhibited, discovered or explored in the course of this study. According to Aspinwall and Staudinger (2003:15), interpersonal relationships with others, result in human strengths being developed through interactions with others. In relation to the situation that faced the hotel workers, the increased level of interactions with others as a result of greater interdepartmental teamwork resulted in enhanced cohesiveness. The increased levels of cohesiveness exhibited by the employees can be considered a positive aspect of the social impact of the flood on this particular group of hotel workers. Cohesiveness can be described as being the bonds that occur between group members, and increases with interpersonal interaction (Forsyth, 2010:135).

The bonds that developed between hotel workers were indicative of the level of cohesiveness which was experienced as a result of the flood, and were mentioned during the semi-structured interviews by the research participants. One of the key factors for the development of bonds was the friendships and attachments that grew between colleagues, and which were also observed in their colleagues by the hotel workers. This reinforces the idea that the hotel workers' sense of cohesiveness was intensified through the group experience of the flood. This is further supported by the work of Levi (2011:3), who indicated that the ties between colleagues form the foundation of the connection in the shared experience of the group.

The flood also caused the hotel workers to form a stronger unit when they all worked together to attain common goals; specifically the goal of re-opening as soon as possible after the flood. This might be due to the fact that groups tend to have the capacity to make better decisions than is the case with lone individuals. (Shepard, 2010:151).

The flood also appeared to elicit personal strengths among some of the participants. Several hotel workers behaved in a manner that would be deemed courageous and brave, by wading in the water even though they could not swim or were afraid of water, thereby overcoming personal fears.

The hotel workers indicated that they all showed a willingness to work together and complete tasks as speedily as possible. This is associated with the sense of unity which occurred as a result of the willingness to work together, which in turn appeared to promote the development of group cohesion. Similar ideas are expressed by Forsythe (2010:141) in relation to the concept of task cohesion, which enhances the ability of group members to function as a single unit. Furthermore, the teamwork that was demonstrated between the hotel workers during the flood was commendable, and was indicative of how cohesive this group of hotel workers became as a result of the situation that they were placed in. Some of the research participants noted that the hotel workers were able to put their differences aside and worked alongside each other in order to realise their objectives in regard to the cleaning up of the mud and debris once the flood waters subsided.

A strength that was often noted by the participants was the team spirit that developed during the aftermath of the flood. Forsythe (2010:144) refers to team spirit as the *esprit de corps*, which also includes the understanding and compassion demonstrated and observed between group members. Team spirit aided and fostered the development of cohesion between the hotel group members, and was enhanced and intensified as a result of the flood. The flood provided the hotel workers with the opportunity to form a new group from the various departments and work towards a common goal of cleaning up and re-opening the hotel as quickly as possible. Team spirit was considered to be a trait of this newly formed group created to deal with the aftermath of the flood. This implies that team spirit might be an important ingredient in group cohesion and resilience.

In addition to team spirit, camaraderie was also experienced in the sense of the comradeship that the hotel workers had in dealing with the flood. The feeling of togetherness was not only experienced but was also observed in others. In addition, there seemed to be a sense of satisfaction and enjoyment when experiencing the development of camaraderie as a result of the flood which they had faced together. The flood brought about a sense of solidarity and comradeship between the hotel workers; in that they had to stick together in order to get through the situation they were faced with. This was extended to the support experienced by the hotel workers

and an awareness that they could rely on their colleagues to get through the situation.

As is evident from this section, the data analysis revealed that an ostensibly difficult and challenging situation such as the flood had the potential to elicit a wide array of personal and collective strengths among those involved. Most notably, it was found that team spirit, camaraderie and deepened friendships developed in the wake of the flood, which in turn led to enhanced levels of group cohesion and resilience. The quality of leadership was enhanced among the members of hotel management, and brought to the fore in others who were not part of management. Other workers overcame personal fears. In sum, it also emerged clearly from the analysis of the data that these strengths had many benefits, both for the individuals involved and for the hotel as a whole, in the form of enhanced personal strengths, improved intra- and inter-departmental relationships, and enhanced productivity.

4. Limitations and recommendations

4.1 Limitations

Two significant limitations were uncovered in the process of the study, which are touched on in the following paragraphs.

The greatest limitation in regards to this research study is that greater insight would have been obtained if the questionnaires and interviews occurred immediately after the flood. If further studies are to be undertaken regarding the social impact of floods on people, that research is conducted as soon as possible after the event.

Interested researchers should try to be on the scene to record initial responses as they occur. As the initial responses in this research study were referred to many months after the flood had occurred.

4.2 Recommendations

During the analysis of the data, the researcher noted key aspects which could be addressed in future flooding and with specific reference to the hotel industry.

One of the aspects which stood out for the researcher was the ability of the management team to manage the expectations of the hotel workers; this was with reference to addressing the insecurity surrounding employment should the hotel have been closed indefinitely. Many of the workers were apprehensive regarding their future employment prospects, as the hotel had been badly damaged in the course of the flooding. When an adverse situation unfolds, it would be of importance to address the concerns and questions that staff members may have regarding their employment.

Once the expectations of the hotel workers were dealt with, it would be of benefit to deal with the primary emotional responses elicited by the people present at the time of the situation. In this case, it was handling the shock experienced by staff as they arrived at their workplace and viewed their work environment which was strewn with debris and water rising from the basement level to the reception area.

As the primary emotional responses are identified in the hotel workers, it would be invaluable to provide comfort for those staff members who are visibly and overly distressed by the situation. In the event that latent emotions exist, it would be favourable to implement a support structure for all employees.

In addition, people who are affected by natural disasters should have the opportunity to debrief as soon as possible after the situation has occurred. The researcher noted that with one particular research participant, the opportunity to discuss what had transpired was not afforded to him. By having the opportunity to reflect on the situation that occurred, the persons involved may have the ability to cope with the situation more effectively. This could be arranged through trauma/debriefing counsellors who are skilled in dealing with adverse situations, who can provide coping mechanisms and tools to deal with the situation.

Specific to the hotel industry, it was found that the hotel workers still maintained a professional demeanour and acted in this manner when dealing with guests, suppliers and external parties in handling the flood situation. In the future, training sessions could incorporate upholding professionalism despite dealing with an adverse situation.

In dealing with a natural disaster, it was shown that the ability to appreciate humour and laughter assisted the hotel workers to deal with the situation as it unfolded and the aftermath thereof.

During the interviews, the research participants noted that they learnt to respect their colleague's roles, as some hotel workers performed roles outside of their daily tasks. A consideration for a training session would be to familiarise staff with the roles that other departments within an organisation perform.

A further recommendation would be to acknowledge and compliment exemplary behaviour of staff members, as well as courage and bravery that is exhibited in light of conquering personal fears. It would indicate to staff members that their behaviour and actions did not go unnoticed and that overcoming personal adversities would be considered remarkable. During the flood and its aftermath, it was shown that some of the hotel workers overcame their own fear of water and managed to wade through the reception area to get to safety.

The group of hotel workers that formed part of the research study displayed levels of cohesion as a result of the flood. In future scenarios pertaining to floods, it would be imperative to foster a positive and calm atmosphere where the focus is on team morale, team spirit, camaraderie and inclusion of all staff members who are involved in the situation. It was found that the flood facilitated the breaking down of barriers, particularly hierarchical barriers between hotel workers and their respective line managers and the management team overall. This improved and strengthened bonds between colleagues as well, as a deeper level of understanding occurred with regards to roles performed.

In an adverse situation, such as the flood that occurred in January 2011, the leadership was shown to be a key driving force in the successful management of the situation. Future studies could focus on leadership with reference to the characteristics of leaders; what are the characteristics of individuals who adopted leadership roles during the situation; the support provided by the management team

to staff members; and the teamwork which is present between management team members.

The researcher proposes the notion that future study should be done considering the development of a theory of group resilience. Future research should focus on investigating if similar characteristics arise in other groups that are under extreme pressure or face situations of difficulty. A focus area could be to discover if resiliency in individuals does promote the resiliency in groups.

A resilience instrument of measurement is recommended to aid future study of group resilience. This could be in the form of a self-assessment questionnaire/survey that can be completed by participants/people who find themselves in situations of difficulty. The self-assessment should focus on aspects such as social support, personal growth arising from the situation, and emotional competence. Emotional competence refers to the ability to express emotions openly and honestly.

5. Concluding remarks

The world of today is formed into social spheres and the people in these spheres have impacted on the environment and are to a greater or lesser degree responsible for the effects that are experienced today. This aspect was highlighted by the lack of maintenance of the lake situated behind the hotel at the centre of the research study.

The final chapter of this dissertation focused on answering the research objectives as set out in chapter 1. The first research objective centred on the subjective experiences of the hotel workers in relation to the flood, and it was noted that negative as well as positive subjective reactions were experienced by the hotel workers. Secondly, the researcher set out to investigate how the interactional patterns and relationships of the hotel workers were affected by the flood, if at all. The research findings indicated that the group of hotel workers experienced enhanced interpersonal relations which were characterised by good teamwork, notable team spirit, stronger bonds and a feeling of camaraderie and togetherness. The third sub-aim explored the effects of the leadership of the hotel on the hotel workers during the and after the flood. During the data analysis process it was revealed that the leadership was effective in addressing certain emotional responses

of the hotel workers. In addition, the leadership steered the group of hotel workers through the situation with successful outcomes which resulted in the hotel reopening in a short span of time after the flood.

The last research objective investigated what strengths were exhibited, discovered or developed as a result of the flood experience, especially with regards to resilience. The research study has highlighted that positive outcomes can result in light of a situation that may have been deemed negative by the people involved. The flood provided an opportunity for studying how people deal with adverse events with significant results for current theories of resilience and group dynamics as well as the field of sociology on the whole. The research findings have led the researcher to propose the concept of group resilience which was grounded in the data obtained from the semi-structured individual and focus group interviews with the hotel workers. Through the analysis of the data, it has been suggested that internal and external factors play a role in fostering group resilience. The internal factors were in relation to past experience, adaptability and flexibility, trust, humour, and the ability to express emotions openly and honestly. The external factors related to having expectations clarified, effective and visible leadership and the ability to offer and receive social support.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix A contains the questionnaire that was distributed to the research participants.

A STUDY OF THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF A FLOOD ON HOTEL WORKERS AT A PRETORIA HOTEL DURING THE FLOODS OF JANUARY 2011

1. Are you Male Female

2. Were you present at the hotel at the time of the flood?
 - 2.1 If yes, what was your initial reaction, how did you feel, and what did you do?
 - 2.2 If not, what was your immediate reaction upon arriving at the hotel, what were your thoughts, how did you feel and what did you do?

3. What are your views on the flood, the damage caused and the reconstruction of the hotel since the flood? What aspects have improved/deteriorated since the flood and why?

4. What personal characteristics do you have, that you believe helped in the management of the flooded areas and people in the hotel, and why?

5. This question pertains to communication as well as your view on the workplace
 - 5.1 How did you communicate with your colleagues and management throughout the flooding and thereafter?
 - 5.2 How did the flood affect your view of the workplace, and why?

6. How have your relationships with your colleagues been impacted or changed in any manner following the flood at the hotel?
 - 6.1 How would you characterise your relationships with your colleagues following the flood at the hotel?
 - 6.2 How have your relationships with your colleagues been changed/affected following the flood at the hotel, and why?
 - 6.3 How have your relationships improved/deteriorated since the flooding, and

why?

6.4 Did the flood have a negative impact on your relationships at all, and why?

7. Describe your relationships with your colleagues

7.1 Prior to the flood

7.2 After the flood

8. How has the flood impacted on your personal relationships outside of your work environment, for example with family members, friends and why?

9. Describe your feelings and your behaviour during the cleanup process after the flood, and in what way did this affect you?

10. Describe the behaviour of your colleagues during the cleanup process after the flood, and how did this affect you?

11. Which personal characteristics demonstrated by your colleagues did you admire in the management of the flooding and why?

12. What did you learn about yourself as a result of the flood, and how did this change your view of yourself, in a positive or negative manner?

13. What do you think you would do differently faced with a similar situation? Why?

APPENDIX B – THE FOLLOW UP QUESTIONNAIRE

A YEAR LATER – THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF A FLOOD ON HOTEL WORKERS AT A PRETORIA HOTEL

1. When you look back on the flood of 17 January 2011, what are your thoughts, and how do you feel regarding the flood?
2. Since the flood of 17 January 2011, do you feel that any personal characteristics have developed or been enhanced? If so, which characteristics have developed or been enhanced?
3. What is your opinion of the flooding of 17 January 2011? Describe your feelings regarding the flooding.
4. What did you learn about yourself as a result of the flood, and how has this changed your view of yourself, whether in a positive or negative manner?
5. Is there a greater/lesser degree of camaraderie/sense of togetherness at this point, a year after the flood of 17 January 2011? Why?

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