



Leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches

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Mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Master of Business Administration* at the North-West University

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Declaration statement

I, Jacobus Christoffel (Kobus) Du Plooy (24062553), declare that *Leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches*, a mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Master of Business Administration* at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University, was completed according to the Copyright Act, No 98 of 1978 of the Republic of South Africa. All literary and academic material and sources, consulted during the writing and compilation of this mini-dissertation, have been acknowledged and referenced according to the American Psychological Association's Publication Manual (6th edition). No single or comprehensive unit of this mini-dissertation has been plagiarised from another author or institution and the document remains the intellectual property of the corresponding author, namely myself.

Furthermore, I certify that submission of this mini-dissertation is exclusively for examination purposes at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University and it has not been submitted for any other purposes to any third party.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' and 'D' followed by a period, positioned above a horizontal line.

Jacobus Christoffel Du Plooy

Summary

Rugby union (henceforth referred to as “rugby” throughout this text) is a popular, high-intensity, full contact team sport played by millions of people throughout the world, including South Africa, where it is considered one of the most popular sports. South Africa has traditionally been one of the strongest rugby playing nations in the world; however, in recent years, South African rugby performances have shown a steady decline against international competition as is evident from its move down the World Rugby Rankings. The present study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of this problem by investigating the leadership challenges experienced among a group of key role players within South African rugby, namely the head coaches of elite South African rugby teams who compete against international competition. From a business perspective, a positive correlation has been found to exist in the literature between sports teams that perform and the revenues they generate. As such, spectators tend to support teams that perform well on the playing field. This, in turn, has a direct influence on the business longevity of these teams and makes it vital to assist the leaders of these teams, their head coaches, to ensure that they continue to grow and remain sustainable. A qualitative, phenomenological methodology was subsequently utilised, which collected data by means of in-depth interviews with six elite South African rugby coaches. The study also utilised the general systems theory (GST) as theoretical base. The data revealed three main themes, namely environmental, relationships and personal leadership challenges. The sub-themes identified from environmental leadership challenges included the influence of the media, political influence, impact of the economic environment leading to limited financial resources, a general lack of professionalism in South African rugby, and ineffective interactions with the South African Rugby Union (SARU), the main governing body of rugby in South Africa. The sub-themes related to the relationship challenges theme included relationship challenges related to managing diverse players, individual expectations

of players, player support, player development, maintaining optimal relationships with assistant coaches, managing expectations of assistant coaches, maintaining optimal relationships with medical personnel, obtaining the ‘buy-in’ from management into the coach’s plans, and relationships with the boards and CEOs of unions where coaches are contracted as well as SARU. Sub-themes were related to the theme of personal leadership challenges and included managing pressure, uncertain career paths and personal development challenges. The data therefore revealed that coaches experience significant leadership challenges, some of which were similar to what their international counterparts experienced and others that are unique to the South African context, which may have been contributing to the problem and required urgent intervention. Recommendations to alleviate these challenges as well as for further research were included, such as the development of a leadership, diversity and emotional intelligence (EQ) development course for all new elite coaches to equip them with the aforementioned skills. Further recommended studies are also to include other leaders in South African rugby such as executive board members and CEOs of unions and SARU to shed further light on and to resolve the problem. Finally, as no research was identified that has specifically researched what leadership challenges elite South African coaches currently face, the present study set out to do so. In the process, it made a unique contribution to the literature on a theoretical and practical level.

Keywords:

Leadership, challenges, rugby, coaches, sport, elite sport, elite rugby coaches, South African rugby, General Systems Theory, qualitative research, phenomenology, sport psychology

Opsomming

Rugby-unie (hierna ‘rugby’ genoem in hierdie teks) is ’n gewilde, hoë-intensiteit, volkontakspanport wat deur miljoene mense regoor die wêreld gespeel word, insluitende Suid-Afrika, waar dit as een van die gewildste sportsoorte beskou word. Suid-Afrika was tradisioneel een van die sterkste rugbynasies ter wêreld, maar prestasies teen internasionale opponente het ’n bestendige agteruitgang begin toon, soos aangedui op die Wêreld Rugby-ranglys waar die land se posisie aansienlik begin verswak het in die onlangse verlede. Die huidige studie het daarom gepoog om ’n beter begrip van hierdie probleem te verkry deur die leierskapsuitdagings te ondersoek onder ’n groep sleutel rolspelers in Suid-Afrikaanse rugby, naamlik die hoof afrigters van elite Suid-Afrikaanse rugbyspanne wat teen internasionale kompetisie meeding. Vanuit ’n besigheidsperspektief is daar in die literatuur gevind dat ’n positiewe korrelasie bestaan tussen spanne wat presteer en die inkomstes wat deur hulle genereer word. Sodanig ondersteun toeskouers spanne wat goed presteer op die speelveld. Dit het verder ’n direkte invloed op hierdie spanne om te kan bly voortbestaan uit ’n besigheidsperspektief wat dit ook noodsaaklik maak om die leiers van hierdie spanne, naamlik hul hoof afrigters, te ondersteun om te verseker dat hulle aanhou groei en volhoubaar kan voortbestaan. ’n Kwalitatiewe, fenomenologiese metodologie is gebruik om data te versamel deur middel van in-diepte-onderhoude met ses elite Suid-Afrikaanse rugby-afrigters. Die studie het ook van die algemene sisteemteorie (AST) gebruik gemaak as teoretiese basis. Die data het drie hooftemas onthul, naamlik omgewings-, verhoudings- en persoonlike leierskapsuitdagings. Die subtemas wat uit die omgewingsleierskap-tema gevloei het, sluit die invloed van die media, politieke invloed, die impak van die ekonomiese omgewing wat gelei het tot beperkte finansiële hulpbronne, ’n algemene gebrek aan professionaliteit in Suid-Afrikaanse rugby en oneffektiewe interaksies met die Suid-Afrikaanse Rugby-unie (SARU), die hoof beheerliggaam van alle rugby in Suid-Afrika, in.

Die subtemas van die verhoudingsuitdagings-tema het uitdagings ingesluit met betrekking tot die bestuur van diverse spelers, die individuele verwagtinge van spelers, speler-ondersteuning, speler-ontwikkeling, optimale verhoudings met hulp afrigters, die verwagtinge van hulp afrigters, die handhawing van optimale verhoudings met mediese personeel, die verkryging van bestuur om 'in te koop' in die hoof afrigter se planne, sowel as verhoudings met die direksies en uitvoerende hoofde van unies waar afrigters gekontrakteer is sowel as SARU. Subtemas wat verband gehou het met die tema van persoonlike leierskapsuitdagings het die bestuur van druk, loopbaan-onsekerheid asook persoonlike ontwikkelingsuitdagings behels. Die data het dus onthul dat afrigters groot leierskapsuitdagings ervaar wat mag bydra tot die probleem en dringende intervensie benodig. Sommige van die uitdaging word ook deur hul eweknieë in ander lande ervaar, maar ander is uniek aan die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks. Aanbevelings ter verligting van hierdie uitdagings sowel as vir verdere navorsing is ingesluit, wat ingesluit het die ontwikkeling van 'n kursus vir alle nuwe elite afrigters om hulle met leierskap, emosionele intelligensie (EI) asook kennis van die hantering van diversiteit te bemagtig. Verdere studies is ook aanbeveel om ander leiers in Suid-Afrikaanse rugby in te sluit soos direksielede en uitvoerende hoofde van unies sowel as SARU om verdere lig op die probleem te werp in 'n poging om dit op te los. Ten slotte, aangesien geen navorsing geïdentifiseer kon word wat spesifiek nagevors het watter leierskapsuitdagings elite Suid-Afrikaanse afrigters in die gesig staar nie, het die huidige studie dit ondersoek en daardeur 'n unieke bydrae tot die literatuur gelewer op 'n teoretiese sowel as praktiese vlak.

Sleutel woorde:

Leierskap, uitdagings, rugby, afrigters, sport, elite sport, elite rugby-afrigters, Suid-Afrikaanse rugby, algemene sisteemteorie, fenomenologie, kwalitatiewe navorsing, sportsielkunde

Preface

This mini-dissertation was written in article format in accordance with rules A4.4.2 of the North-West University. The article in Section II of this mini-dissertation, titled: *Leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches*, will be submitted for possible publication in the *Leadership Quarterly*. The editorial and referencing styles of Sections I and III of this mini-dissertation are in strict accordance with the guidelines described and defined within the Publication Manual (6th edition) of the American Psychological Association (APA) style guide.

The author guidelines of the *Leadership Quarterly* described in section 2.1 of this mini-dissertation stipulate adherence to any editorial and referencing style preferred by the author. As such, it was selected to also make use of the American Psychological Association's Publication manual (6th edition) for purposes of the article. The page numbering in this mini-dissertation is consecutive, starting from the introduction.

Prof Jan Visagie and Prof Pieter Kruger, the co-authors of the article: *Leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches* in Section II of this mini-dissertation granted their consent for submission of the said article for examination purposes, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MBA degree. The numbering of the tables is restarted in Section II. For publication purposes, the referencing in this mini-dissertation is restarted in every section. This mini-dissertation also received a Turn-it-in report within accepted norms.

Letter of permission

Permission is hereby granted for the submission by the first author, Prof JC Du Plooy, of the following mini-dissertation for examination purposes, towards partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Master of Business Administration* at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University:

Leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches.

The roles of the co-authors were as follows: Prof Jan Visagie acted as supervisor and assisted with the conception, design, and peer review of this study. Prof Pieter Kruger acted as the co-supervisor and also assisted with the conception, design, and peer review of this study.

(Signature on hard copy)

Prof Jan Visagie

(Signature on hard copy)

Prof Pieter Kruger

Proof of language editing

Dear Mr / Ms

Re: Language editing of mini-dissertation (Leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches)

I hereby declare that I language edited the above-mentioned mini-dissertation by Prof JC Du Plooy (student number: 24062553).

Please feel free to contact me should you have any enquiries.

Kind regards



Cecile van Zyl

Language practitioner

BA (PU for CHE); BA honours (NWU); MA (NWU)
SATI number: 1002

Leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

Rugby union (henceforth referred to as “rugby”) is a popular, high-intensity, full contact team sport played by millions of people throughout the world. It is mainly played in two formats, namely by seven or 15 players per side (Heyns, 2012). A 15-player per-side rugby match consists of two halves of forty minutes each, with a ten- to twenty-minute interval between halves. A rugby match is characterised by various high-intensity activities such as sprints, accelerations from a static position, rucking, mauling, tackling and breaking through tackles (Gill, Beaven, & Cook, 2006; Suzuki, Umeda, Nakaji, Shimoyama, Mashiko, & Sugawara, 2004). Rugby is regarded as one of the most popular, professional team sports in the world with nearly 200 countries affiliated with World Rugby (Brooks, Fuller, Kemp & Reddin, 2005; Kemp, Hudson, Brooks & Fuller, 2008).

In South Africa, rugby has historically been regarded as a sport predominantly played and dominated by white males (Engh & Potgieter, 2016). After the newly elected democratic government came into power in 1994, this, however, changed with all racial groups and both sexes since then being represented at all levels of the sport throughout South Africa. According to Brown, Verhagen, Viljoen, Readhead, Van Mechelen, Hendricks, and Lambert (2012), approximately 400 000 players of all racial groups and both sexes were participating in rugby on a recreational, amateur and professional level in South Africa by 2011. By 2014, South Africa had a total of 418 509 players, of whom 342 316 were registered players according to World Rugby (World Rugby Year in Review, 2016). Between 2013 and 2014, the number of female rugby players alone had risen to 267 000 worldwide, indicating a substantial increase in interest in the sport from all sectors of society, including South Africa (Birch, 2015). Women’s sevens rugby was also regarded

as the fastest growing sport in the world according to a report by the Commission of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) in 2016, after its establishment as an Olympic sport in the same year (HSBC, 2016).

The business of rugby

Following the Rugby World Cup in 1995, the International Rugby Board (IRB), currently known as World Rugby, repealed the rules with regard to amateurism and as a result rugby became a professional sport (Treasure, Carpenter & Power, 2000). Given the popularity and continuous growth of rugby across the globe highlighted in the introduction, it becomes apparent that from a business perspective the sport has also shown significant growth. This was clearly indicated by the amounts of revenues generated worldwide by the sport since it has become a professional sport. In the 2016 annual report released by World Rugby, it was indicated that the 2015 Rugby World Cup hosted in England generated a surplus of €163 million for World Rugby alone. This amounted to a 78% increase when compared to the previous Rugby World Cup, which was hosted in 2011 by New Zealand. Furthermore, this total did not reflect additional sources of income generated from other sources for various stakeholders involved in the game, such as from corporate sponsorships, television viewing rights and the sales of merchandise, to name but a few (World Rugby Year in Review, 2016).

In addition to ticket sales from the attendance of matches by fans, the sales of sports merchandising alone form an integral part of the business generated through the sporting industry, including rugby. In 2011, PricewaterhouseCoopers (2011) predicted that revenues generated from all sport merchandising across the world would amount to US\$20.1 billion by 2015. Although no forecasts of this nature could be identified for rugby alone, it was accepted that merchandising also fulfilled an important role in the commercial success of rugby in South Africa. Therefore, it becomes evident from the aforementioned discussion that along with the growing interest in rugby worldwide, when viewed from a business perspective, the sport shows significant business potential

as well as continuous and rapid commercial growth, which makes it a highly attractive market for investors (World Rugby Year in Review, 2016).

Along with this growth of rugby, an increased focus has subsequently fallen on the on-field performances of elite rugby teams. This is as the revenues generated by elite teams (e.g. from television broadcasting rights as well as ticket and merchandise sales) have been found to be positively correlated to their on-field performances (Carmichael, McHale & Thomas, 2010). As such, from a business perspective, this has placed ever-increasing pressures on elite rugby teams and their coaches to perform due to the increasing financial implications at stake on their performances. In this respect, the leadership provided by the coaches of these elite teams has become of paramount importance, including within the Southern African context, where the sport is much loved and revered by a large segment of the country's population. It is also common for the coaches of performing elite rugby teams in South Africa and in other parts of the world to be promoted as coaches to more prominent teams, such as national teams, and in the process to earn higher incomes. Simultaneously, coaches of elite teams who underperform tend to be rapidly released from their contracts and replaced by new coaches. When considering the extreme amount of pressure that this scenario places on these coaches, the leadership they provide becomes crucial to ensure the best probability of their team's success. Sport psychologists have long recognised this tendency and therefore authors such as Fletcher and Wagstaff (2009) have called for more research to be conducted on this population to better understand organisational influences, including leadership, on the performances of elite players and teams.

Problem statement

In recent years, South Africa's overall level of rugby performance against international competition has been inconsistent and showed a general, steady decline. South Africa's position in the World Rugby rankings is one indicator of this trend. Table 1 shows how the country's position has gradually declined from the number 1 ranked rugby nation in the world in 2007 (when they also

won the World Cup), to the 5th ranked team by the time this dissertation was being completed. It also shows that the country's position has worsened in recent years from being in the number 2 position behind New Zealand in 2014 to number 7 in 2017 (World Rugby Rankings, 2018).

Year	World Rugby ranking
2007	1 st
2008	2 nd
2009	2 nd
2010	3 rd
2011	4 th
2012	2 nd
2013	2 nd
2014	2 nd
2015	3 rd
2016	6 th
2017	7 th
2018	5 th

Table 1: South African World Rugby Rankings 2007-2018

When considering the country's performances in major tournaments since it was re-admitted to international competitions after 1994, South Africa has won two Rugby World Cups, in 1995 and 2007, but was knocked out of the competition during the quarter final in the 2011 tournament and the semi-final in 2015 tournament (World Rugby, 2016). Furthermore, South Africa was last able to win the Tri-Nations competition (currently known as the Rugby Championship since the inclusion of Argentina) in 2009 and despite having had certain teams, such as the Lions successfully competing in the Super Rugby competition in recent years, and reaching the final of the competition in 2017 and 2018, the last South African team to have won the competition was the Bulls in 2010 (List of Super Rugby Champions, 2018).

It was accepted that numerous variables contributed to this problem of decreasing South African rugby performances in recent years. However, given the important role that elite rugby coaches play as the leaders of these teams, the present study sought to understand what leadership challenges they were experiencing in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the problem. This

is as they play a critical role in the overall performances of their teams given that, among others, they are responsible for performing critical functions that have a direct impact on on-field performances such as creating cultures, being responsible for training, as well as preparing and selecting teams for matches (Fletcher & Arnold, 2011). From a leadership perspective, history has shown how many of the world's current and past problems, such as unemployment, the global recession of 2008, world hunger, climate change, military conflicts and pollution, to name but a few, have all been either directly or indirectly caused by ineffective or failed leadership. In the business sector, well-known failures by companies such as Enron in the United States and Eskom within the South African context have all served as tragic examples of the devastating impact of ineffective leadership (Naidoo, 2016). Furthermore, after being excluded from the Super Rugby competition in 2013 after a string of poor performances, former Lions coach Johan Ackerman was able to significantly improve the performances of the Lions rugby side despite having fewer resources available at the time when compared to his South African counterparts (Rich, 2017). Despite the fact that numerous systemic factors were involved in the aforementioned examples, the aforementioned underscores the important role that leaders play, which may either lead to great successes or dismal failure in all spheres of human existence, including rugby at the elite level of South Africa. In the event that the leadership challenges faced by elite South African rugby coaches are not understood and adequately addressed, it is feared that it may have a further detrimental effect on the overall on-field performances of elite South African rugby teams in the future and, ultimately, of the national team. Should this occur, it may result in detrimental consequences for these coaches themselves, their assistants, their players, their administrators and other support staff in the form of decreased financial revenues and, in severe cases, termination of contracts. This is as these teams and their coaches are ultimately judged by their on-field performances. The crowd attendances of the June 2017 test series between South Africa and France were a testimony to this.

Despite a series of disappointing results in 2016, which included a first ever loss against Italy, it was expected that at least 40 000 spectators would have attended the first test of the Springboks, the South African senior national team, in the 2017 season at Loftus Versveld on 10 June 2017. However, only 29 313 spectators attended the match. The Springboks subsequently went on to win this match with a much improved on-field performance (Jacobs, 2017). This led to an increased crowd attendance of 41 806 when the two sides met again just one week later at the Growthpoint Kings Park Stadium. This match was again won by the Springboks, which, in turn, led to a further increased crowd attendance of 55 820 spectators at Ellis Park stadium a week later, during the final test between the two sides, which was also won by the Springboks (Sport24, 2017). These figures vividly illustrated the relationship between on-field performances of elite rugby teams and, from a business perspective, the implications that this may have on the revenue streams of these teams. This, in turn, has a direct influence on the business longevity of these teams. Most spectators in South Africa therefore appear to spend their money to support teams that perform on the playing field, which makes it vital to assist the leaders of these teams, mostly in the form of their head coaches, to ensure that they continue to grow and remain sustainable. In order to do this, a thorough understanding of their leadership challenges would first need to be ascertained. As no research could be identified to have specifically researched what leadership challenges elite South African coaches were facing, the present study set out to do so.

Purpose of the study

The present study aimed to obtain a clearer understanding of identified problems discussed above by conducting in-depth unstructured interviews with the head coaches of elite South African rugby teams in order to explore what leadership challenges they were experiencing at the time.

Research objective

The present study had one primary research objective, namely to explore what leadership challenges elite South African rugby coaches were experiencing.

Significance

The significance of the present study fell on both a practical and theoretical level. Firstly, on a practical level, it was envisioned that the study would highlight the leadership challenges facing elite South African rugby coaches to add a clearer understanding of the problem statement. It was believed that this, in turn, would allow potential solutions to be recommended in order to eliminate or at least ameliorate some of these challenges. It is was believed that it would also serve as a catalyst to start solving the problem described in the problem statement by supporting these coaches to become more successful leaders and, in the process, improve the on-field performances of their teams through more effective leadership that would be tailored for the unique challenges they faced within the South African context. It was also believed that this would improve the teams they lead from a business perspective to not only grow, but also to remain sustainable, especially in the current uncertain economic climate prevailing in South Africa at the time.

Secondly, on a theoretical level, it was believed that the study would expand on existing theoretical knowledge in the fields of applied sport psychology and leadership in elite South African sport, with specific reference to rugby. It was also hoped to expand the general systems theory (GST) that formed the theoretical basis for the study. Finally, it was envisioned that the results may be transferred to the wider sporting and business communities in South Africa. This was important given the apparent gap that was identified to exist in the current literature of research into elite South African sport and among elite rugby coaches in particular.

Motivation

A positive correlation has been found to exist in the literature between business success and effective leadership practices by management, such as by CEOs, both in South Africa and abroad (Eisenbeiss & Knippenberg, 2015; Sethibe & Steyn, 2015). Similarly, it may be argued that elite sports teams, such as elite rugby teams, are also forms of private businesses led by managers, which include, among others, their head coaches. The leadership provided by a CEO and other managers in private organisations as well as head coaches of elite sports teams can therefore have a detrimental or optimal impact on the overall performances of their organisations or teams (Arnold, Fletcher & Molyneux, 2012; Karakitapoğlu-Aygün & Gumusluoglu, 2013). Given the amount of pressure, focus, financial implications and interest currently involved in elite rugby in South Africa and the rest of the world, it therefore becomes paramount to understand what leadership challenges elite South African rugby coaches are currently experiencing. It is as if following rugby's transformation from amateurism to professionalism the sport has become increasingly commercialised. This has led to an increased interest among scholars in the factors that might contribute to rugby performance, including the performance of elite coaches (Mellalieu, 2008).

When considering the gradual decline in performances by elite South African rugby teams in comparison with other elite rugby teams from other countries in recent years, as explained in the problem statement, it has become increasingly important and also served to motivate the present study. Once these challenges have been identified and are better understood, intervention strategies could be devised that may be tailored for the unique South African environment to assist these coaches to become more effective leaders and, in turn, have an optimal impact on the performance outcomes of their teams. In combination, this may also lead to an improvement of on-field performances by all South African rugby teams against international competition in the future and in doing so start to better understand and address the problem.

Thesis statement

An awareness of the challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches will offer an improved understanding and contribute towards the solution to the current problem of the gradual decline of elite South African teams' on-field performances against international competition without compromising the identity and employment security of elite coaches, assistant coaches, other staff, players or administrators.

Delineation

The present study focused exclusively on the leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches from their own perspectives. This included all head coaches who met the inclusion criteria and who were based in South Africa. It did not include the leadership challenges experienced by players, administrators, assistant coaches, other members of team management (such as medical staff), or any other individuals in leadership positions within elite South African rugby. Furthermore, it did not include elite coaches from other countries as the study exclusively focused on the unique South African context. Finally, it did not include non-professional South African coaches such as those coaching on amateur or school levels, as this also fell outside the scope of the present study and could be explored in additional future research.

Research question

The present study contained one primary research question that was posed to the participants, namely: *What leadership challenges are you currently experiencing as an elite South African rugby coach?* Further probing questions were also put to the coaches in cases where they did not spontaneously elaborate in their answer to this question.

Theory base

The general systems theory (GST), as first postulated by the biologist Ludwig Von Bertalanffy (1972), was selected to serve as the theoretical base for the present study. According to this theory, individuals form part of interlocking systems, e.g. the individual, the family, the organisation and the community (Goldenberg and Goldenberg, 2008). The participants were, as such, seen from this perspective to also form part of various systems on different levels that mutually interacted with and influenced one another. As such, a change made to one part of these systems would inadvertently affect all the other parts. These systems included the teams where they were contracted, which, in turn, formed part of the larger system of the South African community that included organisations such as the South African Rugby Union (SARU).

The GST is a well-known theory that has been adopted in multiple disciplines such as economics and ecological studies, to name but a few. The GST consists of a series of postulates and assumptions that are related to all levels of systems, e.g. from the smallest atomic particles to people, families, organisations, societies and ultimately, galaxies. Due to this flexibility as a theoretical framework, it was also adopted by psychology where it led to the development of the family systems theory (Haarhoff, 2011). In a paper by Iwu, Kapondoro, Twum-Darko, and Lose. (2016), it was also showed how the GST could be applied to the field of human resource management, a field within the discipline of industrial psychology that is primarily concerned with the psychology and wellbeing of employees in the workplace. This is, as it proved to be a, flexible theory to allow an understanding of how various parts of a system interacted and mutually influenced each other. As such, it was also deemed the most appropriate theoretical foundation for the present study, as it allowed a clear description of how challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches that originated from various systems all impacted them. It also allowed for a flexible vantage point from which to propose potential interventions to resolve these challenges in the future by punctuating from different levels of the systems in which these coaches functioned.

The following part of this section will briefly elaborate on the theory itself in the interest of clarity for the reader. In evaluating only parts of a system, Von Bertalanffy (1972) was the first to conclude that it would be insufficient to understand the whole system in such a way. He therefore recommended that the parts should rather be studied in combination with specific reference to their relationships and interactions with each other in order to fully understand the whole system. This referred to the characteristic of non-summativity of systems (Phipps & Vorster, 2011). Therefore, according to Haarhoff (2011), whatever affects one part of the system will also affect the other parts of it in some way. As such, a system is more than merely the sum of its different parts. If one part is changed or altered, the entire system as a whole is inadvertently also altered. In studying a system, it is therefore important to look at the system as a whole and to understand how its various parts are interdependent and mutually influencing each other.

In addition to the characteristics described above, systems also possess certain additional characteristics. A system's ability to remain unchanged during times of change or to change during times of stability must be finely balanced to prevent it from disintegrating into chaos or to stagnate in isolation. As such, the characteristic of morphostasis refers to a system's ability to maintain stability or dynamic equilibrium that is achieved by maintaining its position within the larger-, or supra-system. By contrast, morphogenesis refers to the characteristic of a system to enhance itself, which allows for maturity, advancement and innovation to take place within the system at the same time as morphostasis. These two characteristics can be described as two sides of the same coin and are both required if a system is to function optimally (Haarhof, 2011; Goldenberg, & Goldenberg, 2008).

Another characteristic, homeostasis, refers to a system's efforts to maintain stability and resist change. This is influenced by another characteristic, namely feedback. As the process of reinserting the results of past performances back into the system as a way to control and ensure its survival, feedback occurs in a circular manner through interaction with the environment. Negative

feedback loops trigger changes required by a system to proverbially get it ‘back on track’, which ensures homeostasis in the face of change. By contrast, positive feedback loops lead to further change by accelerating initial changes. Systems require both to function optimally as positive feedback allows new information to be integrated that will allow growth in the face of change, while negative feedback prevents new information to be integrated and thereby protects the integrity of the system, where appropriate, and, in doing so, in order to maintain the status quo. Closely related to these characteristics are the characteristics of open and closed systems, where open systems are those that allow a continuous flow of information to and from the external environment and closed systems maintain firm boundaries that do not allow for much information to flow to and from it into the external environment. Systems can also hold varying degrees of openness and closeness. In this regard, systems all have unique boundaries and rules that characterise them (Haarhof, 2011, Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008).

The rules of a system encompass the characteristic and repetitive patterns that take place within it, while also providing information of what values the system upholds and what behaviours are regarded as appropriate within. Boundaries refer to invisible lines of demarcation that separate systems from one another and aid in defining the autonomy of systems to differentiate themselves from smaller sub-systems and larger, supra-systems as depicted in Figure 1 below (Haarhoff, 2011, Goldberg & Goldberg, 2008).

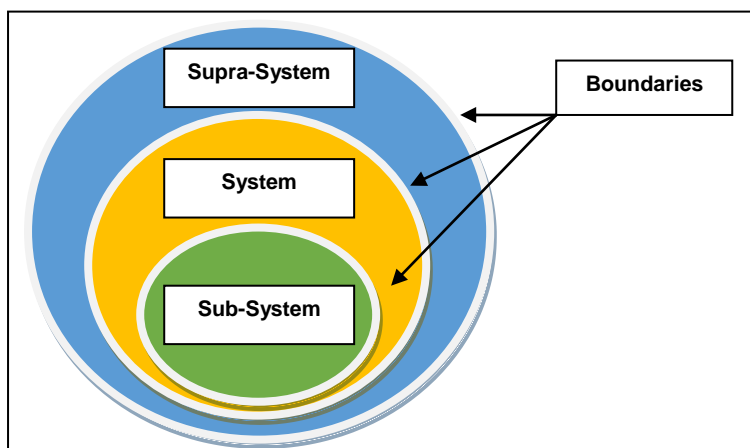


Figure 1: Interlocking systems

Boundaries also serve to regulate the spread of one system, known as its output, to another system, referred to as input. The degree to which information is shared between systems is regulated by the permeability of its boundaries, and where this takes place freely, a system can be viewed as an open system. By contrast, systems with highly impermeable boundaries result in those systems being described as closed systems. Finally, GST brought a significant shift when studying and understanding phenomena to focus on the process, meaning how change occurs over time (Haarhof, 2011, Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008). The present study incorporated and utilised the aforementioned aspects to describe elite South African rugby coaches within the systems, including the sub- and supra-systems in which they functioned to obtain a clearer understanding of the leadership challenges they experienced within these various systems that impacted them. The following section will highlight the limited literature that could be identified related to the topic under investigation.

General literature review

An exploration of leadership challenges experienced by elite rugby coaches was undertaken to provide the reader with a critical and factual evaluation of related work currently in existence within the literature. The databases and search engines consulted for this purpose included PsycInfo, PsychArticles, SportDiscus with full text, Academic search premier, ERIC-Database, MEDLINE, ScienceDirect, EBSCOhost, Google, Google Scholar, SAGE Publications, JSTOR, SA ePublications, SABINET, and the North-West University Institutional Repository. While the primary focus of this study was on leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches, very limited research regarding leadership styles and the challenges facing elite rugby coaches both in South Africa and other countries could be identified. As such, other sports and studies, as closely related to the topic as possible, were also included to further substantiate the study. These findings are highlighted in the following sections.

Effective leadership has been found to be sought-after in almost all types of industries around the globe, including elite sport. This is as, among other factors, it has been found to be a stronger predictor of promotion than intellectual ability (Germain, 2012). Much debate, however, continues to rage in the literature regarding the actual definition of leadership as a construct to the extent that some authors such as Jian and Fairhurst (2017) had adopted the position of not defining the concept at all given its complexity and how it may differ between contexts. Yukl (2012) further explained that most definitions of leadership viewed it as a process where influence was purposefully being exerted over individuals with the aim of guiding, structuring and facilitating activities as well as relationships within a particular group or organisation. For the purpose of the present study, the definition of leadership by Woods and West (2016) was, however, adopted for its simplicity: “A specialised role that an individual occupies and the process of influence” (p. 381).

In addition to the difficulty of defining the concept, various scholars also hold different beliefs as to whether leadership is innate or whether it can be taught. Those who argue that it can be taught believe that once this had been done it can play a critical role in the leader’s personal and professional life (Germain, 2012; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). Youssef and Luthans (2012) also indicated that leadership is an important skill to possess, particularly when one wishes to establish a competitive edge over others. However, as Woods and West (2016) explained, determining the effectiveness of leadership will depend on numerous variables and, as a result, it should rather be evaluated within the context that it is taking place and being evaluated.

As alluded to previously, numerous speculations have been made regarding what was contributing to the problem of decreasing South African rugby performances in recent years; however, no scientific research studies could be identified that had inquired from elite South African rugby coaches what challenges they experienced. This was most likely due to an inability by other researchers to gain access to this population of coaches as well as the potential reluctance by them to take part in such research. One important reason for this could be that coaches want to

protect their identities in order to avoid any detrimental consequences for themselves and their teams, especially if their views were not well received by some. Furthermore, very few studies could be identified from the literature that had specifically investigated the leadership challenges experienced by coaches from rugby.

Those that were found included a study conducted in the United Kingdom (UK) by Thelwell, Weston, and Greenless (2010), who interviewed three elite sports coaches to examine the stresses they were experiencing and the coping strategies they employed to cope with them. The sample included an elite soccer, cricket and rugby coach, respectively. Results grouped their primary stresses under performance and organisational stressors. All of the coaches referred to performance stressors to relate to poor on-field performances of their teams. The rugby coach in particular referred to stress experienced by players not adhering to game plans and fulfilling their potential during competitive games. In terms of organisational stressors, this coach also highlighted how selection serves as a significant stressor to him, mostly due to player injuries. Finally, he also experienced stress related to working with assistant coaches who held conflicting views on aspects such as game plans and training approaches. These findings were, however, limited by only including the views of this single elite rugby coach (Thelwell et al., 2010).

Another related UK-based study, by Arnold *et al.* (2012), investigated performance leadership and management in elite sport among 13 national performance directors of Olympic sports. The study made use of a qualitative approach by means of individual interviews. Results identified four main themes, namely vision, operations, people and culture. The most prominent vision challenges reported by the participants were vision development, influences on the vision, and sharing the vision. The most prominent operations challenges included financial management, strategic competition and training planning, athlete selection and upholding rules and regulations. The main people-related challenges included staff management, lines of communication, and feedback mechanisms. Finally, the main culture challenges included establishing role awareness,

and organisational and team atmosphere. The study was, however, limited in that it did not include rugby union coaches.

Another study, by Orłowski, Wicker, and Breuer (2016), investigated which challenges may have contributed towards the probability that elite German sports coaches would have vacated their positions. Their results were obtained via an online survey, which included a sample of 1 860 coaches from 45 different sporting codes. The survey presented coaches with 10 possible scenarios that may contribute to their deciding to leave their positions. In each of these scenarios, the potential coaching position at different locations varied with regard to income, contract length, workload, responsibility for personnel, reputation of the new job, career perspectives, sporting performance of athletes, distance from Germany and the language that would be predominantly required from them in the new job. The respondents were requested to indicate the possibility that they would accept such a position. Results of a regression analysis indicated that higher income, contracts of longer duration, responsibility for personnel and being able to speak the required language significantly increased the probability that a coach would accept a new position, while distances of nine flight hours and more, lower reputation of the position and career perspectives reduced it. The study was limited in the sense that it did not indicate whether rugby coaches were included in the sample or why coaches gave the responses that they did and may therefore not be as applicable to the present study.

In a South African study, Surujlal and Mafini (2011) investigated the reasons why coaches left their positions as well as what challenges they faced. The study investigated the management of professional sports coaches in sport organisations affiliated with the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC). It investigated the perceptions of human resource managers in sport organisations on how South African elite sports coaches were being managed and made use of a mixed-method approach. A sample of 450 human resource managers completed an online survey and in-depth interviews were also conducted with 10 of them. Results

revealed recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation, and job security to be lacking and requiring improvement when it came to the management of elite South African sports coaches. The authors further noted that demographic changes, workforce diversity, changing managerial and coaching skills requirements and government legislation were all unique aspects of the South African sporting context that were also changing the very nature of sport organisations in the country. As such, they warned that if these human resource-related challenges of elite South African sport coaches were not addressed, it could lead to them leaving their positions. The study was, however, limited in that it did not inquire directly from coaches themselves what their views were in this respect.

Another South African study by Pelsers-Carstens, Keyser, and Surujlal (2015) also investigated reasons why elite South African coaches resigned from their positions. They focused on the relationship between sport coaches' social contract, performance, workload, anxiety and how these variables influenced these coaches' intentions to resign. This study requested a sample of 151 coaches based in Gauteng to complete the social contract scale, perceived performance scale, workload scale, anxiety scale and intention to quit scale to collect the data. The findings of this study revealed no significant relationship to exist between the social contract and perceived performance. However, a significant relationship was found between coaches' perceived performance and a negative relationship between the social contract and anxiety of sport coaches. Increased workload and anxiety were also found to have the potential to influence coaches' overall performance levels and intentions to resign. The study was, however, limited in only representing coaches from Gauteng and did not indicate whether any rugby coaches were included in the sample.

These studies were the only related ones that could be identified from the literature that highlighted a general paucity of research into the field of leadership challenges experienced by elite sport coaches, particularly within the South African context. Furthermore, no studies could be found that had specifically focused on the leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby

coaches. It was envisioned that the present study would therefore significantly contribute towards limiting this gap in the research upon its completion. Following a review of the limited available literature on the topic, the following section will highlight the assumptions that the researchers made while conducting the present study.

Assumptions

The problem as indicated under the problem statement section was assumed to be complex and to have numerous factors contributing towards it. When considering the critically important role that elite coaches play in the success and failure of their teams, it was further assumed that they form a critical factor towards gaining a better understanding of this problem. As such, the challenges they face as elite South African rugby coaches were deemed critical to be understood. This is as these challenges can only be resolved or ameliorated once they had been scientifically explored and clearly understood. If this could be achieved, it was assumed that such an understanding could provide a starting point from where to start resolving or at least ameliorating these challenges as far as possible and by doing so start contributing towards improving the on-field performances of South African teams again in the future. The study exclusively focused on elite South African rugby coaches as it was also assumed that different variables and dynamics influenced the leadership challenges experienced by coaches from other countries and coaches at non-professional levels, e.g. school- and club-level coaches. Finally, the researchers assumed, for the purpose of this study, that leadership is a skill that can be taught and developed. The following section will highlight how the present investigation took place.

Empirical investigation

A qualitative research approach was used in the present study as it was explorative and descriptive in nature. Qualitative studies seek to understand participants' perspectives of their world, meaning how they view the situations being examined (Cresswell, 2009). Furthermore,

qualitative research makes use of rich data gathering methods in the form of written or spoken language, which allows for in-depth and descriptive data to be obtained from participants (Howitt, 2010). This approach allowed the unique perceptions and experiences of the participants that were specific to them as individuals to be obtained. It further allowed the researcher to provide a credible account of collected data (Mason, 2010). A qualitative approach was deemed the most suitable approach to have explored and describe the participants' experiences of the leadership challenges they experienced as elite South African rugby coaches.

A phenomenological qualitative research design was utilised. When considering that the essence of this research project was to capture the unique perspectives of each participant by using their descriptive attributions to construct their realities, it was deemed the most suitable qualitative design to utilise. The phenomenological approach facilitated the attainment of the the aim since it captivated an understanding of the participants' lived experiences, which included their own subjective perceptions as well as the environmental factors that contributed to their lived experiences (Cresswell, 2009; Fouche & Schurink, 2011). The underlying tenets of the phenomenological approach made it the most suitable design in view of the research to capture the essence of the participants' understanding and experience of leadership.

Participants.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria for participants in the present study are highlighted next.

Inclusion criteria:

- Elite South African head rugby coaches of professional rugby teams participating at an international or multinational level, such as Super Rugby.
- Prospective participants had to provide voluntary informed consent for their data to be used for research purposes.

The exclusion criteria:

- Coaches of recreational, non-professional South African rugby teams such as clubs and schools where players participated for leisure, on a part-time basis and who were not remunerated.
- Elite rugby coaches from professional rugby teams from other countries.
- Prospective participants who were illiterate in English or Afrikaans as the researchers were only able to converse in these languages.

The following section will highlight the rationale for selecting the stated criteria. The target group for this study consisted of elite South African rugby coaches who were appointed in their roles at the time when data was being collected. To be regarded as an elite South African rugby coach, the team that the coach led was required to be an elite South African rugby team, namely a professional team that participated in professional competitions against teams from other countries, either at international level (such as national teams) or at multi-national level (such as Super Rugby and Pro 14) with full-time contracted players, administrators, support staff and coaches who are remunerated for their participation. Coaches from recreational and non-professional teams such as schools and clubs where players and administrators were not remunerated for their participation and who took part in the sport on a part-time basis were regarded as non-professional South African rugby coaches. These coaches were not included in the present study as it was believed that different pressures and variables influenced the leadership challenges of coaches on elite and non-professional levels. Furthermore, only head coaches were included for this purpose given their more senior roles as leaders in their respective teams. This is as final decision-making of matters that directly influence on-field performances ultimately resides with head coaches. In most cases, assistant coaches and other members of team management may advise head coaches; however, it is the head coaches who are finally responsible for decision-making and the team's performances, e.g.

team selection and training schedules. Furthermore, elite rugby coaches from other countries were also excluded as the present study sought to exclusively explore the unique South African context.

Sampling

Participants were recruited by means of purposive sampling. Purposive sampling involves selecting research participants according to the need of the study and determining which participants will best provide rich and dense information that will facilitate insight into the research question (Devers & Frankel, 2000). Regarding the intended sample size, this study aimed to explore the common perception and understanding among a relatively small group of similar individuals (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). For the purpose of this study, 11 elite South African rugby teams were considered in no particular order: The Springboks national 15's rugby team, the Springbok Men's sevens team, the Springboks Women's sevens team, the Springboks Under 20 team, the Springboks Under 19 team, the Sharks Super Rugby team, the Bulls Super Rugby team, the Lions Super Rugby team, the Stormers Super Rugby team, the Kings Pro 14 team and the Cheetahs Pro 14 team. Six head coaches of these teams finally participated in the study, which amounted to a 54.5% representation of the total population. This was regarded to be a suitable representation for the present study and saturation of the data was therefore determined by this maximum number of participants who had participated, and the richness of the data that was generated from their experiences (Mason, 2010).

Definitions

The following definitions were adopted for the present study:

- Leadership: *“A specialised role that an individual occupies and the process of influence”* (Woods & West, 2016, p. 381).

- Challenge: *“The situation of being faced with something that needs great mental or physical effort in order to be done successfully and therefore tests a person's ability” (Challenge, 2018).*
- Elite South African rugby team: *A professional South African rugby team that competes on an international level and includes the following 11 teams: The Springboks senior national team [while this study was being completed there were no Springboks Women's national team]; the Springbok U/20 national team; the Springbok U/19 national team; the Springbok Men's Sevens national team; the Springbok Women's Sevens national team; the Bulls Super Rugby side; the Sharks Super Rugby side, the Stormers Super Rugby side; the Lions Super Rugby side, the Kings Pro 14 side and the Cheetahs Pro 14 side.*
- Elite South African rugby coach: *The head coach of any of the identified elite South African rugby teams.*

Ethical considerations

All of the participants in the present study are well known by the public given their current positions. Although relatively sensitive information was communicated by them during the answering of the open-ended and follow-up questions, the estimated risk level to them was still considered to be low. This was mainly because the sample was not considered to be made up of highly vulnerable participants and it was ensured that their identities and any information that could have led to the deduction of their identities was not revealed at any time. Furthermore, the topic under investigation required of participants to share their experiences of leadership challenges and this was not regarded to be of a highly sensitive or personal nature. Given that the primary concern of any research study is the welfare of the participants, the participants in the present study were treated with respect and dignity at all times by acknowledging their right to make choices based on their own values and preferences (National Commission, 1978, APA, 2002). The physical and

psychological well-being of the participants for this study was therefore ensured at all times as debriefing services were made available for any participant who may have experienced any emotional discomfort throughout the research process. None of the participants, however, made use of this service.

The risk of potential harm is always present in any research study. The researcher therefore further emphasised the psychological and/or physical comfort of the participants at all times by providing clear and detailed information about the study and by having also stressed that their participation was completely voluntary. Voluntary participation ensured beneficence and non-maleficence throughout the entire process (APA, 2002). As mentioned previously, for this purpose, an independent psychologist was available to debrief the participants if needed and no form of incentive or reimbursement was offered to the participants for their participation.

Trustworthiness

The model of Lincoln and Guba was used to ensure trustworthiness of this study. This model focuses on four aspects, namely credibility, dependability, conformability and transferability (Krefting, 1991). The study leader and an independent psychologist reviewed the interviews to further ensure that no themes were excluded or eliminated from the collected data.

With the first aspect, namely credibility, confidence in the certainty of the findings was based on the experience and perception of the participants. If individuals from the population recognised the description of the findings, it could be viewed as an accurate portrayal of the data. Certain methodological strategies such as triangulation, member checking and the researcher continuously reflecting on the research ensured strong credibility (Krefting, 1991; Tracey, 2010). Secondly, dependability indicates how consistent the findings are and that it could be repeated. A qualitative researcher considers the range of experiences and includes even the outlying experiences to describe the phenomenon under investigation (Krefting, 1991; Tracey, 2010). A co-coder

assured the dependability of the data by assisting with the data analysis for this study. The third aspect from the Lincoln and Guba model emphasised neutrality, which, for this study, was ensured through conformability (Krefting, 1991). The study leader and an independent psychologist reviewed the analysis and interpretation of the data to support conformability. A dense and thick description of the data collected from the participants ensured transferability. Transferability allows the collected data to be compared across different contexts (Krefting, 1991). Therefore, the researcher attempted to sufficiently describe the leadership challenges facing elite South African rugby coaches to such an extent that it could be applied within another. Finally, phenomenology expects of the researcher to render an unbiased report by putting aside their own views and opinions in order to convey the authentic meaning of the participants' descriptions (Cresswell, 2009). The researcher made a conscious effort throughout the research process to try and put aside his own views and render such an unbiased report as far as possible.

Data storage

The data was stored on the researcher's password-protected computer for the duration of the project. The researcher monitored access to the data at all times. Physical data was also kept in a locked cabinet inside the researcher's office on the North-West University's Potchefstroom Campus. Audio recordings of the interviews were copied to an external storage device once it had been transcribed and was also locked away with the physical data. The data will be stored for a minimum of six years and destroyed thereafter.

Professional competency

The study adhered to the professional values and guidelines as prescribed by the HPCSA to ensure replicability, clarity and objectivity of the research process and findings (Health Professions Act 56 of 1974). The researcher strived at all times to remain honest and maintain integrity throughout the duration of the study. The researcher further remained cognisant of his obligation and responsibility for providing a competent, ethical and honest service to society. The researcher

therefore always acted professionally and maintained objectivity towards the participants. As an associate professor and staff member of the NWU, the researcher also has experience in the field of research that included the field of phenomenological research. His own PhD study followed the same approach and as such also included interviews with participants. As a registered clinical psychologist with the HPCSA, the researcher was also well trained in the skill of conducting interviews, including unstructured research interviews. Furthermore, working under the competent guidance of an experienced supervisor and co-supervisor further facilitated the professional competence of the researcher and ensured the scientific integrity and rigor of the study. The following steps will highlight the procedure that was followed to conduct the present study in a step-by-step format.

Procedure

The study was conducted in accordance with the following steps:

Step 1: After the necessary ethical approval (view addendum B) had been obtained from the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC) of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, North-West University (EMS-REC NWU-00316-18-A4), Prof Pieter Kruger (co-supervisor) from the Institute of Psychology & Wellbeing (IPW) first contacted the prospective participants for the present study telephonically. Due to his longstanding work within South African rugby as a performance consultant for a number of these teams, he knew most of the current elite South African rugby coaches on a personal basis. During their initial conversation, he briefly introduced the topic and the procedure of the study to them and gauged whether they would be willing to participate.

Step 2: With verbal permission from the respective coaches, Prof Kruger then forwarded their contact details to the researcher. The researcher contacted each of the coaches telephonically to verbally explain the aim of the study and to obtain their assent to participate. Those who provided their assent were next sent informed consent documents (view Addendum C) for the

study via email and allowed a 48-hour period to contemplate their participation in the study again. During this period, they were requested to thoroughly read through the informed consent form and ask any questions they may have had regarding the proposed study or informed consent form, either via email or telephonically at any time. Any questions were then answered as soon as possible so as to ensure that all aspects regarding the study were clear and understandable.

It was also emphasised to them that participation in this study was completely voluntary and for that purpose written informed consent would be obtained from them. The informed consent was compiled in an understandable language and provided information regarding the nature as well as the activities of the study (National Commission, 1978; APA, 2002). The participants were further informed that they would not be penalised in any way if they withdrew from study and that they would receive no payment or other forms of compensation for their participation. Therefore, all the participants made an informed decision to share their experiences of the leadership challenges they were experiencing as elite South African rugby coaches voluntarily. They were also ensured that their identities would not be revealed at any time as part of this process.

Step 3: After 48 hours, the prospective participants were contacted again telephonically to verify whether they still wished to participate in the study. If so, they were requested to forward the completed informed consent documents to the researcher via email following which a date and time to conduct the in-depth interview with them was arranged. It would have been preferred to conduct the interviews in person; however, it needed to be done telephonically. This was as they had full schedules and were based around the country. As such, on a purely practical level, it was not possible for the researcher to travel to each of them to conduct the interviews in person.

Step 4: Prior to each interview, the interviewer ensured that he was alone and that the room where he was seated was quiet and free of any distractions to provide participants with the necessary privacy. Prior to starting the interviews, participants were again referred to the informed consent documents that they had completed to verify whether they still agreed to participate in the

study and to ask if anything was unclear. Any questions were then answered and the participants could then read through the informed consent forms again. After confirmation had been reached that the participants wished to continue with the interview, it then commenced. The following section provides more details on the actual in-depth interviews as well as the research question.

Data collection

The data for the present study was gathered by means of in-depth, unstructured interviews. Qualitative research explores multiple realities to gain different perspectives and understanding of the participants' social world (Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin, 2009). In-depth, unstructured interviews allow the researcher to explore meaning and perception of the participants. It also provides structure with flexibility, which leads to an increased understanding of the research question (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003). Building rapport within a relatively short space of time is also possible with the in-depth unstructured interview. This fosters a safe and relaxed environment to probe the participants' personal experiences (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Legard et al., 2003). This method further implies an equal relationship between the interviewer and participant, which provides a space to retrieve the participants' unique accounts or experiences. This method is not merely an attempt to collect data (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Legard et al., 2003); instead, it is a conversation that facilitates unanticipated responses from the participant as well as eliciting information with greater detail and depth (Legard et al., 2003). For this study, the interview was based on a single broad and open-ended question with the aim of exploring the leadership challenges that elite South African rugby coaches currently experience, namely: *"Please tell me what leadership challenges you currently experience as an elite South African rugby coach?"*

This primary interview question was based on the research aim of the study. Additional further probing occurred depending on the responses from participants to the primary question as the in-depth unstructured interview permits probing and clarification of the answers in order to facilitate a better grasp of the leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby

coaches (Legard et al., 2003; Smith & Osborn, 2003). The researcher also used reflections and member checking to maintain objectivity and limit subjective interpretations of the participants' answers. The interviews were also recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

Commencing with each interview, the researcher clearly indicated that an independent psychologist was on standby to debrief any participant if needed. Furthermore, no costs were involved to any participant to be part of the research. Six interviews were subsequently conducted in total, which ranged between 18.03 and 25.17 minutes. The average time of the interviews was 20.21 minutes. In ending off each interview, the researcher explained to the participants that they would each receive feedback in a timely manner via email in the form of a completed copy of the present mini-dissertation before thanking them for their participation.

Data analysis

Polkinghorne (1989) explained that data analysis aims to identify and reveal structures, logic and interrelationships that occur among phenomena under investigation. This was done by means of thematic analysis that was selected as the primary method of analysing the data. The steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) were used as the primary guideline for analysis on ATLAS.ti 8 software. These steps include familiarisation, generating initial codes, grouping codes according to similarity, reviewing of themes, defining and naming of themes and composing the final report.

Familiarisation occurred while the researcher transcribed the interviews by listening to the recordings of the interviews. This enabled the researcher to informally review each interview and identify any statements that had not been noticed during the actual interview. After transcribing the interviews, the researcher next read and re-read each of them again to ensure that a thorough understanding of the statements that were made by the participants was established, as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2013). Repeated immersion is also encouraged before any analyses are made as it would enable the researcher to first establish linkages within the data.

During the second phase of re-reading the transcribed interviews, the researcher was then able to generate initial categories that related specifically to leadership challenges as they were experienced by the participants. During the next phase of defining and naming the themes, the researcher then started to interpret the data. The researcher examined the codes and based on their prominence clustered them into a suitable order and relevant themes. The co-coder also independently coded the transcribed interviews. The co-coder is an experienced researcher and study leader of the present study. A consensus meeting was subsequently held to ensure that the accuracy of the data analysis phase had been achieved during which the themes by both the researcher and the co-coder were evaluated to ensure that the generated themes were reflective of the main research question as prescribed by Clarke and Braun (2013). This process also served to enhance the trustworthiness of the study by incorporating a peer-review process. The meeting also served to finalise the naming of the themes and sub-themes as depicted in Figure 2 as the aim was to capture the essence of each individual theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Finally, the themes were reported under the results section of the article presented in section 2 of this mini-dissertation to form a logical line of argumentation and storytelling (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Limitations

Research within the human sciences and in particular in the fields of applied sport psychology and leadership has proven challenging for numerous researchers in the past. The present study was no different as it also had certain limitations. The sample size of six participants could be argued to have been relatively small. Furthermore, the study did not focus on possible solutions to the problem statement and also did not include the perspectives of key stakeholders pertaining to their experiences or perceptions as to what was contributing to the problem. Due to a dearth of research on the topic, limited relevant literature could also be identified, both from South Africa and other countries. However, when considering that the total population of the present study consisted of 11 coaches in total, and made use of a qualitative, phenomenological research design within

which smaller numbers of participants are acceptable given that personal in-depth experiences are being investigated, six participants could nevertheless be considered to have been a sufficiently large sample size. Furthermore, as this study was conducted for the purposes of a mini-dissertation and its aim was only to ascertain a better understanding of the problem by including head coaches only, it was also deemed sufficient that only they were included as participants in the present study. Finally, the limited amount of relevant literature that could be identified was attributed, among other reasons, to the inability of other researchers to have been able to gain access to this unique population.

Publication of findings

The findings of this study will be released and published in the *Leadership Quarterly*. This is a peer-reviewed journal that publishes research articles in the field of leadership. The participants will all be informed that they will each receive a copy of the completed mini-dissertation, which includes the article once it had been assessed and fully completed.

Choice and structure of the research report: Article format

The final results of this study were presented in article format, consistent with the General Regulation A.13.7 of the North-West University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a professional Master's degree in Business Administration (MBA). This dissertation consisted of three sections, which were submitted to the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus) for examination purposes on 21 November 2018.

Brief section overviews

Article format was the preferred structure with this mini-dissertation: As such, section 1 contextualised the present study by highlighting general background information pertaining to the study, the purpose of the study, its research objectives, problem statement, significance, motivation, research question, definitions, assumptions, delineation, theory base and a general literature review

of relevant literature. Section 2 provided the reader with the article that was submitted for possible publication, including the results of the present study and a discussion thereof. Section 3 concluded the mini-dissertation with a critical review that consisted of a summary of the findings, conclusions, limitations of the study, practical recommendations emanating from the findings as well as recommendations for future research.

Conclusion

This section provided an introduction of the present study to the reader, which included a broad overview of the present study, its related concepts and theoretical base. It highlighted the purpose of the study, its research objectives, problem statement, significance, motivation, research question, definitions, assumptions, delineation and relevant literature. Section 2 will next provide the reader with the article that was submitted for publication that emerged from the present study.

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SECTION 2

ARTICLE: Leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches

Note to the reader

- The article in Section II of this mini-dissertation, titled '*Leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches*', was written in accordance with the author guidelines of *the Leadership Quarterly* (please refer to Addendum A of this mini-dissertation). These guidelines stipulate adherence to the style guide and the referencing style.
- The author guidelines of the journal stipulate that original articles should not exceed 15 000 words and references, including in-text citing and reference list (please refer to Addendum A of this mini-dissertation).
- The article in Section II of this mini-dissertation, titled: '*Leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches*' has a total of 10775 words including in-text citing and the reference list.

Title page

Leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches

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Leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches

Abstract: *South African rugby performances have shown a decline in international competitions in recent years as is evident from its move down the World Rugby Rankings. The present study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of this problem by investigating the leadership challenges experienced among a group of key role players within South African rugby, namely the head coaches of elite South African rugby teams that compete on an international level. A qualitative, phenomenological methodology was utilised, which collected data by means of in-depth interviews from six participants. The general systems theory was used as theoretical basis. The data revealed three main themes, namely environmental, relationships and personal leadership challenges. The data revealed that these coaches experience significant leadership challenges that are contributing to the problem, some of which are unique to the South African context. Recommendations to alleviate these challenges as well as for further research were included.*

Keywords: Leadership, challenges, rugby, coaches, elite sport, elite rugby coaches, South African rugby, general systems theory, phenomenology

Introduction

The sport of rugby union (referred to as ‘rugby’) has experienced significant growth since becoming a professional sport in 1995. Between 2013 and 2014, the number of female rugby players alone rose by 267 000 worldwide, indicating a substantial increase in interest in the sport from all sectors of society around the globe, including South Africa (Birch, 2015). Between 400 000 and 500 000 players of all racial groups and both sexes were participating in rugby on a recreational, amateur and professional level in South Africa during 2011 (Brown, Verhagen, Viljoen, Readhead, Van Mechelen, Hendricks & Lambert, 2012). This growth in participation also coincided with growth in the business of rugby. The link between performance and business in elite sports has been well researched and documented in recent years (Cruickshank & Collins, 2012). This also held true for rugby as it was indicated in the 2016 annual report by World Rugby, the sport’s international governing body, that the 2015 Rugby World Cup, hosted in England, generated a surplus of €163 million in revenues for World Rugby alone. This amounted to a 78% increase when compared to the previous rugby world cup hosted by New Zealand in 2011. Furthermore, this total did not include additional revenues generated from other sources for other stakeholders, such as corporate sponsorships and the sales of sport merchandising (World Rugby Year in Review, 2016).

As a result of the aforementioned growth, an increasing focus also arose on the performances of professional teams. This is as the revenues generated by teams (e.g. from television broadcasting rights as well as ticket and merchandise sales) are often positively correlated to the on-field performances of these teams (Carmichael, McHale & Thomas, 2010; Morgan, 2002). This has led to ever-increasing pressures on elite rugby teams to perform. Furthermore, as leaders of these teams, it has also highlighted the critical importance and pressures of coaches to facilitate the on-field performances of their teams (Roberts, 2013).

Problem statement

In recent years, South Africa's overall level of rugby performance has deteriorated in comparison with the rest of the world. This is evident from South Africa's position in the World Rugby Rankings, where the country's position has declined from number 2 in 2015, to 6th in 2016 and 7th in 2017. By the time this document was compiled, its position had slightly improved to 5th position (World Rugby Rankings, 2018). In addition to the World Rugby Rankings, after having won the Rugby World Cups of both 1995 and 2007, South Africa was knocked out of the competition during the quarter final stages in 2011 and again in the semi-final stages of the 2015 World Cup competitions.

These are but a few indicators of the country's recent decline in overall rugby performances when compared to the rest of the world. Numerous speculations have been made regarding the reasons behind this trend. These have included references to the country's complex and sensitive political climate, which forces coaches at the elite and other levels to select a certain number of players from previously disadvantaged non-white racial groups. Furthermore, allegations of financial mismanagement as well as ineffective leadership and corporate governance provided by the South African Rugby Union (SARU), the governing body of all rugby in the country, have also been expressed. The slow economic growth rate in South Africa has also been accused of causing the problem, as limited financial resources and the inability to compete with the Yen, the Euro and the Pound have caused a number of professional South African coaches and players to seek to further their careers outside of South Africa.

Given the critical importance of leadership in elite sport (Fletcher & Arnold, 2012), and the important impact that coaches have on on-field performances as the leaders of the teams they coach, the present study sought to understand what leadership challenges elite South African coaches were experiencing. The study also focused specifically on elite teams as it was also assumed by the researchers that it is at the elite level where the economic impact of these challenges are most felt. In order to avoid further speculation, the paper also sought to inquire directly from elite South African coaches what challenges they were experiencing that were contributing to the

aforementioned problem. The study therefore did not deal with the leadership challenges of other role players within the elite South African rugby context, such as administrators and players, nor did it include their views of what leadership challenges elite South African coaches were experiencing.

It was believed that understating these challenges may not only facilitate a clearer understanding of them, but following such an understanding, it may also highlight actions that could be taken to potentially solve or at least ameliorate them. It is further hoped that such actions may aid to improve the overall rugby performance of South African teams in the future. Furthermore, scholars such as Greenwood, Davids, and Renshaw (2012), as well as Williams and Kendall (2007), have called for increased empirical research on the knowledge and experiences of elite coaches as they argued that this is critical to further enhance empirical research on sporting performance and leadership.

Literature review

The topic of leadership has become popular among scholars during the last 20 years. This had led to considerably more research appearing on the topic in the literature (Avolio & Yammarino, 2002; Dansereau & Yammarino, 1998). Despite this, there is still no comprehensive understanding of what leadership is and also no agreement among different theorists on what effective leadership entails. The definition of leadership by Woods and West (2016) was, however, utilised for the present study due to its simplicity, namely: *“A specialised role that an individual occupies and the process of influence.”* (p. 381). Regarding causation of the problem as highlighted in the problem statement, it is believed that coaches of elite South African rugby teams can play a key role towards obtaining a greater understanding of the problem and in doing so provide the initial steps towards solving it. No scientific research studies could, however, be identified from the literature that had inquired what challenges they experienced. This was most likely, among other reasons, due to an inability by other researchers to have gained access to this unique population as well as the potential reluctance on the parts of these coaches to participate in such a study out of potential fear that their identities may become known and potentially lead to detrimental consequences for both themselves and their respective teams. Furthermore, very few studies could be identified from the literature that had specifically investigated the leadership challenges experienced by coaches from rugby or other sporting codes. As such, it was believed that the present study would make a unique and valuable contribution to the existing literature.

Those studies that were found included a study conducted in the United Kingdom (UK) by Thelwell, Weston, and Greenless (2010), who interviewed three elite sports coaches to examine the stresses they were experiencing and the coping strategies they employed to cope with them. The

sample included an elite soccer, cricket and rugby coach, respectively. Results grouped their primary stresses under performance and organisational stressors. All of the coaches referred to performance stressors to relate to poor on-field performances of their teams. The rugby coach, in particular, referred to stress experienced by players not adhering to game plans and fulfilling their potential during competitive games. In terms of organisational stressors, this coach also highlighted how selection serves as a particular stressor to him, mostly due to player injuries. Finally, he also experienced stress related to working with assistant coaches who held conflicting views on aspects such as game plans and training approaches. These findings were, however, limited by only including the views of this single elite rugby coach (Thelwell et al., 2010).

Another related UK-based study by Arnold, Fletcher, and Molyneux (2012) investigated performance leadership and management in elite sport among 13 national performance directors of Olympic sports. The study made use of a qualitative approach by means of individual interviews. Results identified four main themes, namely vision, operations, people and culture. The most prominent vision challenges reported by the participants were vision development, influences on the vision, and sharing the vision. The most prominent operations challenges included financial management, strategic competition and training planning, athlete selection and upholding rules and regulations. The main people-related challenges included staff management, lines of communication, and feedback mechanisms. Finally, the main culture challenges included establishing role awareness, and organisational and team atmosphere. The study was, however, limited in that it did not include rugby union coaches.

Another study by Orłowski, Wicker, and Breuer (2016) investigated which challenges may have contributed towards the probability that elite German sports coaches would have vacated their positions. Their results were obtained via an online survey that included a sample of 1 860 coaches from 45 different sporting codes. The survey presented coaches with 10 possible scenarios that may contribute to their deciding to leave their positions. In each of these scenarios, the potential coaching position at different locations varied with regard to income, contract length, workload, responsibility for personnel, reputation of the new job, career perspectives, sporting performance of athletes, distance from Germany and the language that would be predominantly required from them in the new job. The respondents were requested to indicate the possibility that they would accept such a position. Results of a regression analysis indicated that higher income, contracts of longer duration, responsibility for personnel and being able to speak the required language significantly increased the probability that a coach would accept a new position, while distances of nine flight hours and more, lower reputation of the position and career perspectives reduced it. The study was limited in the sense that it did not indicate whether rugby coaches were included in the sample or

why coaches gave the responses that they did and may therefore not be applicable to the present study.

In a South African study, Surujlal and Mafini (2011) investigated the reasons why coaches left their positions as well as what challenges they faced. The study investigated the management of professional sports coaches in sport organisations affiliated with the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC). It investigated the perceptions of human resource managers in sport organisations on how South African elite sports coaches were being managed and made use of a mixed-method approach. A sample of 450 human resource managers completed an online survey and in-depth interviews were also conducted with 10 of them. Results revealed recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation, and job security to be lacking and requiring improvement when it came to the management of elite South African sports coaches. The authors further noted that demographic changes, workforce diversity, changing managerial and coaching skills requirements and government legislation were all unique aspects of the South African sporting context that were also changing the very nature of sport organisations in the country. As such, they warned that if these human resource-related challenges of elite South African sport coaches were not addressed, it could lead to them leaving their positions. The study was, however, limited in that it did not inquire directly from coaches themselves what their views were in this respect.

Another South African study by Pelser-Carstens, Keyser, and Surujlal (2015) also investigated reasons why elite South African coaches resigned from their positions. They focused on the relationship between sport coaches' social contract, performance, workload, anxiety and how these variables influenced these coaches' intentions to resign. This study requested a sample of 151 coaches based on the Gauteng Province to complete the social contract scale, perceived performance scale, workload scale, anxiety scale and intention to quit scale to collect the data. The findings of this study revealed no significant relationship to exist between the social contract and perceived performance. However, a significant relationship was found between coaches' perceived performance and a negative relationship between the social contract and anxiety of sport coaches. Increased workload and anxiety were also found to have the potential to influence coaches' overall performance levels and intentions to resign. The study was, however, limited in only representing coaches from Gauteng and did not indicate whether any rugby coaches were included in the sample.

The aforementioned were the only related studies that could be identified from the literature, which highlighted a general paucity of research into the field of leadership challenges experienced by elite sport coaches, particularly within the South African context. Furthermore, no studies could be found that had specifically focused on the leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches. It was envisioned that the present study would therefore significantly

contribute towards limiting this gap in the research upon its completion. The following section will highlight how the present study was conducted.

Research design and method

In view of the rather limited knowledge available of leadership challenges in elite sport, this study was deemed best suited for a qualitative research method. This is as, according to Creswell (2009), qualitative research methods often take on an exploratory approach, whereby it seeks to understand participants' unique subjective views of their worlds, i.e. how they observe the topic under investigation so as to provide a rich description of these complex human experiences. The present study therefore utilised this approach as it was both explorative and descriptive in nature. Furthermore, numerous research designs from the qualitative research approach could have been utilised to explore the subjective experiences of participants in the present study. For this study, the researcher subsequently made use of a phenomenological design, which, in its broadest sense, could be said to have originated from a philosophical tradition as it refers to the study of 'phenomena' as it appeared within human experience. Phenomenology therefore refers to the *meaning* that 'things' have in every human being's experience and as such focuses on the experiences of participants within particular situations or contexts (Smith, 2008). This approach was deemed to be the most suitable for the present study, as phenomenology explicates a thorough understanding of participants' lived experiences (Creswell, 2009; Fouche & Schurink, 2011). Furthermore, it allowed the researcher to provide both an unbiased and authentic report of the leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches (Creswell, 2009). In-depth unstructured interviews were used to collect the data, which posed one primary open-ended question to the participants, namely: *"Please tell me what leadership challenges you currently experience as an elite South African rugby coach?"* Further probing questions were also asked where participants did not spontaneously elaborate on their answer to the primary research question. The interviews ranged between 18.03 and 25.17 minutes at an average of 20.21 minutes per interview.

Participants

For the purposes of the present study, an elite South African rugby team was regarded to be a South African rugby team that competed on an international level. These only included the following 11 teams: The Springboks; the Springbok U/20 side; the Springbok U/19 side; the Springbok Men's Sevens side; the Springbok Women's Sevens side; the Bulls Super Rugby side; the Sharks Super Rugby side, the Stormers Super Rugby side; the Lions Super Rugby side, the Kings Pro 14 side and the Cheetahs Pro 14 side. Furthermore, for the purposes of the present study, an elite South African rugby coach was defined as the head coach of any of the aforementioned

teams. Each participant also had to be able to communicate in Afrikaans or English. Six of these coaches finally participated in the study.

Purposive sampling was used to identify and recruit participants for the present study. This approach is frequently utilised in qualitative research when there is a limited number of potential participants who possess the experience or expertise pertaining to the topic under investigation (Devers & Frankel, 2000). Recruitment was done with the assistance of the co-supervisor who already held existing relationships with a number of the participants, which had emanated from his work in the elite sports domain. During his initial conversation with the potential participants, he briefly introduced the topic and procedure to them. Following their agreement to participate in the study, they were contacted via email by the researcher who further explained the study to them and sent them the informed consent documentation. Only coaches who completed the informed consent forms were contacted for an interview. Six male head coaches finally agreed to participate in the study. This represented 54.5% of the total population. This was regarded to be a suitable representation of the total population for the present study and saturation of the data was therefore determined by this maximum number of participants who participated (Mason, 2010).

Data analysis

Polkinghorne (1989) explained that data analysis aims to identify and reveal structures, logic and interrelationships that occur among phenomena under investigation. This was achieved by means of thematic analysis as the primary method that was selected for analysing the data in the present study. The steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) served as the primary guide for this purpose. These steps included familiarisation, generating initial codes, grouping codes according to similarity, reviewing of themes, defining and naming of themes and composing the final report.

Familiarisation occurred while the researcher transcribed the interviews by listening to the recordings of the interviews. This enabled the researcher to informally review each interview and identify any statements that had not been noticed during the actual interview. After transcribing the interviews, the researcher next read and re-read each of them so as to ensure that a thorough understanding of the statements that had been made by the participants was established (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Repeated immersion is also encouraged before any analyses are made according to this approach, as it will enable the researcher to first establish linkages within the data. During the second phase of re-reading the transcribed interviews, the researcher was then able to generate initial categories that related specifically to leadership challenges as they were experienced by the participants. These categories are displayed in Figure 1.

The researcher then examined the codes and based on their prominence clustered them into a suitable order and relevant themes. A co-coder also independently coded the transcribed interviews. The co-coder is an experienced researcher and study leader of the present study. A consensus meeting was subsequently held to ensure the accuracy of the data analysis phase during which the themes by both the researcher and the co-coder were evaluated to ensure that the generated themes were reflective of the main research question as prescribed by Clarke and Braun (2013). This process also served to enhance the trustworthiness of the study by incorporating a peer-review process. The meeting also served to finalise the naming of the themes and sub-themes that were generated from the data while capturing the essence of each individual theme. Finally, the themes were reported under the results section to form a logical line of argumentation and storytelling (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Ethics

Participants voluntarily partook in the study and had to sign an informed consent form on which confidentiality and anonymity were also ensured. Given the potential sensitive nature of the topic and the fact that the coaches are well known by the public, special care was taken not to reveal their identities at any time. The research was also approved by the Economic & Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC) of the Faculty of Economic & Management Sciences, North-West University: EMS-REC NWU-00316-18-A4. Furthermore, the model of Lincoln and Guba was used to ensure trustworthiness of this study and therefore ensured a consistent focus on credibility, dependability, conformability and transferability throughout the study (Krefting, 1991).

Theory base

The general systems theory (GST), as first postulated by the biologist Ludwig Von Bertalanffy (1972), was selected to serve as the theoretical base for the present study. According to this theory, individuals form part of interlocking systems, e.g. the individual, the family, the organisation and the community (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008). The coaches were seen from this perspective to form part of various systems, larger supra-systems and smaller sub-systems that mutually interacted with and influenced each other. As such, a change made to one part of these systems would inadvertently affect all the other parts.

Results

Figure 2 provides an overview of the findings as integrated with the GST. It depicts the three

themes and their respective sub-themes that emerged from the data, which were grouped into three systemic domains, namely the environmental, relationships and personal domains. Each of these domains is constantly influencing and interacting with others.

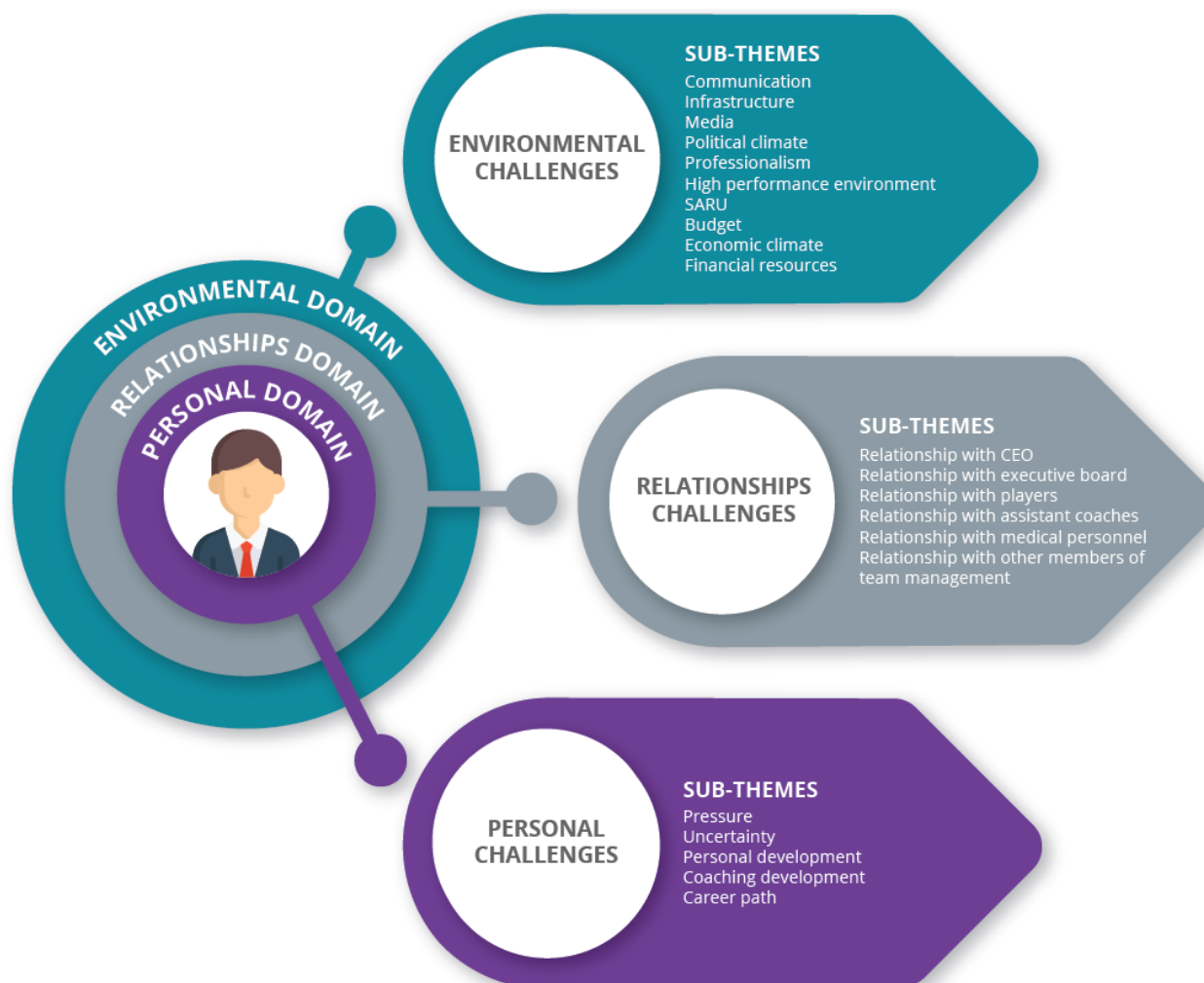


Figure 2: Leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches

The first domain was formed by the first theme, namely environmental leadership challenges that originated outside of the direct influence of the coach as a supra-system, but nevertheless posed unique leadership challenges to him. These challenges included the influence of the media, political environment, economic environment, which led to limited available financial resources, a general lack of professionalism in South African rugby, the impact of the South African Rugby Union (SARU) as a governing body, and a general lack of effective communication between the coach and stakeholders. The next domain could be described as a system that is closer to the coach in the sense that he has more direct influence on it, namely the relationship domain. This included all the important relationships that the coach needed to manage, but which posed certain leadership challenges. The next theme fell within the ambit of this domain, namely relationship challenges,

which included relationships with all important stakeholders, e.g. administrators, players and team management. Sub-themes included player relationship challenges, which, in turn, included managing diverse players, individual expectations of players, player support, and player development as professionals and individuals outside of rugby. The next sub-theme was that of team management relationship challenges, which included challenges of maintaining optimal relationships with assistant coaches and medical personnel while obtaining their ‘buy-in’ to the coach’s plans. Administrator relationships included the next sub-theme that mainly consisted of relationships challenges with the board of directors and CEOs of both the unions and SARU. The next domain was construed as a sub-system, namely the personal domain, which involved aspects that were of a personal nature and over which the coach has the most direct control. The theme of personal leadership challenges fell within this domain and included the subthemes of managing pressure, career path uncertainties and personal development challenges. The following section will discuss each of these domains in combination with their respective themes and sub-themes.

The environmental domain

This supra-system included environmental challenges that fell outside of the immediate sphere of influence of the coaches, but which presented challenges to their leadership. This included the first theme that emerged from the data, namely *environmental leadership challenges*. This theme included various sub-themes, the first of which was challenges that coaches experienced in relation to SARU, the governing body of rugby in South Africa.

The first aspect that emerged as part of this sub-theme was a general dissatisfaction with slow decision-making processes and the ineffective communication coaches experienced from SARU. Participant three indicated that “*we don’t have a centralised system where all communication from SARU comes from like the All Blacks and Ireland have*”. Decision-making therefore takes a very long time as participant three explained further that “*it goes from one committee to the next and no one can give you an answer.*” Similarly, participant one also stated that:

“The frustration on top of everything else we [elite coaches] need to deal with is that you simply want to continue with the next project or your planning but the decisions are not taken [by SARU] and no one can tell you where the delay is coming from.”

Participant one added that these delays are often due to the ‘red tape’ of SARU as “*the fact is that the structure [of SARU] is of such a nature that to make decisions it needs to go through a number of processes*”. This situation often wastes time and money as well as creates confusion and frustration among coaches, e.g. relating to financial resources, as participant six stated: “*I don’t*

understand how it [the budget at SARU] works”? Participant one added that one particular leadership challenge to him is that coaches are not allowed to spend their budgets prior to obtaining approval from SARU first. This causes delays and significantly impacts how he is able to execute important tasks: *“Like every small thing first needs to be approved [by SARU] and as a result we constantly need to ask for permission first to spend our own budgets, then you get it [what you requested permission to purchase] too late so you don’t need it anymore by the time you get it.”* In line with this statement, participant three stated that *“a fish rots from its head downwards”* in reference to SARU’s structures and processes. Interestingly, only those coaches who were directly employed by SARU had indicated that they were unable to spend their budgets before obtaining approval to do so, as this was not the case among the other coaches who were directly employed by their unions.

In addition to the structure and difficulties related to gaining approval before spending their budgets, the coaches added that they believed that past financial mismanagement within SARU had been the main cause of these measures as it had led to general a lack of available funds at SARU. Participant three stated in this regard that: *“There are truly serious problems in South African rugby on all levels as they [SARU] don’t have any money”* and participant four added: *“I am sure the company [SARU] would have given us more money if they had it”*, while participant five indicated that *“we don’t receive enough funding from SARU”*.

Related to these themes, participant five expressed the impression that SARU and South African rugby as a whole were unprofessional:

“I don’t think our rugby is being run professionally at all levels, e.g. the player pool is too large and the money that is being spent, the budget [from SARU], needs to be spread to all the unions, including the smaller ones. So we don’t have a high performance and professional system here [in South Africa]. For example, if a player doesn’t make it here with us at [South African Super rugby team], then he simply goes to the [South African 1st Division Currie Cup team], with all due respect to them.”

Participant one also agreed with the aforementioned and indicated that this apparent unprofessionalism caused a lack of cooperation between SARU and elite coaches when it came to coaching players: *“It would be much nicer to work together, for decision making to be made faster and communicated more efficiently [by SARU] in order to professionally prepare a player while also keeping your own job.”* This appeared to have created a disjointed system in South African rugby where self-interest appeared to have become more important than the success of the national team, as participant six explained:

“The [South African Super rugby team] coach only cares about his job because he’s hired and fired by his own board at his union. It’s the same for the [South African Super rugby team] and the [South African Super rugby team] and that’s why New Zealand has it right. Everything that’s done there is done for the good of New Zealand rugby and ensuring that the All Blacks [New Zealand national team] are successful. So, everybody knows exactly where they fit in. That’s why I feel they [SARU] don’t care about the greater good or about Springbok [the national team] rugby. E.g. just look at their [Springbok players] conditioning. Physiologically, I think each one of our Super Rugby franchises is on a different conditioning program, so how do you then get together [as a Springboks team] and play a certain game plan when everybody’s conditioned differently? In New Zealand, whether you play for the [New Zealand Super Rugby team name excluded] or the [New Zealand team name excluded], and you play for the All Blacks, you are conditioned the same way. We [elite South African rugby teams] are not streamlined and as a result the Springboks also don’t have a unique brand of rugby, e.g. if you ask someone say from another country: “How do the Springboks play rugby? You know, or how do South-Africans play rugby?” They won’t have an answer.”

The aforementioned environmental challenges had created the impression among the coaches that SARU was not focused on ensuring that the national team was successful, as participant three stated: *“There is no management [by SARU] and the focus is just on transformation and what everyone can get out for themselves which makes it is very difficult for us [as coaches].”* Participant one also responded in a similar manner that *“I often think we [South African rugby] miss the trick as every guy is just worried about his own little area that he is responsible for and forgets that, ultimately, the main job we all have is to make sure that the Springboks win. Not just my team or the part I am responsible for”.* Participant one then alluded to the current political climate in South Africa and how that also posed a challenge to his leadership: *“Obviously transformation is just underneath that [ensuring that the Springboks win], but if the Springboks win then the problems related to transformation will also be solved and make things easier for all of us.”* Participant five also referred to the political challenges and influences facing coaches as he indicated that *“we have other challenges surrounding players. You know the [political] situation in our country as it currently is”* that elite coaches from other countries do not need to contend with. Participant three expressed further:

“I believe that for any leader, regardless of which field you are in, it is challenging in South Africa right now due to our political conditions. All the coaches in South Africa face the same situation as we essentially sit with a transformation problem. So when people ask me

why the All Blacks are so successful I explain to them that if you imposed the same type prescriptions [of transformation] on them [elite New Zealand rugby coaches] you are also going to beat them.”

Another environmental factor that was reported to be contributing towards leadership challenges for coaches included the current economic conditions in South Africa. This was mainly because it had led to progressively smaller budgets at the disposal of the coaches in recent years. With the weak Rand, several professional players and coaches have subsequently selected to sign more lucrative contracts in other countries. This has led to a drain of knowledge, experience and talent from South Africa each year, as Participant two explained how challenging this has been for the leadership of coaches:

“It is a huge challenge because at the end of the day, regardless of all the work that I put into a player while standing in the sun for hours and going through an entire pre-season together, that player won’t necessarily say at the end of the year that he would want to stay with [South African Super rugby team].”

Participant five also stated that *“this [South African player contracts] will always be a challenge for South African coaches because, you know, ultimately it is always about the players themselves, as individuals, what they can get for themselves and not about the teams they play for.”*

Another environmental leadership challenge related to how coaches need to manage the impact of the media is, as participant three explained:

“Social media in particular needs to be managed carefully for your entire team. This morning e.g. I had to call a player in who was down about what was written about his performance on social media. This is a problem because anyone can say anything on social media about a player, even if that individual had only played for his 3rd team in high school if he was lucky and knows nothing about rugby at the highest level. That places players under huge pressure and you as a coach need to manage that even if you have very little knowledge or background about that kind of thing yourself.”

Despite most coaches stating that the physical infrastructure and equipment available to them where their teams were based were mostly satisfactory, some of them did indicate that it posed a leadership challenge to them as participant three stated: *“We have challenges to ensure that our spectators are safe and that they want to be there [at the stadium] as they ultimately buy the tickets that generates income for the union.”* Each of the environmental challenges was mostly out of the direct control of the coaches; however, they nevertheless presented significant leadership challenges

to them that are in some cases unique to the South African context. Coaches, however, have a higher degree of influence on the challenges indicated in the following domain.

The relationships domain

The relationships domain encompassed the next theme that emerged from data, namely relationships challenges. The subthemes related to this theme included relationships with various key stakeholders such as players, assistant coaches and other members of team management. It also included relationships with the boards of directors and the CEOs of their respective unions and SARU. All of the coaches explained the importance of maintaining effective relationships with the boards of directors at the unions as well as at SARU. Nevertheless, some of them experienced this as a major leadership challenge as participant four explained:

“They [the SARU board] don’t know what we do. They make decisions solely on what they see happens between the four lines on television. So to me the feeling is that if they really wanted to do their jobs well and have sound judgement and decision making abilities, they need to spend time inside our systems to actually see what we do so that it is not only a decision based on whether you, the team or a player achieved success on the field or not.”

In addition to experiencing the SARU board as being uninvolved, some of the coaches also expressed dissatisfaction with their relationship with the CEO, as participant one said:

“It is frustrating, as it all stops with the CEO and on many occasions you simply don’t receive an answer from him” and participant six added: *“We don’t have a direct line to the CEO, and as a coach I am not allowed to present anything to him directly or to the board [of SARU].”*

This links with what was referred to earlier in terms of the structures and apparent lack of effective communication, which detrimentally affects the relationships between coaches and SARU. When it came to the sub-theme of player management, the player budget was also one of the most significant challenges indicated by almost all of the participants, e.g. participant two stated that *“it [the player budget] is probably our biggest challenge at [South African Super rugby team]”* and participant four explained:

“I believe that if you have more budget you may retain some of your players for a longer period. We are now busy with player contracting again and it is a case of having to beg, borrow and steal to retain the players you want within your allowed budget.”

Participant five also added that “*we cannot compete with the overseas market*” so they often have to try and convince certain players by any means possible to accept the contracts offered to them in South Africa.

In addition to the challenge of retaining players based on their financial contracts, managing the expectations of players also posed a unique leadership challenge, particularly as their careers developed and they achieved certain milestones such as being selected for the national team. Participant four explained: “*You can only have so many players in your starting line-up, so I think from a leadership point of view a great challenge for me this past season in particular was to manage players and their expectations of where they believe they are and what they then believed they should receive, like being in the starting line up every game or a certain contract, based on where they are in their careers and in their lives. That was a really difficult one.*” In this regard, participant six indicated that players need to do more to improve relationships between them and coaches, as he felt that “*the actual change needs to come from them [the players]. Not from people like us [coaches] who believe in giving them those opportunities, but them actually embracing it.*”

Managing players who are diverse in terms of their ethnicity, cultures and ages in the same team also posed a unique leadership challenge as participant one indicated that “*one of my greatest leadership challenges is bringing together players from different ages and cultural groups together each season in the same team and to get the best out of all of them*”. Participant two also stated:

“I think to bring together people from different backgrounds and cultures and to lead them is difficult. You don’t always know what you shouldn’t say. So the challenge is about how to motivate everyone and to keep everyone positive. I have also coached in other countries and I think that it is a huge thing here in South Africa. That, and the fact that I believe we [South African rugby] don’t handle success very well.”

This was an aspect also mentioned by participant four that “*in South Africa we don’t manage success well and struggle to be consistent once we achieved it*”. As such, understanding and supporting players to be consistent posed a major challenge for coaches and they sometimes did not know how to do this effectively, e.g. with off-field challenges as indicated by participant two, who stated that “*the challenge is to get players to understand how to draw the line from rugby, the process of rugby and what you should be able to do to draw this through into your own life, it is not always clear how to bring that across.*” Participant four also indicated that sport psychologists are particularly underutilised to assist with these challenges, as he explained that “*we underestimate the importance of a psychologist and from a psychology point of view the value of sport psychology in South African sport.*” In terms of supporting players, especially with off-field-related challenges,

coaches therefore often feel ill equipped and participant five stated that despite this *“there are not really a lot of teams who make use of these guys [psychologists]”*.

In addition to the challenges of managing players, the sub-theme of managing relationships with team management also posed certain challenges. Given their close working relationships, assistant coaches in particular play a critical role in this respect, which can also pose a leadership challenge to coaches as participant two indicated:

“Among my assistant coaches I have certain young coaches who gained most of their knowledge and experience in [local area name], so many of them had not been influenced by rugby around the world and the flip side to that is I also have a coach or two who have been around the world. This means that in my relationships with them I cannot re-invent the wheel each day, but I need to make sure that they all grow at the same time. This is a difficult balance to achieve without sounding like an educator all the time. So to know when to stop saying something so that they can learn their own lessons is sometimes difficult.”

Participant four also underscored the importance of the relationship with assistant coaches and explained how this can at times be challenging to manage:

“It [relationships with assistant coaches] needs to be of such a nature that you can be honest with one another and speak up if you don’t agree with something or believe that it will be to the teams’ detriment. So he needs to share his opinion but he needs to do so in a respectful manner, and that needs to go both ways, from me towards him and him towards me. This is however difficult as sometimes coaches are scared to share their opinions, I suppose because they may fear losing their jobs. That is a challenge I continually try to change but it is not easy.”

Amidst these challenges, coaches also at times find it difficult to get all of their assistant coaches, who at times have their own ideas and aspirations of becoming head coaches themselves, to accept their roles and to ‘buy in’ to the head coaches’ visions for their teams, as participant five stated: *“I believe the biggest leadership challenge is ultimately to get these guys [assistant coaches] to support your philosophy [as head coach]”*.

In addition to relationships between coaches and assistant coaches, managing relationships with other members of team management, such as medical staff, can also pose certain leadership challenges. This is as it is not only challenging to identify and appoint the most suitable staff, but also to manage potential tensions among them as participant two indicated: *“You need to get the right people on the bus and then you need to get them to sit on the right places. Sometimes the staff*

you have to work with are inexperienced or do not fully understand their roles and your approach to coaching.” Participant five also explained:

“There is tension sometimes between medical staff and coaches as they [medical staff] have their own ideas about players’ readiness to play based on their training, but then, they don’t need to tell that player that he is dropped from the team. The biggest leadership challenge therefore is to get everyone aligned [medical staff and coaches] and to work together. Sometimes that is a challenge that needs to work itself out over time”.

In addition to the diverse and complex relationships that coaches need to manage in their roles, they also noted certain challenges of a more personal nature as described in the following section.

The personal domain

Firstly, a particular personal leadership challenge that emerged was that of uncertainty about the future, as participant four explained: *“So you think, okay, I am the head coach here now, but what is next for me? I finish in [date on which contract expires], but there is not really a career pathway for me, so will my contract be renewed again or where do I go from here?* In addition to the uncertainty, coaches also felt that they did not receive inputs from their unions, SARU or from other sources to develop them into better coaches while they are in their positions, as participant five asked *“what does SARU offer coaches to develop them into better coaches? There is nothing. Once you have completed your IRB 1, 2 and 3 courses [development courses presented by World Rugby], which is actually a worldwide certificate, there is nothing else.”* In elaborating on this, participant four added that he has resorted to try and develop himself through further reading and attending seminars wherever he can. This is, however, difficult due to his full schedule and the demands of his position. Accordingly, he indicated that:

“There is currently no leadership development program for coaches. And if you think about it, one of the most critical factors of being a successful coach at the highest level is your leadership skills and, especially, your people skills. If an organisation’s coaches, team management or whoever else doesn’t have these skills, they won’t be successful. So if they [coaches] can be sent on courses or just implement some kind of program to develop those leadership and people skills to allow them to manage human relationships better, I think that will definitely help as the most successful coaches I know manage their systems the best and they all have good people skills”.

Participant four indicated that he believed this also contributed to why many coaches from South Africa are only concerned with their own welfare and not with the success of the Springboks, as: *“Every coach is just trying to protect his own interests and wants to be successful because he knows that it is what his job depends on, you know, whether he is going to get fired or not.”*

In addition to the lack of development and clear communication about their future career pathways, the coaches also indicated that they experience intense feelings of pressure in their positions. This is, they are finally accountable for what occurs both on and off the field in a sport where there are constant expectations for their teams to win, particularly in South Africa. These results can sometimes mean the end of their own careers, as well as those of their support staff and players. Participant two explained that, as a result, he often feels a great deal of pressure as:

“I don’t just come to work and go home again like many other people in different positions do, there are people’s lives involved in what I do, especially in sport. If I do my job half-heartedly another person is most likely going to lose his job and, as a result, not be able to care for his wife and children any more. So even if you have a permanent appointment at a union like just printing the tickets, if you do not maintain a certain excellence in your work, everyone is going to suffer. So it is difficult to e.g. in your personal life to build on your marriage when there are so many aspects at work that are out of your control. That in itself is quite a challenge as I am always under pressure. As a result I constantly ask myself how I can improve the on field performances of the team so that people keep believing in the leadership I am trying to provide. Therefore I am constantly trying to find answers to the question of how can I and the team go from being good to great”?

Following a description of the findings of the themes and subthemes that emerged from the data, the following section will discuss the findings.

Discussion

It is clear from the results that elite South African rugby coaches faced numerous, significant and complex leadership challenges. Some of these challenges are part of the realities of South African society that requires solutions on a wider scale to be resolved, such as the country’s slow economic growth, the weakening rand and political influences such as the drive towards transformation. These challenges all form part of the supra-environmental system of South Africa and impacts all sectors of the country, including elite rugby. Potential solutions to these challenges fell outside of the scope of the present study, albeit it remained important to note them as they nevertheless formed part of the leadership challenges that participants reported and influenced the other domains in which they functioned. It is also especially important to bear in mind that the

teams that these coaches lead compete on an international level against countries where some of these challenges do not exist. As such, it is important to take this into consideration when their performances are evaluated and compared to coaches and teams from these countries. Given the impact and complexity of these challenges, it is believed that South African coaches have in fact performed admirably and showed high levels of resilience in the recent past to have maintained the levels of performance that they have amidst these challenges.

Having said that, it was nevertheless believed that some of the leadership challenges reported from the supra-systemic level, however, appeared possible to address, such as the challenges reported in relation to the corporate governance of SARU. Based on the results of this study, it appeared to be lacking in numerous respects and to be having a detrimental impact on the participants and the teams they lead. These particularly included bureaucratic 'red tape', which apparently prolonged decision-making processes, coupled with ineffective communication between SARU and coaches. These findings were also similar to Orłowski et al. (2016), and Fletcher and Arnold (2011), as the participants in the present study also reported that uncertainty over their contracts, the responsibilities they held towards those whom they lead, financial management, staff management, lines of communication, feedback mechanisms, role awareness, and organisational and team atmospheres all posed significant leadership challenges to them. The findings of the present study also appeared to resemble the findings by Surujlal and Mafini (2011), as recruitment, selection, training, development, compensation, demographic changes, workforce diversity, changing managerial and coaching skill requirements were also all challenges that were reported by the participants in the present study.

It was concluded that these aspects may be significantly improved without having to invest large amounts of resources by SARU through the application of more effective leadership, both from the board and CEO of SARU. In this regard, the transformational leadership style appeared to be best suited for this purpose, as it has been found to be particularly effective in elite sporting environments (Smith, Young, Figgins, & Arthur, 2017; Arnold, Fletcher, & Molyneux, 2012; Morgan, Fletcher, & Sarkar, 2015; Hodge, Herny, & Smith, 2014).

Managing relationships with key stakeholders such as members of team management was also identified in the present study under the relationship domain. In the case of assistant coaches, the findings of the present study were similar to the findings of Thelwell, Weston, and Greenless (2017) in that working with other coaches who held conflicting views was also indicated by the participants in the present study as a leadership challenge. Interestingly, when considering all of the responses by the various coaches, the emphasis appeared to fall more on obtaining more interpersonal skills as opposed to more effective coaching skills *per se*. As such, it appeared that at

the elite level, the emotional intelligence (EQ) of coaches started to play a more critical role than their rugby knowledge and coaching skills alone.

The focus of the present study fell on obtaining a clear understanding of the leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches as part of attempting to resolve the problem of declining South African rugby performances when compared to the rest of the world in recent years. From this perspective, the study achieved its objective by gaining a rich understanding of the experiences of six of these coaches. In this way, the study also contributed on a theoretical level to both applied sport psychology and leadership literature, particularly in this unique industry, namely elite rugby in South Africa. Furthermore, the population consisted of the elite coaches themselves and the study therefore did not make use of speculations to come to its conclusions. As this population is not easily accessible, it makes the findings of the present study particularly unique, rare and valuable.

Practical application

The recommendations made by Surujlal and Mafini (2011) also appeared applicable and are therefore recommended actions that may be taken by SARU to alleviate the challenges reported by participants. These include delegating more authority to coaches of national teams over which they have control as the unions all control their budgets independently. This would allow these coaches to make autonomous decisions like their counterparts at the unions are able to, particularly about their budgets without having to gain prior approval from SARU. Furthermore, it is recommended that a clear line of communication should be established between SARU and all head coaches along with clarity on all matters affecting the coaches who are in their direct employment, such as career path options, budget restrictions and other relevant procedures to assist them to become more effective in their roles. It is believed that this can all be achieved through the application of transformational leadership from the board and CEO of SARU through, among others, communicating a clear vision that the focus throughout South African rugby should be to assist the Springboks to win. This is, according to the framework by Bass and Avolio (1994), because transformational leadership was conceptualised as containing four behavioural components, namely idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration. In accordance with these characteristics, transformational leaders can be characterised, among others, as open to new suggestions, effective communicators, to set clear expectations as well as to empower those who they lead by creating new learning opportunities for them. Application of this type of leadership style within elite sport domains has also been found to be highly effective, e.g. Hamza and Abdelmonem (2018) had found it to have increased employee empowerment among a number of Egyptian sporting domains. Furthermore, it is also

recommended that a centralised contracting system similar to New Zealand be explored in more depth in South Africa to expand on the already existing central contracting system for a number of Springbok players and to reduce the large number of professionally contracted players in South Africa. It is believed that this will further assist the board and CEO of SARU to implement this vision along with a more centralised approach towards conditioning of players and implementation of game plans, which compliment the plans of the head coach by all head coaches of elite South African rugby teams.

Furthermore, it is proposed that further education and development courses be developed for coaches to equip them with improved leadership, diversity management and emotional intelligence (EI) skills. According to Olawoyin (2018), EI refers to a particular set of skills that enables those who possess it to be optimally 'in touch' with themselves. This, in turn, allows them to interact effectively with others around them, especially in relationships between leaders and followers. These skills include empathy, namely the ability to be aware of one's own emotions, as well as those being experienced by others at any given time. Furthermore, it refers to being able to manage stress effectively, to communicate effectively in relationships, and to use all of the aforementioned to make effective decisions on how to handle interpersonal interactions. A course of this nature was developed and found to be effective among elite cricket players by Cotterill (2017) in the United Kingdom. A study by Philippe, Sagar, Gerber, and Hauw (2016) also found that effective coach-player relationships helped to build and maintain mental toughness among a group of players from the Swiss National Rugby Team. It is therefore recommended that such a course be made compulsory for all head and assistant coaches to attend prior to being appointed at any of the elite South African rugby teams named in this paper. It is also advised that they undergo advanced courses on a continuous basis that can further build on these skills at least once a year.

According to the GST principle of non-summativity, elements of a system are interdependent and, as a result, a change in one part of the system will result in change in the entire system (Haarhoff, 2011). As such, it was believed that implementing the recommendations may not necessarily solve the complete problem described in the problem statement; however, it was nevertheless believed that it could serve as a catalyst that will reverberate throughout the entire network of systems and subsystems that make up the complete system of South African rugby and its elite coaches. In this way, it can go a long way towards solving the problem as described in the problem statement.

Limitations

Research in the human sciences and in particular the fields of applied sport psychology and leadership has proven challenging for numerous researchers in the past. The present study was no

different, and it also had certain limitations. The sample size of six participants could be argued to have been relatively small. Furthermore, the study did not focus on possible solutions to the problem statement and also did not include the perspectives of key stakeholders pertaining to their experiences or perceptions as to what was contributing to the problem. Due to a dearth of research on the topic, limited relevant literature could also be identified both from South Africa and other countries. When, however, considering that the total population of the present study consisted of 11 coaches in total, and made use of a qualitative, phenomenological research design within which smaller numbers of participants are acceptable given that personal in-depth experiences are being investigated, six participants could therefore be considered to have been a sufficiently large sample size. Furthermore, as this study was conducted for the purposes of a mini-dissertation and its aim was only to ascertain a better understanding of the problem by including head coaches only, it was deemed sufficient that only they were included as participants in the present study. Finally, the limited amount relevant literature that could be identified was attributed to, among other factors, the inability of other researchers to have been able to gain access to this unique population.

Conclusion

Despite the limitations, the present study succeeded in achieving its primary aim, which was to develop an in-depth understanding of the leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches. As such, it provided valuable contributions on both a theoretical and practical level towards the literature on applied sport psychology and leadership, in particular on leadership among a very unique group of leaders, i.e. elite South African rugby coaches. The study also succeeded in identifying a range of challenges that were classified by means of the GST into three domains, namely the environmental, relationships and personal domains. Each of these domains included a central theme that emerged from the data, namely environmental-, relationship- and personal leadership challenges with their respective sub-themes. Given the lack of other studies on this topic, it is believed that this study was unique in terms of the particular population that was included as well as that it aided towards a better understanding of the problem of declining South African rugby performances in recent years against international opposition. It also allowed a number of valuable recommendations to be made by the researchers that, if implemented, could start making a significant contribution towards solving the problem and allowing South African rugby sides who compete at an international level to return to their former positions of at least one of the top two rugby playing nations in the world. Furthermore, the study also contributed on a theoretical level to the GST by applying it to the unique context of elite sport and again displaying its versatility and value as a theory in facilitating a better understanding of phenomena and their

relatedness when punctuating from a systemic perspective. Further research recommendations include conducting similar studies with South African rugby coaches at other non-professional levels, such as schools and clubs. Future studies may also involve board members from SARU and the unions as, similar to head coaches, they are also in key leadership positions and were frequently referred to by the participants in the present study.

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SECTION 3: CRITICAL REFLECTION

Introduction

This section will provide a critical reflection on the study as a whole and will include the operationalisation of the research question as achieved through the research process. This section aimed to determine the adequacy with which the research question was achieved by providing a summary of the findings, conclusions, contributions and limitations of the study before concluding with recommendations for future research.

Summary of findings

The present study aimed to explore the leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches. A general systems theory (GST) lens was applied when interpreting the findings. For this, a single broad and open-ended question with the aim of exploring the leadership challenges that elite South African rugby coaches currently experience was asked during in-depth interviews with the participants, namely: *“Please tell me what leadership challenges you currently experience as an elite South African rugby coach?”* Further probing questions were also asked to elaborate on the responses by the participants. The participants subsequently responded with a broad range of responses. The researcher interpreted the broad responses in part as a reaction to the minimal research that had been conducted among this elite group to date, as well as an apparent need on their part to have shared their realities with an independent individual in the hope of improving their circumstances. The themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data will be discussed in the following section.

In utilising the GST as a theoretical framework, the three themes and their respective sub-themes that emerged from the data were divided into three systemic domains. The first domain was referred to as the environmental domain and encapsulated the first theme, namely environmental leadership challenges. These challenges originated predominantly from outside of the direct

influence of the coach, but nevertheless posed unique leadership challenges to him. As such, it formed an external, supra-system for the coach (Haarhof, 2011). The sub-themes included the influence of the media, especially social media; the political environment, particularly related to the pressure on coaches to drive transformation in the sport; the economic environment, especially relating to the weak rand and limited financial resources available to coaches; a general lack of professionalism in South African rugby, in this respect the impact of SARU as a governing body and its general apparent lack of effective leadership communication between the coaches and stakeholders were highlighted.

The next domain was named the relationships domain and consisted of the next theme, namely relationship challenges. This domain was seen as being closer as closer to the coach in the sense that he had more direct influence on this domain, namely the relationship domain. This included all the important relationships that the coach needs to manage, but that pose certain leadership challenges. It included various sub-themes, namely relationships with all important stakeholders, e.g. administrators, players and team management. Player relationship challenges were particularly highlighted by the participants, which included managing diverse players, individual expectations of players, player support and player development as both professionals and individuals outside of rugby. The next sub-theme was that of the team management relationship challenges, which included challenges of maintaining optimal relationships with assistant coaches and medical personnel, while still obtaining their 'buy-in' to the coach's plans. Administrator relationships were also reported here, which mainly consisted of relationship challenges with the board of directors and CEOs of both the unions where the coaches were contracted as well as SARU. The third and final domain was the closest to the participants and was referred to as the personal domain. This included all personal aspects over which the coach had the most direct control. The theme of personal leadership challenges fell within this domain and included the sub-themes of managing pressure, future career path uncertainties and personal development challenges.

Limitations

Research in the human sciences and in particular the fields of applied sport psychology and leadership has proven challenging for numerous researchers in the past. The present study was no exception and therefore also contained certain limitations. These limitations will be highlighted next:

- The sample size of six participants could be argued to have been relatively small.
- Only male participants were included.
- The study did not focus on possible solutions to the problem statement.
- The study was limited to only include the perspectives of the participants and therefore did not include other key stakeholders such as players, administrators, other members of team management and members from SARU.
- Limited relevant literature could also be identified to be included as part of the literature review, both from South Africa and other countries.

The total population of the present study consisted of 11 coaches in total; six of whom agreed to participate in the present study. This represented 54.5% of the total population. As such, despite being a relatively small sample size, it was nevertheless regarded to be a suitable representation of the total population for the present study, which allowed for saturation of the data (Mason, 2010).

Furthermore, the study made use of a qualitative, phenomenological research design within which smaller numbers of participants are acceptable given that personal in-depth experiences are being investigated. The main objective of this study was also to determine what leadership experiences elite South African coaches experienced. Given the richness of the findings, the study succeeded in this objective. Given that the study was conducted as part of the completion of a master's degree, its scope was also not large enough to have included the views of other stakeholders. In this regard, it

only intended to obtain a better understanding of the problem statement described in section 1 and did not set out to fully solve the problem. Therefore, it was deemed acceptable that only the head coaches of these teams were included in the present study as other studies may include the other stakeholders in future, related studies to further clarify the problem and contribute towards ultimately solving it.

The fact that all of the participants were male was also not due to any bias on behalf of the researchers, but rather because the entire population of all 11 coaches are all male. Finally, a limited amount relevant literature could be found regarding the topic. One of the reasons that was hypothesised to have contributed to this was the inability of previous researchers to have been able to gain access to this unique population. In this regard, the study made a valuable contribution by identifying a gap in the literature and taking the first steps towards filling that gap with the present study. In this sense, it made a very unique and valuable contribution to the literature as well as the GST by showing its versatility and effectiveness as a theoretical foundation from which to have described the topic under investigation.

Recommendations

Despite it not having been the main objective of the study, the data nevertheless allowed the researchers to make certain recommendations based on the findings of the present study. These included:

- Appealing to SARU to delegate authority to head coaches to make autonomous decisions about their budgets without having to gain prior approval from SARU.
- Clear lines of communication should be established between SARU and head coaches.
- More frequent communication from SARU to coaches to clarify matters affecting them on a personal level, such as career path options.

- More frequent communication from SARU to coaches to clarify matters affecting them on a professional level such as budget restrictions and all other relevant corporate policies and procedures.
- The focused implementation of transformational leadership from the board and CEO of SARU, e.g. communicating a clear vision with a focus towards aligning all structures and departments to promote the success of the national team, namely the Springboks senior side.
- That SARU investigates the option of restructuring itself towards a centralised player contracting system similar to that of New Zealand.
- That SARU aims towards establishing a more streamlined approach among all elite South African rugby teams towards the conditioning of players and implementation of game plans that complement the plans of the head coach of the senior national team.
- That SARU establishes and implements further education and development courses to equip coaches with improved leadership, diversity management and emotional intelligence (EQ) skills. It is recommended that such a course be made compulsory for newly appointed head and assistant coaches of elite South African rugby teams prior to their appointment in these positions.
- In building on the previous recommendation, it is also advised that coaches undergo further advanced courses on a continuous basis that can build on these skills at least once a year for the duration of their contracts.

According to the GST principle of non-summativity, elements of a system are interdependent and, as a result, a change in one part of the system will result in changes in the whole system (Haarhof, 2011). As such, it was believed that implementing the aforementioned recommendations may not necessarily solve the complete problem described in the problem statement in section 1; however, it is believed that it can serve as a catalyst that will reverberate

throughout the entire network of systems and subsystems that make up the complete system of South African rugby. In this way, it can go a long way towards solving the problem as described in the problem statement.

Future research

In spite of the rich data and unique contribution of the present study, which added to the fields of applied sport psychology and leadership by investigating the leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches, the following recommendations are made for future research. It is hoped that this would further assist to broaden an understanding of the realities of these coaches and other stakeholders in an effort to ultimately solve the problem as highlighted in the problem statement in section 1. These include:

- Conducting similar studies with South African rugby coaches at non-professional levels, e.g. schools and clubs.
- Studies that involve board members from SARU and the South African Super Rugby franchises as, similar to head coaches, they are also in key leadership positions and were frequently referred to by the participants in the present study.
- Conducting studies to investigate what challenges professional South African rugby players are experiencing, perhaps by using a quantitative methodology to include larger sample sizes.
- Using the framework of this study to explore the leadership challenges experienced by elite coaches from other sporting codes, such as cricket and soccer.
- Extending the study to include social surveys to capture the perceptions of the general public regarding the problem statement.

Final personal reflection

Given that this section entails a final personal reflection, it was written in the first person.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed conducting this study and felt particularly privileged to have interacted with the participants in question. As experienced professionals who coach at the highest levels within South African rugby, I felt particularly grateful of how they granted their time and insights to me. What struck me in particular was how humble they all were and that, despite being in the positions that they occupied, they also experienced significant challenges like most other people. In a country where the public expects the rugby teams they support to win every time they take to the field, it is often the coaches who are the first to be questioned if their teams do not produce such results. Sadly, what some do not appear to realise is that in the world of competitive sport, the margins between winning and losing are so small that it may sometimes be determined by a single event such as one handling error, interception, missed tackle or a moment of individual brilliance by one player. This highlighted to me yet again how these coaches do everything in their power to prepare their teams as best as they can, but ultimately, as just indicated, it is as if they study for an exam but their players go out and write it. As such, I believe it to be unfair to criticise coaches as soon as their teams suffer a loss, especially in South Africa, as the participants in the present study had indicated that they are fully aware of their responsibilities and do everything in their power, despite the leadership challenges that were identified from this study, to ensure that their teams are victorious every time they take to the field. Finally, it is hoped that the results of this study may spark some interventions to make it easier for these coaches to do their work and that others will treat them with more empathy in the future.

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Addendum A: Author guidelines



THE LEADERSHIP QUARTERLY

An International Journal of Political, Social and Behavioral Science

AUTHOR INFORMATION PACK

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ISSN: 1048-9843

DESCRIPTION

The Leadership Quarterly is a social-science journal dedicated to advancing our understanding of leadership as a phenomenon, how to study it, as well as its practical implications.

The journal seeks contributions from various disciplinary perspectives, including psychology broadly defined (i.e., industrial-organizational, social, evolutionary, biological, differential), management (i.e., organizational behavior, strategy, organizational theory), political science, sociology, economics (i.e., personnel, behavioral, labor), anthropology, history, and methodology. Equally desirable are contributions from multidisciplinary perspectives.

The aim of the journal is to publish scholarly research, theory, and developmental application from diverse fields of inquiry about leadership. The journal will consider studies of leaders from all walks of social life, including formal or informal leaders of any type of group or organization; non-human leadership will also be considered.

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INTRODUCTION

EDITORIAL POLICY

The Leadership Quarterly is a social-science journal dedicated to advancing our understanding of leadership as a phenomenon, how to study it, as well as its practical implications.

The journal seeks contributions from various disciplinary perspectives, including psychology broadly defined (i.e., industrial-organizational, social, evolutionary, biological, differential), management (i.e., organizational behavior, strategy, organizational theory), political science, sociology, economics (i.e., personnel, behavioral, labor), anthropology, history, and methodology. Equally desirable are contributions from multidisciplinary perspectives.

The aim of the journal is to publish scholarly research, theory, and developmental application from diverse fields of inquiry about leadership. The journal will consider studies of leaders from all walks of social life, including formal or informal leaders of any type of group or organization; non-human leadership will also be considered.

Contact Details for Submission

Authors who experience technical difficulties in submitting their paper via EVISE should contact leadershipquarterly@elsevier.com

Types of articles

Apart from special issue calls or the Yearly Review issue call, which provide specific submissions instructions, the Editor in Chief of *The Leadership Quarterly* will consider articles for regular issues; authors should consult the [editorial](#) published in the first issue of 2017 for more information regarding the editorial policy and vision of the journal.

Articles published in a regular issue of the journal can reflect any epistemological point of view and can encompass one of the following types:

Full length articles, including (a) empirical studies, which can consist of deductive (i.e., theory driven) or inductive (i.e., exploratory research having little or no theory), (b) theoretical articles, (c) meta-analyses, (d) systematic or narrative reviews, (e) in-depth critiques and reflections that shed new light on leadership as a phenomenon, (f) applied methodological articles that present more robust ways in which to study leadership, or which make use of methodological developments from other fields, and (g) adversarial collaborations in the form of an exchange of letters or debates on a particular topic. Such manuscripts should normally be between 12,000 to 15,000 words, all inclusive (i.e., abstract, text, figures, tables, and references). Longer manuscripts will be considered a long as their contribution is commensurate. Short communications, including (a) basic research, particularly the sort that makes an important discovery for which there is little theory to guide the interpretation of the results, (b) replication studies, whether providing additional evidence for or against a particular theory or finding, or (c) methodologically strong studies that present null results. As concerns (b) and (c), the key criterion that will determine acceptance is that such studies are robustly designed and well powered, and whose contribution to the research record will be informative for meta-analyses, reviews, and critiques. Short communications manuscripts should normally be between 5,000 to 10,000 words, all inclusive (i.e., abstract, text, figures, tables, and references). Commentaries of published articles should highlight issues that extend, reinterpret, or question findings presented. Such manuscripts should normally be between 3,000 to 5,000 words, all inclusive (i.e., abstract, text, figures, tables, and references). Proposals-these include proposals regarding (a) registered reports, or (b) results-masked articles. Registered reports propose to undertake an original empirical study, wherein data have not yet been gathered; in this case authors submit a proposal consisting of an introduction, literature review with hypotheses, and method, which if found appropriate by the editor, is sent for review. Such a proposal may be accepted, revised, or rejected. Authors whose registered

report proposals are accepted then gather the data and write up their findings; to the extent that the write up and conclusions are faithful to the accepted proposal, the manuscript will usually be accepted regardless of whether findings are supported or statistically significant. Results-masked articles concern manuscripts whose data already have been gathered; in this case, authors submit a manuscript consisting of an introduction, literature review with hypotheses, and method, which is reviewed. The proposal can either be accepted or rejected (in rare instances, such proposals may be revised for clarity); that is, any flaws in the theory or method cannot normally be corrected given that the data have been gathered already. Similar to registered reports, to the extent that the write up and conclusions are faithful to the accepted proposal, the manuscript will usually be accepted regardless of the findings.

Data reporting

Declare all data (i.e., all variables) that were gathered and their stopping rules, along with all treatments and all experiments (failed or significant) and not just selectively report statistically significant findings.

Report a correlation matrix, ideally at the item level (or at the factor level if there are too many items), with means and standard deviations (if the matrix is very large, it can be included as on-line supplementary material). For experimental data, binary variables for conditions should be included in the correlation matrix. Interactions modeled for predictors also have to be included in the correlation matrix.

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To foster transparency, we encourage you to state the availability of your data in your submission. This may be a requirement of your funding body or institution. If your data is unavailable to access or unsuitable to post, you will have the opportunity to indicate why during the submission process, for example by stating that the research data is confidential. The statement will appear with your published article on ScienceDirect. For more information, visit the [Data Statement page](#).

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If authors believe that a decision was taken in error or is unjustifiable, appeals can be addressed to the Editor in Chief. If the appeal appears to be well motivated the editor will (a) for a decision having been taken by the editor, reconsider the decision or (b) in the event that the decision concerns that of an associate editor, request the associate editor to take a position on the authors appeal. Appeals may be accepted or denied, and depending on circumstances, articles may be sent out for further review prior to a final decision being taken by the Editor in Chief.

AFTER ACCEPTANCE

Online proof correction

Corresponding authors will receive an e-mail with a link to our online proofing system, allowing annotation and correction of proofs online. The environment is similar to MS Word: in addition to editing text, you can also comment on figures/tables and answer questions from the Copy Editor. Web-based proofing provides a faster and less error-prone process by allowing you to directly type your corrections, eliminating the potential introduction of errors.

If preferred, you can still choose to annotate and upload your edits on the PDF version. All instructions for proofing will be given in the e-mail we send to authors, including alternative methods to the online version and PDF.

We will do everything possible to get your article published quickly and accurately. Please use this proof only for checking the typesetting, editing, completeness and correctness of the text, tables and figures. Significant changes to the article as accepted for publication will only be considered at this stage with permission from the Editor. It is important to ensure that all corrections are sent back to us in one communication. Please check carefully before replying, as inclusion of any subsequent corrections cannot be guaranteed. Proofreading is solely your responsibility.

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Addendum B: Ethical approval



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South Africa, 2520

Tel: (018) 299-4900
Faks: (018) 299-4910
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Research Ethics Regulatory Committee

Tel: +27 18 299 4849
Email: Ethics@nwu.ac.za

ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER OF STUDY

Based on the approval by the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC) on 31/05/2018 after being reviewed at the meeting held on 18/05/2018, the North-West University Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-RERC) hereby **approves** your project as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-RERC grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the project may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Project title: An explorative study of the leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches.																													
Project Leader/Supervisor: Prof JC Visagie																													
Student: JC du Plooy																													
Ethics number:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>N</td><td>W</td><td>U</td><td>-</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>3</td><td>1</td><td>6</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>8</td><td>-</td><td>A</td><td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Institution</td> <td colspan="6">Project Number</td> <td colspan="2">Year</td> <td colspan="2">Status</td> </tr> </table> <p><small>Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation</small></p>	N	W	U	-	0	0	3	1	6	-	1	8	-	A	4	Institution			Project Number						Year		Status	
N	W	U	-	0	0	3	1	6	-	1	8	-	A	4															
Institution			Project Number						Year		Status																		
Application Type:																													
Commencement date: 2018-05-18	Expiry date: 2021-05-17																												
Risk:	Low risk																												

Special conditions of the approval (if applicable):

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following:

- The project leader (principle investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-RERC via EMS-REC:
 - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project
 - without any delay in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
 - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the EMS-REC. Would there be deviation from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date, a new application must be made to the NWU-RERC via EMS-REC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-RERC and EMS-REC retains the right to:
 - request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project;
 - to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
 - withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected,
 - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the EMS-REC or that information has been false or misrepresented,
 - the required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,
 - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.

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

Yours sincerely

Prof Bennie Linde
Chair NWU Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENTATION FOR ELITE SOUTH AFRICAN RUGBY COACHES

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY: **An explorative study of the leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches**

ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBERS:

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Prof Jan Visagie

POST-GRADUATE STUDENT/RESEARCHER: Dr Kobus du Plooy

ADDRESS: Institute of Psychology & Wellbeing (IPW), North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, Building E8, 11 Hoffman Street, Potchefstroom, 2531

CONTACT NUMBER: (+28)18 299 1737

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

This study has been approved by the Economic and Management Sciences Research **Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences of the North-West University (NWU 00316-18-A4)**. Please note that it might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or other relevant people to inspect the research records.

What is this research study all about?

- *This study will be conducted by means of in-depth unstructured interviews and will involve a personal, private interview with you and the researcher of approximately 20 to 30 minutes at a private venue most convenient for you.*
- *As a senior lecturer and registered clinical psychologist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), the researcher who will conduct this interview is trained and experienced in interviewing skills and scientific research.*
- *We plan to identify what leadership challenges coaches of elite South African rugby teams are currently facing. With a better understanding of these challenges, possible interventions can hopefully be developed/proposed to assist elite South African rugby coaches with these challenges. This, in turn, will hopefully also benefit these coaches as individuals and leaders by improving their leadership of their teams. This, in turn, will hopefully also assist their teams from a business perspective to grow and remain sustainable through improved on-field performances leading to higher revenues for these teams and their respective franchises/unions.*

Why have you been invited to participate?

- *You have been invited to be part of this research because you are currently appointed as an elite head coach of a professional South African rugby team.*
- *You will not be able to take part in this research if you are currently coaching a recreational, non-professional South African rugby team such as a club and/or school side where players participate for leisure or on a part-time basis and are not remunerated.*
- *Furthermore, you will be unable to participate if you are currently an elite rugby coach of a professional rugby team outside of South Africa as the present study will focus exclusively on the South African context.*
- *Finally, you will also be unable to participate in the event that you are illiterate in English or Afrikaans as the researchers are only able to converse in these languages.*

What will be expected of you?

- *You will be expected to take part in a once-off semi-structured in-depth interview during which you will be asked about the leadership challenges you are currently facing in your role as elite South African rugby coach. Depending on your response you may be asked further questions or to elaborate on your answer in the interest of gaining further clarity regarding the topic. It is estimated that this interview will last approximately 20 to 30 minutes and it will be conducted at a time and private venue most convenient for you.*

Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?

- *There will not be any direct gains for you if you take part in this study; however, the other indirect gains of the study will be the development of scientific knowledge on the leadership challenges currently facing elite South African rugby coaches. This knowledge will hopefully enable the developed/proposed to assist elite South African rugby coaches with these challenges. This, in turn, will hopefully also benefit these coaches as individuals and leaders by improving their leadership of their teams. This, in turn, will hopefully also assist their teams from a business perspective to grow and remain sustainable through improved on-field performances leading to higher revenues for these teams and their respective franchises/unions.*

Are there risks involved in you taking part in this research and what will be done to prevent them?

- *The risks to you in this study are considered to be minimal. Personal and sensitive information may, however, be communicated during the answering of the open-ended and follow-up questions relating to your experience of leadership challenges as an elite South African rugby coach. Should any psychological discomfort be experienced in this regard you can simply indicate it as such to the researcher who will then arrange for professional debriefing to be made available to you free of charge.*
- *As it is foreseen that the interview will last approximately 20 to 30 minutes, this may inconvenience you and/or lead to possible boredom. As such, you will be provided with a bottle of water during the interview and the researcher will ensure to limit the interview only to the relevant discussion so as to minimise the use of your time.*
- *It is considered that there are more gains for you in joining this study than there are risks. The risk of harm, however, always remains part of any research study. For this reason, the researcher will make every effort to ensure your psychological and/or physical comfort at all times. As mentioned above, an independent psychologist will also be available to debrief you if needed.*

How will we protect your confidentiality and who will see your findings?

- *As most elite South African rugby coaches are well known to the general public, every effort will be made to ensure your anonymity at all times. Anonymity of your findings will therefore be protected by using participant numbers rather than participants' demographical information. Only the researcher, co-researchers and the transcriber will have access to the*

data, which will be stored on a password-protected computer. Your privacy will be respected by not making your identity aware to anyone other than the aforementioned individuals who will all sign a confidentiality agreement to ensure that they will protect your personal information at all times. Your results will also be kept confidential by storing it on the researcher's password-protected computer for the duration of the project. The researcher will further monitor access to the data at all times. Physical data will be kept in a locked cabinet inside the researcher's office on the North-West University's Potchefstroom Campus. Audio recordings of the interviews will be copied to an external storage device once it had been transcribed and be locked away with the physical data. The data will be kept for a minimum of six years and destroyed thereafter.

What will happen with the findings or samples?

- *The findings of this study will only be used for this study as already explained. Should there be any request to use it for other purposes such as another research project, your permission will first be obtained. The Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee will therefore ensure the protection of your data in this manner.*

How will you know about the results of this research?

- *We will give you the results of this research when the mini-dissertation has been completed by approximately April 2019.*
- *You will be informed of these findings by receiving an electronic copy of the complete mini-dissertation via email as well as a copy of the research article based on the findings from this study by the researcher.*

Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs for you?

This study is funded by the researcher in his personal capacity and you will not be paid to take part in the study because it is voluntary. Refreshments in the form of a bottle of water will, however, be provided to you during the interview for your comfort. There will therefore be no costs involved for you, if you do take part in this study.

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

- You can contact Prof Kobus du Plooy at the Institute of Psychology & Wellbeing (IPW) of the North-West University's Potchefstroom Campus if you have any further questions or have any problems. His contact particulars are:
 - Office number: (+27)18 299 1737
 - E-mail: kobus.duplooy@nwu.ac.za
- You can also contact the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee via Mrs Wilma Pretorius at (+27)18 299 1419 or wilma.pretorius@nwu.ac.za if you have any concerns that were not answered about the research or if you have complaints about the research.
- You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own purposes.

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I agree to take part in the research study titled: **An explorative study on the leadership challenges experienced by elite South African rugby coaches.**

I declare that:

- I have read this information/it was explained to me by a trusted person in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- The research was clearly explained to me.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person getting the consent from me, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be handled in a negative way if I do so.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in the best interest, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20....

.....
Signature of participant

.....
Signature of witness

Declaration by post graduate student/researcher obtaining the consent:

I, Prof Kobus du Plooy, hereby declare that:

- I clearly and in detail explained the information in this document to
.....
- I did/did not use an interpreter.
- I encouraged him to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above.
- I gave him time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to do so.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20....

.....
Signature of person obtaining consent

.....
Signature of witness

Declaration by principle investigator

I, Prof Jan Visagie, hereby declare that:


- I explained the information in this document to
- I did/did not use an interpreter
- I encouraged him to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them
- I am satisfied that he adequately understands all aspects of the research, as described above.
- I am satisfied that he had time to discuss it with others if he wished to do so.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20....

.....
Signature of researcher

.....
Signature of witness

Addendum D: Turn-it-in report summary



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File size: 246.5K
Page count: 54
Word count: 19,003
Character count: 104,927
Submission date: 17-Nov-2018 06:01PM (UTC+0200)
Submission ID: 1040898336

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

Rugby union (hereafter referred to as "rugby" throughout this text) is a popular, high-intensity, full contact team sport played by millions of people throughout the world. It is mainly played in two formats, namely by seven and fifteen players per side (Heysen, 2012). A fifteen player per-side rugby match consists of two halves of forty minutes each with a ten to twenty minute interval between halves. A rugby match is characterized by various high intensity activities such as sprints, accelerations from a static position, rucking, mauling, tackling and breaking through tackles (Gill, Brown, & Cook, 2006; Suzuki, Umeda, Nakaji, Shimoyama, Moshiko, & Sugawara, 2004). Rugby is regarded as one of the most popular, professional team sports in the world with nearly 200 countries affiliated at the International Rugby Board (Brooks, Falter, Kemp & Hedkin, 2005; Kemp, Hudson, Brooks & Falter, 2008).

In South Africa, rugby has historically been regarded as a sport predominantly played and dominated by white males (Eggh & Potgieter, 2016). After the newly elected democratic government came into power in 1994 this however changed with all racial groups and both sexes since then being represented at all levels of the sport throughout South Africa. According to Brown, Verhegen, Viljoen, Readhead, Van Mechelen, Hendricks and Lambert (2012) approximately 400 000 players of all racial groups and both sexes were participating in rugby on a recreational, amateur and professional level in South Africa by 2011. By 2014 South Africa had a total of 418 509 players of which 342 316 were registered players according to World Rugby (World Rugby Year in Review, 2016). Between 2013 and 2014 the number of female rugby players alone had risen to 267,000 worldwide, indicating a substantial increase in interest in the sport from all sectors of society, including South Africa (Birch, 2015). Women's sevens rugby was also regarded as the fastest growing sport in the world according to a report by the Commission of the Hong Kong and

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