HOW UK BUSINESS COACHES COPE AND PERSIST TOWARDS HIGHER LEVELS OF OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE SUCCESS IN BOUNDARYLESS CAREERS

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ABSTRACT

This research explores how UK business coaches navigate boundaryless careers and the psychological mechanisms that enable them to cope and persist towards higher levels of objective and subjective success. Through a mixed-method approach, including qualitative interviews (Study 1) and quantitative survey (Study 2), this project offers a robust perspective on the drivers, barriers, and dynamics shaping the lives of business coaches and the role of Psychological Capital (PsyCap) in their journey. Study 1 (N=15) delves into the intrinsic drivers, barriers, enablers, and strategies that lead coaches to objective and subjective success in their careers. The study highlights the profound themes, sub-themes, and specifics that influence a professional's ability to cope and persist, including professional network(s); the desire to effect positive change and assist others in achieving more; the aspiration for a flexible and balanced lifestyle; personal growth; financial stability; and meaningful impact. Additionally, the study underscores the role of client success as a primary source of job satisfaction for business coaches and the importance of social connections in their careers. Through the lens of boundaryless careers and agency theory, the findings align with the role of coaching in promoting overall well-being and work-life harmony among clients, emphasising the importance of constructs such as resilience, goal persistence, self-efficacy, optimism, and a positive mindset as strategies to overcome challenges inherent in boundaryless careers—constructs that exist in the core-construct of PsyCap. Study 2 (N=85) extends the research from Study 1 and adopts a quantitative approach to investigate the link between PsyCap and performance and well-being outcomes discussed in Study 1 and potential mediating pathways. The results form a model that assists coaches and others in boundaryless careers to cope and persist in their careers.

The study supports the direct effects of PsyCap on business coaches' ability to cope, persist, and achieve outcomes such as coach revenue, number of clients, client retention, as well as well-being factors such as life satisfaction and reduction of job insecurity. The mediation effects of motivational, affective, and behavioural pathways are also explored with job engagement being highlighted as a key mediator between PsyCap and the number of clients a coach has. The theoretical, empirical, and practical contributions of this research contribute to the fields of boundaryless careers, positive psychology, and coaching practices, offering nuanced insights and implications into the factors shaping success and well-being within the context of business coaching. The study provides insights into the UK coaching industry, offering implications for professional development and sustainable practice.

Keywords: Boundaryless Careers, Business Coaching, Psychological Capital, Cope and Persist

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CHAPTER 1 | INTRODUCTION

1.1 | Introduction

Business coaching is a rapidly growing industry that plays a pivotal role in enhancing client performance, well-being, and adaptability in dynamic career landscapes. Despite having a shortage of robust empirical evidence, business coaching is known for yielding positive outcomes (Wiginton & Cartwright, 2020). However, while much attention has been given to the outcomes achieved by clients, the challenges faced by business coaches themselves remain underexplored. How business coaches cope and persist within the uncertainties of their careers warrants closer investigation. As the number of professional coaches worldwide surged from 12,133 in 2007 to an estimated 47,500 in 2012, then to approximately 109,200 in 2022, business coaching has undeniably gained prominence (ICF, 2012; Turner & Hawkins, 2016; ICF, 2023).

Rooted in concepts from positive psychology, coaching psychology, leadership development, and executive coaching, business coaching is celebrated for enhancing self-regulation, performance, well-being, and coping among clients (Blackman et al., 2016; Corey, 2012; Goodstone & Diamante, 1998; Crompton et al., 2012). Yet, within this thriving industry, the narrative of business coaches' own career journeys remains less explored.

In the context of business coaching, this thesis explores the notion of career ‘success’, adopting a boundaryless career perspective. The concept of career success is multifaceted, comprising both subjective and objective dimensions. Subjective career success is characterised by personal evaluations encompassing aspects like income satisfaction, security, and work-life balance. In contrast, objective career success relies on tangible indicators such as occupation and income. The interplay between these dimensions highlights the dual nature of what it means to be successful in a boundaryless careers (Goffman, 1961; Arthur et al., 2005).

Within the realm of business coaching, this dual essence of career success becomes apparent as the project evaluates how business coaches navigate their careers while helping their clients in boundaryless careers.

For example, a significant challenge for business coaches is client dropout, impacting not only their financial well-being but also their ability to effectively coach clients (Schermurly,

2018). Factors such as low motivation for change, suboptimal coaching relationships, and unclear outcomes contribute to client dropout, affecting both clients' progress and coaches' professional well-being (Wiginton & Cartwright, 2020). As business coaches navigate their own boundaryless careers, they must contend with these interferences, influencing their coping strategies and persistence, even in the face of challenges and adversity.

This research project unravels the uncharted territory of how business coaches manage their own boundaryless careers while simultaneously supporting their clients. Through empirical investigation, the project uncovers the strategies business coaches employ to cope with adversity and persist in their own careers, thus contributing to a more profound understanding of the intricate interplay between individual agency, coaching dynamics, and the boundaryless career paradigm.

Understanding the unique challenges and opportunities of boundaryless careers is essential for business coaches to objectively and subjectively succeed. This thesis explores how they navigate these challenges, with a focus on the impact of client dropout and how coaches deploy strategies to bugger the effects, how coaches refine coaching approaches, and strengthening evidence-based practices. By examining the impact of coaching, the factors influencing dropout, and strategies they deploy to cope and persist through a qualitative study, alongside a quantitative study detailing the mechanisms that exist that influence coach performance outcomes, the projects aims to deepen the understanding of how coaches cope and persist in this dynamic boundaryless career environment.

Although the coaching profession has grown globally, this research focuses specifically on business coaches operating within the United Kingdom, providing contextual depth regarding professional regulation, market maturity, and career development in the UK coaching sector. This research represents a collaborative effort between academics and UK practitioners, offering valuable insights into the realities of boundaryless careers. By addressing the question on how business coaches cope and persist in their boundaryless careers I aspire to contribute to evolution to theory and business coaching practice.

1.2 | Background

1.2.1 | Boundaryless Careers

Arthur and Rousseau (1996) marked a significant shift in career paradigms by introducing the concept of boundaryless careers. This departure from the traditional organisational career model—which emphasised stable employment within large firms—redefined career trajectories as ones that transcend conventional boundaries, allowing individuals to move across employers, work units, and even construct careers through external networks (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Inkson et al., 2012). The underlying theme is that boundaryless careers have their independence from the constraints of traditional organisational career principles (Arthur, 1994).

The emergence of boundaryless careers was driven by economic shifts in the 1990s, coupled with the rise of "protean careers," highlighting adaptability in response to external changes (Hall, 1996). Psychological success came to encompass not only objective measures like advancement and economic rewards but also subjective criteria such as relational commitments, personal development, and work-life balance (Bailyn, 1993; Marshall, 1995; Mirvis & Hall, 1994; Tams & Arthur, 2010).

Tams & Arthur (2010) identify three key themes shaping boundaryless career theory through their review of 17 years of research: (i) diminishing reliance on stable employment within large organisations, necessitating personal responsibility for learning and adaptability (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996; Hall, 1996); (ii) the potential for careers to contribute to a networked and learning-oriented economy (Arthur, Inkson, & Pringle, 1999; Weick, 1996); and (iii) societal changes driving individuals to align their careers with personal values and commitments outside of work (Mirvis & Hall, 1994; Tams & Arthur, 2010).

Recent research by Kost et al. (2020) emphasises individual accountability in boundaryless careers, advocating a shift from traditional HR practices to network-based and self-organised approaches (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006; Kost et al., 2020). The boundaryless career perspective encompasses both physical mobility (career transitions across organisational boundaries) and psychological mobility (capacity to adjust within and between roles) (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006), with career agency theory playing a crucial role (Tams & Arthur, 2010).

The concept of boundaryless careers allows individuals to move across employers, work units, and networks, offering autonomy, flexibility, and variety (Arthur, 1994; Eby et al., 2003;

Kost et al., 2020). However, this autonomy requires carving one's own path. Although this may have its benefits, it also leads to new challenges that the boundaryless individual must face, such as adaptability, resilience, and self-management (Forrier et al., 2009; Miles & Snow, 1996; Kost et al., 2020).

Critics within the boundaryless career literature warn that boundaryless career research overlooks the interdependence of physical and psychological career aspects, potentially limiting its applicability (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). Scholars highlight that future boundaryless career researchers must use diverse research methodologies and address challenges like adapting to changing economies, managing identity, and interacting with institutions (Tams & Arthur, 2010) if they are to contribute to a deeper understanding of boundaryless career theory. The notion of career success in boundaryless careers includes both subjective and objective perspectives (Arthur et al., 2005); acknowledging the complexity of its dimensions is therefore essential for future developments of theory (Van Maanen, 1977).

The boundaryless career concept transforms traditional career trajectories, emphasising adaptability, autonomy, and transcending boundaries. However, inclusivity challenges remain, necessitating comprehensive research on factors influencing career success. By addressing these challenges and nurturing career agency, researchers contribute to understanding how individuals navigate, cope, persist, and thrive within dynamic work landscapes, and their boundaryless career journey.

Business coaching represents a unique case within boundaryless careers. Coaches often operate as independent professionals, requiring them to manage their career paths, maintain adaptability, and balance their and their clients' success. These characteristics make them an ideal population for studying the interplay between boundaryless career theory and psychological resources such as PsyCap.

1.2.3 | Business Coaching

Despite the lack of robust empirical evidence, existing literature reviews indicate positive outcomes associated with business coaching; however, there remains a need for comprehensive research to delve into various aspects of coaching, including antecedents, processes, outcomes, and factors influencing coaching relationships (ICF, 2012; Wiginton & Cartwright, 2020).

Business coaching, whilst originating from sports coaching, harnesses concepts from positive psychology, coaching psychology, leadership development, and executive coaching (Myburgh, 2014; Wiginton & Cartwright, 2020). These foundations allow business coaching to offer various benefits, including improved self-regulation, performance, well-being, and coping for clients.

From a theoretical perspective, business coaching draws on various theoretical constructs and psychological models from mentoring, training, counselling, and persuasive communication (Blackman et al., 2016). The use of counselling approaches, such as psychoanalysis and cognitive behaviour therapy, is common in coaching practice (Corey, 2012). Coaching relies on interdisciplinary strategies, including adult learning and change principles, to achieve lasting behavioural change (Goodstone & Diamante, 1998; Crompton et al., 2012).

Drawing from disciplines, including business and social sciences, the role of business coaches is to improve individual and organisational performance and enhance self-regulation, work attitudes, well-being, and coping (Theeboom et al., 2014; Sonesh et al., 2015). However, the industry faces challenges such as a lack of clear regulation, standards, and training, leading to a lack of evidence-based practice and market confusion (Schute, 2019; Stout-Rostron, 2012; Van Rensburg et al., 2011). The effectiveness of coaching interventions and their impact on individual and organisational outcomes have been reported as difficult to tangibly measure, and therefore, objective return on business coaching requires further research.

Researchers suggest efforts should focus on refining coaching models, evaluating coaching approaches, and assessing the sustainability of coaching interventions (Kilburg, 2000; Hagen, 2012; Crompton et al., 2012) as to how coaches carry out their work and effective strategies is unclear and remains subjective depending on the coaching organisation opinion on how one should effectively coach. Collaborative efforts between researchers and practitioners can contribute to the growth and development of boundaryless careers from both client and coach perspectives, particularly how business coaches cope and persist, what contributes towards the ability to cope and persist (i.e., their environment, network, motivators) when faced with adversity, and perusing higher levels of objective and subjective success.

1.2.4 | Business Coach Career Success

Borrowing from boundaryless career literature, career 'success' is a multifaceted outcome, variably defined based on individual viewpoints. It embraces both subjective and objective dimensions. Subjective career success entails an individual's internal assessment, accounting for personal value-laden aspects. Conversely, objective career success gauges external indicators like income and job level. The interplay of these perspectives underscores the dual nature of the concept of boundaryless careers.

Subjective career success reflects personal evaluations, encompassing income, security, work-life balance, and more. It acknowledges diverse career goals, emphasising personal fulfilment. Objective career success focuses on tangible metrics like occupation and income relating to societal roles. This dual nature is recognised in career theory (Goffman, 1961), where subjective and objective views interact, though they might not align in every aspect due to individual variations (Arthur et al., 2005). For instance, an artist's subjective success might be the acclaim received, while a salesperson's objective success could be measured in commissions. Yet even objective metrics can impact subjective perceptions (Van Maanen, 1977), exemplifying the two-sided essence.

In the context of business coaching, this two-sided essence informs how the studies will be examining success within the context of this project, i.e., success as a business coach and how business coaches cope and persist towards their version(s) of success. The literature review highlights key themes that shape the interview questions, for example, what drives the coach, why they choose to transition to a business coaching career (boundaryless career in the case of this project), what barriers they face, what support they lean on, how they learn and adapt, what is 'success' to them, and what contributes (and what does not) towards their success.

The two studies themselves reveal that success for the business coaches interviewed revolves around the success of their clients and their own personal objective and subjective success. Objectively, the coaches discuss client success in terms of growing their business revenue, profit, team, and geographical expansion. They perceive their own objective success as number of clients, revenue, retention, and client results. Subjectively, the business coaches explain that success is around well-being, personal growth, work-life balance, freedom of choice, and the feeling that they are making an impact on other's lives.

However, to achieve these results, they need clients. Therefore, the underpinning measure—and themes that emerge from the interviews—of success performance revolves around the business coach's ability to acquire clients (income) and retain them (the security of their income).

A factor that is highlighted in the literature review and interviews that acts as an interference for the business coach is client dropout (Schermuly, 2018). Not only does client dropout impact the business coach financially, but it also acts as interference in the ability for the business coach to 'coach' them—i.e., challenge and push the client—as there is a fear that they may lose the client. However, if they do not push the client, they may lose the client as well, as the client isn't moving forward and getting results. Previous research has found that client dropout can result from factors such as low change motivation, poor relationship quality, activation of serious problems, and unclear outcomes (Graßmann & Schermuly, 2016; Schermuly, 2018). Client dropout not only impacts the clients' progress but also has negative consequences for coaches, including financial losses, increased stress levels, and reduced self-worth (Greif, 2008; Rainer & Campbell, 2001; Graßmann & Schermuly, 2016). Coping and persisting in such conditions can be challenging for business coaches, affecting their well-being and professional growth, thus forming a physical and psychological barrier for business coaches.

Given the unique demands of boundaryless careers—particularly for business coaches who often operate independently, who are the focus of this project—psychological resources play a crucial role in determining their ability to cope and persist. Psychological Resource Theory (PRT) and Agency Theory are discussed within this project, emphasising how one calls upon one's psychological resources to drive towards higher levels of performance. Psychological Capital (PsyCap), a state-like construct encompassing hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism, provides a robust framework for understanding how these professionals persist in challenging environments. I utilise these principles in this project to deliver an approach that is grounded in theory and research to how business coaches cope and persist.

1.2.5 | Psychological Capital

This project explores individual characteristics that might explain business coach success, encompassing both subjective and objective criteria. Given the demands associated with this boundaryless career and how agency theory contributes to the question of 'why and how

does the business coach cope and persist?' a focus on the internal mechanisms—that may be driving the business coach to cope and persist—might confer an advantage. Thus, I focus on the concept of Psychological Capital (PsyCaP) and its underpinning theories to help develop a model to understand the mechanisms in play that may lead to how a coach copes and persists towards higher levels of objective and subjective success.

PsyCap refers to a core construct comprising of four interrelated constructs: hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism. These factors contribute to an individual's ability to effectively cope with challenges, remain resilient, and maintain a positive outlook, which can enhance their performance and well-being (Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Peterson, 2010). In the context of business coaching, where coaches navigate a boundaryless career with various challenges, understanding how PsyCap influences their coping mechanisms, and persistence helps with explaining how a business coach copes and persists.

Business coaches operate in a dynamic and challenging environment, especially in the face of factors that both they and their clients face, like the UK commercial challenges of Brexit, COVID-19, geopolitical conflicts, and economic pressures—among the day-to-day entrepreneur challenges of running and being responsible for a business. To maintain their effectiveness and guide their clients successfully, business coaches must possess the psychological resources that PsyCap encompasses. These resources not only empower coaches to weather personal and professional challenges but also enable them to serve as guiding lights for their clients.

PsyCap's components—hope, self-efficacy (confidence), resilience, and optimism—can play a pivotal role in helping coaches adapt and thrive. Hope instils a sense of purpose and a belief that efforts will lead to positive outcomes, thus assisting coaches in navigating uncertainty. Self-efficacy enhances their self-efficacy and belief in their capabilities, which is crucial for addressing complex client issues. Resilience equips coaches to rebound from setbacks and maintain their focus on client needs even in the face of adversity. Optimism fosters a positive attitude and enables coaches to view past, present, and future challenges as opportunities for growth, benefiting both them and their clients (Luthans et al., 2007; Tugade and Fredrickson, 2004).

Furthermore, the positive emotional states associated with PsyCap broaden cognitive processes, leading to greater attention, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. For business coaches, this can translate into enhanced client engagement and effectiveness in guiding clients through intricate business challenges. For example, coaches with higher

PsyCap levels are likely to engage more effectively with their clients, leading to increased client satisfaction and better outcomes. The positive demeanour displayed by coaches who possess high PsyCap can also contribute to a contagion effect, influencing others in their environment's attitudes and behaviours positively (Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Peterson, 2010; Story et al., 2013).

To fully understand the impact of PsyCap on business coaches' coping strategies and persistence, researchers suggest that future endeavours should explore the mediators between PsyCap and performance outcomes. Investigating the specific mechanisms through which PsyCap affects coaches' interactions with clients, adaptability to challenges, and overall success can provide valuable insights. Furthermore, applying PsyCap theory within the niche context of business coaching could lead to developing practical strategies for coaches to enhance their well-being and client outcomes (Avey et al., 2011; Luthans et al., 2006).

In summary, PsyCap may serve as a valuable concept for understanding how business coaches cope and persist in their boundaryless careers. By cultivating hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism, coaches can effectively navigate challenges, positively influence their clients, and contribute to their own and their clients' success. Understanding the mediating mechanisms and context-specific applications of PsyCap within the business coaching domain can provide actionable insights for coaches and clients.

1.3 | Research Aim and Objectives

1.3.1 | Aim

This research aims to investigate how business coaches navigate the challenges of boundaryless careers, focusing on the psychological and behavioural mechanisms that enable them to persist and succeed to 'higher levels of objective and subjective success' despite adversity.

From a qualitative perspective, the aim is to understand what the drivers and barriers are for business coaches, along with what enablers support them in their careers and what strategies they use or have learnt so they can adapt and succeed in their boundaryless

careers. Study 1 aims to learn more about the challenges that boundaryless career individuals face and how (why) they persevere in obtaining success for their own personal success—and success for their clients. The research is also interested in how a coach psychologically remains resilient and optimistic, showing up as the coach—despite physical and psychological setbacks of their own—in front of their client to coach them towards positive results, even when the boundaryless individual (the business coach) faces adversity.

From a quantitative perspective, Study 2 aims to theorise and empirically test a model examining the effects of one's state-like (as opposed to traits) nature on performance and well-being outcomes that were highlighted in Study 1. Study 2 also aims to explore the different pathways that a coach's psychological capital leads to success outcomes so that a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of how business coaches cope and persist can be built into a theoretical model. These proposed mechanisms are informed by the Study 2 literature review on PsyCap and the qualitative findings from Study 1.

The aim is to carry out a deductive approach by first developing theory and then testing. Thus, by developing and testing a robust theoretical model that contributes to both PsyCap theory and business coaching practice, this answers the call for this study via a mixed method of 'how business coaches cope and persist in boundaryless careers'.

Defining "Success"

In this thesis, phrases like 'higher levels of success' is conceptualised as a multidimensional construct encompassing both objective and subjective indicators of achievement within boundaryless careers (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 2004). Objective success refers to externally observable outcomes such as financial performance, client acquisition, and client retention—measures that reflect tangible career progress (Ng, Eby, Sorensen & Feldman, 2005). Subjective success, by contrast, concerns the individual's internal evaluation of fulfilment, satisfaction, and psychological well-being—how professionals perceive and interpret their own achievement and development (Hall, 2004).

Within the context of business coaching, this dual definition recognises that professional achievement extends beyond financial gain to include autonomy, flexibility, and meaningful impact—dimensions that are particularly salient in boundaryless careers (Arthur &

Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 2004). Accordingly, the present research measures success through both objective outcomes—such as revenue (Coach Certification), Number of Clients, and Client Retention—and subjective outcomes—such as Job Insecurity and Life Satisfaction. This multidimensional framing provides conceptual precision and supports a richer understanding of how business coaches cope and persist towards success that is both financially and psychologically sustainable.

1.3.2 | Research Objectives

To fulfil the research aim and align with the DBA criteria—which emphasises translating theory into practice—the following objectives have been established:

Theoretical Objectives

Contributing to Boundaryless Career Theory:

1. Conduct action research among business coaches to explore the barriers they encounter and the strategies they use to navigate and persist in boundaryless careers.
2. Employ inductive research to uncover novel enablers in the business coaching environment that aid coping and persistence, contributing to existing literature.

Understanding PsyCap's Role in Business Coach Performance:

3. Investigate the influence of Psychological Capital (PsyCap) on performance outcomes in the context of business coaching, including client acquisition, retention, and revenue.
4. Examine key mechanisms that mediate the relationship between PsyCap and performance outcomes, shedding light on the pathways through which PsyCap impacts success.

Professional Objectives

Model for Coping and Persistence:

5. Identify the drivers and barriers faced by business coaches and highlight strategies that business coaches deploy to overcome adversity in boundaryless careers.
6. Formulate an evidence-backed model tailored for business coaches and boundaryless career individuals. This project aids coaches in effectively recognising the mechanisms

and variables that assist them with coping and persisting throughout their boundaryless careers.

Self-Awareness and Behavioural Understanding:

7. Develop a comprehensive model that enables business coaches to understand their behaviours, emotions, and psychological state (PsyCap) arising from business coaching experiences. This project serves as a reference point for coping strategies.

Navigational Tool for Challenges:

8. Generate practical insight to assist business coaches and boundaryless individuals in navigating challenges and enhancing their abilities to boost client acquisition, retention, and overall success.

Increasing Exposure of PsyCap:

9. Elevate the awareness of PsyCap and its advantages within the business coaching domain for increased tangible and well-being results.

Evidence-Based Performance Enhancement:

10. Provide a substantiated approach by demonstrating the positive impact of PsyCap development on Return on Development (ROD). This contribution underscores the relationship between PsyCap and performance outcomes.

Through these interconnected theoretical and professional objectives, I aim to contribute to boundaryless career theory, advance the understanding of PsyCap's role in business coach's (and boundaryless career) performance and well-being, and develop insight for business coaches and boundaryless individuals to thrive in dynamic career landscapes. In turn, this research aligns with a DBA's goal of synthesising theory with practical application.

1.4 | Organisation of the Thesis

To fully answer the research question and achieve the aim of the DBA project, this thesis is structured into two distinct yet interconnected research studies that provide an in-depth exploration of the psychological factors influencing business coaches' success in a dynamic and demanding landscape.

Chapter 1 begins with this introduction which provides an overview of the research, the research aims and objectives, and an epistemology for the DBA project as a whole. The research employs a mixed-methods approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of business coaches' coping strategies. The chapters are therefore developed with two studies in mind. Study 1 uses qualitative interviews to explore the challenges and strategies of business coaches in detail, while Study 2 employs a quantitative survey to test hypotheses that are derived from the literature—and guided by findings from Study 1—to examine the role of PsyCap in influencing performance and well-being outcomes, outcomes that were highlighted as important to the business coaches from Study 1.

In Chapter 2, Study 1 literature review part 1 on boundaryless carers is explored that highlights how those in boundaryless careers—in general and not just specific to business coaches—cope and persist and what theories contribute towards boundaryless career success.

In Chapter 3, the business coaching literature is explored, applying the business coaching context to the boundaryless career exploration thus far. This examination highlights context-specific challenges and barriers that business coaches face in their careers and how they may overcome them. The two literature review chapters provide a background of boundaryless career and business coaching literature that informs the semi-structured interviews.

Chapter 4 delivers a detailed methodology of Study 1, outlines the research design, and explains why the specific methods were utilised.

Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 are the results chapters for Study 1. The results for Study 1 are separated into their own chapters as the results for Study 1 can be compartmentalised into four key areas—as a result of the findings of Study 1 qualitative interviews and literature review—to deliver an understanding of how business coaches cope and persist. Chapter 9 is a discussion chapter discussing the findings of Study 1.

Chapter 10 presents the literature review for Study 2, which is based on the findings of Study 1. Study 2 extends Study 1 by focusing on PsyCap and quantitatively testing its impact on performance variables that are critical for business coaches.

Chapter 11 presents the methodology for Study 2. Chapter 12 delivers the results for Study 2 and explains the analytical approaches used.

In Chapter 13, I discuss the findings of Study 1, followed by an overarching DBA project discussion in Chapter 14 that synergises both studies and their findings to present a conclusion for this DBA.

Integration and Implications: Hybrid Discussion and Conclusion

The culmination of both studies is presented in a comprehensive discussion of findings which brings together the qualitative insights from Study 1 and the quantitative results from Study 2. This synthesis allows for a holistic understanding of how business coaches cope and persist in their boundaryless careers. The discussion also explores the practical implications of the research's outcomes and their potential impact on business coaching practices.

The subsequent chapter delves into the implications of the research for practitioners and stakeholders in the business coaching domain. By offering insights into the impact of state-like psychological constructs, particularly PsyCap, on business coaches' success, this chapter provides actionable takeaways for enhancing coaching effectiveness and training.

Finally, the last chapter provides a conclusive summary of the research journey, reflecting on the research objectives, methodologies, and key findings. It offers insights into the unique contribution of this project as a DBA thesis (distilling theory into practice) to the field of business coaching, its contribution towards boundaryless career theory, and highlights potential avenues for further exploration.

Throughout the thesis, the focus remains on the central question of how business coaches navigate the challenges of their boundaryless careers in the pursuit towards success while cultivating their own well-being and that of their clients. By structuring the research into two complementary studies and integrating qualitative and quantitative insights, this thesis offers a comprehensive exploration of the dynamic world of business coaching and its underlying psychological drivers.

1.5 | Research Contributions

The definition of the DBA from Aston University is 'Actionable Research' and that 'the executive DBA is an independent research experience that distils theory into practice'. This DBA will therefore contribute to both theory and practice. The term 'contribution' in a PhD sense does not mean to achieve a large breakthrough but to tease out difficulties and puzzles that are yet to be sufficiently well explained (Phillips & Pugh, 2010). Thus, this thesis will contribute to research theoretically and empirically, and as it is a DBA, have a particular emphasis on practice too by carrying out two studies around boundaryless careers (and their surrounding theories) and how they apply in a business coaching context in helping professionals cope and persist (contribution to practice).

This DBA thesis makes significant contributions to both theoretical understanding and empirical knowledge in the field of business coaching within the context of boundaryless careers through the following:

Theoretical Contributions:

1. **Advancing Psychological Capital (PsyCap) Research:** This research addresses the call by PsyCap researchers to investigate potential mediators between PsyCap and performance outcomes within specific contexts (Avey et al., 2011). By studying how self-reported PsyCap manifests in communication and observable behaviour, this mixed-method project enhances the understanding of PsyCap's state-like nature and mediation effects (Instilling Hope) and moderation effects (Job Engagement). By clarifying the mediation effects and individual-level boundary conditions, this research enriches the theory surrounding PsyCap and state-like studies (Avey et al., 2008).

2. **Operationalising PsyCap within a Working Model:** This research contextualises PsyCap within the coaching context, providing a working model to better understand PsyCap's influence on business coaching performance outcomes. By focusing on the effects of PsyCap on communication, behaviour, and performance within a coaching setting, this research advances the theoretical understanding of PsyCap and its implications for both business coaching and boundaryless careers (Luthans, 2002; Tams & Arthur, 2010).

3. **Contribution to Career Agency Theory:** The examination of how business coaches cope and persist in boundaryless careers contributes to the development of career agency theory. By identifying challenges, opportunities, and strategies for boundaryless individuals, this research adds depth to the understanding of how individuals navigate dynamic work environments (Tams & Arthur, 2010).

Methodological Contributions:

4. **Mixed-Methods Approach:** This research utilises both qualitative and quantitative methods to study business coaches within a large coaching organisation. By combining observational and correlational studies, this research generates comprehensive insights into the effects of PsyCap on coaches' behaviour and performance, thereby making a methodological contribution (Avey et al., 2008).

Empirical Contributions:

5. **Unveiling PsyCap Effects on Performance Outcomes:** The quantitative study aims to understand the effects of PsyCap on performance outcomes, specifically within a service-based context. This empirical investigation contributes to understanding how PsyCap relates to real-world success indicators like client retention and acquisition (ROD), providing practical implications for coaches (Avey et al., 2010; Avey et al., 2008).

6. **Contextualising PsyCap for Coaching:** This research contextualises PsyCap within the coaching profession and develops a tool for coach training. By examining how PsyCap impacts coaches' communication and behaviour, this study adds empirical insights to the application of PsyCap within coaching practices (Story et al., 2013; Avey et al., 2011).

7. **Addressing Gaps in PsyCap Research:** By identifying mediators and boundary conditions addressing gaps in PsyCap research leading to empirical and theoretical developments, thus aligning to the call for more controlled investigations (Avey et al., 2011; Dawkins et al., 2013).

8. **Engaged Scholarship and Stakeholder Involvement:** The unique opportunity to work with business coaches and stakeholders provides practical insights and enhances the engagement of scholars. By involving stakeholders in research design and problem-

solving, this research contributes to the concept of engaged scholarship, producing findings that align with both science and practice (Van De Ven, 2007; Lee & Lings, 2008).

Practical Contributions:

9. **Enhancing Coach-Client Relationships:** By studying how PsyCap influences coaches' communication and behaviour, this research offers insights into fostering positive coach-client interactions. This practical contribution has the potential to enhance client engagement, satisfaction, and outcomes, thereby positively impacting business coaches and their clients (Story et al., 2013; Friend et al., 2016).

10. **Meeting Modern Challenges:** The research explores how business coaches cope with challenges such as client dropout, economic uncertainties, and geopolitical conflicts. By addressing these challenges, the research contributes to guiding coaches in navigating complex, boundaryless career landscapes (Kost et al., 2020).

11. **Strategic Resource Allocation:** The integration of PsyCap theory with business coaching practices aligns positivity, human fulfilment, and bottom-line results. This practical contribution provides insights into investing in and developing PsyCap among organisational leaders and human resources, offering a competitive advantage in today's dynamic environment (Avey et al., 2010).

12. **Unique Insights for Coaches:** Through engaged scholarship and stakeholder involvement, this research provides unique insights for coaches that may not be accessible to other researchers. This practical contribution enables coaches to better navigate challenges and opportunities specific to their boundaryless careers, contributing to their growth and success (Van De Ven, 2007).

In conclusion, this DBA project contributes substantially to both theory and practice by advancing the understanding of Boundaryless Career and Psychological Capital theory, their application within the coaching context, and their impact on business coaches' coping mechanisms and persistence in boundaryless careers. The research's mixed-method approach, engagement with stakeholders, and focus on practical tools provide valuable insights that contribute to the development of theory, the enhancement of coaching

practices, and the empowerment of boundaryless individuals to navigate their career paths successfully.

1.6 | Overarching Methodology & Epistemology

Each study provides its own methodology that highlights the rationale behind the study approach. In the context of this whole DBA project, I provide this overarching methodology and epistemology section to detail the entire projects approach as a DBA. The individual methodologies for each study are detailed in later chapters.

1.6.1 | Project Sample

The project has a unique opportunity to interview business coaches who are trained in the same coaching systems (a franchise model). This, in turn, allows for the isolation of variable factors such as how the coach is trained to acquire, retain, and coach clients. This allows for the deep exploration of people based variables, such as psychological factors.

As the focus of the project is directed towards the business coaches, thus the participant pool is comprised of business coaches, all within a single organisation in the UK, ensuring less variance in their coaching process and emphasis on the coach's personality and behaviours as individuals. This distinctive approach to working with the business coaches assists with addressing the research gaps, objectives, and ultimately answering the research question -how a business coach copes and persists in a boundaryless career'. Scholars in the field of Boundaryless Careers, and more specifically, PsyCap research, have made the call to examine PsyCap within diverse business contexts (Avey et al., 2011). Additionally, this research establishes collaboration with key stakeholders from business coaching firms, facilitating unprecedented access to both business coaches and valuable data for research purposes (Van de Ven, 2007).

1.6.2 | Research Approach and Epistemology

My chosen methods are influenced by my philosophical perspective and domain of interest (Lee & Lings, 2008). Grounded in a post-positivist epistemological stance, this project adopts a scientific abductive methodology. Although the project is a mixed method, the primary approach is an abductive approach. Abductive research, rooted in the philosophical work of Peirce (1974), is a qualitative approach aimed at producing explanatory insights for observed phenomena. This method involves proposing plausible hypotheses to explain unexpected observations, enabling researchers to move beyond description and verification. Abduction encourages the exploration of potential explanations for complex or puzzling situations that existing theories cannot fully account for (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). Timmermans & Tavory (2012) propose the abductive research process encompasses the following key steps:

- **Surprising Observation (C):** Researchers start with surprising data observations that demand understanding. These observations prompt the search for underlying causes or meanings.
- **Hypothetical Reasoning (A):** Plausible hypotheses or explanations (A) are proposed to account for the observed phenomenon (C). These hypotheses draw from existing theoretical frameworks or introduce new concepts.
- **Situation Fit and Evaluation:** Proposed hypotheses are evaluated based on their fit with observed data and contextual nuances. The extent to which hypotheses offer coherent explanations is considered.
- **Creative Synthesis:** Abductive research fosters creativity, allowing synthesis of evidence, theoretical concepts, and observations to construct explanatory narratives.
- **Theoretical Development:** Abduction contributes to the development of new theoretical insights, refining existing theories, or proposing innovative perspectives.

Abductive research emphasises generating plausible explanations and insights rather than rigid hypothesis confirmation. It proves valuable when existing theories fall short or new dimensions of complexity need exploration. Researchers engaging in abductive reasoning unveil hidden relationships, propose novel explanations, and contribute to theoretical framework expansion. Additionally, abductive analysis diverges from traditional inductive approaches by involving a thorough engagement with scholarly literature from the outset. In contrast to induction or deduction, abduction involves formulating explanatory hypotheses based on observed facts. It starts with a surprising observation (C), introduces plausible premises (A), and suggests their consideration for potential exploration (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012).

The overarching approach to the project encompasses the abductive approach and a mixed method design, characterised by a sequence of steps that follows a mixed method as suggested by Lee & Lings (2008) and Bryman & Bell's (2015) suggestions. They are as follows: i) literature review, ii) formulation of research questions derived from the literature, shaping Study 1, iii) development of semi-structured interviews with an inductive orientation to encourage open exploration of emerging concepts, allowing room for unexpected insights that may shape subsequent research, iv) analysis and discussion of Study 1 to establish the foundation for Study 2, v) deducing insights from Study 1 findings, considering both anticipated themes and surprising discoveries that may refine or reshape the research direction, vi) formulation of hypotheses based on current literature, vii) design of Study 2 survey, viii) data collection, ix) analysis of Study 2, x) discussion of Study 2 results, xi) overarching discussion, xii) conclusion, xiii) implications and recommendations for theory advancement and future research.

In the qualitative phase, an inductive approach is employed, enabling the research to comprehensively explore real-world challenges encountered in business coaching. The application of this approach not only infuses an action research element into the study by directly engaging with coaches but also allows the business coach and their emerging challenges on how they cope and persist to steer the trajectory of research and shapes the literature review for the subsequent phase, Study 2, that is a deductive approach.

The iterative transition from inductive to deductive (abductive) methodology facilitates the construction of a theoretical model. This model draws from contemporary challenges confronted by boundaryless career business coaches (discussed in the results of Study 1), unravelling their strategies for coping and persistence and further exploring the literature to reveal the underpinning mechanisms that assist in how they cope and persist. Interviews conducted in Study 1 provide the cornerstone for Study 2, fostering a focused literature review. Subsequently, a theoretical model and hypotheses are formulated from the second literature review of Study 2 and subjected to testing in Study 2.

1.6.3 | Study One: Qualitative Exploration of Business Coaches' Challenges and How They Cope and Persist

Study 1 employs a qualitative approach to comprehensively understand the challenges faced by business coaches and how they adapt to various coaching situations. It uses a semi-structured interview format to engage with 15 experienced business coaches. These coaches are drawn from a single UK-based business coaching organisation (that I the researcher also worked within), ensuring consistency in their coaching approach.

This inductive study begins by forming semi-structured open-ended questions based on existing literature and business coaching data that is derived from the literature review. The recorded interviews, conducted over Zoom and transcribed through software (Otter.ai), yield extensive insights into the business coaches' perspectives. The qualitative data is then dually analysed, first by analysis software, NVivo, that aids in identifying common themes and trends among the coaches' responses; secondly, a manual method where I, as the researcher, consolidate responses into a spreadsheet and manually extract key themes and phrases. This dual approach is used because the researcher (myself) is a business coach carrying out action research; therefore, (i) the former method removes industry bias; (ii) the latter allows for action research and my experience as a business coach to extract key areas in the transcripts that may be vital in how a business coach copes and persists.

Study 1 findings provide valuable insights into the challenges business coaches encounter, especially when dealing with clients. A significant conclusion drawn is that one of the most prominent challenges faced by coaches is acquiring and retaining clients. Moreover, this study contributes to the broader thesis by establishing a foundation for understanding the role of emotions and state-like psychological constructs in influencing coaches' emotional experiences and overall well-being and their ability to cope and persist.

From the findings of Study 1, a model is developed that highlights all the key findings that, in turn, help demonstrate a visual around how business coaches cope and persist.

1.6.4 | Study 2: Quantitative Examination of PsyCap's Influence on Performance

Study 2 follows a deductive approach, building on the findings of Study 1 and the existing literature. This study focuses on investigating the specific influence of state-like psychological constructs, particularly Psychological Capital (PsyCap), on business coaches' performance outcomes. A quantitative survey is designed and administered to 100 business

coaches who are business coaches within the same UK business coaching organisation as Study One.

Study 2 survey, informed by Study 1 qualitative insights and existing literature, explores the reasons behind PsyCap's impact on performance outcomes. The survey's design aims to quantifiably measure the effects of PsyCap on tangible performance metrics such as revenue, client numbers, and client retention rates. Additionally, this study delves into the mechanisms that mediate the relationship between self-attributed PsyCap and performance outcomes.

Correlational data is generated from the survey responses through statistical analysis using SPSS, offering insights into the interplay between variables outlined in the theoretical model. Study 2 outcomes reveal a positive relationship, drawing from the regression coefficients and correlation tests, between high levels of PsyCap and improved performance outcomes among business coaches. Moreover, the study's exploration of mediating effects (particularly regarding well-being) adds depth to the understanding of how PsyCap influences performance.

1.6.5 | Engaged Scholarship and Stakeholder Involvement

It is imperative to acknowledge at this stage that I, as the researcher, am an active business coach. Thus, this allows the infusion of the concept of 'engaged scholarship' throughout my research journey and shapes my research methodology. The involvement of key stakeholders (e.g., firm owners, business coaches, and general managers) presents an avenue for enhanced triangulation. Following Van de Ven's notion of engaged scholarship, triangulation enriches the multi-faceted representation of problems, mitigating the potential for narrow, biased interpretations. Convergence of perspectives among various stakeholders enhances the reliability of problem representation, instilling confidence in its validity (Van De Ven, 2007; Lee and Lings, 2008). This methodological approach is pivotal for both Study 1 and Study 2, contributing to the research's depth. While this may introduce a degree of bias, it also unlocks opportunities that would have been unattainable without this insider perspective, thereby offering a distinct contribution. To counterbalance this potential bias, the research supervisors lie outside the business coaching realm, and a pragmatic research approach involving semi-structured interviews and computer-assisted analysis has

been executed in both study phases, thereby shaping the research methodology and increasing validity.

The specific method for each study is outlined before Study 1 and Study 2 in the later chapters.

CHAPTER 2 | LITERATURE REVIEW PART 1: BOUNDARYLESS CAREER

I begin this literature review by exploring the broad overview of boundaryless careers. I then delve deeper into the elements of boundaryless careers that most uncover the specific literature to how those in boundaryless careers cope and persist. I later specifically look at the concepts deeper within business coaches which flows into part 2 literature review on business coaching.

This literature review aims to explore the existing research landscape on boundaryless careers, identify key concepts and gaps, and establish how these insights inform the coping and persistence mechanisms of business coaches. By addressing these gaps, this review lays the foundation for Study 1's qualitative inquiry into the challenges and strategies unique to business coaching. I use this review to provide context, situating my work within the broader field and aligning it with or distinguishing it from prior studies. It helps me shape my research questions and methodology, drawing on best practices from previous work while also establishing credibility by demonstrating my familiarity with the topic. Ultimately, my literature review forms the foundation for meaningful comparisons, ensuring my study contributes valuable insights to the field.

To answer the Study 1 research question, I explore two bodies of literature. I firstly explore the overarching theory and literature that surrounds the business coaches' type of career. As business coaching is a niche field, literature on how individuals cope and persist will be more limited. I, therefore, explore the broader perspective of the career, as opposed to the niche field of business coaching, as the literature may be more abundant in helping understand the underpinning mechanisms and theories of how people cope and persist. I explore boundaryless careers first to give a broader perspective on the literature, and in the second part of this literature review, I look at the business coaching industry—and the literature surrounding how they cope and persist—specifically.

Throughout this literature review, I have a focus question: "How do business coaches cope and persist?'. I continually ask 'Why?' which broadens and then narrows down the literature specifically to the point that questions derive that can only be answered by the coaches and warrant the need to interview business coaches to gain intel on their experiences.

I highlight and summarise key gaps identified through the literature review(s) that assist in answering the research question, which then shapes the semi-structured interview questions

that I carry out in the qualitative study (Study 1). I highlight (*italic text*) as they emerge and are summarised in Study 1 methodology. Study 1 then attempts to capture the responses of business coaches to form themes and subthemes, from the responses that then specifically contribute to the research question, 'How do business coaches cope and persist?'

As this is a qualitative study, the literature reviews are here to set the stage for the current state of boundaryless career and business coaching research and help form the semi-structured interview questions so that the research is impactful theoretically, empirically, and practically.

I begin from the wider perspective by initiating an inquiry into what is the true essence of a boundaryless career and how people in careers similar to business coaches (boundaryless careers) cope and persist.

A boundaryless career refers to a career path that transcends traditional organisational or geographical boundaries. It is a concept that has emerged in response to the increasing interconnectedness and global nature of work. In a boundaryless career, individuals are not constrained by the traditional notion of a linear career path within a single organisation or industry. Boundaryless careers offer the potential for greater autonomy, flexibility, and variety in one's professional life, i.e., they are responsible for their own outcomes and success. However, boundaryless-careers may also require individuals to be adaptable, resilient, and proactive in managing their careers in an ever-changing and dynamic work environment (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Inkson et al., 2012; Tams & Arthur, 2010; Kost et al., 2020)

The following literature review (part 1) examines the boundaryless career concept in depth and highlights the current state of boundaryless research and its surrounding theories and where future research is needed.

2.1 | What is a Boundaryless Career?

Arthur and Rousseau (1996) signalled a major change in career forms, from 'the bounded' or organisational career—that saw people in orderly employment arrangements achieved through vertical coordination in mainly large, stable firms i.e., the dominant employment form through the mid-1980s (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996)—towards the concept of 'boundaryless

career'—the opposite of 'organisational careers' where a career is conceived to unfold in a single employment setting (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Inkson et al., 2012). The authors encouraged researchers of career theory to rethink their ideas about what a career entails and raised several new questions and lines of inquiry where career opportunities may transcend any single employer (Arthur et al., 2005).

Arthur and Rousseau highlighted six different meanings of boundaryless careers, involving careers: (i) like the stereotypical Silicon Valley career that move across the boundaries of separate employers; (ii) like those of academics or carpenters, that draw validation—and marketability—from outside the present employer; (iii) like those of real estate agents, that are sustained by external networks or information; (iv) that break traditional organisational assumptions about hierarchy and career advancement; (v) that involve an individual rejecting existing career opportunities for personal or family reasons; and (vi) that are based on the interpretation of the career actor, who may perceive a boundaryless future regardless of structural constraints (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). The common theme amongst all these meanings is that one is independent of, rather than dependent on, traditional organisational career principles (Arthur, 1994).

The reason for research into boundaryless careers can be a result of the changing economy of the 1990s where economic trends were complemented by psychological views of 'protean careers', careers that could ''change shape'' in response to changing external circumstances (Hall, 1996) where psychological "success" could not only be determined based on prevailing towards organisational defined goals criteria—such as advancement and economic reward—but an increase in subjective criteria, such as relational commitments to family, friends, and communities, and the professional's own personal development could be considered equally important as objective criteria towards career success (Bailyn, 1993; Marshall, 1995; Mirvis & Hall, 1994; Tams & Arthur, 2010). Thus, this new perspective advanced the argument that careers are not only subject to changing external conditions, i.e., the organisation that the employee is a part of, but that professionals can be responsible more directly to their own career success.

However, a boundaryless career does not always lead to the outcome that an individual should remove themselves from a larger organisation; more so, larger organisations could also shape their structure to create an environment where boundaryless career individuals could flourish within and remain boundaryless.

In their review of 17 years of research on boundaryless careers, Tams & Arthur (2010) sum up that this emerging debate around protean and boundaryless careers raised attention to three themes that shape boundaryless career theory: (i) it was becoming more evident that reliance on stable employment within large organisations was an increasingly problematic assumption, suggesting the need to reduce one's dependence on a single firm, thus strengthen their personal responsibility for learning and adaptability within increasingly flexible and uncertain career contexts (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996; Hall, 1996); (ii) The has been a raise in awareness that a higher networked and learning-oriented economy could provide opportunities for careers to proactively contribute to and shape the economy (Arthur, Inkson, & Pringle, 1999; Weick, 1996); (iii) Social changes were also influencing individual's desire to create their own path and careers in a way that is more aligned with their own personal values and commitments outside of work (Mirvis & Hall, 1994; Tams & Arthur, 2010).

Moving forward to recent research, Kost et al. (2020) found that researchers of the boundaryless career perspective show particular interest in the importance of individuals taking responsibility for their own career development and competency building, arguing for a shift away from traditional, employer-centric human resource management practices towards network-based and self-organised approaches to diminish career boundaries (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006; Kost et al., 2020).

The boundaryless career perspective encompasses both 'physical mobility', i.e., actual career transitions across organisational boundaries, and 'psychological mobility'—the individuals' perceived capacity to make transitions such as intra-role and extra-role adjustments (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006), which can also include intra-organisational and inter-organisational mobility that is the movement within and between organisations (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994), thus, individuals should take ownership of their career success, including their competency development (Forrier, Sels, & Stynen, 2009; Miles & Snow, 1996; Kost et al., 2020).

This concept of physical and psychological mobility is mentioned throughout this project as I refer to it when considering business coaches.

Kost et al., (2020) deliver an example of how modern boundaryless career theory applies within the acting industry and positions how the current research and theory development is found to be evident in the example. Actor work exemplifies a boundaryless career as their work exhibits low barriers for transitioning between their work 'platforms', lacks hierarchical

reporting relationships, imposes minimal geographic and time constraints, and grants a high degree of autonomy in task selection (Gherardi & Murgia, 2013; Storey, Salaman, & Platman, 2005; Sturdy & Wright, 2008; Ainsworth & Hardy, 2008; Kost et al., 2020).

Using their example of boundaryless careers within actors, Kost et al. (2020) highlight and refer to other research findings to support their points that boundaryless careers are grounded in four assumptions: Firstly, the concept of career actors is rooted in the belief that they possess both psychological and physical mobility (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). Secondly, these actors are actively involved in managing their careers and emphasise their independence from employers (Forrier et al., 2009; Miles & Snow, 1996; Zeitz, Blau, & Fertig, 2009). A third assumption is that modern careers are evolving towards becoming boundaryless, characterised by increased psychological and physical mobility; this trend is believed to be beneficial for individuals in general (Zeitz et al., 2009). Fourth, as a result of these trends and findings, there has been a notable shift in the discourse surrounding career development responsibilities, moving from an organisation-centric approach to an individual-centric one (Roper, Ganesh, & Inkson, 2010; Kost et al., 2020).

Literature on boundaryless careers holds much potential to help understand the factors impacting the work of the business coach, a relatively niche profession but which is, at its core, also a boundaryless career. For example, boundaryless careers as a concept and theory may help explain how a business coach copes and persists as the business coach career is highly demanding and relies on the individual's solo performance to succeed. The following explores how the boundaryless career concept and theory contribute towards business coach success in more depth by examining boundaryless career foundations, theory, outcomes, and how those in boundaryless careers—as they are responsible for their success—cope and persist towards their personal and business goals.

2.2 | Boundaryless Careers: Underpinning Foundations

Boundaryless career theories are becoming more prominent in both career studies and management studies, providing a new 'status quo' concerning modern careers (Inkson et al., 2012). The study of boundaryless careers offers avenues for understanding the dynamic relationship between organisational structures, individual behaviours, and career success. The concept of boundaryless careers provides a fresh perspective on modern careers, highlighting that the increased mobility of individuals allows new opportunities to move

across organisational boundaries and harness inter-organisational opportunities. As this literature review moves towards answering the question 'How do business coaches in boundaryless careers cope and persist?', the following part of this literature review explores the foundations and theories surrounding boundaryless careers, more specifically, highlighting the significance of how *agency theor*y are key contributors towards boundaryless career success.

Boundaryless careers are careers where individuals can move across 'boundaries, i.e., employers and/or work units within employers; they can develop careers via extra-organisational networks and can reject existing (conventional) career opportunities for either work-related or nonwork-related reasons (Arthur, 1994; Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003; Kost et al., 2020). Therefore, from this perspective, career opportunities can transcend any employer, position, or role (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). The ability to 'transcend any employer' is an attractive feature of the boundaryless career. However, without the direction and management of an employer, the boundaryless career individual must carve their own path to success.

Boundaryless Career Theory holds unique significance in the study of career success because of its own two unique attributes. The first attribute outlined by Arthur et al. (2005) is that of inter-organisational mobility, which concerns the fundamental shift in the psychological contract at work where it undermines any assumption that the organisation will be a 'lifetime employer', thus potentially developing a new perspective amongst both employee and employer that the relationship is unlikely to last forever (Cappelli, 1999). In turn, this notion that the employee won't last forever allows for both parties to be aware of the employment arrangement, further allowing the opportunity for inter-organisational mobility rather than explicit changes of employer for the boundaryless career individual. Arthur et al. (2005) highlight that this is consistent with views of boundaryless career theory as it follows the notion that 'opportunities that go beyond any single employer' (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996) and demonstrates greater 'independence from, rather than dependence on, traditional organisational career arrangements' (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). This information is key to understanding the foundation of a boundaryless career as it is essential to know that a boundaryless career isn't just a career that is self-employed; they can also be employed by an organisation and be a person that may take advantage of an opportunity to move without physically moving, i.e., leveraging one's skills to renegotiate their contract with the current employer (Arthur et al., 2005). This suggests that understanding boundaryless careers is essential not just for individuals to understand but for how employers within organisations can harness it to improve their employee's performance.

The notion of ‘career theory’ offers a vantage point to explore not only the relationships between organisational structure and strategy but also individual agency and behaviour (Inkson et al., 2012). Agency and career self-management are two elements that a professional must possess to pursue a boundaryless career (Forrier et al., 2009; Miles & Snow, 1996; Tams & Arthur, 2010; Kost et al., 2020).

Tams et al. (2010) examine 17 years of boundaryless careers and highlight that ‘career agency’ draws upon established career scholarship (Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989) and incorporates insights from sociological thinking (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998), thus developing a process of engaging in work-related social interactions, that is guided by past experiences and future possibilities, which leads to the individual actively investing in their career.

Regarding ‘how’ one peruses career agency and growth within a boundaryless career, growth and development have been linked to individuals' investments in knowing-why (motivation and identity), knowing-how (skills and expertise), and knowing-whom (relationships and reputation). These three ‘knowings’ suggest that career agency involves interrelated dimensions that pertain to not just the nature of the work itself (knowing-how) and the interpersonal connections (knowing-whom), but also the (knowing-why) surrounding that work (Tams et al., 2010; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996).

So far in this chapter, I have discussed what a boundaryless career is, its foundations and theory, and have started to unravel underpinning theories that may share relationships with how a person in a boundaryless career copes and persists. In the context of this project, this information helps shed light on the boundaryless career dynamics and how a business coach becomes successful, copes and persists. Through a deeper understanding of the theory around the ‘knowing-why’, ‘knowing-how’ and ‘knowing-who’ aspects of agency, the literature may reveal how one’s agency shifts that may influence the individual’s behaviours and how they cope and persist.

The following chapter explores the challenges and need for future research from key papers in the boundaryless career literature. Thus, the key challenges, gaps, and requests for future research form the questions that are asked in this project's qualitative study to contribute to theory and practice.

2.3 | Boundaryless Careers: The Need for Future Research

> *"The old picture of stable employment and associated organisational careers is fading. A new picture of dynamic employment and boundaryless careers calls for our attention" — Arthur (1994, p.297)*

The statement above was the conclusion of Arthur's (1994) research on how employee statistics in the US, UK, Japan, and Europe show an increasing number of professionals moving from a traditional career towards a boundaryless career. However, from 1994 onwards, the popularity of the boundaryless career has not come without its own challenges.

Boundaryless career researchers Sulivan & Arthur pose two challenges for boundaryless research. They criticise the approach that boundaryless researchers have taken, suggesting that scholars have solely focused on physical changes in work arrangements, whilst other scholars have focused on psychological changes. The challenge that arises from this separate approach is that separation overlooks the interdependence between physical and psychological aspects of careers, making the existing body of work less applicable to individuals who need to consider both dimensions. This, in turn, not only creates challenges for research as boundaryless career theory encompasses both aspects, but it also lacks applicability for managers and career counsellors seeking to support individuals. The versatility of the boundaryless career concept is often overlooked due to its emphasis on physical mobility. (Sulivan & Arthur, 2006).

Sulivan and Arthur (2006) suggest that future research needs to examine the potential differences between boundaryless careers characterised by physical mobility and those characterised by psychological mobility. However, physical mobility may appear to be more attractive for researchers because it is relatively easy to measure, whereas measuring psychological mobility poses more challenges (Briscoe et al., 2006).

Within the context of business coaching, examining whether physical or psychological mobility tends to weigh more on an individual's decision to become a coach would help contribute to the research question. It would provide insights as to the factors driving coaches to pursue a business coaching (boundaryless) career and how they continue to cope and persist.

Further challenges that exist in boundaryless career literature are where perspectives assume that boundary-less-ness is inherent in new network designs of organisations and

generally “benefits” individuals (Kost et al., 2020). Scholars have also criticised these assumptions, questioning their generalisability to all individuals, organisations, and industries (Inkson et al., 2012). Where the challenge and criticism derive is that the positive aspects of boundaryless careers mostly apply to highly educated and skilled professionals, while scholars suggest that in some cases, women, minorities, or workers with low education levels often experience boundaryless careers as burdensome due to the lack of resources provided by employers (Inkson et al., 2012; Pringle & Mallon, 2003; Zeitz et al., 2009), therefore, boundaryless careers is not always a benefit to an individual, depending on their situation and current drivers, and cultural or life background.

Kost et al. (2020) highlight in their more recent publication that influence of organisational processes and individual agency on careers is another important consideration. They argue that boundaryless career perspective has been criticised for neglecting the support structures that help workers develop career competencies necessary for success in boundaryless careers (Zeitz et al., 2009) and that a question for future research may be of whether careers are shaped mainly by organisations or individual agency as both factors have mutual impacts (Inkson et al., 2012; Lazarova & Taylor, 2009; Kost et al. 2020).

In a business coaching context, these challenges highlight that a boundaryless career may not suit everyone, as its long-term benefits often come at the expense of short-term security. Understanding what motivates business coaches to pursue and persist in boundaryless careers can provide insights into why they choose this path despite the availability of more traditional and stable employment options. While physical movement between jobs and organisations is easily identifiable, psychological mobility and attitudinal factors require further exploration (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009).

So how does future research need to be shaped to enhance the understanding of boundaryless careers?

The concept of the boundaryless career should be understood as involving both physical and psychological mobility. To advance research on boundaryless careers, various data collection methods and research designs should be utilised, including ‘action research’ in collaboration with managers to support employees in their career development (Briscoe et al., 2006; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006).

Empirical studies also need to provide a stronger foundation for understanding boundaryless careers. Similarly, flexible work arrangements may only be available to privileged groups of

workers (Marler et al., 2002; Pringle & Mallon, 2003; Tams & Arthur, 2010). Thus, future research on boundaryless careers must be conscious of context and employment variations when carrying out research. Therefore, future research should aim to provide more holistic yet precise and comprehensive insights into the complexities of boundaryless careers, considering individual variations, support structures, and long-term effects on individuals' well-being and success.

To explore the past research findings, challenges and gaps that revolve around agency to pursue a business coaching (boundaryless) career, there is a significant requirement to explore this from a psychological perspective. In line with 'action research', I have a unique opportunity to interview the business coaches within my organisation who may be deemed hard to access by others. Thus, answering the call for data collection and analysis around the psychological aspect of boundaryless career transitioning research is possible (Sulivan & Arthur, 2006; Briscoe et al., 2006). The first group of questions, therefore, explores the psychological mobility gaps and why there was/is an increasing shift of professionals moving from a traditional career towards a boundaryless career (Arthur, 1994).

2.4 | How Individuals Cope and Persist: What Are The Physical And Psychological Drivers?

The literature so far has highlighted the empirical and theoretical foundations for boundaryless careers. The following explores how the literature can assist with answering the question of how coaches cope and persist within the coaching career, which then shapes the semi-structured interviews.

Arthur and Rousseau (1996) marked a significant shift in career paradigms, transitioning from the traditional organisational career model—characterised by stable, hierarchical employment structures within large firms—to the boundaryless career model. Boundaryless careers are defined by their independence from traditional organisational constraints, allowing individuals to transcend the boundaries of a single employer (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Inkson et al., 2012). This transformation invited researchers to re-evaluate career theory and explore new questions about what drives individuals to adopt such career paths and how they sustain them (Arthur et al., 2005).

The literature thus far has revealed that individuals may be driven to seek and pursue boundaryless careers. Arthur and Rousseau (1996) identified six dimensions of boundaryless careers that illustrate the diversity in how individuals engage with this career mode. To recap:

1. Careers that move across employers, exemplified by the Silicon Valley career trajectory.
2. Careers validated by external marketability, as seen in professions like academia or carpentry.
3. Careers sustained through external networks, such as those of real estate agents.
4. Careers that reject traditional hierarchical advancement norms.
5. Careers shaped by personal or family priorities, leading individuals to reject conventional opportunities.
6. Careers defined by the individual's perception of a boundaryless future, regardless of structural constraints.

The common thread across these dimensions is the emphasis on individual agency and independence from traditional career principles (Arthur, 1994). In the context of business coaching, these dimensions may manifest in many forms to create drivers for why the business coach may pursue their career. For example, Business coaches often derive their validation from clients (dimension 2), sustain their practice through robust external networks (dimension 3), and frequently make career decisions aligned with personal values and family considerations (dimension 5). This insight allows questions to be shaped for Study 1 interviews.

Taking Ownership for Their Future and Success

The rise of boundaryless careers is partly attributed to shifts in the economy during the 1990s, where increasing flexibility and uncertainty in organisational contexts challenged traditional employment models (Hall, 1996). This economic transition aligned with psychological shifts toward ‘protean careers’, where success is defined less by organisational metrics (e.g., promotions, economic rewards) and more by subjective criteria, such as personal growth, relational commitments, and self-fulfilment (Bailyn, 1993; Marshall, 1995; Mirvis & Hall, 1994; Tams & Arthur, 2010).

The protean perspective advanced the idea that individuals must take greater ownership of their career trajectories.

This shift highlights the importance of personal responsibility, adaptability, and competency development in navigating a career that may span multiple organisations or industries. For business coaches, this means balancing the autonomy and flexibility inherent in boundaryless careers with the need for self-management and resilience in the face of uncertain income streams and fluctuating client demands. This forms questions for the semi-structured interviews in Study 1.

Agency and Self-Management in Boundaryless Careers

As discussed in the literature review foundations. Agency and self-management are critical drivers of success in boundaryless careers. Tams et al. (2010) identified "career agency" as a process shaped by past experiences and future aspirations, enabling individuals to actively invest in their professional growth. To recap, this process involves three interrelated dimensions of career agency:

1. **Knowing-Why:** Motivation and identity, which provide the purpose and drive behind career decisions.
2. **Knowing-How:** Skills and expertise that enable individuals to excel in their chosen field.
3. **Knowing-Whom:** Relationships and networks that facilitate career opportunities and growth (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996).

These dimensions underscore the proactive nature of boundaryless careers, where success depends on individuals' ability to navigate and leverage their motivations, capabilities, and connections. For business coaches, this requires not only technical expertise but also the ability to build and maintain meaningful relationships with clients and peers. 'Knowing why' may help shed light on understanding why the coach pursues a boundaryless career. This forms questions for Study 1.

Preliminary Theme Development and Questions

Although this literature explains the concept of a boundaryless career, it causes specific questions to be asked to what drives individuals to step out of a traditional into a boundaryless career, and what drives them to cope and persist towards success in that career. Understanding why the business coach wanted to become a business coach and how they transitioned to their coaching career may reveal insight into whether physical or

psychological mobility factors were more determinant in their choice. Insight into what drives the business coach when they began their journey and what drives them to continue today (even when faced with adversity) may help with understanding why they chose a boundaryless career over a traditional career. Asking deeper questions around what they enjoy most, what they enjoy least, and how it contributes to meaningfulness, job satisfaction, and work-life balance (elements of Arthur and Rousseau (1996) six reasons why they engage in boundaryless career) may encourage discussion in the interview thus enriching the data collection.

Q) What made you want to be a coach?
Q) How did you get started?
Q) What motivated you then?
Q) What motivates you now?
Q) Which factors do you enjoy the most about your work?
Q) Which factors do you enjoy the least about your work?
Q) How do you think your job compares to others in terms of:
- *i) Providing you with a sense of achievement?*
- *ii) Experiencing meaningfulness at work?*
- *iii) Enabling you a positive work/life balance?*

2.5 | How Individuals Cope and Persist: What Barriers Do They Face And How They Overcome Them?

So far, I have reviewed boundaryless careers, the gaps for future research, its foundations, and underpinning theories. Next, I will focus on boundaryless careers from an individual perspective by examining current literature that may help explain the phenomenon of how a business coach copes and persists within a boundaryless career and the barriers they must overcome. This specific section explores what might get in the way of the coaches' success and barriers.

In psychology, barriers are the obstacles—both internal and external—that prevent people from reaching their goals. They can be external, like societal pressures or physical challenges, or internal, like self-doubt, emotional struggles, or lack of motivation. These

hurdles not only make it harder to “take action” but can also drain energy and impact mental well-being (Hobfoll, 1989; Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Hobfoll’s (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theory explains that people strive to protect and build resources like time, energy, and confidence. When barriers threaten or take away these resources—such as fear of failure reducing confidence or time constraints limiting opportunities—it creates stress and makes progress feel even harder.

Meanwhile, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) highlights that people thrive when three basic needs are met: feeling in control (autonomy), capable (competence), and connected to others (relatedness). Barriers block these needs, like when micromanagement reduces autonomy or social isolation undermines connection. When these needs aren’t fulfilled, motivation and well-being suffer (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

In essence, barriers are not just roadblocks, they are challenges that influence how people feel, think, and act. Recognising their impact can help individuals protect resources, meet their psychological needs, and stay connected to what drives them (Hobfoll, 1989; Deci & Ryan, 2000).

As previously mentioned, ‘agency theory’ (Tams and Arthur, 2010) has been highlighted as a key theory that may assist in unravelling answers to how a business coach copes and persists through the highs and lows of the economy and working with challenging clients. The concept of career agency refers to an individual’s ability to shape their career. Different disciplinary perspectives have contributed to the understanding of career agency, focusing on various dimensions such as motivation, skills, relationships, identity development, adaptability, power dynamics, resistance, and interactions with institutional structures.

To begin, Tams and Arthur (2010), in their foundational study, suggest that opportunities for advancing theory arise from addressing debates and gaining a more systematic understanding of career agency. Future research avenues involve examining various career agency concepts that have evolved over time, shedding light on how individuals in boundaryless careers navigate challenges and persevere when faced with adversity—topics covered later in this chapter.

The challenges and associations related to 'agencies' proposed by Tams and Arthur may also be relevant to understanding the barriers business coaches face, these include the following.

Adapting to a changing economy

Adapting to a changing economy is built on DeFillippi and Arthur's (1996) proposed model of career agency, which emphasises three dimensions: knowing why (motivation and identity), knowing how (skills and expertise), and knowing who (relationships and reputation). This model suggests that career agency involves complementary dimensions related to the work being performed and the relationships around that work.

Identity and adaptability

Identity and adaptability adopt a psychological perspective that has linked career agency to individuals' identity development and adaptability (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Hall & Chandler, 2005). This approach focuses on psychological facets such as self-direction, values, and personal capabilities, placing importance on subjective definitions of career success and the potential for self-actualisation and liberation — specifically highlighting the role of lifelong learning and identity development in achieving agency.

Resistance

Critical management scholars offer a political and sceptical view of career agency, framing it as a tension between control and resistance or precarious identity and belonging. They reveal power inequalities in flexible work arrangements, expose the political and economic interests behind these arrangements, and highlight how career marketisation can disrupt established relationships (Blair, Culkin, & Randle, 2003; Sennett, 1998). Some argue that apparent agency may simply be a way for institutions to shift risks onto individuals, disguising them as "self-directedness" and "individual responsibility" (Ehrenreich, 2006; Ekinsmyth, 2002). Critical scholars also explore agency as resistance through strategies such as disengagement, voicing one's opinions, and participating in collective change movements.

Interacting with institutions

Career scholars responding to sociological arguments propose that individuals can express agency within institutional constraints (Zucker, 1977; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Giddens' (1984) structuration theory is often referenced to suggest that individuals can exert agency despite institutional power. For example, Barley (1989) proposes career structuration theory, which posits that individuals draw on institutional resources, interpretive schemes, and norms to enact career scripts in novel ways, potentially leading to institutional change. Duberley et al. (2006) expand on this idea by suggesting that individuals also incorporate personal considerations and resources when interpreting institutional career scripts.

Examining the barriers faced from past studies and other contexts reveals insight into how business coaches may cope and persist through the lens of agency theory. For example, Tams and Arthur (2010) carried out a boundaryless career study in gig workers, such as actors, offering real-world agency theory examples. Unlike traditional employees, gig workers, operating within boundaryless careers, are self-employed and responsible for their economic stability and career planning. While the absence of hierarchies and the freedom to choose tasks might seem to increase flexibility, a study by Kost et al. (2020) reveals that it can hinder transitions. The lack of comprehensive feedback limits the development of essential competencies and self-esteem. Additionally, the absence of direct contact with clients and colleagues limits the creation of meaningful social networks and knowing-whom competencies. These competencies are crucial for career advancement, as they enable access to knowledge and resources. Without such networks, gig workers struggle to connect with their work and the surrounding community, impacting their adaptability and skill maintenance in boundaryless careers.

The challenges faced by actors in boundaryless careers closely align with Tams and Arthur's (2010) suggested challenges. The absence of employment protections places the responsibility for economic stability and career planning squarely on the workers themselves. Intra-organisational boundaries limit transitions, while limited feedback hampers career competencies. The lack of meaningful social networks impairs knowing-whom competencies and access to knowledge and resources (Kost et al., 2020). This study of career agency is shaped by disciplinary perspectives, shedding light on different aspects of agency and its interaction with structures evident in the actors' challenges. While the initial literature on boundaryless careers emphasises the challenges of a changing economy, research on identity, adaptability, resistance, and institutional interactions provides a more nuanced understanding of individual agency. Exploring the intersections of these perspectives challenges assumptions and offers new directions for research on career agency (Tams & Arthur, 2010).

Preliminary Theme and Questions: Barriers and Strategies

These findings highlight the barriers individuals face in boundaryless careers and how the coping strategies they have been found to deploy to cope and persist.

Agency theory helps explain how individuals overcome these challenges, emphasising the need for further research to enhance career agency, ultimately advancing the understanding of boundaryless careers and helping shed light on how business coaches cope and persist in their careers. Therefore, I chose to ask questions in my interview with business coaches that promote the coach to discuss their experience on how they have coped during challenging times, why they did not give up, and also—without directly asking the question (as this could sway the answer) so that I could encourage a story for the qualitative research—attempt to seek how changing economy, identity and adaptability, resistance, and institutional interactions may have influenced their ability to cope and persist.

Q) What do you fear the most as a coach?
Q) What factors in your environment prevent you from doing your work well?
Q) Can you give me an example of a time that you were coaching a client through a negative situation?
- *i) What do you feel you did (behaved) that helped them?*
- *ii) Can you give me examples of sentences you find yourself using?*
- *iii) What do you feel you did (behaved) that didn't help them or was counter-productive?*
- *iv) Can you give me examples of sentences you find yourself using that are counter-productive?*

Encouraging the coach to talk about a specific scenario and how they coped and persevered—or are currently persevering—may reveal how agency theory and its four elements (changing economy, identity and adaptability, resistance, and institutional interactions) apply in a real business coaching situation. This question is also included in the business coaching literature review, as further literature is discussed in the chapter.

Q) Tell me about a time you really had to dig deep and push hard to make it as a coach?
- *i) What made you do it?*

ii) *What was going through your mind when you were doing it?*

iii) *What was the key to success at the end of it?*

iv) *If you were to do it again what would you keep or change?*

v) *If you know this was the key to your success, what stops you from doing it again?*

2.6 | How Individuals Cope and Persist: What Supports Them?

While in the previous sections, barriers were reviewed, in this section, I will focus on what supports a professional—in this context, a business coach—to cope and persist towards success in a boundaryless career. To distinguish what supports them towards success, there is a need to understand what they require support towards, i.e., what success looks like to them. This is first explored, followed by the supporters in their environment that enable them to achieve 'success', further followed by personal characteristics and personality that may enable them to cope and persist.

2.6.1 | Success and Enablers

Career success is a multifaceted concept, defined differently from individual to individual and within the context of boundaryless careers. It can be viewed subjectively, with individuals evaluating success based on personal dimensions like income, job security, work location, and work-life balance, influenced by their unique career aspirations and values. Conversely, objective career success is externally focused, measuring success through tangible indicators such as occupation, income, and job level, reflecting societal roles and official positions (Van Maanen, 1977; Arthur et al., 2005). This dual nature of career success acknowledges the diversity of individual goals and the importance of both personal fulfilment and societal recognition in defining success.

Career theory acknowledges that there is an inherent two-sidedness of career success, where subjective and objective views contribute to one another (Goffman, 1961); however, sometimes these views may not align on every dimension because success has a different meaning dependent on the individual and their career. An example given by Atrhur et al. (2005) is that of an artist who may define their success in terms of gratification (subjective) that they are given for their work, as opposed to the objective aspect, such as the value that

they get for selling their work. In contrast, a salesperson may perceive their success from a more objective measure, such as the commission they earn. However, the objective earning one receives may signal to one's internal apprehension and evaluation (Van Maanen, 1977) subjective interpretation that they are successful because of objective measure. Therefore, the two-sidedness is apparent in what could be seen as a more objective-based career too.

The question of how one measures their success as objective or subjective within boundaryless careers, and further, how this perspective of success acts as an adjuvant for a professional, requires more research and will be explored in the results and discussion of Study 1. However, there is also another common theme amongst scholars as to what contributes towards boundaryless career success that revolves around interdependence, learning, and network.

In boundaryless careers, individuals are responsible for their own success and enjoy a high degree of independence. Scholars have noted that those who seek 'interdependence' within these careers report higher levels of support and better opportunities for career development and success (Arthur, 1994; Arthur et al., 2005; Kost et al., 2020; Grant, 2007). Communities and peer groups within boundaryless careers provide platforms for individuals to identify with others and find shared meaning through overlapping work experiences (Arthur et al., 2005; Van Maanen & Barley, 1984). These peer groups offer support, contribute to sense-making processes, and help individuals make sense of their career success, which is more objectively defined in terms of skills and behaviour.

Social networks are fundamental to success in boundaryless careers. They enable professionals to develop 'knowing-whom' competencies and access other people's knowledge and resources, 'knowing-how', to meet skill maintenance demands in a changing economy (Arthur, 1994; Eby et al., 2003). Engaging in networks allows direct interaction with clients, increasing understanding of how one's actions impact others and building 'knowing-why' competencies (Grant, 2007; Kost et al., 2020).

Preliminary Theme and Questions

The literature on what supports and contributes to the success of boundaryless workers highlights two major themes in boundaryless career discussions: the objective and subjective perception of success and the importance of interdependency. A deeper understanding of objective and subjective success, the role of networks in success, the

potential for additional adjuvants that enable support, and testing these theories in the context of business coaching where coaches have direct client contact and receive ongoing feedback can add value to boundary career knowledge.

Exploring the theme of how the business coach perceives success will shed light on how a business coach copes and persists in a boundaryless career.

Q) How do you think your job compares to others in terms of:

- *i) Providing you with a sense of achievement?*
- *ii) Experiencing meaningfulness at work?*
- *iii) Enabling you a positive work life balance?*

Exploring how a business coach develops knowing-why (motivation and identity), knowing-how (skills and expertise), knowing whom (relationships and reputation), along with their views on what other aspects of their environment act as enablers, and how they have adapted, will also shed light on how a business coach copes and persists in a boundaryless career.

Q) How do you learn from one client to the other?
Q) How do you keep learning about your job?
Q) How do you think your approach as a coach has changed over the years? (to encourage deeper insight and how they have developed support)
Q) What factors in your environment support you in doing your work well?

2.6.2 | Personal Characteristics and Personality That Enable Success In Boundaryless Careers

Further to the previous discussion around adjuvants that may contribute to boundaryless career (business coach) success, another factor that might play a role is the individual characteristics of the worker. By reviewing the current literature themes around boundaryless, characteristics have emerged that may help explain what it is about the individual (the business coach) specifically that may enable an individual to cope and persist in a boundaryless career.

Characteristics

Sullivan & Arthur (2006) examine boundaryless careers and the individual's ability to transverse between the dimensions of physical mobility (actual objective movement between jobs, occupations, and countries) and psychological mobility (one's subjective capacity to move as seen through the mind of the career worker). In their findings, they witness that the characteristics that contribute to success in boundaryless careers can be understood through the concept of DeFillippi & Arthur's (1996) career competencies, i.e., as previously outlined, the three ways of knowing: knowing-why (an individual's motivation and identity), knowing-how (skills and expertise), and knowing-whom (referring to relationships and reputation).

The authors suggest that these three ways of knowing are interdependent, and the accumulation of competencies in one area can trigger the pursuit of competencies in the other two. Individuals with higher levels of career competencies, specifically those with greater knowing-why competencies (e.g., proactive personality, openness to experience), knowing-how competencies (e.g., career-related skills), and knowing-whom competencies (e.g., networks, mentors) also report higher levels of 'perceived career success' and marketability (Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003).

Preliminary Theme and Questions

Characteristics may help increase the business coach's success because they convey competencies, demonstrating perceived career success and marketability to their clients, thus allowing them to keep and acquire clients. This is also discussed in the business coaching literature review.

Q19) What characteristics do you feel you have that help your clients?
Q20) What characteristics do you feel you have that doesn't help your clients?

Personality

The previous header has highlighted that one's competencies may play a part in boundaryless career success and, thus, business coach success. However, one's personality is not discussed within the major boundaryless career studies, therefore suggesting an avenue for future research. Agency theory may shed light on why one's personality influences business coach success and is witnessed within Tams & Arthur (2010) study.

Agency, a vital concept in boundaryless careers, represents individuals' ability to harness the resources and power to achieve their potential. Tams & Arthur (2010) distilled six key aspects of agency from their extensive research on boundaryless careers, underscoring their relevance for understanding how personal attributes shape action tendencies for coping and persisting:

Individual Variation: Personality traits, cognitions, emotions, and motivations significantly influence career agency. These individual differences predict an individual's career self-management and job search outcomes, distinguishing those with higher agency from those with lower agency (Kanfer et al., 2001; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1994).

Social Variation: Agency is socially referenced and moulded by surrounding circumstances. It reflects the impact of institutional career scripts and incorporates contextual factors, resources, and narratives. Social referencing of agency is an ongoing process, with individuals integrating various factors into their career stories (Cohen et al., 2004; Duberley et al., 2006).

Practice: Career agency is manifested through actions individuals take to influence their environment. These practices include job searches, career self-management, networking, image management, and seeking external job market opportunities (Ibarra, 2003; Kanfer et al., 2001; O'Mahony & Bechky, 2006).

Outcomes: Career agency's impact extends beyond personal satisfaction, encompassing objective career outcomes like mobility, income, and status. Analysing the effects of career choices on these outcomes is crucial for understanding the influence of agency on individuals' careers (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005).

Contexts: The contexts in which agency operates are pivotal for understanding its connection to outcomes. These contexts both influence and are influenced by individuals, occurring at different levels and evolving over time. Recognising the mutually enacted

relationship between contexts and individual agency provides valuable insights into career interactions (Barley, 1989; Griffin, 2007).

Learning: Learning from work experiences is fundamental to agency. It enables individuals to refine their practices, assess outcomes, and adapt to different contexts. Learning may be seen as independent, with individuals generating experiences and expertise, or interdependent, acknowledging the socially constructed nature of learning and the internalisation of socially produced knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Tams & Arthur, 2010).

These facets of agency theory, along with the characteristics of a business coach, are central to an individual's 'agency' for success in boundaryless careers, encompassing individual variations (personality), social influences, practices, outcomes, contexts, and learning. These features underscore the interplay between individual traits, societal impacts, actions, and the broader environment in shaping an individual's agency and career trajectory. However, little is explained about how one's personality helps those in a boundaryless career.

Preliminary Theme and Questions

How the personalities of business coaches enable and support them in carrying out their work is an element that needs further research. Understanding personality and how it enables the individual in a boundaryless career to cope and persist is an avenue that this research can access and contribute to theory and practice.

Q21) How do you think your personality helps you at work?
Q22) Do you think there a part of your personality that holds you back at work?

The literature thus far highlights that both personality and agency play a crucial role in determining an individual's physical and psychological mobility. Externally, factors such as career progression, gender, cultural background, and individual differences influence this mobility. Internally, career competencies and skillsets also shape a boundaryless worker's ability to move across roles and industries. However, even with high physical and psychological mobility, an individual's level of agency significantly impacts their ability to cope and persist in a boundaryless career. One's level of 'agency' is influenced by various factors, including personal characteristics, social referencing, practice, experiences,

contextual factors, and continuous learning. Despite these insights, there remains a gap in the literature regarding how personality contributes to coping and persistence in boundaryless careers, highlighting an important area for future research.

2.7 | Boundaryless Career Summary

The literature review set out to answer the question to how individuals cope and persist from a broad perspective of looking at their boundaryless career. This review establishes a foundation for Study 1 by connecting boundaryless career theories to business coaching and identifying gaps, such as the need for psychological perspectives and personality traits, to shape interview questions. Boundaryless careers, which transcend organisational and geographic boundaries, offer autonomy and flexibility but demand resilience, adaptability, and proactive management (Arthur, 1994; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). Agency theory, including the dimensions of "knowing-why," "knowing-how," and "knowing-whom," provides a framework for understanding how business coaches build networks, sustain their practices, and navigate challenges (Tams & Arthur, 2010) that is helpful in answering this project research question on how business coaches cope and persist. Critics highlight the need to integrate physical and psychological aspects in research (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006); thus, this is explored within Study 1. Future studies must explore subjective and objective career success and the role of personality traits and other psychological factors to truly understand the nature of boundaryless career success. By understanding the questions proposed from this boundaryless careers literature review, this research aims to uncover how business coaches cope and succeed in their dynamic careers; the following literature review therefore explores the business coaching industry, specifically, to reveal the current state of the literature on how business coaches may coach and persist.

CHAPTER 3 | LITERATURE REVIEW PART 2: BUSINESS COACHING

This chapter examines existing literature on business coaching as a boundaryless career and, in particular, what is currently known—and not known—about how business coaches cope and persist over time. While the previous chapter provided a broader overview of the boundaryless career concept, this chapter narrows the focus to a specific profession, using business coaches as a theoretically rich case through which to understand how individuals sustain their work, build psychological resources and navigate barriers in practice.

It is important to clarify how the concept of business coach is used in this project. The literature review will focus on the following areas. First, understanding what coaching is, why business coaching is distinct from other forms of consulting, and what are the variations of coaching within businesses. Second, the outcomes of business coaching are discussed. Third, the theories and foundations of business coaching are explored. Fourth, key findings and gaps where future research could contribute to business coaching literature are discussed. Finally, literature on how business coaches cope and persist that helps them succeed is examined, where there is an emphasis on how the coach succeeds, what makes the client relationship and retention continue, and what contributes to coach and client success—that further builds on drivers, barriers, enablers that support them, and the strategies they deploy that were found from the literature review part 1 on boundaryless careers.

This part 2 literature review narrows down on the themes that emerged from literature review part 1. Similar to the boundaryless career literature review, the review develops questions about how a business coach copes and persists that are utilised in the semi-structured interviews for Study 1.

Definition of Business Coaching

Before this chapter commences, understanding the definition of ‘business coaching’ within businesses assists with understanding the context for this project (see Table 1). It is easy within the coaching literature to get confused between the different forms of coaching within businesses. For example, where authors in the coaching literature may refer to a ‘business coach’, they could also be referring to a coach within a business i.e., an executive coach, an

internal manager that is coaching as part of their role, a life coach, or for the case of this project, an external coach that takes a holistic look at the business, a business coach. Each coach would have different clients or people they report to. For example, a business coach working for an SME could be coaching the business owner. In contrast, an executive coach a larger corporation has employed could be coaching an executive team and required to report to a human resource department. The focus of the coach too would also differ. Where a business coach could be focused on the result of the business and the business owner's personal success as an entrepreneur, an executive coach consultant or mentor may have a specific goal to achieve, such as team KPIs, culture and change management, or problems that need addressing within the business with people or processes.

Table 1: Overview of business coach styles.[1]

Style	Internal / External	Client	Focus
Business Coach	External	Business Owner	Holistic / Business
Executive Coach	External	Management	Specific / Performance of the Individual
Life Coach	External	Employees	Holistic / Wellbeing of the Individual
Consultant	External	Management	Specific, Processes, Training
Mentor	Internal	Employees	Holistic / Sharing Mentor's Experience
HR Dept. Coach	Internal	Employees	Performance / Wellbeing

As an overview for this chapter, the review reveals that although earlier scholarship repeatedly called for more robust empirical evidence on the effectiveness of business and workplace coaching, more recent meta-analyses now demonstrate that coaching can reliably produce positive outcomes across performance, learning and well-being domains (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018; Wang et al., 2022; Nicolau et al., 2023; Cannon-Bowers et al., 2023). At the same time, these studies consistently stress that the field remains theoretically and methodologically underdeveloped, particularly in explaining how coaching works, which mechanisms are involved, and which contextual conditions matter most (de Haan & Nilsson, 2023; Wang et al., 2022; Nicolau et al., 2023).

[1] *This table is a general perspective, this may vary depending on the context. Each style may borrow approaches from other styles, e.g., a consultant may use coaching tools in their practice, or a coach may also become a mentor. Information in the table is guided by Beattie et al. (2014) and Hawkins & Smith (2013).*

Comprehensive research is therefore still needed to delve into the various aspects of coaching, including its antecedents, mechanisms, outcomes, and the factors influencing coaching relationships, as well as the experiences of those delivering coaching. For example, meta-analytic evidence shows that the number of coaching hours or sessions does not systematically predict outcomes (Cannon-Bowers et al., 2023; Nicolau et al., 2023), and that both face-to-face and virtual formats appear similarly effective (Cannon-Bowers et al., 2023). These findings suggest that what happens within coaching—the mechanisms and psychological resources activated—may be more important than simple dosage or format, which is highly relevant for understanding how coaches themselves cope and persist in boundaryless careers.

These previous quantitative reviews have focused predominantly on coachees in organisational settings and on outcome variables such as goal attainment, self-efficacy, psychological capital and resilience (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018; Wang et al., 2022; Nicolau et al., 2023). Whilst this is useful information for Study 1 (and Study 2), much less is known about the qualitative, lived experience of business coaches, the conditions under which they sustain their practice over time, and how they respond to barriers such as client dropout, income volatility and emotional demands—however the studies do demonstrate how psychological elements do positively apply to coaching offering insight to this DBA. Addressing these gaps helps to justify the present study's focus on coaches' coping and persistence and supports the development of the questions that are used in the inquiry with business coaches in Study 1.

3.1 | What is Coaching

Between 1987 and 1992, coaching literature primarily focused on its fundamental role in enhancing individual and organisational performance by equipping people with the necessary tools, knowledge, and opportunities (Schutte & Steyn, 2015). As this literature review reveals, over time, the definition of "coaching" has evolved, shaped by factors such as the author's familiarity with the field (i.e., through deeper understanding and new research), the characteristics of research participants, and whether coaching is viewed as an internal function—such as an HR-driven approach where managers act as coaches—or an external service provided by independent professionals. As research on business coaching has expanded, new coaching models and applications have emerged across different

contexts, reflecting the dynamic and evolving nature of the industry. This project provides an in-depth exploration of the literature within the specific niche of business coaching.

The coaching industry has experienced significant growth over the past few decades. Earlier reports find that the International Coaching Federation (ICF) reported that in 2007, there were 12,133 professional coaches worldwide. By 2012, this number had risen to approximately 47,500, generating nearly $2 billion (USD) in annual revenue globally (ICF, 2012; Turner & Hawkins, 2016).

In their review, Wiginton & Cartwright (2020) trace the evolution of business coaching, highlighting the diverse definitions proposed by various researchers. They begin with the ICF's accredited board definition, which describes coaching as "partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximise their personal and professional potential" (ICF, 2016).

More recent data indicates continued industry expansion. In 2022, the number of professional coach practitioners worldwide reached approximately 109,200, representing a 54% increase since 2019 (ICF, 2023). While this figure encompasses all coaching professionals, including business coaches, data specific to business coaching remains limited. However, given the industry's overall growth, it is reasonable to infer a parallel rise in business coaching practitioners.

In the United States, the business coaching sector has also expanded significantly. In 2024 there were approximately 80,490 business coaching businesses, reportedly marking a 4.4% increase from the previous year (IBISWorld, 2024). This growth highlights the rising demand for business coaching services as organisations and individuals seek professional guidance to enhance performance and career development—and the desire for professionals to become business coaches.

With respect to what "coaching" is, Wiginton & Cartwright's (2020) review explores early research by authors Parsloe and Wray (2000), emphasising that coaching is helping individuals manage their own learning to maximise their potential and achieve personal and professional development. Whitmore (2002) further suggests that coaching is about unlocking people's potential to enhance their performance by facilitating learning rather than instructing. This concept delves into the idea of mastery and "self-efficacy," which holds significance for this project, considering that self-efficacy is linked to psychological capital (PsyCap), thereby sparking interest in the relationship between PsyCap and coaching. This

aspect is further discussed in this project's Study 1, as PsyCap is a concept that emerges from the results of that study.

3.2 | What is Business Coaching

Having considered how coaching is generally conceptualised, the focus is now narrowed towards the conceptualisation of the 'business coach' profession. In exploring business coaching, let us first consider the demographic landscape. In the US alone, it was reported that there were 80,490 business coaching businesses (IBISWorld, 2024), each of which could employ multiple business coaches.

Business success is intricately tied to the abilities of entrepreneurs who can effectively communicate a clear purpose, allocate resources, and guide their teams towards aligned goals (Tichy, 2002). However, as businesses grow in both size and complexity, leaders lacking experience quickly realise that basic academic training falls short in addressing the myriad challenges of daily operations (Crompton et al., 2012; Sexton, Upton, Wacholtz, & McDougall, 1997; Bennis & O'Toole, 2005).

As defined by Wington (2018), business coaching involves a trusted advisor, the coach, providing diagnosis and guidance to organisations and their leaders. The coach's role is to foster situational clarity, define actionable steps, and ensure accountability for measurable outcomes. This process occurs within an environment characterised by confidentiality, candidness, and a focus on progress for both the business and the client (Wiginton & Cartwright, 2020; Wiginton, 2018). However, this definition, though comprehensive, leaves open the question of what sets "business coaching" apart from other coaching practices. In acknowledgement of the everyday operational challenges faced by entrepreneurs, Crompton et al. (2012) assert that business coaching encompasses more than Wington's (2018) definition.

The research conducted by Crompton et al. (2012) delves into the influence of business coaching on fast-growing companies. Entrepreneurs often engage experienced business coaches to help them achieve milestones, attain business goals, and address emotional and practical concerns, such as loneliness, the weight of decision-making, and the impact on health and family (Kets De Vries, Korotov, & Floreant-Treacy, 2007). Their comprehensive review of coaching literature up to 2012 outlines the performance outcomes and how

business coaches distinguish themselves from other coaching practices. They employ an external yet holistic approach, fulfilling various roles like enhancing skills, improving performance, facilitating learning and development, and adapting to evolving leadership demands (Witherspoon & White, 1996). They also reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation (Cooper & Quick, 2003), serve as sounding boards (Clutterbuck & Megginson, 1999), provide space for unstructured discussions (Devins & Gold, 2000), and offer entrepreneurs objective feedback for assessing performance and achieving organisational outcomes (Drucker, 2005). They further act as advisors leveraging their background and business experience (Leonard & Swap, 2005) and serve as connectors to unique networks, including access to capital (Bhide, 2000; Crompton et al., 2012).

A comprehensive review by Hamlin, Ellinger, and Beattie (2008) identified 37 distinct coaching definitions. They classified these into four broad categories: "coaching," "executive coaching," "business coaching," and "life coaching." While all variants share the intention to enhance performance, effectiveness, and personal development, they diverge in their specific focus and emphasis. For example, business coaching seeks to holistically assist businesses and individuals in achieving their goals, whereas executive coaching concentrates on one-to-one relationships between coaches and executives or managers, aiming to improve organisational performance (Beattie et al., 2014).

Business Coaching Distinction

A fundamental distinction of business coaching is the approach taken by business coaches, which differentiates them from consultants or teachers. Business coaches adopt a solution-focused approach, employing thought-provoking questioning to stimulate shifts in thinking, self-discovery, and accountability. This approach empowers entrepreneurs to perceive problems as learning opportunities rather than obstacles to progress (Creane, 2006; Crompton et al., 2012).

Further distinctions between business coaching and other coaching practices encompass coaching conversations that can revolve around customer requirements (Delmar, Davidsson, & Gartner, 2003), the production of goods and services, innovation combined with leadership for business growth (David, 1991), and the implementation of processes, procedures, methods, and systems for peak efficiency and effective management (Leonard & Swap, 2005). Additionally, business coaching provides leadership development for effective

cultural change (Garrett-Harris, 2006), particularly when issues with people stem from ineffective management (David, 1991; Crompton et al., 2012).

The Business Coach's Job

With the foundations of business coaching understood, the following explores "what" business coaches do and further the "how" and "why" business coaches work in the way they do in their job. This understanding sets the stage for this DBA project for both Study 1 and Study 2 by giving deeper context to what exactly the role of business coaching entails—thus providing context to what the specific drivers, barriers, enablers, and strategies may look like for a business coach.

Jones et al. (2016) emphasise that business coaching constitutes a dyadic learning-and-development intervention centred on a collaborative, reflective, goal-focused relationship aimed at achieving professional outcomes valued by the coachee (i.e., the client; Furham et al., 2022). While this definition provides an overarching view of business coaching, the dynamics between coach and client underscore the differences between coaching types. Turner & Hawkins (2016) suggest that these dynamics are significantly influenced by who is being coached and the stakeholders involved.

During coaching, the coach employs a wide array of behavioural techniques and methods to assist the client in achieving mutually identified goals. This is done with the aim of improving the client's professional performance and personal satisfaction and, consequently, enhancing the effectiveness of the client's organisation within a formally defined coaching agreement (Kilburg, 1996; Schermuly, 2018). Kilburg's statement highlights the "how" of coaching, focusing on behavioural techniques, and underscores the importance of a defined coaching agreement. This agreement, in turn, shapes the coach's intentions and, consequently, their coaching approach, aligning it with the desired results for the organisation.

The coaching agreement, in essence, comprises two aspects. The first is a juridical contract that stipulates practicalities like the number of sessions and payment terms. The second is a psychological contract where both coach and client outline the goals they aim to achieve through the coaching process (Schermuly, 2018). It is worth noting that these two contracts are not always one-on-one arrangements. When other stakeholders are involved, such as when the client is a company, the coachee is an employee, and the coach is external to the

business, the dynamics of the coaching intervention may shift. In this scenario, a business or a department is paying for the performance outcomes despite not being the direct recipient of the coaching. This is a classic example of executive coaching.

Whilst the client may be different, the underpinning coaching practice in the coach's day job in both business coaching and executive coaching follow the same principles. Kilburg (1996) defines executive coaching as a helping relationship aimed at assisting the client in achieving mutually identified goals to enhance professional performance, personal satisfaction, and, subsequently, the effectiveness of the client's organisation, all within a formally defined coaching agreement (2000, p. 65; Turner, E., & Hawkins, P., 2016). Executive coaching and mentoring often diverge in that coaching typically focuses on short-term and specific developmental issues, while mentoring adopts a more holistic view of the individual (Hawkins & Smith, 2013). This emphasis on short-term developmental focus underscores the roots of executive coaching in psychology and therapy. While coaches may occasionally address psychological issues, coaching primarily involves working with individuals in functional roles, while therapy deals with dysfunction or disorders (Grant, 2001; Blackman et al., 2016).

From the literature review thus far, the project's specific context within boundaryless careers is now clear as to how a business coach carries out their job. It becomes apparent that all coaches aim to influence and enhance their clients' behaviour. Where managers within an organisation can also acquire coaching skills and coach internally, a distinctive feature of business coaches is their external position relative to the firm, resulting in a unique dynamic in the coach-client relationship. This project explores the broader realm of business coaching, considering the challenges business coaches face, both objective and psychological, and their impact on client relationships and the success of the client-coach collaboration. The project seeks to comprehend how business coaches approach this matter and how they cope and persist.

3.3 | Business Coaching: Foundations & Theory

The following delves into the foundations of business coaching practice, followed by an examination of theories that underpin coaching practice derived from various coaching studies.

3.3.1 | Foundations of Business Coaching Practice

A study by Wington & Cartwright (2020) demonstrates that business coaching draws from business disciplines and the social sciences. It is firmly rooted in positive psychology and coaching psychology, which are concerned with optimal functioning, well-being, and performance enhancement (Linley & Harrington, 2005), as opposed to fields of clinical psychology that may be more focused towards what is wrong with people. Positive psychology explores factors contributing to happiness, wisdom, creativity, and human strengths, anchoring the foundations of coaching (Linley & Harrington, 2005). As Grant (2006) articulated, coaching psychology systematically applies behavioural science to improve individuals' life experiences, work performance, and well-being, serving individuals, groups, and organisations without clinically significant mental health issues (Wington & Cartwright, 2020).

The concept of business coaching finds its origins in the world of sports (Myburgh, 2014). While this heritage has positive implications for certain aspects of business, such as sports psychology in a business context, it may pose challenges when transposing sports philosophy and therapy to business concerns like return on investment, marketing, sales, operations, and accounting. Leadership development and executive coaching—i.e., developing the team—are also key components of business coaching (Schute & Steyn, 2015). Effective business coaching, however, centres on entrepreneurs gaining insights into their current situations and envisioning future goals (Stober, 2006). In all, lasting behavioural change is achieved through interdisciplinary coaching strategies rooted in principles of adult learning and change (Goodstone & Diamante, 1998; Crompton et al., 2012). By utilising behavioural change through adult learning principles, business coaching is carried out effectively within entrepreneurs and business teams.

Executive coaching, focusing on changing behaviour and enhancing organisational effectiveness, is typified by the model proposed by Leedham (2005), which encompasses coach skills, situational analysis, behaviour improvement, and attaining business results. The prevailing paradigms in executive coaching are rooted in psychology and human resource development, forging a connection between psychotherapy and human resource development within coaching (Schute & Steyn, 2015).

In essence, business coaching integrates knowledge from diverse disciplines, particularly business and social sciences, and finds its foundations in positive and coaching psychology. Key concepts revolve around leadership development and executive coaching. Business coaching primarily operates with the model of coach skills, situational analysis, behaviour improvement, and business result attainment. The field leans towards the dominance of psychological and human resource developmental paradigms.

3.3.2 | Coaching Theory

When examining coaching literature, as Schute and Steyn (2015) detailed, 17 out of 36 reviewed articles present theories guiding coaching practice. These theories mainly fall into two categories: psychological theories (12 articles) and human resources developmental theories (5 articles), including executive developmental and learning theories.

In a systematic review of 111 studies conducted by Blackman et al. (2016), it was revealed that most studies did not explicitly adopt a specific theoretical model or conceptual framework. However, implicit concepts and theories often guided the development of coaching programs in these studies. Seven concepts or theories were explicitly employed in guiding the research of certain studies. These encompassed psychotherapy, cognitive behaviour therapy, approaches to enhance self-efficacy, mindfulness, leadership concepts, action learning, and theories related to attitude and behaviour change through persuasive communication. Additionally, the potential of concepts from 'adult learning' for coaching practice connected to these existing theories, was emphasised by Cox et al. (2014). It's worth noting that academic researchers, except for a few cases like Douglas and McCauley (1999), have considered adult learning.

The practice of coaching draws on a myriad of theoretical constructs and psychological models from mentoring, training, and counselling. Given the background of many coaching consultants, counselling is the most prevalent theoretical approach. This encompasses diverse theoretical approaches such as psychoanalysis, Adlerian therapy, Gestalt therapy, cognitive behaviour therapy, and rational emotive therapy (Blackman et al., 2016). Despite their differences, these approaches all focus on challenging individuals' thinking about themselves and their situations. It's important to note that counselling literature tends to assume that the individual being coached has a problem, even if not viewed as 'sick' (Corey, 2012).

Conversely, in the coaching literature, the organisation is sometimes perceived as having a problem (Blackman et al., 2016). In such cases, instruction and 'learning theories' provide a theoretical framework. Emerging options for coaching practice and research also draw from the realm of persuasive communication. These two theoretical traditions, counselling and learning theories, are not inherently conflicting, and a combination of the two stands to yield the best overall outcome (Blackman et al., 2016, Schute & Steyn, 2015).

In essence, coaching theory is a multifaceted field, drawing from psychological and human resource developmental theories. The practice encompasses various theoretical constructs, from counselling, learning, and persuasive communication. The integration of these different elements enriches the coaching field, allowing for diverse and adaptable coaching approaches.

The following examines the objectives of the coaching intervention and the anticipated outcomes, as these factors help reveal how and why coaches carry out their work.

3.4 | Outcomes of Business Coaching

Recent systematic reviews and meta-analyses provide a more fine-grained picture of coaching outcomes. A review of 110 workplace coaching studies (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018) grouped outcomes into three broad categories: personal development (e.g. reduced stress, increased life satisfaction, perceived social support), behavioural change (e.g. improved communication, management and team-building skills), and outcomes relating to the coachee (the client) and their work (e.g. self-awareness, psychological capital and self-efficacy). More recent meta-analyses focusing on psychologically informed coaching approaches report moderate overall effects across learning, performance and well-being outcomes (Wang et al., 2022; Nicolau et al., 2023; Cannon-Bowers et al., 2023). Together, these findings suggest that coaching can build capabilities and psychological resources that are relevant not only for coachees but also for understanding how business coaches themselves might sustain objective and subjective success over time in boundaryless careers.

A key element to understanding the context of this project and the role of the business coach is the outcomes the coach's work should facilitate and the impact business coaching has on these.

The European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD) and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) in 2009 conducted a survey involving 129 key informants who were recognised as coaching experts within European organisations. The survey revealed that the five major benefits associated with coaching were improved performance, motivation, team cohesion, retention, and conflict resolution and that the group of employees most likely to receive coaching were identified as managers themselves or individuals with potential who were part of the organisation's talent pipeline (EFMD/EMCC, 2009; Beattie et al., 2014).

These practice-based findings align with the broader evidence base summarised by Athanasopoulou and Dopson (2018), who show that improvements in performance, motivation and team functioning typically sit alongside gains in psychological preparedness, such as higher self-efficacy and psychological capital. This evidence hints at the influence of psychologically based resources and their influence on coaching and coaches.

Blackman et al. (2016) comprehensively analysed various coaching studies to determine whether the existing research supports the notion that business coaching yields positive outcomes. The researchers conducted a systematic and critical review of 111 empirical papers, focusing on business coaching theory, processes, and outcomes. The reviewed studies specifically examined seven key dimensions of personal development and found business coaching was associated with an improved ability to delegate appropriately (McGovern et al., 2001), better stress management (Ladergard, 2011; Wales, 2003), enhanced ability to address workplace conflict and work autonomously (Blackman, 2008; Gray et al., 2011; Smith Glasgow et al., 2009), increased personal accountability (Kralj, 2001), greater innovation and creativity (Norlander et al., 2002; Styhre, 2008), higher levels of initiative (Blackman, 2010; Sonesh et al., 2015), and improved flexibility and adaptability (Hall et al., 1999; Wigington & Cartwright, 2020). These are relevant to both Study 1 and Study 2 of this project.

More recent quantitative syntheses extend this picture. For instance, a meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials found that executive coaching produces significant positive effects on overall outcomes, with behavioural outcomes stronger than attitudinal and person-characteristic outcomes (Nicolau et al., 2023). Specific gains were reported for self-efficacy,

psychological capital, and resilience, suggesting that coaching can build precisely the psychological resources that are critical for coping and persistence in uncertain career environments (Nicolau et al., 2023). Similarly, Wang et al. (2022) found that psychologically informed and integrative coaching frameworks yield moderate overall effects across learning, performance and well-being, with integrative approaches (combining multiple techniques) generating larger effects than single-method frameworks.

Importantly, these meta-analyses converge on the idea that coaching is particularly powerful when it triggers *behavioural* and *goal-directed* change rather than just shifting attitudes (Wang et al., 2022; Nicolau et al., 2023). For the present project, this supports an emphasis on possible pathways through which business coaches persist in their boundaryless careers, and on the psychological resources that enable them to keep acting despite setbacks. Pathways (motivational, affective and behavioural) are explored deeper in the quantitative study (Study 2) of this DBA project.

Whilst the impact of coaching on clients is not the focus of this project, understanding the effects of coaching helps set the scene for the effects of business coaching in industries. Schermuly's (2018) meta-analytical revealed that coaching has positive effects on the self-regulation and the performance of the clients—compared to not being coached—along with positive effects on work attitudes, well-being, and coping (Theeboom, Beersma, & van Vianen, 2014). In another meta-analysis (Sonesh et al., 2015) it was found that coaching demonstrated positive effects on behavioural changes, which were stronger than the effect on attitudinal changes (Sonesh et al., 2015).

Crompton et al. (2012), in their research measuring the influence of business coaching on fast-growth companies, reported that coaching led to positive outcomes, including informed decision-making, generation of ideas and options for progress, accomplishment of objectives and goals, and heightened self-awareness (Witherspoon & White, 1996). Hall, Otazo, and Hollenbeck (1999) found that entrepreneurs benefit from coaching by acquiring new skills, gaining broader perspectives, enhancing problem-solving abilities, and experiencing overall improvement in performance. Additionally, business coaching that is built upon a foundation of partnership, education, and competency, where the coach and entrepreneur collaborate, enhances the likelihood of achieving desired outcomes and fostering satisfaction (Witherspoon & White, 1996).

In contrast to positive results, less positive outcomes have also been identified in over 50% of business coaching cases (Graßmann & Schermuly; 2016; Schermuly, et al., 2014), but

they tend to be of low intensity and short duration. Examples of such side effects include a decrease in work satisfaction in the client, the development of a dependency on the coach, and the activation of unresolved problems that cannot be adequately addressed within the coaching process (Graßmann & Schermuly, 2016; Schermuly, 2018).

As a coach and author of this project, my interpretation of this is that although coaching may be deployed in a business, not everyone is coachable. For example, somebody who is made to be coached and does not want to be coached. The coach's approach may also not be right for the client. Although the client likes being coached, they don't like the work and change that comes with it and must step out of their comfort zone. This is also discussed in the results of Study 1 in how the coach must develop adaptability skills to work with a diverse range of clients.

Ultimately, the goal of business coaching is to positively influence the numbers of the business, i.e., revenue, profitability, and performance indicators. Although intangible benefits arising from coaching, such as improved relationships and tangible influences on productivity and quality have been found in studies (McGovern et al., 2001; Crompton et al., 2012).

The challenge for business coaching is that measuring coaching return on investment (ROI) has been a contentious issue, particularly in assessing tangible outcomes versus intangible evaluation. While some earlier coaching studies focused on measuring success outcomes, Kilburg (2000) argued that overall findings suggest coaching has not demonstrated verifiable business performance and growth as a direct outcome.

My interpretation from 12 years in the business coaching industry on this is that there are variables such as industry, economic influences, company culture, personalities, values and beliefs, and willingness for both the client and coach to be patient and persist towards results and that may not happen overnight are all influencers on 'business performance'. My argument would be that these variables should be taken into consideration when assessing if business coaching works or not. Just like in the context of just because you have signed up to the gym doesn't mean you will lose weight, the topic of cope and persist, as per the business coach, would also stand for the business coaches' clients in how much they are prepared to take the necessary actions to achieve performance goals. Header 3.5.1 supports further reasoning for my interpretation and why the meta-analysis concludes that business coaching can have negative performance contributions. Header 3.7.1 also

discusses how different business owner personalities can influence coaching results. These topics are also discussed by the interviewed coaches in Study 1, contributing to the findings.

More contemporary evidence paints a more nuanced picture. A recent meta-analysis of workplace coaching found overall positive effects but also reported that the number of coaching hours or sessions did not significantly predict outcomes, and that face-to-face and virtual modalities were similarly effective (Cannon-Bowers et al., 2023). Similarly, Nicolau et al. (2023) found that session count did not significantly moderate most outcomes. These findings suggest that the volume or format of coaching may be less important than the quality of the process and the psychological mechanisms activated. For business coaches operating in boundaryless careers, this shifts the focus from "more coaching" to the specific strategies and internal resources that sustain performance and well-being over time.

3.5 | Coaching Literature Challenges, Gaps and Future Research

Next, I discuss overarching challenges, key findings, gaps and where scholars have suggested future research should focus its efforts.

3.5.1 | Business Coaching Literature Challenges

Schute (2019) highlights core challenges within the coaching industry, reporting that business coaching has the potential to significantly influence the competence and performance of individuals, managerial leaders, teams, and organisations. However, the coaching industry lacks clear regulations and standards (Stout-Rostron, 2012; Van Rensburg, Basson, & Carrim, 2011). As a result, a wide range of approaches and methodologies are used in coaching with little grounding in evidence-based practice (Joo, 2005; Bluckert, 2004). Many coaches lack formal education in behavioural sciences, and commercialised coaching courses often lack theoretical grounding (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Grant, 2006). This lack of standardisation and training contributes to market confusion and the presence of untrained or poorly trained practitioners in the coaching industry (Schute, 2019). This lack of regulation and consistency might explain why the previous meta-analysis that argued the lack of evidence on performance (Graßmann & Schermuly; 2016; Schermuly, et al., 2014) failed to identify the expected positive results.

Additionally, researchers criticise coaching practice suggesting that there is a lack of empirical evidence on the effectiveness and impact of coaching interventions, especially in achieving specific goals and measuring performance change in business contexts (Bolch, 2001; Peel, 2004; Kilburg, 2000). The scarcity of research on the effectiveness of coaching interventions hinders understanding their impact on individual and organisational learning and performance (Hagen, 2012; Crompton et al., 2012).

Furthermore, managerial coaching also lacks empirical evidence, and managers may have varying attitudes toward supporting employee learning and development (Ellinger, Hamlin, & Beattie, 2008). Although management support has been shown to positively impact coaching outcomes, there is limited research on the means to achieve effective management support (Knights & Poppleton, 2007; Stewart et al., 2008; Ogilvy & Ellam-Dyson, 2012; Turner & Hawkins, 2016). Evaluating coaching engagements and communicating results to executives and stakeholders are often lacking, which can lead to mismatches between expected and delivered outcomes (Coutu & Kauffman, 2009; Peterson, 2009; Turner & Hawkins, 2016).

Coaching has at the same time been described as one of the fastest-growing specialities within the human resources profession (Bozer & Delegach, 2019), which makes these challenges particularly salient. Critics have repeatedly questioned whether coaching is sufficiently grounded in empirical evidence (Sherman & Freas, 2004; Greif et al., 2022) and whether it justifies the level of investment organisations make in it (Sonesh et al., 2015). More recent reviews reiterate that, despite growing numbers of studies, the field remains “relatively immature” in its understanding of the mechanisms of change, optimal formats and longer-term effects (de Haan & Nilsson, 2023; Cannon-Bowers et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2022). These critiques underscore that business coaching is simultaneously expanding rapidly and still consolidating its evidence base, which creates both opportunities and pressures for coaches working in boundaryless careers.

In summary, the literature review has presented that scholars have criticised the coaching industry for its challenges related to regulation, standards, and training, which contribute to a lack of evidence-based practice and market confusion. Further research is needed to assess the effectiveness of coaching interventions and their impact on individual and organisational outcomes. Additionally, the establishment of clear evaluation mechanisms and multi-stakeholder agreements on coaching outcomes remains an ongoing challenge.

While these critiques are important for the industry to address, many fall beyond the scope of this project. This research specifically focuses on understanding how business coaches navigate their boundaryless careers, particularly in relation to the psychological factors that influence their ability to sustain and succeed in coaching. However, understanding the critiques also sets the scene for what barriers business coaches face in the industry and what they must tackle to challenge the status quo. By interviewing and carrying out an inquiry to professional business coaches in Study 1 and then examining psychological constructs such as psychological capital (PsyCap) in the latter study, this project aims to contribute to the evidence base on how coaches maintain their effectiveness and resilience in a profession that lacks traditional career structures and can be faced with obstacles that have been critiqued.

3.5.2 | Gaps and Future Research

From a scholarship perspective, business coaching as a field lacks comprehensive empirical research, and the existing literature is still in its early stages (Beets & Goodman, 2012). While coaching has gained popularity, limited empirical evidence supports its impact (Joo, 2005). There is a general shortage of empirical research on business coaching, emphasising the need for more studies to understand its impact on performance as the lack of research and theory in the field hinders its advancement (Passmore & Gibbes, 2007; Joo, 2005; Schute & Steyn, 2015).

From coaching within an organisation perspective, Beatile et al. (2014) suggest that to address coaching research gaps, future research should explore the benefits that managers gain from serving as coaches and engaging in coaching relationships, as well as the limitations of managerial coaching within workplace contexts (Ellinger et al., 2014). Longitudinal research would allow for examining changing coaching relationships over time and identifying key moments in the coaching life cycle (Beatile et al., 2014).

Other suggestions by Beatile et al. (2014) are coaching research would benefit by studying (i) the interaction between demographic variables and coaching as it would enhance the development and delivery of coaching programs; (ii) the use of technology in coaching, specifically e-coaching, would provide insights into its benefits and limitations and its potential as a blended learning strategy; (iii) investigating the role of coaching in supporting

cross-cultural teams would be valuable in the context of globalisation and diverse labour forces.

In addition to these earlier calls, recent quantitative syntheses highlight several unresolved issues that further justify the present research focus. Meta-analyses report substantial heterogeneity in behavioural outcomes (Nicolau et al., 2023) and note that many important domains — such as engagement, turnover intentions and longer-term career outcomes — remain under-studied (Wang et al., 2022; Nicolau et al., 2023). Moreover, most existing studies focus on coachees in organisational roles rather than on the coaches themselves and rarely consider career structures beyond traditional organisational boundaries (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018; de Haan & Nilsson, 2023). This creates a clear gap for research that examines how business coaches, working in boundaryless careers, cope with adversity, build and draw on psychological resources, and persist over time. The present project responds directly to this gap.

These are important points to notice for the sake of providing a comprehensive understanding of the coaching domain. However, the focus of the studies for this project is on how the coach copes in the face of adversity and the strategies they deploy to overcome barriers in the pursuit towards success in their career. Understanding these points highlighted from previous research, however, adds context to the discussions that are had with coaches in the semi-structured interviews, thus shaping the interviews and allowing for deeper exploration in the research into how the coaches cope and persist.

3.5.3 | Performance Outcomes Challenges & Gaps

A key challenge for business coaches is client dropout. Client dropout from the coaching program not only causes physical challenges, i.e., cashflow challenges for the coach—which in a boundaryless career is not just business cashflow, but personal income—but it also causes psychological challenges where the coach loses confidence and questions their ability as a coach (self-doubt). Schermuly (2018) addresses client dropout and the adverse effects this has on the coach, physically and psychologically. This area is explored in depth later in the literature review and assists with the research question of ‘how coaches cope and persist’. However, from a research gap perspective, Schermuly suggests that researchers should explore the antecedents of side effects and the causes of dropout in

coaching relationships (Graßmann & Schermuly, 2016), and particularly how it fits within a process mode with a theoretical foundation.

Schermuly (2018) emphasises that research on client dropout in business coaching is lacking, despite its potential impact on clients, coaches, organisations, and the validity of coaching research. Client dropout refers to clients ending coaching prematurely before completing all sessions and goals. Four key factors influencing dropout are the client's motivation for change, the quality of coach-client relationships, client neuroticism, and negative side effects experienced during coaching. Research suggests that dropout should be more prominently considered when assessing and sharing the effectiveness of coaching outcomes (Schermuly, 2018).

It is important to categorise and understand the various factors contributing to dropout, including both client-related and coach-related causes (Graßmann & Schermuly, 2016; Scherumuly, 2018). Exploring this from either the client side or the coach side would have a significant impact on business coach research from both a traditional and boundaryless career perspective as engagement, agency, and retention are key to any coaching practice, and ultimately, one in a boundaryless career.[2]

To summarise, while some progress has been made in evaluating coaching programs and establishing their legitimacy as an HR development tool, researchers need to adopt a more critical approach and delve deeper into the effectiveness and guidelines for coaching practice (Webster & Watson, 2002). This calls for an evidence-based conceptual framework to guide future research and practice (Webster & Watson, 2002).

The field of business coaching requires more empirical research to establish its effectiveness, understand its impact on performance, and identify factors that influence coaching relationships and outcomes. This project addresses this need for evidence-based

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[2] *Client dropout is not the focus of this research, however it is worth noting at this point of the project that it may (and does) come up as a threat to the business coach in the interviews which in turn has impact on not just how the coach copes and persists, but the dynamic that coach has with client i.e., if the coach is afraid to lose a client then this can influence how hard the coach chooses to challenge the client. I have decided to include this in my literature review as it plays an important factor in how one in a boundaryless career copes and persists. Client Retention is also an outcome variable in Study 2.*

future research on how those in boundaryless careers can cope and persist by interviewing business coaches in Study 1, and objectively measuring coach performance outcomes within a framework, along with mediating and moderating effects in Study 2.

3.6 | Barriers and Strategies: Business Coaches and Client Dropout

The boundaryless career literature review highlighted that understanding barriers and how individuals deploy strategies is essential for future research. The literature review thus far has emphasised the importance of client retention—of course, to retain clients, the coach also needs to acquire them. Acquiring and retaining clients and addressing client dropout present significant challenges for business coaches, impacting their financial stability and emotional well-being (Schermuly, 2018). The following primarily focuses on client dropout as a prominent illustration of adversity in the coaching profession, shedding light on how coaches deploy strategies to overcome these barriers and persist in their roles. I begin by exploring the effects of client dropout on coaches, followed by an examination of the underlying reasons for client dropout. Finally, I delve into the strategies and insights from the literature on how coaches can effectively overcome the adversity of client dropout. This comprehensive approach aims to illustrate how business coaches cope and persist in the face of adversity and assists in developing the questions for deeper inquiry for the Study 1 semi-structured interviews.

3.6.1 | Understanding Client Dropout in Business Coaching

Client dropout is a prevalent issue in one-on-one professional relationships, with dropout rates varying among different types of professional-client interactions. For this study, it also gives an opportunity to explore a potential barrier for one in a boundaryless career, what psychological and physical impacts the barriers have on the coach—or boundaryless career individual—and how one may cope and persist to overcome the barrier. In business coaching, Schermuly (2018) suggests, several factors contribute to client dropout:

Low Change Motivation

The motivation for change plays a pivotal role. It refers to a client's willingness to invest time and effort into the coaching process, especially when facing the often demanding and stressful process of personal or professional change (McKenna & Davis, 2009). Clients with high "change motivation" demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility for their own growth and development, even when confronted with challenges during coaching (McKenna & Davis, 2009). Initially, clients who seek coaching typically desire change; however, the process of change, such as altering one's leadership style or pursuing career advancement, can be demanding and fraught with challenges. These challenges and associated stressors may lead individuals to terminate coaching prematurely to avoid further difficulties. Dropout can serve as a functional escape strategy for clients with low "change motivation" and little willingness to invest time and effort in the coaching process (Schermuly, 2018).

Low Relationship Quality

The quality of the relationship between the coach and the client is a significant predictor of coaching success (Sonesh et al., 2015). This quality is characterised by a strong collaborative bond between the client and coach, marked by a shared understanding of coaching goals and tasks (Baron & Morin, 2009; Graßmann & Schermuly, 2016; Schermuly, 2018).).

High-quality relationships in coaching are characterised by trust and openness exhibited by both the coach and the client (Ianiro, Schermuly, & Kauffeld, 2013). Negative relationships between individuals in an interaction, such as supervisors and employees, are associated with higher turnover intentions and actual turnover (Dulebohn, et al., 2012). A low quality of relationship has also been linked to client dropout in psychotherapy research (Sharf, Primavera, & Diener, 2010). Consequently, coaching processes with a dropout are expected to have lower relationship quality compared to those without a dropout (Schermuly, 2018).

Clients' Neuroticism

Neuroticism, or emotional instability, is a personality trait included in the Big Five personality framework (Costa & McCrae, 1992). High neuroticism is associated with traits such as fearfulness, anxiety, and depression (Judge, Martocchio, & Thoresen, 1997). Individuals

with high neuroticism tend to display stronger tendencies toward withdrawal behaviours. In the context of coaching, withdrawal behaviour can manifest as client dropout. Clients with low emotional stability may also have less effective coping strategies for managing difficult situations and emotional challenges encountered during coaching. Furthermore, individuals high in neuroticism tend to perceive life events as more negative (Magnus, Diener, Fujita, & Pavot, 1993), which may extend to the coaching process. Clients with low emotional stability might interpret coaching discussions as more negative, potentially influencing their decision to drop out. Therefore, high neuroticism can be seen as a vulnerability that increases the likelihood of client dropout (Schermuly, 2018).

Side Effects of Coaching

Side effects of coaching for clients are defined as "all harmful or unwanted results for clients directly caused by coaching that occur parallel to or after coaching" (Schermuly et al., 2014). These side effects are distinct from coaching failure and can occur irrespective of coaching success. Side effects include clients experiencing unwanted negative emotions or conflicts with supervisors due to the adoption of new behaviours learned in coaching (Schermuly & Graßmann, 2016). If clients encounter numerous side effects during coaching, it can decrease their trust in both coaching and the coach. Negative events have a greater impact on trust compared to positive events (Yaniv & Kleinberger, 2000). Given that coaching already involves certain losses, such as investments of time and money with uncertain outcomes, negative side effects can activate loss aversion and contribute to client dropout (Schermuly, 2018).

3.6.2 | Adverse Effects of Client Dropout on Business Coaches

The consequences of client dropout are not limited to clients alone. Graßmann & Schermuly (2016) found that business coaches also face significant barriers impacting not only their financial and physical results, but their well-being and other psychological aspects:

Financial Loss—Terminating coaching prematurely results in financial losses for coaches as they rely on client fees for their income. This financial impact can be particularly pronounced for coaches who rely on coaching as their primary source of income.

Loss of Clients and Reputation—Client dropout can result in the organisation associating the dropout with the coach, potentially leading to the loss of the organisation as a client. This loss can not only affect immediate revenue but also harm the coach's professional reputation within the industry.

Psychological Impact—Client dropout can lead to increased stress levels for business coaches. The emotional toll of dropout and the perceived loss of the client's trust can reduce the coach's self-worth, potentially impacting their overall well-being and ability to cope with such adversities (Graßmann & Schermuly, 2016).

Financial imperatives, loss of clients and wellbeing influences on the coach are discussed in Study 1. These discussions from Study 1 further shape the outcome variables in the model used in Study 2.

3.6.3 | How Business Coaches Deploy Strategies To Overcome Barriers

As discussed previously, a relevant point to be examined is how different people in boundaryless careers deploy strategies to overcome barriers, both physical and psychological. Understanding barriers for business coaches in their careers—such as client dropout—allows for an example to experiment and be explored that sheds light on the strategies coaches deploy to cope and persist pre-study that may help shape the interviews with coaches. It is important to review them here to examine what paths have been previously explored to overcome barriers such as client dropout and what the findings have been. These findings can then be cross-referenced in Study 1 to explore deeper if this assists with answering the question with how business coaches cope and persist, and also the physical and psychological impacts they may further entail. For example, to address and mitigate the general challenges associated with a barrier such as client dropout, previous research has found that successful business coaches have employed several strategies:

Maintain Professional Boundaries

Coaches should exercise prudence in seeking a perceived friendship status with clients. While developing meaningful relationships is important in coaching, coaches must also

uphold their professional duty to provide candid and sometimes critical feedback, even when it may not be popular (Wiginton & Cartwright, 2020).

Build Empathy

Coaches should focus on building empathy. Empathy is a crucial tool in gauging when coaching becomes too intense (Rogers, 2012). Effective coaches often become valued friends to business leaders. Deeper relationships often result from meaningful communication. However, it's essential to recognise that a pitfall of becoming a friend is that the content of coaching discussions may shift from a fact-based, action-focused approach to a more vague and less comprehensive style, which may not be beneficial for the business (Wiginton & Cartwright, 2020).

Recognise the Importance of Change Motivation

Coaches should emphasise the importance of change motivation, convincing clients of the possibility of change, increasing their openness to feedback, and encouraging risk-taking (McKenna & Davis, 2009). Motivational interviewing, a counselling style that creates a constructive atmosphere for behaviour change, can be effective in this regard (Miller & Rollnick, 2012). This approach employs empathic listening and other techniques to understand clients' perspectives and reduce resistance to change (Rollnick & Allison, 2004).

Conduct Diagnostic Assessments

Coaches should conduct diagnostic assessments early in the coaching process to determine client expectations, goals, and self-management skills. These assessments ensure that the coaching relationship is well-aligned with the client's needs (Grant, 2003).

Recognise Client Dropout as a Natural Aspect

Coaches should acknowledge that client dropout is a natural aspect of their work. They must be aware that it can have consequences for both clients and coaches. This

acknowledgement helps coaches better prepare for and address dropout issues and build resilience (Schermuly, 2018).

In summary, client dropout is a complex issue in business coaching, however, examining the reason it occurs, its physical and psychological impacts on coaches, and how coaches have developed to overcome this challenge reveals how coaches cope and persist. Client dropout results from a variety of factors, including low change motivation, relationship quality, clients' neuroticism, and side effects of coaching. The adverse effects on business coaches include financial loss, potential client loss, and psychological impacts. It is suggested that to overcome these barriers, business coaches should maintain professional boundaries, build empathy, conduct diagnostic assessments, recognise the natural occurrence of client dropout, and emphasise change motivation. By addressing these issues, coaches can enhance coaching outcomes and minimise client dropout, ultimately leading to better results for their clients and an improved ROI for the organisations they serve. This example of how a coach copes and persists within an area of business coaching shapes this research within the broader and holistic context of how a business coach copes and persists towards overall success in a boundaryless career. This offers a useful comparison to explore how the business coaches interviewed responses in this study 1 compared to existing literature. Study 1 reveals similar notions but with higher complexity and how varieties of client situations and dynamics between coach and their business play a part in achieving business coaching performance for both client and coach.

Preliminary Theme and Questions

Considering both boundaryless careers as a backdrop and specific research on business coaches has highlighted research themes that are key to address to obtain a better understanding of how business coaches can cope and persist. It is relevant to recognise that there are fears/threats and characteristics of the coach and client that can influence the success of the intervention. Thus, it is important to explore what fears beyond the well-documented client dropout might be salient for business coaches. Note that these questions were also developed in the boundaryless career literature review warranting discussion for both boundaryless career and business coaching purposes.

Q) What do you fear the most as a coach?
Q) What factors in your environment prevent you from doing your work well?

Q30) Can you give me an example of a time that you were coaching a client through a negative situation?

- *v) What do you feel you did (behaved) that helped them?*
- *vi) Can you give me examples of sentences you find yourself using?*
- *vii) What do you feel you did (behaved) that didn't help them or was counter-productive?*
- *viii) Can you give me examples of sentences you find yourself using that are counter-productive?*

3.7 | Cope And Persist: Enablers And Strategies For Business Coach Success

The following focuses on how a coach copes and persists towards success and builds on the topic of 'enablers'—from literature review part 1—that assist the coach in a boundaryless career. A business coach's success is dependent on the ability to acquire and retain clients—as outlined in the previous sections.

This header begins by detailing why a client would choose to stay with a business coach, with a particular focus on the client as the driver of the company's success. Thus, the characteristics of clients who respond well to business coaching are discussed, along with specific outcomes that have been recorded from previous studies. Secondly, this section delves into the enablers that support coaches in retaining their clients. By exploring enablers and strategies, context can be added to the boundaryless career literature for how a business coach deploys strategies and leans on enablers in order to cope and persist. In turn, this helps shape the semi-structured interviews used in study 1.

3.7.1 | Why Clients Seek Coaches

Business professionals often encounter significant challenges in achieving success, and research highlights the crucial role of founder characteristics in this process. Collins, Hanges, and Locke (2004) emphasise that achievement motivation is a key predictor of entrepreneurial performance. However, individual differences in traits such as risk-taking and locus of control can influence how effectively founders navigate these challenges. For instance, entrepreneurs with a high need for achievement, combined with risk-taking tendencies and an external locus of control, may struggle with decision-making and strategic

direction (Begley, 1995). Conversely, those with an internal locus of control tend to be more effective in implementing strategies and directing operations, reinforcing the importance of psychological factors in entrepreneurial success (Boone, de Brabander & Witteloostuijn, 1996; Crompton et al., 2012). Given these variations, entrepreneurs may seek out a business coach to provide guidance in developing effective strategies, refining decision-making skills, and strengthening their leadership approach. A coach can help bridge gaps in self-efficacy, offer structured support, and enhance an entrepreneur's ability to manage the complexities of running a business, making coaching a valuable resource for long-term success.

3.7.2 | Why a Client Stays with a Coach

When considering the outcomes of coaching and training, it becomes evident that the evaluation of these processes has evolved over time. Traditional indicators, such as productivity growth and return on investment (ROI), have been used but often suffered from biases and a lack of comparability (Blackman et al., 2016; De Meuse et al., 2009; Humphrey & Navas-Alemán, 2009; Grant, 2012).

Recent studies have shifted focus towards assessing changes in behaviour, coaching satisfaction scores, and perceived improvements in 'self-efficacy' as preferred indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of coaching and training (Lawrence & Whyte, 2014; Robson & Bennett, 2000; Crompton et al., 2012; Blackman et al., 2016).

This evolution suggests that clients remain engaged with coaches due to a growing understanding of the value of these indicators in achieving positive outcomes.

3.7.3 | Enablers & Strategies: Client Characteristics

An important element that unfolded with the part 1 literature review was the characteristics and personalities of the boundaryless career individual. The following extends on this by suggesting enablers in terms of the client's characteristics that may enable the coach to do their job.

In terms of “coachee”—i.e., the client, those getting coached—characteristics, motivation expressed through effort and an open attitude toward change, as well as self-efficacy, are crucial factors associated with positive coaching outcomes (Audet & Couteret, 2012; Anderson, 2013; Baron & Morin, 2010; Berg & Karlsen, 2012; Blackman, 2006; Bozer, Sarros, & Santora, 2013; De Haan, et al., 2013; Levy et al., 2002). However, it is important to note that most coachees in the reviewed studies were high achievers who voluntarily engaged in coaching, which has limited the examination of variations in motivation and confidence. Despite these limitations, barriers such as family commitments and workload constraints have hindered coachees' ability to invest sufficient time and effort into the coaching process (Blackman, 2006; Ton et al., 2023).

Blackman et al. (2016) have engaged in a discourse regarding the beneficiaries of coaching, with differing perspectives on its applicability, some associating it with leadership and managerial development, while others underscore its value for new and less experienced staff (Caligiuri, 2006; Riggio & Lee, 2007; Feldman, 1995). The reviewed studies have cast a wide net, encompassing coachees from various sectors and experience levels, revealing the absence of conclusive evidence favouring one category of coachee over another in terms of benefits. This broad diversity underscores the versatility of coaching and its potential to benefit a wide array of individuals within the business world.

Furthermore, self-efficacy has emerged as a pivotal factor in achieving success, as Bandura and Locke (2003) emphasised its central role in driving motivation, performance, and goal achievement, particularly among entrepreneurs. Recent studies have homed in on self-efficacy, suggesting a potential correlation between client and coach success, with self-efficacy serving as the common thread connecting the two. Entrepreneurs with high self-efficacy tend to engage in improvisation, execute innovative actions, and excel in new venture performance (Hmielski & Corbett, 2008). Goals, self-efficacy, and shared vision have also been directly linked to venture growth (Baum & Locke, 2004). Furthermore, entrepreneurs with strong self-efficacy exhibit confidence in their decision-making abilities, extending to those involving employees (Forbes, 2005; Crompton et al., 2012). This emphasis on self-efficacy underscores its significance in both the client's and coach's journey toward success. Client characteristics and self-efficacy is therefore an enabler for coach success

3.7.4 |Enablers & Strategies: Coaching Relationship

The relationship between the coach and the client is a crucial determinant of coaching success (McKenna & Davis, 2009; Baron & Morin, 2009; Boyce et al., 2010). It acts as an enabler for business coaches to cope and persist in their coaching journey. A trusted relationship with a motivated entrepreneur not only fosters opportunities for reflection on successful outcomes (Rider, 2002) but also enhances the acquisition of skills and abilities that contribute to professional development and effectiveness (Leonard & Swap, 2005; Crompton et al., 2012). The fundamental requirement of mutual liking and trust between the coach and the client has also been found to be another adjuvant that helps coaches recruit and retain clients (Furnham et al., 2022).

3.7.5 | Enablers & Strategies: Coach Capabilities and Marketability

Following on from the previous adjuvant, what does make a 'good fit' for a coach and client to build a relationship? For both the client and coach, selecting a suitable coach is a critical adjuvant for maximising insight and learning in the coaching process (Furnham et al., 2022). Furnham's eight criteria for choosing a business coach (training, experience, style compatibility, theoretical approach, success metrics, supervision, self-awareness, and motivation) provide a roadmap for clients to evaluate potential coaches and ensure a good fit. Although coaches may possess the capability criteria (knowing how), communication (knowing whom) may restrict the coach from conveying their capabilities to potential clients; thus, coach marketability also plays a role as an adjuvant (Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003; Rekalde et al., 2015; Graham et al., 1994; Blackman et al., 2016).

Preliminary Theme and Questions

It is suggested that client characteristics emerge as enablers for the business coach. Study 1 seeks to expand on the literature from this chapter by exploring what characteristics are enablers and whether there are any characteristics that are more challenging for the coach.

Q) Are there characteristics that make clients particularly easy to work with?

Q) Are there characteristics that make clients particularly challenging to work with? (Opportunity for potential barrier and how they cope and persist)
Q) Are there clients you enjoy more working with? Why?
Q) Are there clients you enjoy less working with? Why? (Opportunity for potential barrier and how they cope and persist)

3.7.6 | Enablers & Strategies: Coaching Methods

Effective coaching in business relies on structured interactions employing tools, models, and processes focused on self-development (Bush, 2005). Another enabler for business coaches is adopting key elements in the coaching process, including setting clear goals, providing feedback, integrating coaching with organisational consultation methods, maintaining regular communication, and emphasising continuous learning (Blackman et al., 2016). Additionally, the organisational context and the coaching process itself should align with goals, provide support, and encourage appropriate action, establishing them as key methods that act as adjuvants for business coaches (Wiginton & Cartwright, 2020; Blackman et al., 2016).

Preliminary Theme and Question

This literature review suggests the importance of examining how a business coach conducts coaching interventions (Hagen, 2012; Crompton et al., 2012). This project uniquely allows for a deeper exploration of the coach's approach and thought processes during client interactions, shedding light on the 'how' and 'why' behind a coach's coping and persistence. Given the conversational nature of the intervention, it also provides a distinctive opportunity to investigate the specific methods and language a coach employs to engage and motivate clients in pursuit of their goals. To explore different coaching *situations and how the business coach adapts, the following question is asked.*

Q) Can you give me an example of a time that you were coaching a client through a positive situation?

i) What do you feel you did that helped them?
ii) Can you give me examples of sentences you find yourself using?

iii) What do you feel you did that didn't help them or was counter-productive? (Opportunity for potential barrier)

iv) Can you give me examples of sentences you find yourself using that are counter-productive?

Q) If you had a client for over a year, how would you work with a client that is going through:

i) Financial problems, i.e., bankruptcy?

ii) If their business was not growing and they are not seeing results?

iii) Was demonstrating self-doubt?

iv) Was not taking actions or doing the work they said they would do?

v) Were demonstrating mental health challenges because of their business (stress, anxiety, depression)?

3.7.7 | Enablers & Strategies: Coach Characteristics

The boundaryless career literature review suggested that the individual's characteristics were an enabler. The business coaching literature also delivers insight into this perspective.

Coaches should possess specific characteristics and behaviours that contribute to their effectiveness (Wiginton & Cartwright, 2020). These characteristics are adjuvants for business coaches as they enhance their client coaching journey, thus helping them achieve results for the client, leading to client retention. Effective coaching characteristics include experience, self-confidence, empathy, organisation, creativity, honesty, and confidentiality (Wiginton & Cartwright, 2020; Blackman et al., 2016).

As previously discussed, client characteristics like self-efficacy, motivation, and commitment also play a vital role, along with the relationship between the coach and the client, which should involve trust, authenticity, challenge, and commitment (McKenna & Davis, 2009; Baron & Morin, 2009; Boyce et al., 2010; Wiginton & Cartwright, 2020; Blackman et al., 2016). From a holistic perspective, integrity, support for the coachee, communication skills, and credibility are consistent themes that further serve as adjuvants for business coaches (Rekalde et al., 2015; Graham et al., 1994; Blackman et al., 2016). The study by Furnham et al. (2022) provides insights into demographic factors influencing coach preferences, showing that these factors significantly influence participants' choices. These preferences, whether based on gender, experience, or background, reflect the nuanced considerations

clients make when selecting a coach (Furnham et al., 2022). These considerations, along with the adjuvants mentioned, contribute to a coach's ability to cope and persist in their coaching role and ultimately drive clients toward results, thus, client retention that leads to coach success.

Preliminary Theme and Questions

The characteristics of business coaches have been addressed in the Boundaryless Career chapter. Here, the focus shifts towards understanding how coaches perceive their own coaching and its impact on their clients, which, in turn, influences their boundaryless career success and coping strategies. While it is not possible to obtain direct data from the coaches' clients due to access limitations, an alternative perspective can still be explored. Since all participating business coaches in this study have their own coach within their organisation, this allows for an examination of their experiences as clients themselves. By reflecting on how they are coached and how their coach's characteristics benefit them, valuable insights can be gained into the coaching process from a dual perspective—both as a coach and as a recipient of coaching.

Q) Do you have a coach? If yes:

i) What do you like about them?

ii) What don't you like about them?

3.8 | Business Coaching Summary

This literature review part 2 was initiated to allow a platform for the questions from literature review part 1 to be tested. By understanding business coaching and the job business coaches entail, their day-to-day knowledge of how individuals cope and persist within boundaryless careers can be deepened, and the DBA project objectives can be achieved.

Business coaching plays a critical role in helping entrepreneurs navigate complexities and achieve their goals by acting as diagnosticians, guides, and sources of support. Coaches enhance skills, improve performance, and provide emotional support, leading to positive outcomes such as improved self-regulation, work attitudes, well-being, and professional

performance (Theeboom, Beersma, & van Vianen, 2014; Sonesh et al., 2015). However, client dropout remains an example of a significant barrier, often stemming from low motivation for change, poor relationship quality, unresolved issues, and unclear roles or outcomes (Graßmann & Schermuly, 2016; Schermuly, 2018)—allowing for a key barrier to be explored on how the coaches deploy strategies to overcome this barrier and witness how they cope and persist. These barriers not only hinder client progress but also impose financial and emotional burdens on coaches, including stress and reduced self-esteem (Greif, 2008; Rainer & Campbell, 2001). Thus, providing another opportunity to research how coaches cope and persist physically and psychologically.

Despite its multidisciplinary foundation, there is limited empirical evidence on the effectiveness of coaching interventions in achieving specific outcomes or measuring performance changes (Bolch, 2001; Peel, 2004). The quality of the coach-client relationship is pivotal, as strong bonds foster engagement while weak dynamics can lead to disengagement or dropout, often triggered by unresolved issues surfacing during sessions (Burk et al., 2010; McKenna & Davis, 2009). These barriers—and the drivers to continue to despite setbacks—underscore the importance of understanding how coaches in boundaryless careers sustain their practice, deploy strategies to overcome barriers, and maintain resilience, offering vital insights into the dynamics of coaching and its implications for performance and well-being outcomes. These areas of exploration shape Study 1, guiding semi-structured interviews.

Taken together, recent reviews and meta-analyses show that coaching is generally effective in building behavioural capabilities and psychological resources such as self-efficacy, resilience and psychological capital (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018; Wang et al., 2022; Nicolau et al., 2023; Cannon-Bowers et al., 2023). At the same time, the field remains underdeveloped in explaining the mechanisms through which these changes occur, in understanding how outcomes unfold over time, and in examining the position of coaches themselves within increasingly boundaryless career structures (de Haan & Nilsson, 2023). By focusing on how business coaches cope and persist, this project seeks to extend the coaching literature beyond client outcomes and towards a more complete understanding of the resources, strategies and contextual conditions that sustain coaching practice in contemporary careers.

3.9 | Critical Synthesis and Identified Research Gap

These past chapters have shown that the evidence base for boundaryless careers and coaching has evolved substantially over the last two decades. Earlier critiques questioned whether coaching was empirically grounded or worth the level of investment (Sherman & Freas, 2004; Joo, 2005; Sonesh et al., 2015; Greif et al., 2022), and several reviews pointed to conceptual and methodological fragmentation (Blackman et al., 2016; Beattie et al., 2014; Schute & Steyn, 2015). More recent meta-analyses, however, indicate that workplace and executive coaching can produce moderately positive effects across learning, performance and well-being outcomes (Wang et al., 2022; Nicolau et al., 2023; Cannon-Bowers et al., 2023). These reviews highlight that coaching is particularly effective in building action-oriented behaviours (e.g. goal pursuit), self-efficacy, psychological capital and resilience (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018; Wang et al., 2022; Nicolau et al., 2023), all of which are relevant resources for individuals operating in boundaryless careers.

At the same time, critical gaps remain. First, the field is still described as "relatively immature" in terms of understanding how coaching works – the mechanisms, boundary conditions and long-term effects are under-specified (de Haan & Nilsson, 2023; Cannon-Bowers et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2022). Meta-analyses show that neither the number of coaching sessions nor their modality (face-to-face vs virtual) reliably explains variance in outcomes (Cannon-Bowers et al., 2023; Nicolau et al., 2023), while there is considerable heterogeneity in behavioural effects (Nicolau et al., 2023). This suggests that traditional design levers (duration, format) may be less important than the psychological and relational processes that occur within coaching. Yet these processes are rarely studied from the perspective of the coach.

Second, the overwhelming majority of outcome studies conceptualise the *coachee* as the primary unit of analysis, typically located within organisational structures (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018; Wang et al., 2022; Nicolau et al., 2023). Much less is known about coaches as workers in their own right, despite coaching having been described as one of the fastest growing specialities within HR and professional services (Bozer & Delegach, 2019). Existing research on side-effects and client dropout points to significant financial and psychological consequences for coaches (Graßmann & Schermuly, 2016; Schermuly, 2018), but these studies tend to treat such effects as confounds in evaluating coaching rather than as central phenomena in their own right.

Third, the boundaryless career literature typically treats knowledge workers and professionals as relatively anonymous actors, with limited attention to specific occupations that rely heavily on self-employment, client acquisition and emotional labour. Business coaches exemplify such boundaryless careers: they work across organisational boundaries, juggle multiple roles and identities and are exposed to income volatility and client loss. Yet there is currently little empirical work that connects boundaryless career theory, coaching outcomes (e.g. PsyCap, resilience, self-efficacy) and the day-to-day strategies coaches use to cope and persist in the face of adversity.

This project responds to these gaps in two ways. Study 1 uses semi-structured interviews with experienced business coaches to explore qualitatively how they understand and navigate their boundaryless careers, including how they interpret barriers such as client dropout and which strategies and psychological resources they draw on to persist. Study 2 then operationalises selected constructs – particularly the emerging psychological mechanisms and related resources – to examine quantitatively how these are associated with perceived objective and subjective outcomes in a boundaryless coaching context. The project does *not* aim to evaluate whether coaching 'works' in terms of ROI or to compare coaching schools; rather, it uses coaching as a theoretically rich and practically important case to understand how professionals in boundaryless careers cope and persist over time.

CHAPTER 4 | STUDY ONE METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I delve into the methodology deployed for study 1.

The methodological approach embraced in Study 1 is qualitative. Central to this approach are semi-structured interviews as the primary research tool. In the subsequent sections, I will initially introduce the qualitative research approach and then discuss the use of semi-structured interviews in my investigation. Finally, I will outline the research process, concentrating on sampling, data collection, and data analysis. Additionally, I will underscore the concept of 'engaged scholarship' and how my role as researcher and business coach within the coaching organisation imparts distinctive value to this DBA project.

4.1 | Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research delves into phenomena in their natural settings, interpreting them through the meanings individuals assign (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1997; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Unlike positivistic methods that often break phenomena into parts, qualitative research seeks a holistic understanding of the whole. The approach acknowledges the social construction of reality, highlighting the interconnectedness of social worlds and individual experiences (Cassell & Symon, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Subjectivity is central in qualitative research, given that it explores the human experience, making it difficult for researchers to detach from their subjective perspectives (Myers, 2000). Researchers actively engage with participants, negotiating meaning in the process and inevitably infusing the research with their values.

Qualitative research is a dynamic, interactive process distinct from many quantitative methods. Research questions evolve based on respondents' insights and begin with an open mind, focusing on discovery rather than predetermined tests. The concept of "progressive focusing" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1997) illustrates this dynamism as the research problem transforms over time, ultimately revealing its true essence, which may differ from initial expectations. Over time, the research problem is developed and transformed, and eventually, its scope is clarified and delimited, and its internal structure is explored. In this sense, it is often that well into the process of inquiry that one discovers

what the research is really about; not uncommonly, it turns out to be about something different from the initial inquiry problems (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1997).

4.2 | Semi-structured Interviews

The principal research method employed in this qualitative study is semi-structured interviews, a method characterised by its flexibility and use of open-ended questions (King, 2004).

While the primary topics for discussion are typically identified in advance, many questions are generated during the interviews themselves, fostering a two-way dialogue that allows for the introduction of new topics, in-depth discussions, and detailed probing by both the interviewer and the respondent (King, 2004). These interviews offer valuable insight into how respondents interpret phenomena and provide a deeper understanding of the reasons behind their viewpoints, which in turn, reveals more depth to the understanding around the initial inquiry.

The primary aim of semi-structured interviews is to gain insights into specific situations and actions rather than seeking general opinions (Kvale, 1997). They can vary in terms of duration, the number of participants, and the style of the setting, which may range from telephone interviews to internet-based interviews and face-to-face interactions—in the case of this study, the interviews were carried out over the online communications platform Zoom where they were recorded and later transcribed, analysed, and coded.

4.3 | Engaged Scholarship

A limitation of the qualitative research approach for Study 1 is that I needed the engagement of business coaches to take time out of their already time-restricted working week. Similar to lawyers, for a business coach, time is highly valuable, with some business coaches earning high incomes due to the value of the time to clients. Engaging business coaches and requesting their time for 60 minutes can be a challenge. An approach that allowed data to be collected for research and be perceived as a valuable use of time to the business coach was required; thus, engaged scholarship was deployed.

Engaged scholarship, as introduced by Van De Ven (2007), signifies a research approach that emphasises collaboration between academic institutions and external stakeholders, surpassing conventional isolated research, with a focus on addressing real-world issues for societal betterment. This approach cultivates enduring partnerships involving academics, students, community members, and organisations, shifting from one-time projects to establishing mutually beneficial relationships. It prioritises practical, community-driven research, focusing on solving real-world challenges while actively involving community members, particularly marginalised groups, as research participants. Engaged scholarship promotes interdisciplinary collaboration to address multifaceted issues and encourages reflective practices among researchers (Van De Ven, 2007).

Further, the engaged scholarship approach emphasises reciprocity, ensuring that both academic researchers and community partners mutually benefit through knowledge exchange and support. Engaged scholarship takes on various forms, including community-based participatory research and service-learning programs, producing highly meaningful research and applicable to real-world challenges. Engaging key stakeholders fosters triangulation, which, from an engaged scholarship perspective, enriches problem representation, reducing myopic viewpoints and building reliability through consensus (Van De Ven, 2007).

The research project's aim to benefit the coaching industry aligns with stakeholders' desire for a practical outcome alongside contributing to knowledge. The concept of an "engaged scholar" suggests that research involving relevant stakeholders in problem formulation, theory building, and research design leads to more substantial advancements in both science and practice than the traditional isolated approach (Van De Ven, 2007). However, communicating the research's value to business coaches and stakeholders is essential yet also a challenge as practice did not always value academia. The study's goal is to enhance theory and practice, driven by stakeholder involvement, although bridging the gap between academia and practice remained a challenge that I, as the researcher, had to overcome.

Effective communication of the research's value is crucial to prevent stakeholder disengagement, as noted by Van De Ven (2007). The research must emphasise its value to both practice and coaching to encourage the active participation of business coaches.

Argyris (2000) suggests that actionable knowledge should specify intended consequences, behavioural sequences, causal relationships, and governing values. Effective

communication necessitates a shared understanding of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics to facilitate the exchange of domain-specific knowledge. Utilising Carlisle's (2004) framework of knowledge transfer and transformation, Van De Ven (2007) provides a guideline for transferring knowledge between scholars and stakeholders. Research findings are more likely to be adopted and diffused when they offer a relative advantage, align with current understandings, are simple and explicit, and allow practical experimentation. By considering perceived value and effective communication, an increased engagement level is achieved (Carlisle, 2004; Van De Ven, 2007). I utilised this approach in my offering to the business coach by offering a training session on research findings upon project completion that further incentivised the coach's participation. Interestingly, many business coaches interviewed from the business coaching community were willing to participate without expecting any return.

Engaged scholarship (Van De Ven, 2007) is an approach to academic research and scholarship that emphasises collaboration between academic institutions and communities or external stakeholders. It goes beyond traditional research that is conducted in isolation and aims to address real-world issues and contribute to the betterment of society, thus creating a fit for the context of this research where the business coaches needed to be engaged and a part of the contribution towards research and practice.

4.4 | Issues of Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are fundamental considerations in quantitative research. While these aspects hold equal significance in the qualitative tradition, the approaches for handling them differ in the qualitative context as compared to the quantitative framework.

4.4.1 | Reliability

In quantitative research, reliability concerns the extent to which results remain consistent over time and accurately represent the entire population under study (Joppe, 2000). However, in qualitative research, the focus shifts where the perceptions are seen as dynamic rather than static. Thus, it is acknowledged that there may be multiple

interpretations of phenomena (Golafshani, 2003). Therefore, the expectation of consistent findings from repeated investigations is not as relevant.

Hammersley's (1992) definition of reliability in the qualitative context relates to the consistency with which different observers or the same observer on different occasions assign instances to the same category. Silverman (2009) emphasises that qualitative researchers should document their procedures to demonstrate methodological reliability. This involves presenting detailed data with minimal inferences, such as extended transcripts that include the context and respondent's comments.

The following chapter forms interpretative codes from the initial descriptive codes. The descriptive codes within their tables are presented in the appendices. Throughout the following results chapter, I have adhered to the principle of using substantial segments of original data, along with relevant contextual information, to facilitate readers' understanding of my data interpretations, following Bryman's (1988) recommendation.

Qualitative researchers can also bolster reliability by engaging co-researchers, a practice noted by Golafshani (2003) and Johnson (1997), which involves collaborating with peer researchers to interpret the data and gain a more comprehensive understanding of various constructions. My two supervisors for my DBA individually have a qualitative and quantitative approach to research; thus, their guidance also increases the reliability of this DBA.

4.4.2 | Validity

In quantitative research, validity pertains to whether the study accurately measures its intended focus and the truthfulness of its results. Conversely, in qualitative research, validity is described as the extent to which an account faithfully represents the social phenomena it references, as outlined by Hammersley (1990).

To address the issue of ‘anecdotalism’ where findings are based on partial data, qualitative researchers can adopt strategies proposed by Silverman (2009). Firstly, researchers should refrain from prematurely forming conclusions based on initial assumptions and limited evidence. Secondly, the concept of "constant comparison" can be employed to test emerging hypotheses by examining them across all the data. Thirdly, the principle of

"comprehensive data treatment" should be applied, ensuring that all data is integrated into the analysis, and generalisations are drawn for all cases in the relevant category (Silverman, 2009).

In the context of this research, the study adheres to Silverman's notions of "comprehensive data treatment" and "constant comparison" through back-and-forth examination between the empirical data and the exploration of emerging ideas that derive from the coach transcripts (Silverman, 2009; Hammersley, 1990). Van De Ven (2007) employs an "engaged scholarship model" by involving stakeholders in problem formulation, theory development, research design, and issue resolution. This approach is expected to yield research outcomes that have more substantial impacts on both scientific knowledge and practical applications compared to the traditional isolated research model.

4.5 | The Research Process

The introduction outlines the research method for this project, demonstrating the overarching methodology of the project and the two studies this DBA encompasses. However, the data analysis methods are different between each study, so the 'research process' is discussed individually for each study.

The research process for Study 1 follows a 'thematic' qualitative approach. Thematic analysis has gained popularity as a method for analysing qualitative data within the social sciences (Thompson, 2022) and adds a unique contribution to qualitative research. As previously mentioned, qualitative analysis involves interpreting data to extract meaning, aiming to explore the social world and provide in-depth descriptions of phenomena (Rinehart, 2021). Researchers are responsible for condensing and restructuring data into meaningful information to convey theoretical and practical implications (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Morse, 1994). Where thematic analysis contributes is that it is known for its flexibility, captures patterns in raw data, organising it into meaningful themes, and applies to both inductive and deductive research designs (Braun et al., 2019; Campbell et al., 2021; Guest et al., 2012; Nowell et al., 2017; Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Thompson, 2022).

The thematic analysis involves distinct stages in qualitative research. It starts with collecting data and familiarising the researcher with its content and context. Initial coding assigns

labels to segments of data, followed by code grouping to identify common themes. These themes are then defined and named, accompanied by illustrative data excerpts. Researchers organise data related to each theme, analyse relationships, and ensure rigour and coherence through review and refinement (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). Ultimately, the findings are reported coherently in scholarly works while maintaining transparency. The thematic process provides a systematic way to extract and communicate insights from qualitative data while ensuring the researcher's interpretive skills align with the research objectives.

As outlined previously, Study 1 follows a thematic analysis approach (Thompson, 2022). All interviews (N=15) were recorded over the Zoom platform and then later transcribed via Otter.ai platform, a transcription service that refines the transcript into usable content (i.e., accent recognition, removal of “erms” and “hmms”) ready for manual data analysis. Videos of the business coaches were deleted, and transcripts were anonymised to protect the identity of the business coach. The total recording time was approximately 18 hours and approximately 150,000 words.

The words from the transcriptions then followed a dual analysis process. The first had the data input into qualitative data analysis software NVivo. The software then formed descriptive codes amongst the coaches’ responses for each question. The second process was then carried out manually by the researcher where the researcher manually read and selected key phrases from the transcripts that were then analysed for emerging codes. The data was placed into a spreadsheet and manually analysed for descriptive codes. Both the NVivo codes and the manually analysed data were then counted in a spreadsheet and both the coaches mentioned the code (case count) and the frequency they talked about the code (code count).

This dual approach allowed for a non-biased approach (NVivo) and an engaged scholarship approach where I (the researcher and coach) could use my experience as a business coach to interpret the qualitative findings. Key phrases (objective data) used by the interviewees were extracted and are highlighted in the results to give the essence of responses from the business coaches and feed discussion for Study 1 thematic approach to research. The descriptive codes from the data analysis are discussed in the next chapter to develop interpretative codes that, in turn, contribute to theory development.

4.6 | Recruitment of Participants

This research study is based on data collected from qualitative interviews with 15 business coaches in the UK who are part of a business coaching franchise. A large number of sample subjects are not required to ensure population representativeness, since it is assumed that practices are shared within a social context (King, 2004; Dick, 2004). The study recognises the challenges posed by relativist epistemology, which suggests that gathering a large volume of cases may not ensure a study's credibility since there can be various interpretations of a text, with no single interpretation being privileged over others (King, 2004). The sampling approach employed is characterised as non-probability purposive sampling, meaning it involves a targeted selection of specific individuals based on defined criteria. Further details about the sample composition follow.

4.7 | Description of the Sample

The UK business coaches interviewed in this research are from the same UK business coaching organisation and all reside and coach clients in the UK. This in turn allows for a control factor as all the business coaches are taught and use the same method of business coaching that was trained to them by the organisation. The number of business coaches interviewed in study one is fifteen (N=15). The business coaches approached included a mix of male and female, younger and older, different locations across the UK, and a variety of business coach positions, including actively coaching firm owners, employee business coaches, and general managers (those employed by the franchisor to manage territories, that also coach). The coaches also had different experiences in terms of coaching tenure, the total number of businesses they have ever coached, and their level of education. The type of coach in Table 2 refers to the position the coach is within their franchise partnership (specific to the organisation used in the case study and not the coaching industry in general). Partner is a coach that has purchased a franchise licence and can trade solely anywhere in the country and employs only two coaches as employees. A Senior Partner is a franchisee that owns a territory within the UK that only they can trade in. Senior Partners are allowed to employ as many coaches as they desire with no restrictions. An Employee Business Coach (EBC) is a coach that is employed by the senior partner or partner, they have one role in the business which is to coach, where the partner and senior partners also have to grow their

business and take on all aspects of the business (i.e., marketing, sales, operations, finance, employee management).

Table 2: Business coach interviewees demographics

	Sex	Age	Coaching Tenure	Highest Education	Total Bus. Coached	Num. of Clients (Current)	Type of Coach
Coach 1	M	60-70	15+	Level 5	12	6	Partner
Coach 2	M	50-60	5-10	Level 6	11	8	S. Partner
Coach 3	M	50-60	10-15	Level 2	9	6	Partner
Coach 4	F	50-60	2-5	Level 5	6	5	EBC
Coach 5	M	30-40	2-5	Level 6	12	10	EBC
Coach 6	M	30-40	1-2	Level 5	8	5	S. Partner
Coach 7	F	50-60	2-5	Level 5	7	7	EBC
Coach 8	M	50-60	2-5	Level 5	8	7	Partner
Coach 9	M	50-60	2-5	Level 6	10	7	Partner
Coach 10	M	50-60	5-10	Level 2	11	8	S. Partner
Coach 11	F	30-40	1-2	Level 5	2	2	EBC
Coach 12	M	50-60	5-10	Level 6	13	7	S. Partner
Coach 13	M	50-60	5-10	Level 2	11	8	S. Partner
Coach 14	M	60-70	1-2	Level 2	6	5	EBC
Coach 15	F	40-50	2-5	Level 4	6	6	Partner

4.8 | Collection of Data

The following outlines how the questions for the interviews were formed based on the literature review and how/why the interview procedure was formed and carried out.

4.8.1 | Formation of Themes and Interview Questions

The two literature reviews presented in previous chapters explored existing research that may help reveal insight into how a business coach copes and persists in a boundaryless career. Both boundaryless career and business coach literature were researched. The literature identified common themes, such as drivers, barriers, and the specific strategies used by the coaches, which emerged from both boundaryless career and business coach literature. The themes highlight both gaps in the research and their potential contribution to understanding how business coaches cope and persist.

The questions formed are highlighted in *italics* in the literature review. They are listed in 'table 3'.

The questions in 'table 3' form the semi-structured interviews. The questions were structured and rearranged based on my perspective as both a researcher and business coach, aiming to create a natural flow and encourage open discussion around themes. Consequently, they do not follow the numerical order of topics presented in the literature review. For instance, asking what 'makes you cope and persist?' would not only have little context but may also lead to a closed response if the coach was not encouraged to open up by talking about their journey first.

Table 3: Study 1 interview questions shaped by the literature review

Preliminary Theme	Questions Asked to Coach
Drivers	1. What made you want to be a coach?
Drivers	2. How did you get started?
Drivers	3. What motivated you then?
Drivers	4. What motivates you now?
Drivers	4b. Which factors do you enjoy the most about your work?
Drivers	5. Which factors do you enjoy the least about your work?
Drivers	6. How do you think your job compares to others in terms of:
Drivers	6.1. providing you with a sense of achievement?
Drivers	6.2. experiencing meaningfulness at work?
Enablers	6.3. enabling you a positive work/life balance?
Enablers	7. How do you learn from one client to the other?
Enablers	8. How do you keep learning about your job?
Enablers	9. How do you think your approach as a coach has changed over the years?
Barriers	10. What do you fear the most as a coach?
Barriers	11. What factors in your environment prevent you from doing your work well?
Enablers	12. Are there characteristics that make clients particularly easy to work with?
Barriers	13. Are there characteristics that make clients particularly challenging to work with?
Enablers	14. Are there clients you enjoy more working with? Why?
Barriers	15. Are there clients you enjoy less working with? Why?
Strategies	16. Can you give me an example of a time that you were coaching a client through a positive situation?
Strategies	16.1. What do you feel you did that helped them?
Strategies	16.2. Can you give me examples of sentences you find yourself using?
Strategies	16.3. What do you feel you did that didn't help them or was counter-productive?
Strategies	16.4. Can you give me examples of sentences you find yourself using that are counter-productive?
Strategies	17. Can you give me an example of a time that you were coaching a client through a negative situation?
Strategies	17.1. What do you feel you did (behaved) that helped them?
Strategies	17.2. Can you give me examples of sentences you find yourself using?
Strategies	17.3. What do you feel you did (behaved) that didn't help them or was counter-productive?
Strategies	17.4. Can you give me examples of sentences you find yourself using that are counter-productive?
Strategies	18. If you had a client for over a year, how would you work with a client that is going through:
Strategies	18.1. Financial problems, i.e., bankruptcy?
Strategies	18.2. If their business was not growing and they are not seeing results?

Strategies	18.3. Was demonstrating self-doubt?
Strategies	18.4. Was not taking actions or doing the work they said they would do?
Strategies	18.5. Were demonstrating mental health challenges because of their business (stress, anxiety, depression)?
Enablers	19. How do you think your personality helps you at work?
Barriers	20. Do you think there a part of your personality that holds you back at work?
Enablers	21. What characteristics do you feel you have that help your clients?
Enablers	22. What characteristics do you feel you have that doesn't help your clients?
Barriers	23. What factors in your environment support you in doing your work well?
Strategies	24. Tell me about a time you really had to dig deep and push hard to make it as a coach?
Strategies	24.1. What made you do it?
Strategies	24.2. What was going through your mind when you were doing it?
Strategies	24.3. What was the key to success at the end of it?
Strategies	24.4. If you were to do it again what would you keep or change?
Barriers	24.5. If you know this was the key to your success, what stops you from doing it again?
	Do you have a coach? If yes:
Enablers	25.1. What do you like about them?
Enablers	25.2. What don't you like about them?

4.8.2 | Interview Process

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary method of data collection, with each respondent being interviewed within the time slot of 1 hour. Some business coaches finished the interview at around 45 minutes, whereas some proceeded to beyond 90 minutes. The reason for the extended time is that I would often ask the business coach to 'tell me more about…' the response they were delivering, thus revealing deeper insight. The average time, however, was around 60 minutes.

The interviews took place over Zoom and the audio was recorded. The business coach was first introduced to the interview, how it was structured and why. I ensured that the coach was comfortable and that they could stop the interview at any point or say if they did not want to answer any questions. This ensured the coach was free of any fear of the interview that may have caused interference in how the coach responded during the interview. Rapport-building was, therefore, a crucial aspect of this qualitative research process. The researcher made considerable efforts to create a relaxed and comfortable environment for the respondents, using supportive phrases, appropriate eye contact, and nods to acknowledge their statements. Knowing the respondents on an informal basis facilitated the development of rapport.

The process began with a brief discussion of the research's nature and purpose, emphasising confidentiality and obtaining the respondents' consent. Participants were encouraged to ask questions during the interview, and if they felt the need to expand on a topic to add richness to the data, they could go off track from the questions.

Each interview began with an open-ended question: "What made you want to be a coach?" that encouraged the coach to reminisce about their journey so far and set a positive stage for the interview, thus allowing them to 'open up' with their responses. Follow-up questions and clarifications were frequently used, such as "Tell me more about…" or "Could you please explain what you just said?" These questions often led to respondents making new insights about their career experiences during the interview itself—aligning with the thematic nature of the study.

All interviews were audio recorded with the business coach's permission. Transcribing each interview immediately after its conclusion ensured accuracy and allowed any discrepancies in understanding to be corrected, thus ensuring validity.

4.9 | Ethical Consideration

This research project followed the ethical guidelines outlined by the Aston University Ethics Board. The research was only carried out following participant consent. The data in this research was 'primary research' obtained from stakeholders, i.e., business coaches, business coaching firm owners, and general managers (coaches employed by the franchisor).

With stakeholders involved, it is important to consider the implications that carrying out such research could have on the participant (Lee and Lings, 2008), for example, the research must not position the coach in a negative light to the organisation or to potential or existing customers. The research design has taken into consideration ethical practices that will protect the participant's privacy and interests.

I consulted Aston University's Ethics Department regarding the methodology for this study. Several key ethical considerations were discussed along with appropriate actions taken to ensure compliance with ethical guidelines. First, the competence of the coach must not be emphasised in a way that could undermine the credibility of the coach or the coaching

organisation. To address this, participation in the study is entirely voluntary, and all coaches and participants have the option to take part or withdraw at any time. Confidentiality is also a priority. No identifying data—such as names, businesses, or locations—will be presented, as certain details (e.g., coach locations or names of client's businesses) could inadvertently reveal participants' identities. Additionally, participants must be fully aware that data is being collected. They were informed of this in the introduction email and survey communications, which outlined how their data would be used by the researcher. They were also assured that privacy measures were in place to protect their identity. While participants have the option to withdraw, this must occur before their data has been processed. Informed consent is a crucial component of this study. Following the completion of the survey, participants must provide explicit consent for their data to be used in the research. GDPR guidelines will be followed to ensure compliance with data protection regulations, and confirmed consent will be obtained from all participants. To maintain the naturalistic approach of Study 1, the overarching research focus—how business coaches cope and persist—will not be disclosed to interviewees until the study is complete. However, participants will have the option to request a report of the findings after the completion of the DBA.

4.10 | Reflexivity

The research process involving key stakeholders—such as firm owners, business coaches, and general managers—allows for valuable triangulation, enhancing the richness and complexity of the problem representation and reducing the risk of biased and myopic viewpoints perceived by other stakeholders. This approach, aligned with engaged scholarship principles, bolsters the validity and reliability of the research (Van De Ven, 2007; Lee & Lings, 2008), as discussed previously in this methodology. Although this introduces potential bias stemming from the researcher's role as a business coach within the coaching community, it offers a unique contribution to research by granting access to business coaches who would otherwise be difficult to reach. To mitigate potential bias, reflexivity is discussed.

Reflexivity in research refers to the awareness of how the researcher's presence and personal perspectives influence the research process, recognising that complete detachment is impossible. It involves exploring "the ways in which a researcher's involvement with a particular study influences, acts upon, and informs such research" (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999: 228). There is a growing awareness that the process of

acquiring, organising, and interpreting knowledge is relevant and can influence research (Altheide and Johnson, 1994). Scholars emphasise the importance of being reflexive about how they interpret their data (Devine and Heath, 1999; Henwood and Pidgeon, 1997; Olesen et al., 1994), as research interpretations are only valid when the researcher can demonstrate how they were reached (Mason, 1996).

Insider research involves researchers conducting studies within groups they are also part of (Kanuha, 2000). Similar to engaged scholarship, being an insider offers several advantages, including easy access to the group and a deep understanding of the target population (Corbin Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). However, insider research has its challenges that fall under the topic of reflexivity.

One significant challenge encountered in this study was that respondents assumed that I already understood their experiences, leading them to not fully explain themselves (Karra and Phillips, 2007). Phrases like "as you will know Lewis…" were common. To address this issue, I clarified that I was acting as a researcher and not a coach; thus, I requested that they answer the question as though I was not a coach from the beginning, and when any comments were made, that they assumed I did not understand the concept. My research required capturing respondents' precise interpretations in their own words, encouraging participants to share their experiences in more depth.

Another challenge of insider research was the risk of overlooking essential aspects of the study because they seemed obvious (Karra and Phillips, 2007). For example, respondents repeatedly discuss the topic of DISC behaviour profiling that is common within the business coaching franchise, for example when talking about client characteristics "when I am dealing with a high D" that means little to anybody that is not familiar with DISC. Again, to counter this, I would interrupt the dialogue to ask the coach to explain more. As Fay (1996) suggests, outsiders may better appreciate the broader perspective and conceptualise the experience more effectively. Therefore, I would lean on my supervisors from outside the business coaching realm to be involved. Utilising semi-structured interviews and computer software-aided analysis also allowed for descriptive codes to be formed that were free from bias, but I also recognised that my interpretation was also relevant as an insider, thus the dual process of NVivo and manual reading and documenting of codes was an ideal procedure for descriptive code forming.

4.11 | Study 1 Methodology Summary

In the following chapter, the findings are presented from the semi-structured interviews with business coaches that follow the themes and questions derived from the literature review. While some questions were similar, they were intentionally rephrased to encourage deeper insights. The research employed an inductive approach, avoiding predetermined codes and allowing codes to emerge organically from each business coach's transcript. This approach prioritises the data's influence on the research direction, avoiding preconceived notions (Van De Ven, 2007; Lee & Lings, 2008). The semi-structured interviews aimed to elicit responses based on the coaches' experiences, rather than leading them toward biased researcher expectations. This inductive method might reveal concepts not previously covered (Bryman & Bell, 2015) in the current business coaching and boundaryless career literature for how business coaches cope and persist in their careers.

CHAPTER 5 | What Drives Coaches to Cope and Persist in the Profession

Chapters 5 – 8 present the research findings. In Chapter 5 I address how coaches account for what drives them to persist in the occupation.

5.1 | What Drives the Coach

This chapter explores the critical drivers that motivate business coaches to endure and thrive in their demanding profession. Respondents' accounts coalesced around the financial imperatives, pursuit of flexibility, desire for personal growth, and quest for meaningful work. This chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of the diverse factors that sustain coaches' commitment and resilience. Understanding these drivers is essential as it highlights the multifaceted nature of their motivations, shedding light on the profound dedication required to succeed in the coaching profession.

5.2 | Financial Imperatives

The business coaches in the sample spoke about their wish to make more money.

Eight business coaches argued that money was important for their livelihood.

> *"What motivates me? Well, I needed to pay the mortgage, and all that sort of good stuff and eat. So it had to be a business that made money once I got over that. And once that's okay. I love business. I'm absolutely fascinated by business. (COACH 1)*

Coaches mentioned that there was an initial need to replace the corporate income that they made from their previous jobs to achieve financial stability and highlighted the importance of how financial stability could also affect their family's well-being.

> *"In the first instance, I got to feel that it was something I thought I could be half decent at. And I needed to replace my corporate income. So my family weren't*

detrimentally affected by essentially me making a big decision to walk away from a long corporate career." (Coach 3)

In essence, business coaches emphasised the financial imperatives of their careers, highlighting the necessity of securing a stable income to meet basic needs and ensure family well-being. This pragmatic approach underscores the importance of financial stability in their decision to pursue coaching, revealing a foundational driver rooted in economic considerations.

5.3 | Desire for Flexibility

All 15 business coaches discussed how flexibility was a driver for them. It allowed the coach to achieve autonomy, which further allowed them to achieve a better work-life balance.

Coaches report that they pursued the business coaching career in the first instance for flexibility that allows for a better work-life balance. They reported that making it work as a business coach is a driver so they don't have to return to a 'nine to five' corporate career. They also reported that work-life balance is not an easy goal to achieve without deliberate effort.

Six of the business coaches interviewed emphasised that a driver for them to persist as a business coach was because they did not want to be in a corporate career with no flexibility. Coaching allows the individual to utilise what they liked best about their previous career in a way that they can work for themselves.

"I wanted to be a coach. Because first and foremost, I wanted to work for myself. So I wanted the business to work for myself. But when I looked back in my career at what I enjoyed most of what I did, when I was in corporate, it was coaching people and working with a team." (Coach 15)

And it also gave me the flexibility to work somewhat limited hours and from where I wanted as well potentially." (Coach 11)

Generally speaking, yes. Yeah, I could coach three days a week. I could probably coach, I could probably condense that further if I wanted to."(Coach 12)

Coaches reported that business coaching works well for them in achieving flexibility because there is a ‘no time for money’ correlation in how they deliver results in their jobs.

COACH 14 discusses how business coaching results derive from the value given and that more time doesn’t correlate with the value delivered to the client.

> *"But in reality, you don't have to work 12 hours, 15 hours a day, you can manage your own time, as long as the results that you want, are within that time." (COACH 14)*

Coaches report that flexibility and autonomy are driving factors for them, as they allow the coach to work from home without extensive travel.

> *“Let me just think, a moment about that. I believe that what motivated me was this, the fact that I could be based at home or in a given location, but probably at home. And I didn't really have to go anywhere. In order to interact with business people, I didn't have to do any major travelling, I could do all of this from one location." (Coach 9)*

COACH 11 gives further insight into why the flexibility and the option to work from home is also a driver for a business coach because autonomy allows them to accommodate family needs (family well-being) and how this allows them to work towards their bigger vision and goals.

> *"But probably actually, what I'm trying to build is something which my vision of what I was trying to build probably changed a bit, I was probably thinking about building something bigger back then, I've had some changes family-wise, which means that that's probably not such a great idea anymore, or not such a commitment I can make a really know what motivates me is to be able to decide when where and whether I worked by a particular point in 2025." (Coach 11)*

Coaches reported that although on the surface coaching may seem to offer autonomy and a better work-life balance than a corporate career due to flexibility, the reality is that to be successful they have to work just as hard—if not harder—than they did in their corporate careers.

COACH 2 discusses how their career as a business coach is not as easy life as they expected, but it is rewarding because of the enjoyment they get from coaching.

> *“I mean, listen, work-life balance. I've got lots of flexibility. I work hard. So I probably work as hard if not harder than I did in my corporate life, but everything I do is because I enjoy it." (Coach 2)*

Coaches also reported that although having flexibility is a driver, achieving a positive work-life balance and success does not come easy. The coaches acknowledged the need for deliberate action to maintain balance in the coaching profession. Work-life balance is not a by-product of being a business coach; it only comes with hard work and focus to achieve work-life balance as a goal.

> *"Yeah, for me, personally, yes, I see some coaches working crazy hours. So we're not immune to having a positive work-life balance, we're not immune to having to be really deliberate in making that happen in our businesses. And in our own lives. I am in a team or our team really values work-life balance, you know, there are people on my team who will dial into our team meetings from Greece, or Norway, or Prague or wherever they happen to be because that's what they're up to." (Coach 5)*

In summary, business coaches’ unanimous desire for flexibility underscores their aim for autonomy and enhanced work-life balance, setting their career choices apart from traditional corporate confines. This pursuit is attractive for its promise of self-determined schedules and the ability to work from anywhere, as highlighted by coaches. However, achieving this flexibility and balance is challenging, requiring disciplined effort and hard work, as success in coaching goes beyond mere autonomy to encompass deliberate planning and execution. This underscores that while flexibility in coaching offers the potential for personal and professional fulfilment, it also demands a committed and focused approach to truly realise its benefits.

5.4 | Desire for Personal Growth

Seven of the business coaches directly responded that personal growth and learning are drivers. The coaches emphasised further what personal growth means for them, suggesting

that the driver is for new experiences, the desire to face new challenges and overcome fear, and the passion for lifelong learning.

Business coaches share an ongoing commitment to learning. They discussed the joy of learning and applying new knowledge as elements that drive them as business coaches.

> *"I also am very, very interested in learning and growth. So I've done a lot of that in the past. And I continue to do a lot of that now." (Coach 1)*

> *"I like learning. I like I then like implementing the learning and seeing the effect that that can have." (Coach 2).*

COACH 11 enjoyed the challenge that business coaching delivers being in a career where they can face new challenges and overcome fear was a driver for them as it kept them on their toes to need to constantly learn and allowed them to witness new experiences, referring to the business coaching journey as:

> *"...a healthy dose of fear of failure" (Coach 11)*

The desire for personal growth and learning stands out as a key driver for business coaches, emphasising their dedication to continuous development and pursuing new challenges. This commitment is rooted in a passion for lifelong learning, as highlighted by coaches who cherish the process of acquiring and applying new knowledge. The journey of business coaching, with its inherent uncertainties and challenges, like the "healthy dose of fear of failure" described by Coach 11, acts as a powerful driver for growth.

5.5 | Meaningful Work

Coaches report that the feeling that they were carrying out “meaningful work” was a driver for them. The following explores what the coaches consider as “meaningful work”, followed by two sub-sections that cover the theme in detail: the desire to influence the growth of others and the desire to positively impact their community.

5.5.1 | Meaningful work compared to other jobs

The coaches express how previous jobs they had—although they would allow them to be financially successful—lacked meaning. Coaches also explain that although the journey of business coaching is full of ups and downs, reflecting on how they contribute to meaningful work drives them to persist during tough times.

Coaches' responses reflect on past work. COACH 2, for example, explained how they worked in the food industry in an executive position and questioned its meaningfulness compared to coaching.

> "*I can't think that anyone's got a more meaningful job than me. I'll give you an example. So I don't know if I can say this. But I used to work for a chocolate company in <removed>. And again, I'm not dissing them because I work for <removed> and <removed> and they were brilliant businesses and you know, lovely product. But I did kind of find myself checking myself a few times afterwards thinking, what the hell was what was the purpose of me working in <removed> for six years selling chocolate?" (Coach 2)*

Coaches contemplate how coaching provides more meaning than many other professions could because they perceive their work as "delivering goals" for their customers and how being present for their customers gives them the foundation to reflect and grow.

> *"Yeah, I can't think of unless I was a doctor, I can't think of any other job that I could do that would provide more meaning. And I say that without wishing to sound trite because it's not about helping somebody. It's not about fixing their problems. It's about delivering their goals." (Coach 13)*

> *"I would say for me, that's more about experiencing meaningfulness in life. Because all these things are so interconnected. So in terms of meaningfulness for me, means that really, because I was there, something's something potentially better than it was when I wasn't there. And that that is why I derive a sense of meaning self-worth value, purpose from is having a pretty deep-rooted belief, long predating coaching, that that things will all just be better if I'm there than if I'm not." (Coach 9)*

COACH 8 compares the sense of achievement felt in coaching to previous roles that lacked this feeling, where their work as a business coach is recognised and visible.

> *"Oh, it's completely different. I've had so many jobs over the years in different places, and I've moved on because I've never felt a sense of achievement. And I've never felt like I've been working towards anything. So I think for me this job is it's more than a job, I don't like to call it a job really, because it's more than that. It's the way that it helps and makes a difference to people gives you have a sense of achievement without being kind of recognised or always." (Coach 8)*

COACH 12's response was unique and revealed how coaching others in finding their purpose leads to personal reflection on their purpose, which in turn drives them to develop their careers so they align with their values.

> *"Yeah, I think it is big, partly because we talk about it so much in coaching others about having a clear and meaningful purpose to be spending time doing what is important to us. I think that naturally causes me and causes other coaches to focus on that for ourselves. You know, it's a matter when I'm working through vision, values, purpose and things like that, with clients, it's natural that I'm going to do that myself." (Coach 12)*

In summary, the quest for meaningful work emerges as a pivotal driver for business coaches, who contrast their current roles with past positions that lacked purpose and fulfilment despite offering financial success. This pursuit of meaningful work is not just about financial gain but about making a tangible difference in people's lives. Coaches highlighted the unique sense of achievement coaching provides, distinct from any previous job, due to its direct impact on others. Coaches also point out how coaching others to find their purpose encourages personal reflection on one's values and purpose, aligning their career with their deepest beliefs. This collective drive towards meaningful work underscores a shared belief among coaches that their role not only contributes to their clients' success but also offers them a fulfilling career path deeply aligned with their values and desire to make a positive impact. Another driver for the coach is if they did not become successful as a business coach, the alternative would have to be to seek an alternative job that did not have meaning.

5.5.2 | Desire to influence the growth of others

COACH 13 shares the journey from business owner to coach, highlighting a pivotal moment of realisation about the potential of coaching after a conversation with a former colleague who had become a coach. This marked a turning point, recognising coaching as a vehicle for using personal strengths and experiences to assist others.

> *"I think that after years of business experience, starting and running four or five of my own businesses, I realised how difficult it was. And having, you know, kind of fast forwarded, if you like, to a couple of corporate careers and those businesses, I think I discovered one day, a former colleague of mine had become a coach. And when he mentioned it to me, I thought, actually, that sounds exactly like me the privilege of being able to help somebody else solve their problems."*

COACH 5 recounts an experience during a corporate training session that revealed the power of coaching. Realising the impact of seemingly simple questions on personal growth and self-awareness led them to business coaching and the desire to help others.

> *"I did, I come from a corporate background. And we did some, like, management, training, leadership training. We had to bring a challenge to the, to the training course, you know, some minor team… We had to bring a challenge. We were sort of given almost just a list of questions to ask each other, and literally, that we were just reading these questions off a script, you know, without really thinking about it… People were coming, coming to the session with a challenge of, oh, you know, my team is underperforming, or my team won't, you know, doesn't care about their job, or whatever it was. And just by me asking the sort of scripted questions, people were in tears and realising that what they needed to change about themselves, and all this stuff was coming out. And that really opened my eyes to right there's something in this, something that works." (Coach 5)*

COACH 6 and COACH 10 speak to their personal backgrounds of owning businesses and the transformation experienced through being coached. This not only highlights the effectiveness of coaching but also serves as a foundational driver for becoming coaches themselves, aiming to share their learning experiences and assist others in avoiding their past mistakes.

“I wanted to share some of the things that I've learned. And I wanted to help people, I'd been in a bad place before years before. And what I was doing wasn't helping anyone. I was working in property transactions. So although I was doing well, financially it wasn't helping anyone." (Coach 6)

"Being a client of a coach maybe helped me get my business completely systemised and working without me. And I spent 20 years of hardship, working my socks off working really, really hard rather than smart. And I wanted to become a coach so I can help people not do the same as me." (Coach 10)

COACH 4 and COACH 5 emphasise the transformative effect of coaching on clients, particularly through teaching and accountability. COACH 4 discusses changing business mindsets, while COACH 5 focuses on the profound self-realisation clients’ experience, illustrating the deep impact that coaching has on others’ lives.

"I think the ability to actually make a difference to small businesses where the business is almost everything to that person, but if they don't know what they're doing, or they're not focused enough, then they can’t be a healthy small business owner." (Coach 4)

"The thing that motivated me was the change in other people, and getting other people to realise things that they didn't know about themselves. And as a coach, you can go into those kinds of conversations. You've got no, no preconceptions… mainly because I think you get a real good sense of achievement out of coaching because you are achieving through the people that you are coaching, you know, when they achieve when they get it when they make those decisions, you get that sense of achievement." (Coach 5)

COACH 1 and COACH 9 reflect on the joy of witnessing client growth and success. Their narratives underscore the sense of accomplishment and fulfilment that comes from seeing clients achieve their goals, such as moving into a dream home or realising their potential.

"I wouldn't think there are too many other businesses or jobs if you call it that, around that would give this sense of achievement. When you see businesses grow. I've got a client two weeks ago moved into their dream home and that sense of achievement is fantastic." (Coach 1)

"I just liked helping people. And I like seeing other people succeed. And if I can contribute to them succeeding in any way, then that makes them feel good because they've succeeded. And it makes me feel good because I've helped them succeed." (Coach 9)

COACH 9 and COACH 13 articulate the personal fulfilment derived from coaching. They describe the satisfaction of helping others succeed and the privilege of being a part of someone else's problem-solving process, which also reflects on their own journeys and the desire for meaningful work.

"I just liked helping people. And I like seeing other people succeed. And if I can contribute to them succeeding in any way, then that makes them feel good because they've succeeded. And it makes me feel good because I've helped them succeed." (Coach 9)

"*I think that after years of business experience, starting and running four or five of my own businesses, I realised how difficult it was. And having, you know, kind of fast-forwarded, if you like, to a couple of corporate careers and those businesses, I think I discovered one day, a former colleague of mine had become a coach. And when he mentioned it to me, I thought, actually, that sounds exactly like me the privilege of being able to help somebody else solve their problems. If I'd had somebody do that, for me, 25 years ago, I'd probably be lying on a beach in some sunny, hot climate." (Coach 13)*

As COACH 13 highlights, coaches suggest that they are business coaches today because of the impact a business coach once had on their lives. It has become a value of theirs to help more business owners achieve a life like they have and not let the client's business run them to the ground—they were inspired by other business coaches to help others achieve more and are driven to help other business owners do the same.

COACH 6 and COACH 10 discuss the broader impacts of coaching on small business success and others that the business employees, along with the business owner. They talk about the importance of mindset, systemisation, and avoiding past mistakes, highlighting the role of coaching in not just solving immediate problems but in fostering long-term business health and independence.

"*I wanted to help people; I'd been in a bad place before years before" (Coach 6)*

"Being a client of a coach maybe helped me get my business completely systemised and working without me. And I spent 20 years of hardship, working my socks off working really, really hard rather than smart. And I wanted to become a coach so I can help people not do the same as me." (Coach 10)

In essence, driven by transformative experiences and the profound impact of coaching on client growth, business coaches express a unified desire to facilitate success and meaningful change in others' lives. They leverage their expertise to guide business owners towards achieving their full potential and fostering long-term success.

5.5.3 | Desire to positively impact their community

Business coaches are driven by a desire to significantly impact their communities, as evident from their reflections on how coaching extends beyond individual success to contribute to a larger societal and economic benefit. This desire is rooted in their personal experiences, beliefs, and the fulfilment they derive from seeing the positive effects of their work.

COACH 14 encapsulates this sentiment by highlighting the broader impact of their coaching and how it drives them to aid in business growth, not solely for the client's benefit but as a contributor to the economy and the bigger picture.

"Basically, I like growing businesses grow my own business, as before, and I thought I'd just like to actually help other business owners grow their teams, etc. And just basically to really help the economy is the real answer." (Coach 14)

Several coaches discussed the intrinsic value they find in coaching, further emphasising the role of coaching in making a societal impact. For instance, COACH 11 illustrates how coaching offers a unique platform for leveraging one's skills for broader benefits, balancing personal fulfilment with making a positive impact.

"So I guess I'd spent about twenty plus years in leadership development and assessment. Coaching was kind of part of that. But ultimately what I wanted to do I

enjoy having an impact on my clients. I saw coaching and business coaching specifically as an opportunity to have an impact on people in a way that I wasn't in management consulting. (Coach 11)

Similarly, COACH 12 reflected on the meaningfulness of coaching, reinforcing the idea that coaching's value lies in its capacity to positively affect others' lives, further aligning with the coach's desires for meaningful work.

"Yeah, I think there's not too many things more meaningful than positively impacting other people. So, I would say that scores highest compared to other jobs, I'd say it's pretty good."(Coach 12)

Delving deeper into the personal drivers behind coaching, COACH 8 highlighted the ripple effect of their work, showcasing the extensive influence coaching can have, extending beyond the business owner to positively affect the broader community.

"It's helping people. And I think actually seeing the wider impact of that. So by doing the business coaching, now, you're not just helping the individual that's in front of you. But you're also by default, helping their family or helping their employees or their employees' families." (Coach 8)

These coaches' collective reflections underscore a common theme: the desire to leverage coaching as a means to give back and make a significant impact.

"What motivated me was literally to give back some stuff which I've had" (Coach 14)

This sentiment is echoed across their narratives, demonstrating a profound commitment to contributing to the well-being of others and the community at large.

Business coaches' shared aspiration to significantly impact their communities reflects a profound dedication to extending the benefits of their coaching beyond individual achievements to broader societal and economic advancements. This commitment is deeply ingrained in their personal experiences and the fulfilment gained from witnessing the transformative effects of their work. Through insights from coaches who emphasise coaching's role in economic growth and the ripple effect on families and employees, it becomes evident that their work is not just about personal success but about leveraging their

skills for the greater good. These narratives collectively reveal a powerful driver among coaches to use their profession as a means for meaningful change, underscoring the intrinsic value they place on making a lasting, positive impact on the wider community.

5.6 | Chapter 5 Drivers Conclusion

Chapter 5 delved into the drivers of business coaches and how they persist in their profession, identifying four core themes: financial imperatives, the pursuit of flexibility for autonomy and improved work-life balance, a yearning for personal growth, and a quest for meaningful work that impacts others and their community positively. Financial stability is deemed essential for personal gain and as a means to support family well-being. Flexibility emerges as a crucial factor, offering coaches the autonomy to balance work and life effectively, although it requires deliberate effort to achieve. Through facing new challenges and lifelong learning, personal growth is a significant driver, enhancing coaches' skills and experiences. Above all, the desire to conduct meaningful work that transcends individual success to foster broader societal and economic benefits is a dominant theme. Coaches reflect on their previous jobs' lack of purpose and how coaching allows them to make a tangible difference in people's lives and the community at large, underscoring their commitment to leveraging their profession for the greater good. This synthesis of drivers showcases the multifaceted reasons business coaches are drawn to, remain, cope, and persist in their field.

CHAPTER 6 | What Barriers Do Coaches Face in Their Profession

In Chapter 6, I address the physical and psychological barriers that coaches face that they must cope with and persist against to become successful in their profession.

6.1 | What Are Barriers for the Coach?

Chapter 6 delves into the psychological and physical barriers coaches face in their coaching career, starting with the apprehension of client departure, which impacts income and client relationships. I highlight coaches' struggles with self-doubt, which undercuts their effectiveness due to fears of inadequacy and client rejection. The chapter also explores the delicate balance between friendliness and assertiveness needed to maintain professional coaching standards, especially with difficult clients resistant to change. Additionally, I address the shift to virtual coaching prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, underscoring the adaptability required to manage technological challenges and maintain client engagement in a new coaching environment. Addressing these barriers is crucial for coaches to effectively support their clients and sustain their professional success, highlighting the need for ongoing professional development and adaptive coaching strategies so that coaches can cope and persist in their professions.

6.2 | Psychological Barriers

Coaches report on psychological challenges that act as major barriers within their coaching profession. These psychological barriers refer to negative emotions and thoughts they continually must overcome to grow, cope, and persist as successful business coaches.

6.2.1 | The Threat of Client Departure

All fifteen business coaches spoke of the negative impacts of the threat of losing clients. The business coach’s income is not a fixed salary, and the coaches are freelance. Client departure, therefore, impacts the coach’s income. The coach/client agreement for the

coaches in this study is that the client can give 30 days' notice to stop coaching. The decision is in the client's hands, and they can give the 30-day notice to cancel at any given time without warning. This not only has financial implications but, in turn, causes psychological challenges for the coach.

COACH 1 reports that even though they know that one day the client will eventually leave, this still causes apprehension and is a consistent concern for the coach.

> *"The apprehension about clients leaving has been a consistent concern throughout my coaching journey. The inevitability of such events has not dulled the disappointment and the self-interrogation that follows. (Coach 1)*

COACH 13 highlights that the fear of losing their clients is a barrier because, as coaches, it is often necessary for them to be tough with the client. Their desire to be liked causes a predicament for the coach, as they believe being 'tough' may result in the client not liking them.

> *"My desire to be liked is a personal challenge, particularly when it leads to a reluctance to be as tough as necessary for fear of losing clients." (Coach 13)*

COACH 14 also reports the predicament that the coach must be assertive in order to coach the client.

> *"Being very reserved can be limiting, potentially holding back the assertiveness needed in coaching." (Coach 14)*

COACH 5 explains how they feel pressure from their clients to achieve their goals and how they feel they are responsible for the clients' achieving their coaching results.

> *"The dread of clients not reaching their goals despite their efforts weighs on me significantly." (Coach 5).*

The business coaches report on their fear of losing clients, suggesting that it causes them apprehension, which in turn causes not only personal income challenges but also influences their ability to coach and makes them feel the pressure of being responsible for the clients' not achieving their goals.

6.2.2 | Self Doubt

Coaches express an underlying fear of failing to help clients reach their desired outcomes. They feel that they are to blame for the clients' not getting the result, which in turn creates not only anxiety about client departure but also feelings of inadequacy, where they feel they may not be able to help the client get what they want from coaching, thus impacting the coach's confidence and self-efficacy.

> *"There's an underlying fear of not being able to facilitate the results that my clients desire and need. This stems from a recognition that individuals turn to coaching with the hope of enhancing their lives in significant ways. My concern is that, despite best efforts, I may not be capable of guiding them to the fulfilment of those needs and aspirations, which could profoundly impact their pursuit of a better life." (Coach 8)*

Coaches identified negative psychological factors that prevent them from carrying out effective work. Self-doubt about their ability as coaches and the possibility that they may be inadequate to deliver results constrains coaches when it comes to attracting, retaining, and coaching clients. COACH 1 highlighted that self-doubt and internal dialogue are major barriers for them in their coaching careers.

> *"The most significant barrier to effective coaching for me is internal — the mental noise and the stories I tell myself. While external factors are largely beyond my control, the internal dialogue is something I can manage. It's the self-doubt and second-guessing that emerge as the primary obstacles to delivering the high level of coaching I aspire to." (Coach 1)*

COACH 2 expressed how they are anxious about adding value and facing rejection from sceptical clients. They outline that client scepticism is a fear for them as they fear they may be perceived as inadequate.

> *"The fear of not adding value looms large in my professional anxieties, particularly tied to the fear of rejection. Facing cynics in a group setting who might see my offerings as insufficient or misguided challenges my confidence. It's a stark reminder of the vulnerability inherent in coaching, where your expertise is laid bare for critique.*

Despite the deep belief in my methods, the possibility that they might be perceived as ineffectual by others is a fear that persists." (Coach 2)

COACH 15 reports how perceived peer hierarchy affects their confidence as a coach, demonstrating how they are perceived in their network can influence their belief in themselves to cope and persist.

"Occasional self-doubt and being affected by perceived hierarchies in my network impact me negatively, though I work on affirming my worth and abilities." (Coach 15)

COACH 4 speaks of their fears around the inability to communicate effectively, which leads to clients disregarding advice; thus, they are ineffective and inadequate as coaches.

"Observing a client choose to listen to possibly detrimental advice over mine is a significant concern. The inability to effectively communicate the insights they need, or to ask that one question that could trigger their realisation, is my greatest fear. This isn't just about not being heard; it's about failing to fulfil my role in their journey towards betterment. The possibility of being ineffective in a profession that's so results-oriented is daunting." (Coach 4)

COACH 8 introspects on their self-efficacy, its influence on coaching effectiveness, and the loss of confidence the client has in their coach.

"I am not always the most confident of people... that might make them lose confidence as well." (Coach 8)

In essence, coaches often grapple with a fear of failing to help clients achieve their goals, leading to self-doubt and apprehension about client retention and personal adequacy. This psychological burden erodes their confidence and effectiveness as they worry about adding value and facing rejection. Internal factors such as negative self-talk are significant barriers, while perceived inadequacy before sceptical clients intensifies their concerns. Additionally, fears about not being heard or effectively communicating further challenge their ability to perform in a results-oriented profession, impacting their professional confidence and growth.

6.2.3 | Tightrope Between Friend and Coach

Coaches need to have rapport with their clients; however, to coach the client, they also need to be directive with the client if the client is to break unproductive behaviours and achieve their goals. Coaches describe the tension between being direct in their coaching style and maintaining likability as a barrier as some coaches tend to develop friendship bonds with the client; however, they must remain the coach and challenge directly if the client is to get results and remain as a client.

COACH 10 reports that being direct used to hold them back because they wanted to be everyone's friend. This in turn was counterproductive as it put the friendship before coaching results.

> *"Being that direct used to hold me back because I used to want to be everybody's friend, and not do anything for anybody on the planet and put me last." (Coach 10)*

Coaches in the interviews highlighted that friendship came from a desire to be liked. This desire for likability acted as a constraint in their coaching—to be tough on the client on taking the actions necessary to achieve their goals—which in turn led to the fear of client departure.

> *"My desire to be liked is a personal challenge, particularly when it leads to a reluctance to be as tough as necessary for fear of losing clients." (Coach 13)*

Coaches often struggle with the desire to be liked by their clients, which can undermine their effectiveness. Coach 10 and Coach 13 both noted that their need for approval made them less direct and tough with clients, hindering their ability to push for necessary actions to achieve goals and creating a fear of losing clients. This need to maintain friendly relations can thus conflict with professional responsibilities and outcomes.

6.3 | Difficult Clients

Coaches report that working with difficult clients is a barrier to their coaching careers. While the business coach and client initially interview each other before working together, quite

often, the coach will have to coach business employees, too. Clients, therefore, can have diverse characteristics and be resistant to the coach.

6.3.1 | Know It All Clients

Seven coaches report that close-mindedness, cynicism, and the clients thinking that they know it all are challenging characteristics of clients.

Coaches report the difficulties with clients who are resistant to new ideas and exhibit an 'I know' mentality, which in turn makes them opposed to change, which is necessary if the client is to achieve positive results from the coaching program:

> *"Clients who possess the 'I know' mentality and are not open to new ideas present a significant challenge. Their reluctance to change their thought patterns, habits, and beliefs makes progress slow, and often they do not achieve their desired outcomes because they resist the reasons for necessary changes." (Coach 1)*

> *"Clients who think they know it all and are resistant to new learning experiences, such as reading a book for growth, can be difficult to persuade. Their 'I know' mindset limits the potential for growth and is a barrier to productive coaching." (Coach 8)*

Similarly, coaches highlight the struggle with clients who have a 'been there, done that' attitude and resist the coaching process, further suggesting that this can also be an avoidance mechanism used by the client to avoid doing the necessary work to achieve results from coaching.

> *"People who are unyielding and have an entrenched 'been there, done that' mentality are the least enjoyable to work with. Their resistance to being coached and guided can render the coaching relationship ineffective." They further say that approach from the client leads to the "avoidance of necessary work". (Coach 15)*

Exploring deeper into the nuances of closed-mindedness within clients, COACH 3 describes the challenges of engaging with clients who are cynical as opposed to sceptical. COACH 3 explains that scepticism is a characteristic that is okay to deal with within clients because if a

client has not learnt it before, then scepticism is normal. However, cynical clients are dismissive of new ideas as they are choosing to challenge.

> *"Clients who are closed-minded, resembling armchair critics, are very challenging. Conversations with them can feel like a struggle, and their cynicism often becomes a significant obstacle. I prefer to work with sceptical clients who seek evidence over those who dismiss ideas outright." (Coach 3)*

Similarly, an 'I know' attitude is when a client not only has a negative attitude but also leads to physical indiscipline to follow through with doing what they said they would. COACH 2 expresses frustration with clients who are cynical, closed-minded, and lack organisational skills that lead to indiscipline.

> *"Those who are cynical or closed-minded with a fixed mindset are exceptionally frustrating to work with. When they lack focus, are poor organisers, and display indiscipline, such as being late or forgetting commitments, they embody the antithesis of an ideal client." (Coach 2)*

COACH 4 highlights that clients who are not ready to learn or engage are a barrier for the coach. Clients need to be resistant to the vulnerability required for change so that new goals can be achieved.

> *"Clients who are not ready to learn or engage proactively in coaching and rather talk aimlessly present a challenge. It's particularly tough when such behaviour persists, signalling discomfort with the coaching process or resistance to the vulnerability required for change." (Coach 4)*

COACH 10 and 15 reported that "High D"—a dominant personality—clients have a personality trait that they find challenging as they have a combative approach to the coaching process:

> *"High 'D' clients with a resistant 'I know' attitude are less rewarding to work with. They resist being challenged and have a combative approach to coaching." (Coach 10)*

"Working with people who are dictatorial (High D) or feel they know it all is not enjoyable … Their resistance to guidance and input can make the coaching process feel futile." (Coach 15)

On the contrary, COACH 12 addresses the irritation caused by challenging clients, suggesting that the coach needs to improve their coaching abilities and that this constraint is an opportunity for growth by understanding the perspective of others.

"Challenges become less daunting as coaching expertise grows. Early on, clients who constantly question and behave sceptically can be irritating, but understanding their perspective and adapting the coaching style can turn these challenges into opportunities for growth." (Coach 12).

To summarise, coaches commonly face challenges with clients who exhibit a "know-it-all" attitude, characterised by close-mindedness, cynicism, and resistance to change. This mindset impedes progress as these clients are not open to new ideas and often resist the coaching process, which is essential for achieving positive outcomes. Coaches find that such clients, who may display a 'been there, done that' attitude or avoid necessary work, hinder coaching effectiveness. Furthermore, some coaches differentiate between clients who are sceptically cautious and those who are dismissively cynical, with the latter being particularly difficult due to their outright rejection of new concepts. Additionally, clients lacking organisational skills or those who are combative, such as those with a high 'D' personality trait, also pose significant challenges. However, some coaches view these difficulties as opportunities to enhance their coaching skills and adapt their methods, suggesting that overcoming these challenges can lead to growth and improved coaching efficacy. Coach adaptability is discussed in later chapters.

6.3.2 | Not Taking Responsibility as Role of Client

Eight coaches discuss clients who don't follow and take responsibility for the role they play as clients, which is a constraint for the coach.

Coaches find it challenging to work with clients who do not follow through on commitments and resist being challenged. COACH 9 highlights the psychological impact it has on the coach:

"The single most challenging trait is when clients do not follow through with their commitments. It undermines the foundation of the coaching relationship and can be quite wearing over time." (Coach 9)

COACH 9 further reports that they understand the importance of client motivation and action for successful coaching, yet the failure of that action becomes a drain on the coach:

"I enjoy working with clients who are motivated to succeed, regardless of their personality type. The commitment to action is what's crucial. However, consistently failing to take action can become a drain on the coach." (Coach 9)

Coaches also report that the clients not only fail to follow through with their actions to perform so that they can achieve results, but the clients also become resistant, which reveals itself as either combative or through excuses.

COACH 11 talks about the lack of actions clients take towards their goals, suggesting that lack of responsibility and combativeness are characteristics that they find challenging in coaching.

"Clients who don't take responsibility, fail to take action, and lack focus present a less enjoyable coaching experience. Their lack of openness to recognising that they might not have been doing things the most effective way hinders progress." (Coach 11)

COACH 4 describes the struggle with clients who do not act on agreed-upon actions.

"Clients who repeatedly fail to follow through on agreed actions can be particularly taxing. Constant excuses and an inability to progress are challenging, especially if the coach's experience isn't sufficient to redirect the client effectively." (Coach 4)

COACH 11 speaks about clients who entangle themselves in drama, and excuses are a challenge to work with because they not only prevents achieving breakthroughs but also removes the sense of fun from the relationship.

"Clients lacking a sense of fun, who often get entangled in drama and excuses, and who don't take accountability for their actions, are less enjoyable to work with

compared to those who actively engage and make continuous breakthroughs." (Coach 11)

Coaches discuss the challenges with clients who are not inspired to achieve their goals and show a lack of commitment to the work necessary for their development. They refer to this attitude as being the opposite of high performers, where the clients make excuses for lack of action, which in turn hampers the performance of the client's results and the coach.

"The opposite of high performers, those who fail to meet their goals, are consistently late, and do not engage with educational material, pose more of a challenge. It reflects a lack of commitment to their development." (Coach 6)

"Clients who aren't inspired or who use excuses to avoid doing the necessary work make coaching challenging. I don't appreciate when clients hide behind the veil of being 'too busy' as it hampers their growth and the coaching progress." (Coach 14)

COACH 4 reports a deeper constraint where lack of follow-through puts pressure on the coach-client relationship. They report that it is difficult to enjoy coaching clients who avoid taking responsibility for their actions, thus, not only does lack of responsibility lead to lack of action, but it also leads to damaging the coach-client relationship through strained rapport placing a heavier constraint on the coach.

"Some clients may be inherently less likeable, and it can be tough to work with those who avoid taking responsibility. The rapport is strained when progress stalls due to a client's unwillingness to act." (Coach 4)

Coaches mention the difficulty in dealing with indecisive clients or those who are dictatorial and resistant to coaching.

"Clients that are indecisive or display a range of behaviours that challenge the coach's adaptability can be difficult." (Coach 14)

On the contrary, coaches address the challenges of clients who make excuses or are not willing to engage fully in the coaching process, suggesting that this may be due to the coaches' inexperience and their ability to coach different business owner personalities.

"There may be some people who are a bit more challenging to work with, but the true job of a coach is to guide them to the right level, turning a potentially less enjoyable situation into a rewarding challenge." (Coach 13)

“It requires the coach to employ different strategies to achieve the desired outcomes." (Coach 14)

This emphasises the importance of adaptability to client behaviour in the coaching relationship and that coaches must be aware that a client that they may be finding difficult to coach may be because of the coach’s approach and coaching method that they are deploying.

Coaches who report the barrier of working with difficult clients and the client not being accountable to their role suggest that it is not always the case that it is the client’s personality that is the challenge. Coaches suggest that if the client is going through a difficult business situation, then this can, in turn, influence the client’s coaching journey and attitude towards coaching.

COACH 8 discusses the difficulties new coaches face with clients operating under high stress and survival mode.

"New coaches might find it hard to work with clients who are in a dire survival mode due to external pressures. The fear of not being able to help and the intensity of the situation make these coaching experiences less enjoyable." (Coach 8)

This suggests that characteristics may be a challenge for the coach, however, the client may be behaving per a situation they are having in their business or personal life. Thus, coach adaptability is critical for the coach to understand and not just jump to the conclusion that the client’s behaviour is because of a characteristic of theirs; the behaviour could be in response to a situation they are experiencing.

To summarise, coaches are faced with a barrier with clients who fail to take responsibility for their actions, which creates significant challenges in the coaching relationship. Many coaches report that clients who don't follow through on commitments or resist being challenged can be draining and make coaching less effective and enjoyable. This issue is compounded when clients are combative or resort to excuses, hindering progress and making the coaching process taxing. The lack of client accountability often leads to

frustration, as continuous excuses and a lack of engagement reflect poorly on their commitment to development. Coaches find that dealing with such clients requires adaptability and an understanding that some difficulties may stem from external pressures affecting the clients, rather than just personality traits or a lack of motivation. This situation places further demand on the coach to employ various strategies to effectively manage and redirect clients towards positive outcomes, emphasising the need for flexibility and sensitivity in addressing the unique challenges each client may bring to the coaching relationship.

6.4 | Support (Where they need more help)

The business coaches all have a coach within the organisation who coaches them. Support, in this instance, refers to the support that they need as coaches to overcome the barriers that they face in their careers. The coaches reported on their struggles as business coaches and the support that they feel they need more of.

6.4.1 | Being Forceful

Coaches report that their non-forceful personalities are a barrier to their work. They recognise that their non-confrontational personalities find directive coaching challenging. As coaches, it is important that the coach and client do not collide and that the real problem is addressed; thus, the coach needs to be assertive.

Coaches discuss their struggles with becoming more forceful when necessary, suggesting that although they have a positive personality and it acts as a strength, they do have to be confrontational.

> *"I think sometimes I need to be stronger. I need to be a bit more forceful with them, confrontational, and I'm not really a confrontational sort of person." (Coach 4)*

> *"While my positivity is a strength, it becomes a drawback when I need to be forceful. Sometimes you have to put that confrontational face, you know?" (Coach 7)*

"My calm and quiet nature is usually positive, but it can hold me back from being assertive in conversations or challenging clients when necessary." (Coach 8).

These responses highlight that although the coaches need to support clients towards taking the right actions to get results, coaches' non-forceful personalities make coaching a challenge.

COACH 5 reports that being direct and challenging the client is uncomfortable and is a barrier for them when holding the client accountable, but recognises that they must overcome this barrier in their coaching career.

"Not being naturally very direct, it's uncomfortable for me to challenge people, especially when holding them accountable, but I recognise the need to be more forthright in coaching." (Coach 5)

However, COACH 11, who adopts a more natural assertive and direct communication style, describes how they have to hold back from being forceful, as quite often they expect too much from the client, and this can be counterproductive in coaching.

"Sometimes my directness is excessive, and while it can be an asset, it also holds me back if I refrain from using it when needed or when I expect too much from clients." (Coach 11)

Coaches in the interview were also asked what they liked and disliked about their coach. This, in turn, reveals insight into how they perceive support from their coach from a client perspective, thus offering further insight into barriers that coaches may face.

The coaches report that lack of support from the angle that their coach doesn't challenge them or hold them accountable was a barrier to their progress as clients of the coach.

An example of wanting more rigorous support from their coach was witnessed in COACH 1 who desires coaching support that isn't afraid to pose a real challenge.

"What I don't like about coaches... they've not been prepared to really challenge me, or to spear me on a particular issue." (Coach 1)

Similarly, COACH 15 wished for a harder push in certain aspects of coaching which would help them with what they need as a coach.

> *"I think they could probably push me a bit harder. And a couple of aspects... maybe just maybe a shorter, sharper shock, on a couple of occasions might be what I need." (Coach 15)*

This sets the precedence that some coaches like to be pushed and challenged in their support from a coach.

Many coaches struggle with naturally non-forceful personalities, finding it a barrier to adopt a more confrontational or directive approach when necessary. This often limits their ability to effectively address client issues and hold clients accountable. The discomfort with being overly direct can sometimes hinder their coaching effectiveness, as assertiveness is crucial for client progress. Additionally, a common desire among these coaches is for more rigorous support and challenge from their mentors, which they believe would support their own development and effectiveness in coaching. This highlights the need for coaches to stretch beyond their comfort zones to foster higher client support.

6.4.2 | Accountability

Out of the coaching interviews, COACH 4 expected that follow through on accountability measures to hold them accountable for their actions during the sessions to be a strong factor in their coaching experience. COACH 4 reported that they desire the need for follow-through accountability, and this would enhance their coaching journey.

> *"It would be a little bit more accountability from them. A little bit more like last time you said you were going to do this. Did you do it?" (Coach 4)*

COACH 12 concurred with COACH 4, who further noted that leniency in accountability is counterproductive in the coaching relationship.

> *"With my current coach? He probably is letting me off a few things" (Coach 12)*

The above highlights that the coaches, both as coaches and as clients, display a need for coaches to be confrontational to support the coach and hold the client to account.

6.4.3 | Compassion

Where non-confrontation was previously discussed, coaches who are more confrontational report that they must be aware of their lack of compassion and often do not support the client.

COACH 6 speaks on deliberate efforts to be compassionate—despite it not coming naturally in their personality—if they are going to support the client.

> *"Compassion, I'm not as compassionate as I'd like to be... My strength is that what I do in that area now is very deliberate, very practised and conditioned rather than natural." (Coach 6)*

COACH 10 highlights the need for a balanced approach that encompasses both logical and emotional coaching methods. Not doing so causes a lack of support for the client.

> *"What I don't like about my coach, number one is when they coach from a logical place, rather than emotional. (Coach 10)*

The above begins to highlight the conundrum that different coach personalities face and how they adapt to client situations to support them. Some argue that they must be objective to achieve results, however, others say they must demonstrate understanding and compassion for their situation to support the client.

6.5 | Virtual vs. In-Person Dynamics

The COVID pandemic caused barriers and for the business coaching industry to pivot in how they deliver their coaching to clients. The business coaches could not meet their clients face-to-face. Many business coaches moved to coaching their clients over online virtual platforms.

COACH 5 discusses the challenges of shifting dynamic from in-person to virtual coaching and how it has caused adversity in their coaching.

> *"The shift from face-to-face to virtual coaching has brought about a considerable change in my working environment. While one-on-one coaching adapts well to virtual formats, I've found that face-to-face interactions, particularly in group sessions, have a unique energy that's hard to replicate online. These in-person dynamics contribute significantly to the effectiveness of the coaching process." (Coach 5)*

COACH 11 considers travel time as an inefficient yet deliberate choice for personal interaction.

> *"One of the environmental factors that could potentially hinder my work is the geographical size of the area I cover and the resulting travel time for face-to-face coaching. While not detrimental, it's inefficient, as the time spent on the road could be allocated to billable work." (Coach 11)*

While COACH 11 continued to express how virtual platforms act as an adjuvant for their coaching, they also expressed how face-to-face is a more enjoyable method for them as business coaches.

> *"However, this is a deliberate choice to maintain the personal touch that face-to-face interactions provide." (Coach 11)*

Coaches also report that virtual coaching is faced with technological barriers that prevent them from coaching effectively.

COACH 2 cites chaos and technological failures as disruptive to productivity.

> *"Chaos and a lack of structure are antithetical to my productivity. When technology fails, like internet outages or Zoom glitches, it disrupts the rhythm of my coaching sessions. My office environment, with its quiet, organised, and bright atmosphere, is set up to counter any sense of disarray. The calm it provides is crucial for me to engage deeply and thoughtfully with my clients." (Coach 2)*

Similarly, COACH 4 emphasises the need for a stable internet connection and a quiet space, which gives them confidence in their coaching capabilities.

> *"An unstable internet connection is one of the few external factors that can significantly hamper my ability to coach effectively. Beyond that, unexpected domestic interruptions can also be distracting. However, these are minor compared to the broader scope of my work; as long as I have a stable connection and a quiet environment, I feel confident in my coaching capabilities." (Coach 4)*

Coaches express how they feel they lose a sense of connection over virtual platforms, along with being able to read the client's non-verbal signals. Coaches also commented on how coaching lots of clients over virtual platforms caused 'Zoom fatigue' for them. Whereas other coaches that have geographical constraints, for example, found the opportunity to coach online a positive for their career, despite the possibility of being faced with technology issues.

6.6 | Chapter 6 Barriers Conclusion

In Chapter 6, the discussion revolves around the barriers that coaches face, primarily focusing on the fear of client departure and self-doubt. The nature of freelance coaching means income is directly impacted by client retention, with clients having the option to leave at short notice. This precarious setup fuels ongoing apprehension among coaches, who fear that being too assertive might drive clients away. This apprehension is compounded by self-doubt, where coaches constantly question their ability to effectively aid their clients, worried about failing to meet expectations and the potential rejection if perceived as inadequate. These fears are not only about income but also reflect deeper concerns about personal efficacy and professional identity, highlighting the complex emotional landscape that coaches navigate. This struggle is intensified by the need to balance a friendly rapport with a more directive coaching approach, which is often necessary to achieve client goals but risks damaging the coach-client relationship if not handled delicately.

CHAPTER 7 | What Enablers Support the Coach to Cope and Persist

In the following chapter, I explore the enablers that help the coach cope and persist in their careers.

7.1 | What Are Enablers for the Coach

In the ever-evolving field of business coaching, it is crucial to understand the factors that enable coaches to effectively cope with challenges and persist in their careers. This chapter delves into the various enablers that support business coaches, drawing on qualitative insights from the 15 professional coaches. The results reveal three primary areas: the supportive working environment and community, the physical environment of the coaches, and the defining characteristics of ideal clients. These elements are explored to comprehend their collective impact on how coaches cope and persist. The significance of a supportive community is examined through the relationships and networks that coaches build with their peers, the organisations they are part of, and the clients they serve. This community provides emotional support, professional encouragement, and practical assistance, all of which are essential for coaches to thrive. Additionally, the role of the physical environment—ranging from the design of workspaces to the accessibility of natural settings—is assessed in terms of its ability to enhance cognitive function, creativity, and overall coach well-being. Lastly, the characteristics of clients that facilitate effective coaching engagements are analysed. This includes clients' openness to learning, alignment of values with their coaches, and their commitment to applying new knowledge. Through a detailed exploration of these themes, this chapter aims to outline the key enablers that contribute to the success and endurance of business coaches, thereby providing insights that could inform practices and strategies within the coaching industry.

7.2 | Supportive Working Environment and Community

7.2.1 | Having a Supportive Work Community

The fifteen business coaches highlight that factors supporting effective work come from their peer group and being in a community of like-minded business coaches.

COACH 1 expresses how they benefit from receiving coaching and having supportive colleagues and how they have been encouraging friends.

> *"My work is greatly supported by the coaching I receive myself, which serves as a foundation for my own effectiveness. Additionally, having a network of supportive friends and colleagues within the organisation has been invaluable. Their encouragement and assistance have been pivotal in my professional growth." (Coach 1)*

COACH 12 outlines how a reliable network of colleagues and their ongoing passion for coaching assists them on their coaching journey.

> *"My work environment, which I've tailored to my liking, and the network of colleagues I respect and can rely on for support, are critical for my work. Moreover, my passion for coaching and the enjoyment I derive from it enhance my work significantly." (Coach 12)*

COACH 6 values the strong support system at home, within their coaching community, and the client community that the coach has built. These communities allow for knowledge sharing among peers and mutual growth.

> *"The robust support I receive from my partner at home, my continuous learning through books and community, and the strong client community we've built are all fundamental to my success. These factors not only assist in the logistical aspects of running a home and business but also provide an environment ripe with knowledge-sharing and mutual growth." (Coach 6)*

In a similar vein regarding cultural fit, COACH 12 discusses how working with like-minded people on a similar wavelength is inspirational for them.

> *"Working in this organisation with I think, at the time 70 other coaches in the UK and pretty early on being on training with 17 other people that was pretty inspiring to see, you know, the kind of people they were the kinds of things they wanted to achieve. It felt very much on the same wavelengths." (Coach 12)*

COACH 2 highlights the role of family support and a conductive physical environment enables them to focus on their coaching career, remain disciplined, and stay resilient as a business coach.

> *"Having a supportive family life and a conducive physical environment plays a huge role in my success as a coach. A supportive partner allows me to focus on my coaching career, and maintaining a disciplined approach to what I expose myself to mentally reinforces my resilience." (Coach 2)*

COACH 2 places specific emphasis on how the franchise business structure is an enabler for them in a business coaching career because a franchise still delivers a support structure and the accountability of people to answer to whilst also allowing the coach freedom to their own thing.

> *"I wanted to be part of something so you know, I didn't ever think that I would kind of move from corporate straight into doing my very own thing, because I quite liked the structure of corporate to answer to. So therefore a franchisor that option was always of interest to me, because of there's enough freedom to do my own thing, but also within a structure of support." (Coach 2)*

The key concepts from the coaches' experiences highlight the importance of having a supportive network of colleagues and friends and maintaining a passion for the profession as vital factors for coping and persistence in coaching. Additionally, the support from family and clients, along with a well-organised work environment and cultural fit within the organisation, significantly contribute to a coach's success and job satisfaction. These elements together create a supportive ecosystem that not only manages practical and emotional challenges but also fosters professional growth and personal well-being.

7.3 | Physical Environment

Coaches report that their physical environment, such as their workspace and surroundings, enables them to cope and persist in their careers.

COACH 5 finds that time spent outdoors away from their workspace aids in creative thinking and problem-solving which is essential for them to continually learn and evolve as a coach.

> *"Stepping away from the desk and engaging with the world—through walks, swims, or simply being outdoors—enriches my coaching capabilities. This time away from screens is when I brainstorm, solve problems, and absorb new information. It's essential for my continuous learning and evolution as a coach." (Coach 5)*

Similarly, COACH 12 also indicates that their physical environment helps them with their work whilst being motivational for the coach.

> *"I am situated in a beautiful setting that provides not just the tools for my work but also an aesthetically pleasing and motivational backdrop" (Coach 12)*

COACH 2 concurs suggesting that their office space allows positive grounding in their sometimes chaotic thoughts in their work day.

> *"An office that's visually stimulating and organised complements my occasionally chaotic thought process, grounding me in structure when needed." (Coach 2)*

Physical environments play a crucial role in supporting career resilience and development for professionals. Spending time outdoors benefits creative thinking and problem-solving, essential for continuous learning and evolution. Aesthetic and motivational settings in the workplace not only provide the necessary tools to cope and persist through escape and an opportunity to recompose thoughts but also enhance motivation. Additionally, an organised and visually stimulating office space helps in managing chaotic thought processes, providing structure and grounding when needed. These elements collectively enable better coping tools and sustained motivation in a professional setting.

7.4 | Ideal Clients

The 15 business coaches all report throughout their interviews on the personalities and characteristics of their clients. They report that whilst there are clients that they find challenging to deal with, in which they must adopt strategies to overcome (discussed in the following chapter), there are also clients that enable the coach to carry out effective work.

The following reports on what the coaches consider are the ideal characteristics of clients that helps the business coach do their job well.

7.4.1 | Openness to New Learning

The business coaches report that one's openness to new learning is a characteristic of an ideal client.

COACH 1 speaks about the ease of coaching clients who proactively seek self-education and how, on the contrary, clients who resist ideas are difficult to work with—that the coach suggests is often down to their proactive approach to self-education.

> *"Open-minded clients who engage with reading or listening to audiobooks present a distinct ease in coaching. Their proactive approach to self-education often means they are more receptive to new ideas and willing to embrace change, contrasting with those who resist learning new concepts." (Coach 1)*

COACH 12 sees a desire to learn and teach others as vital to a productive coaching relationship as it underlines the ideal client mindset.

> *"Eagerness to learn and improve, especially when coupled with a desire to teach others, significantly contributes to a productive coaching relationship. An openness to new ideas and methods underlines the ideal client mindset." (Coach 12)*

The client's openness to learn and self-education flows through the positive characteristics that business coaches find as an enabler for great coaching with their clients. However, coaches also highlight that learning must also be coupled with the application of new learnings.

COACH 2 admires clients who learn quickly, apply knowledge effectively, and show sustained motivation, as it makes the coaching process rewarding.

> *"Rapid learning and adaptability coupled with sustained drive are traits I admire in clients. Those who can absorb knowledge and then apply it to create meaningful change are ideal. They demonstrate focus, organisation, and the discipline*

necessary to continue their growth trajectory, making the coaching process rewarding." (Coach 2)

Similarly, COACH 11 appreciates clients who are open, willing to learn, and ready to act on new perspectives. COACH 11 suggests that from their experience, these are typically the clients who thrive and achieve better outcomes.

"Clients who display openness, a willingness to learn and to consider different perspectives, and who commit to taking action, are typically the ones who thrive. Their readiness to self-educate and their proactive approach lead to better outcomes." (Coach 11)

COACH 13 highlights the importance of coachability in client growth and receptiveness to change by saying, *"Coachability is pivotal."* However, when questioned further on 'what is coachability?' they responded with a similar response to the other coaches around openness to learn and application of new learnings.

"Clients who are receptive to new viewpoints, willing to reflect critically, and patient in formulating their responses are those who benefit the most from coaching. Their readiness to embrace change is what facilitates their growth." (Coach 13)

Business coaches emphasise that an ideal client's openness to new learning significantly enhances the coaching process. Clients who actively engage in self-education are more receptive to new ideas and willing to embrace change, making them easier to coach. The rapid application of new knowledge and sustained motivation are prized characteristics of an ideal client, as they enable clients to effectively implement change and continue their growth trajectory. Clients who are open, willing to learn, and ready to act on new perspectives typically achieve better outcomes, thus enabling the coach to more effectively carry out their job.

7.4.2 | Shared Values and Traits

The 15 coaches reported that clients with shared values and traits are an enabler for them as business coaches.

Continuing from learning characteristics, I questioned COACH 3 deeper on client characteristics when they too responded about clients being open to learning. I questioned why learning is so important. COACH 3 revealed that open-mindedness and curiosity are also values and traits of theirs too. The coach reported that having shared values allows for the coaching relationship to flow and have a greater impact.

> *"Open-mindedness, curiosity, and ambition are certainly characteristics that make clients easy to work with, but alignment of values is equally critical. When values are aligned, the coaching relationship flows more naturally, allowing for a greater impact." (Coach 3)*

Concurring with the above coaches, COACH 12 discusses how shared values allow for a more enjoyable and honest coaching dynamic.

> *"Working with people who share my values is inherently more enjoyable. When there's a clash, it requires an adjustment, and if dishonesty or negative traits persist, it becomes difficult to maintain an enjoyable coaching dynamic." (Coach 12)*

COACH 7 gravitates towards clients with similar behavioural patterns to themselves, highlighting that it makes for easier coaching interactions.

> *“I gravitate towards clients with similar behavioural patterns to myself. Clients with an open attitude, a desire to improve, and action-oriented tendencies are particularly easy to work with." (Coach 7)*

COACH 10 values a genuine rapport for an effective coaching experience where open and honest communication is at its heart so that the coaching experience can be more impactful.

> *"An open and honest rapport sets the stage for effective coaching. Relatability, especially with clients in industries like trades and services, enables a more genuine and impactful coaching experience." (Coach 10)*

COACH 15 notes that shared personality traits, such as shared humour or shared interests can enhance the coaching relationship by leading to a more relaxed and productive coaching environment.

"Personality matches, such as a shared sense of humour or common interests, can enhance the coaching relationship. These elements contribute to a more relaxed and productive coaching atmosphere." (Coach 15)

Shared values and traits between coaches and clients significantly enhance the coaching process. Sharing values leads to more enjoyable and honest dynamics, although clashes can complicate interactions. Clients with similar behavioural patterns make coaching interactions easier. Shared values foster more genuine rapport and impactful coaching experience, thus enabling the coach to carry out their profession more effectively.

7.4.3 | Clear Goals and Belief Goals Can Be Achieved

The business coaches reported that ideal clients are driven by clear goals. Self-efficacy and belief that they can achieve their goals are also essential characteristics of ideal clients.

Extending on the client and coach alignment of values, COACH 4 notes the ease of coaching clients when both coach and client have clear goals; without alignment, challenges along the coach-client coaching relationship emerge as the client does not easily engage with transformative processes that are essential within coaching.

"Clients who are open to suggestions and have clear objectives are considerably easier to work with. Challenges arise with those unsure of their goals or those who merely want to speak without engaging in a transformative dialogue." (Coach 4)

In addition to clarity and alignment of goals, I questioned the subject further with COACH 5. COACH 5 also finds that clients with self-belief in their ability to achieve and surpass goals are more enjoyable to work with as it fuels their participation in the coaching process and leads to tangible results.

"Belief in the possibility of achieving their goals, and even surpassing them, is what distinguishes the most enjoyable clients. This belief fuels their commitment to action and their participation in coaching sessions, leading to tangible progress." (Coach 5)

COACH 6 explains that their ideal coaching candidates as punctual, reliable, and goal-oriented, with a positive attitude towards openness to learn and application of new learnings, classifying them as high-performance traits.

> *"I identify high-performing clients by their punctuality, reliability, and their habit of completing assigned goals. These clients are usually avid learners, keen on attending seminars and implementing new strategies, making them ideal candidates for successful coaching." (Coach 6)*

Business coaches emphasise that ideal clients are characterised by clear goals and a strong belief in their ability to achieve these goals, which are pivotal for enabling a productive coaching relationship. The alignment of clear goals between coach and client enables an effective coaching process and enhances engagement in transformative activities essential to coaching. Challenges typically arise when clients are unclear about their goals or engage passively without committing to transformative dialogue. Additionally, clients who believe they can meet and even exceed their goals are often more committed to the coaching process, leading to more substantial and tangible results enabling the coach to achieve better results.

7.4.4 | Commitment to Coaching Transformation

The business coach delivers tangible results by transforming the people they work with. For the business to change, the people need to change. The 15 business coaches reported on how a client's commitment to want to transform is a characteristic of an ideal client.

COACH 8 stresses the importance of clients' complete buy-in to the coaching process. This is an important enabler for them, as they are more receptive and easier to guide.

> *"Complete buy-in to the coaching process is essential. Clients who understand and are fully committed to the transformative journey of coaching are more receptive and easier to guide." (Coach 8)*

COACH 9 reports that clients with a history of success are tell-tale signs for a predictive fruitful engagement.

"I look for clients who are already successful in their own right. Their ability to showcase past successes indicates a winning mindset, which is a significant predictor of a fruitful coaching engagement." (Coach 9)

COACH 4 discusses the positives and negatives of working with self-motivated clients who consistently seek growth. They speak of how self-motivated clients are healthy for coaches because they keep them on their toes.

"Clients that push themselves to achieve are both exhausting and exhilarating to work with. They constantly seek what's next, driving progress and keeping the coach on their toes." (Coach 4)

From a coach's perspective, clients who aspire for greatness and make impactful changes are rewarding to work with and are characteristics of an ideal client that enable the coach to do a great job. COACH 13 reports:

"I thrive on inspiring clients. The ability to motivate them to aspire for greatness and effect change in the world makes the coaching process incredibly rewarding." (Coach 13)

This demonstrates that self-motivation is an enabler for both the client and the coach, as clients with these characteristics are not only more enjoyable to work with but also more rewarding for both parties.

COACH 5 speaks of the psychology of the application of learning on how clients who see tasks as practical steps towards their goals, rather than just homework, demonstrate higher levels of commitment and are more fulfilling to work with.

"Less enjoyable are clients who approach tasks as mere homework rather than actionable steps. Those who truly commit to applying what they learn in practical and systematic ways are more fulfilling to work with." (Coach 5)

A key characteristic of an ideal client is their commitment to the transformational element of the coaching process, which makes them more receptive and easier to guide. Self-motivated clients, constantly seeking growth, keep coaches engaged and challenged, making the coaching dynamic both exhilarating and demanding. Furthermore, clients who aspire to make significant changes are particularly rewarding to work with, as they enhance

the coaching experience by motivating both themselves and their coaches. Clients who have demonstrated past successes often act as a predictor of fruitful coaching engagement as it displays their transformational characteristics. This commitment to transformation and practical application of learning is not only beneficial for clients but also acts as an enabler for coaches, making the engagement more enjoyable and rewarding for both parties.

7.5 | Chapter 7 Enablers Conclusion

The enablers that allow business coaches to cope and persist include a complex interplay of supportive community, conducive physical environments, and client characteristics that enhance coaching effectiveness. A supportive work community, comprising peer groups and a network of like-minded coaches, provides essential backing, fostering a culture of mutual growth and knowledge sharing that is fundamental to professional development. The coaches highlighted the significant role of family support and structured work environments in maintaining resilience and discipline, which are essential for sustained coaching success. Furthermore, the physical settings in which coaches operate, including both their formal workspaces and the natural environments they access, play a crucial role in fostering creativity, grounding their mental processes, and facilitating continuous learning. Client characteristics such as openness to learning, alignment of values, and a commitment to transformation are pivotal, with the ideal client being one who not only embraces new ideas and approaches but also actively applies them, thereby fuelling a productive and transformative coaching process. Overall, these enablers collectively contribute to a coaching dynamic that is not only effective but also rewarding and sustainable, highlighting the multifaceted nature of factors that support business coaches in their professional journeys.

CHAPTER 8 | What Strategies Do Business Coaches Deploy to Cope and Persist

Chapter 8 results reveal business coaches' strategies to cope and persist in their careers.

8.1 | Strategies for Coaches

The business coaching career requires the coach to be knowledgeable not only of ever-evolving business practices but also of coaching practice. The business coach will work with a plethora of different clients and personalities who each respond differently to the transformational change process of business coaching. The coach must, therefore, continually learn and adopt new strategies to transform not only businesses but also people.

The following reveals the dynamic strategies employed by business coaches to navigate the complexities of their profession, underscoring the importance of continuous learning, adaptive communication, and fostering both personal and client resilience. These strategies ensure that coaches can effectively meet the diverse needs of their clients and maintain their own professional and personal growth that is needed to cope and persist in their careers.

8.2 | Learning

The 15 coaches were queried about strategies that they adopt to cope and persist in their profession. Continuous learning and development were a core strategy the coaches used. The business coaches invest time and money into their learning so that they can teach their clients new business methods, direct the clients learning, and also, learn new strategies to coach different clients. The various ways the coaches learn are discussed in the following.

8.2.1 | Learning from Literature and Community

The coaches reported that they learn from reading books and listening to audio learning that they then apply and test in their coaching practice.

COACH 5 comments on how they engage with reading and book clubs to stay current in their business coaching career so that they can stay ahead of the literature.

> *"I'm constantly reading, running a book club, and staying ahead of the literature." (Coach 5)*

Similarly, COACH 4 benefits from not just the learning from the literature but also the open discussions their colleagues have around new learning and what other coaches are applying, which allows the coach to observe and listen to other coaches within their organisation.

> *"We have a lot of learning opportunities in our organisation where listening to other coaches is beneficial. It's also helpful to work with others and observe their coaching style." (Coach 4)*

COACH 8 emphasises that learning from reading, listening, observing, and experiencing through coaching helps them adapt to their coaching career. However, it is applying the theory into practice by using the new learnings in their coaching that is most beneficial for them.

> *"It's about reading, listening, observing, and experiencing first-hand. Applying theory to real-life situations with clients is where true learning happens for me." (Coach 8)*

COACH 7 suggested that coaches must have an 'open to learning' attitude. Being receptive to learning from various sources, including clients, is important for coach learning, and an open-learning attitude is a precursor to any learning that occurs for a coach.

> *"You listen to your clients and then re-educate yourself. It's about being open to learning, whether through webinars, books, or articles, and also taking golden nuggets from each client as it's a two-way relationship in coaching." (Coach 7)*

The coaches report that applying learning strategies and putting themselves in situations such as book clubs and communities of other coaches helps them commit to continuous learning and adopt new coaching and business strategies to help them cope and persist as business coaches.

8.2.2 | Learning Through Reflection

The coaches report that they not only learn on the job, but an effective strategy they utilise is to reflect on their coaching sessions that they have with their clients.

COACH 1 discusses the importance of reflection and journaling as a learning tool post-session, as this provides lessons for the coach to accumulate throughout their coaching career, which in turn supports the coach in their future coaching.

> *"I aim to sit back and take the lessons. I think hard about that when I come out of planned sessions because I understand that's part of the growth. Reflecting after coaching sessions is important to me, and I keep a journal to note big lessons for future reference." (Coach 1)*

COACH 2 views each coaching session as practice for honing their skills. They further use the learnings from their coaching sessions to reflect with their peers in the coaching community.

> *"Every coaching session is practice; it's like repetition is the mother of skill. Reflecting on the sessions helps me to grow, and participating in a learning community enriches my experience." (Coach 2)*

Similarly, COACH 10 believes in learning by doing and improving through hours spent coaching, which they can then reflect on to learn and adapt new strategies for coaching clients.

> *"The main way I learn is through the hours spent coaching. The more I interact with clients and ponder on those interactions, the more I learn and adapt." (Coach 10)*

Learning on the job and reflecting on coaching sessions are pivotal strategies for professional development among business coaches. Reflection and journaling after sessions are key for capturing lessons that enhance future coaching effectiveness. Viewing each session as practice helps hone skills, and sharing insights within a coaching community enriches the learning experience. Additionally, direct client interaction is crucial for learning and adapting new coaching strategies. These practices demonstrate the importance of continuous learning and reflection in the ongoing development and success of coaches.

8.2.3 | Learning From Clients

The previous header highlighted how the coach learns during their sessions. The coaches also reflected on how their clients develop their learning as coaches, and that intentionally asking for feedback is a strategy for coach learning and development. Spotting patterns in clients sharing similar issues was also a response by the business coaches of how they learn.

COACH 4 mentions learning through clients' shared experiences which reveal common patterns.

> *"Every single client I've ever had has taught me more than I thought. One will say something, and then the next client will have a similar issue. The things I've learned recently come to light in conversations with clients, revealing patterns." (Coach 4)*

COACH 2 also discusses identifying themes and patterns across different client scenarios. These themes become talking points amongst peers, allowing the coaches in the community to reflect, hone their skills, and adapt as business coaches.

> *"You can start to spot themes and patterns with clients, and I think sharing examples across client situations with their permission is invaluable. It's like the mastermind principle of taking ideas from one place and fitting them into another's scenario." (Coach 2)*

COACH 5 adds a further layer to learning from clients highlighting the value of purposeful feedback and not only asking but being open to honest feedback from clients and peers.

"Asking for feedback is how I learn. It's about having great relationships with clients and also your peers, being able to ask those honest questions and get an honest response … Feedback is critical, as it's the only way to learn if you're not gathering insights from others." (Coach 5)

The section highlights how coaches learn from their sessions by actively engaging in feedback mechanisms and recognising common patterns across client interactions. Gaining insights from clients' shared experiences reveals patterns that are instrumental in a coach's learning process. Identifying recurring themes across different client scenarios enhances a coach's ability to adapt and refine their methods. Furthermore, intentionally soliciting and being receptive to honest feedback from both clients and peers is crucial for continuous professional development. These strategies foster a dynamic learning strategy that not only deepens the coaches' expertise but also enhances their adaptability in the coaching field.

8.3 | Communication

All 15 business coaches discussed communication strategies that they adopt to effectively coach clients.

8.3.1 | Pure Coaching and Questioning

Business coaches refer to the concept of ‘pure coaching’ throughout the interviews. What the coach is referring to is the use of Socratic questioning that takes the client to a place of client self-discovery so that they discover their own solutions, as opposed to the coach pushing their views on the client. The coaches believe that this allows for increased self-efficacy, higher action tendencies, and ownership of results.

The coaches accomplish ‘pure coaching’ by asking open-ended questions to the clients that provoke a deeper and more meaningful response that has higher action tendencies. For example, COACH 1 says that:

"A great question is one... that stops and makes people think, think quite deeply." (Coach 1)

COACH 2 highlights adapting their coaching communication strategy toward client self-discovery, empowering clients through better questions—as opposed to directive communication—so that the client finds their own solutions.

"My approach has shifted towards asking better quality questions and coaching people to find answers, rather than being too prescriptive and direct with solutions." (Coach 2)

COACH 9 reports that they have moved away from making statements to asking questions to focus more on the client. This helps clients think more clearly and makes the interaction more about them.

"My approach has changed from making statements to asking questions. The simplification of questions helps clients to think more clearly and the interaction becomes more about them." (Coach 9)

COACH 12 and COACH 14 advocate the strategy of asking better questions to facilitate constructive outcomes if coaches want to develop their coaching skills.

"Striving to ask better questions, recognising that poorly constructed questions can lead to poor outcomes. A good question is one where neither the coach nor the client knows the answer yet." (Coach 12)

COACH 14 discusses the avoidance of using the question 'why?' suggesting that it is a poor question as it encourages defensiveness in the client.

"Refraining from using terms that can make clients defensive, such as 'why,' and avoiding giving solutions that prevent clients from finding their answers and taking ownership." (Coach 14)

COACH 7, however, suggests that the 'why' question is useful as it challenges the client's perceptions and further encourages deeper reflection.

"Using the 'why' question challenged clients to understand the root of their decisions or perceptions, prompting deeper reflection and potentially leading to more conscious decision-making." (Coach 7)

Using the question ‘why?’ in coaching is often discouraged as it causes the client to return with a defensive response, however, COACH 7 suggests that saying ‘why’ can be a tool that encourages internal reflection when used in the correct coaching situation.

As previously mentioned, the heart of coaching—or ‘pure coaching’—is to encourage clients to find answers from within. COACH 13 finds that by doing this, the client delivers genuine insight, which can lead to the client seeing meaningfulness and impact from the actions they are set out to do, thus leading to a higher chance of follow-through and action.

"Asking reflective questions that challenge the clients to consider their honest feelings or responses when they are alone can bring more authenticity into the coaching conversation and lead to genuine insights." (Coach 13)

Coaches also reflected on their personal experiences with their mentor and coach.

COACH 7 says that they value their coach’s inquisitive questions and consistent inquiry in uncovering underlying issues allows them to motivate their personal and client progress. They report that they have learnt from their coach and carry the lessons they learn from their coach into their coaching practice to help their clients.

“Constant questioning is a good characteristic that helped my clients because it gets to the nitty gritty, it gets to the problem, it gets to the challenge, it gets to the why..." (Coach 7)

COACH 8 appreciates being prompted to think critically through pointed questions. They explain that through their coach (mentor) questioning, they use the questions to undergo self-reflection and reflect on their own personal development as coaches. They also report that they make notes and use the questions that they write down in their own coaching practice.

"They asked me good questions and get me thinking... My notes are always full of the questions they've asked me rather than anything else I need to do." (Coach 8)

Business coaches stress the value of 'pure coaching,' which leverages Socratic questioning to foster client self-discovery rather than imposing the coach's perspectives. This strategy enhances client self-efficacy, action tendencies, and ownership of results. Effective 'pure coaching' involves open-ended questions that encourage deep thinking and personal solutions, making sessions more client centred. The essence of effective coaching is to help clients uncover their own insights, thereby increasing authenticity and meaningful action. Coaches also value insights gained from their mentors as effective strategies who use strategic questioning to encourage critical thinking and personal growth, thus enriching their coaching practice.

8.3.2 | Quality Over Speed

Coaches report how they tailor their strategies to align with their clients' unique needs and goals. They discuss the importance of pacing, realistic expectations, and the right balance of challenge and support, highlighting key adjustments that enhance the quality of the coaching experience and client results.

COACH 11 discusses how they have adapted their coaching methods to focus on what clients want for themselves. The coach has adapted to adjust the pace of coaching to suit the client to foster greater outcomes for coach and client.

> *"I've learned it's not about what I want for the client, but what they want for themselves. Adjusting the coaching pace and tempering my ambition for their business has been a key change." (Coach 11)*

COACH 1 has adapted to not push clients too hard. They suggest that speed to get things done quickly diminishes the quality of their work and is harmful to the client's enthusiasm for the task.

> *"Recognising when to slow down and ensure quality over speed is important. There have been instances when pushing clients too hard was counterproductive, diminishing the quality of their work or their enthusiasm for the task." (Coach 1)*

COACH 4 talks about how they have been too quick to jump to the next challenge as opposed to reflecting on successes, as reflection builds confidence.

"Acknowledging the importance of reflecting on successes and learning from them rather than immediately moving on to the next challenge, as failure to do so can undermine confidence." (Coach 4)

COACH 11 reflects on their expectations and how these may impact client relationships.

"Inpatients... unexpectedly high standards... sometimes I just expect a little too much of them." (Coach 11)

Coaches have adapted their methods to focus more on client-specific goals and adjusted the pacing of their coaching to enhance outcomes. Key strategies include moderating their ambitions for the client's business and emphasising quality over speed to avoid reducing work quality or client enthusiasm. Coaches also recognise the importance of reflecting on successes to build confidence rather than rushing to new challenges. Adjusting expectations and recognising personal biases are crucial strategies for maintaining effective client relationships and improving the coaching experience.

8.3.3 | Solution-Oriented Caution

As an extension from the previous header of quality over speed, the coaches reported that a strategy is to avoid solution-oriented communication.

COACH 2 and COACH 3 discuss the need to avoid giving premature solutions as this leads clients away from developing their own self-efficacy. The coaches have adapted their coaching styles to hold back solutions and stay curious in order to not undermine the coaching process.

"Being cautious about giving opinions or suggestions unless explicitly asked, as it can sometimes lead clients away from finding their own solutions and can potentially undermine the coaching process." (Coach 2)

"Resisting the urge to jump in with solutions too quickly, staying curious, and allowing the client enough time to come up with their own ideas." (Coach 3)

COACH 6 emphasise the importance of clients making their own decisions if the client is going to commit to their actions.

> *"Avoiding direct advice or leading questions that suggest specific actions, recognising that clients are more likely to commit to actions they've chosen themselves." (C0ach 6)*

COACH 10 further suggests that this approach is beneficial to the client because the client must build on their successes rather than the coach's suggestions.

> *"Being careful not to guide clients toward what the coach assumes to be the right course of action, allowing clients to decide for themselves how to build on their successes." (Coach 10)*

Coaches emphasise the importance of fostering client self-efficacy by avoiding solution-oriented communication and premature solutions. They have adapted their coaching strategies to hold back on providing direct answers, maintaining curiosity, and allowing clients the space to discover their own solutions. This approach helps prevent undermining the coaching process and supports clients in developing their problem-solving skills. By resisting the urge to offer direct advice or lead clients towards specific actions, coaches ensure that clients are more likely to commit to decisions they've made independently. This strategy not only empowers clients but also encourages them to build on their successes autonomously rather than relying on the coach's guidance. The coaches report that this focus on client-led decision-making is critical for their long-term development and commitment to the coaching process.

8.3.4 | Active Listening and Reflection

Following pure coaching, coaches highlight how they have adapted in their coaching careers by developing active listening skills. Active listening refers to a communication technique that involves giving full attention to the speaker, understanding their message, responding thoughtfully, and retaining the information heard.

COACH 2 discusses the value of active listening and reflecting clients' words back to them for clarity and a strategy that allows the client to reflect on their thoughts.

"Being an active listener and reflecting the clients' own words back to them provided clarity ... Sharing the notes taken during their talks also helped them to see their own thoughts laid out, which can be incredibly valuable." (Coach 2)

Coaches report that active listening deployed as a strategy allows the client 'space'. The concept of providing 'space' for a client stems from the understanding that clients are often too engulfed in their day-to-day tasks to dedicate time for reflection on their current performance and strategic focus. For example, an electrician preoccupied with daily electrical tasks might struggle to consider how they could expand their business. By creating space for reflection, they can shift their focus toward transformative actions, such as hiring additional electricians to delegate work, thereby facilitating business growth and personal workload management.

COACH 6 promotes the necessity to provide space for clients to communicate effectively and solve problems independently.

"Providing a space for the clients to think and communicate effectively was key." (Coach 6)

COACH 7, whilst often likes to talk a lot, acknowledges the need to balance their communication style with giving clients space to express themselves.

"I like to talk... sometimes I recognise this, that I need to let them talk." (Coach 7)

According to the coaches' responses, the first strategy to active listening is to create the space for active listening to occur. The second strategy of active listening is how the coach responds to cause the client to reflect within.

COACH 3 explains their developments on how they encourage clients to find value in both positive and negative experiences, in turn, this promotes the client's mindset to adapt towards that of continuous learning.

"Asking 'What can you learn from this?' encouraged clients to find value in their experiences, both positive and negative, promoting a mindset geared towards continuous learning." (Coach 3)

COACH 7 explains how simplifying complex concepts—that derive from the client's thoughts and spoken words during active listening space—can lead to client epiphanies.

> *" I make it a bit simple... the penny drops and the lightbulb moment occurs." (Coach 7)*

COACH 6 further suggests that asking open-ended questions during active listening allows the client to solve their problems as opposed to the coach offering direct solutions. Active listening, therefore, falls into the concept of pure coaching and a strategy coaches deploy to succeed in their career.

> *"Asking open-ended coaching questions facilitated their problem-solving rather than offering direct solutions." (Coach 6)*

This highlights that the client not only needs space/time to think about their business but COACH 6 suggests that asking open-ended questions, whilst in the 'space', allows for the development of self-efficacy and self-discovery for the client to find the right answer for themselves.

Coaches also reflected in their interviews around their experiences of being coached by their mentors.

Coaches report how having a safe space to have open and reflective conversations with their coach/mentor supports them in their business coaching careers.

COACH 3 lauds their coach's ability to facilitate reflective thinking by holding the mirror up to how they are acting. COACH 3 explains that 'holding the mirror up' can be challenging for both coach and client however, their coach holds the mirror up in a manner that the coach/client finds acceptable. The coach suggests that is because the coach and coach/client may have shared values thus allowing a safe space for direct challenge.

> *"They're a really good sounding board. They hold the mirror up pretty well. And yeah, we are well connected on values." (Coach 3)*

COACH 4 concurs with the above explaining that they value the safe space for unguarded communication and that is free from judgment.

"I like that it is a space to offload. I can tell them anything. I know I won't be judged." (Coach 4)

Two experienced coaches—the coach and their mentor—who are aware of coaching and its mechanisms adapting to one another is a unique find to this project as it provides an instance where two professional coaches are working together to achieve harmony. Thus, understanding this relationship and feedback from two highly experienced coaches who are coaching one another offers deep insight into the effective strategies coaches deploy that allow them to cope and persist.

In conclusion, active listening and reflection have emerged as pivotal techniques in the coaching process, where coaches have honed their ability to listen attentively and provide thoughtful responses. This method involves hearing, understanding, and reflecting on the client's message, which enhances clarity and encourages clients to see their thoughts before them. Such strategies grant clients the space needed to step back from daily tasks and focus on transformative actions for business growth and personal development. Coaches emphasise the importance of creating a conducive environment for open communication, where clients can express themselves without judgment and engage in reflective thinking. This strategy supports problem-solving and fosters a continuous learning mindset, encouraging clients to derive value from both positive and negative experiences. Furthermore, the application of open-ended questions promotes self-efficacy and self-discovery, aligning with the principles of pure coaching. The safe, reflective space facilitated by coaches is a strategy that coaches deploy that allows for unguarded communication and mutual understanding, which is crucial for effective coaching outcomes.

8.3.5 | Directiveness and Challenge

Contrary to pure coaching, the business coaches discussed how they have developed confidence in their coaching ability and that they have had to be more assertive with clients to get them to take action to achieve results. Better results for the client, the better result for the coach in their career.

COACH 1 has embraced a more direct approach and their clients appreciate and request more of the direct style of coaching.

"Drawing on experience has become significant in my approach to coaching. I'm much more direct now and that's something that my clients appreciate and even request more of." (Coach 1)

Similarly, COACH 4 has become more assertive in challenging clients, stating:

"I've become more assertive in calling out where the client needs more effort, challenging more than I used to instead of just supporting and agreeing with the client." (Coach 4)

COACH 7 suggest that being confrontational is a must for coaches to adapt to in order for the client to follow through and take action.

"Sometimes you have to be forceful". (Coach 7)

Coaches share their views of having direct and realism in their coaching approach. For example, COACH 5 stresses the importance of honesty in coaching conversations because it sets the example of how they should be as leaders in their teams.

"I'm always very kind of honest... let's just cut the bullshit... I think that kind of open and honest, quite frank conversations... helps them to be the same with their teams." (Coach 5)

Not all coaches agree with a direct and challenging approach suggesting that the coach must be situational and choose to deploy this strategy depending on how they need to shift client behaviour.

COACH 11 warns of the dangers of being too direct and the impact it can have on their client. They acknowledge the need to balance directness with patience. If the coach is too direct then the coach can expect too much and the client cannot fulfil their objectives.

"Sometimes I can be a bit too direct... impatience... I expect too much of them and they can't fulfil it." (Coach 11)

Coaches discussed how a coach can be both direct and empathetic. The double-edged sword of coaching, or challenge versus empathy, is a strategy that the coach must develop in order to truly coach clients to get results in their business.

The business coaching literature review revealed that strategies included empathy, however coaches warn of the dangers of empathy.

COACH 8 discusses balancing empathy with direct communication. They suggest that too much empathy and being too understanding prevents the coach from directly addressing the issues that the client needs to handle head on.

> *"Avoiding being overly empathetic in a way that might distract from focusing on necessary actions. Sometimes being too understanding can prevent clients from addressing issues head-on." (Coach 8)*

COACH 11 highlights the importance of being direct yet caring to build trust and drive results that allow them to coach effectively.

> *"My dogged determination and the ability to build trust through being direct, but caring, are what make my coaching effective. I don't overpromise; I'm straightforward, which fosters trust and determination." (Coach 11)*

COACH 15 addresses this double edge sword that is apparent amongst the coaches, suggesting that a coach can be honest, tenacious, and focused on objectives by displaying positive qualities to help the client.

> *"Loyal, objective encouraging, honest, dependable, reliable... tenacious, which... helps them." (Coach 15)*

So what holds the coach back from deploying a more direct communication strategy? Coaches report that a blocker to the strategy of them being direct is that they do not like being confrontational. COACH 4 addresses the problem of developing a more confrontational approach when needed, however, this is a challenge for their non-confrontational nature.

> *"I need to be a bit more forceful... confrontational, and I'm not really a confrontational sort of person." (Coach 4)*

COACH 15 ponders their potential need for more assertive communication and challenge during coaching sessions to develop their boldness as a coach.

"I maybe don't challenge hard enough? Or don't call out things that I am sensing... I wasn't bold enough to challenge them." (Coach 15)

Although coaches argue over the balance of pure coaching, empathy, directness and how much they should challenge the client, the coaches also respond on their experiences of how they are coached by their mentor.

COACH 15 values assertiveness and how their coach challenges their thinking.

"I like the fact that they stand up to me I like the fact that they challenge my thinking I like the fact that they just call out the nonsense they see in me..." (Coach 15)

COACH 13 respects the direct and honest communication from their coach and further highlights that this acceptance of being direct may be from respect for the experience that comes with long-term coaching expertise that their coach/mentor possesses.

"They're brutally honest, been an action coach for 17 plus years. They know every wrinkle in the business..." (Coach 13)

COACH 9 commends the coach's unwavering honesty and realistic perspective.

"What I like about him, I like the fact that they're unbelievably honest. Happy to call things as they see them always come from a position of compassionate commercialism..." (Coach 9)

In conclusion, business coaches are increasingly recognising the need for a more assertive and direct approach to effectively motivate clients and drive results, although some find it challenging as it is not in their nature. This shift from purely supportive roles involves a careful balance between direct communication and empathy to ensure challenges are met with the necessary support for client growth; highlighting that empathy is not always the best strategy when coaching clients and could have an adverse effect for the success of the coach in their coaching career. The adoption of a straightforward style is often appreciated by clients, as it models leadership qualities valuable in their own roles. However, this approach must be moderated to avoid overwhelming clients, with a focus on maintaining a supportive environment that fosters trust and actionable outcomes. This evolution in coaching strategies reflects a dynamic adaptation to the diverse needs of clients, highlighting

the importance of finding the right mix of challenge and support. The coaches argue however on which element of the mix should be more prominent to help the client achieve results.

8.4 | Adapting

The following addresses they dynamic adaptation the coach must deploy to work with different clients. Previous headers have suggested that the coaches must adapt their strategies to suit the situational needs of the clients and the different personalities of clients. This next section explores the strategies the coaches use to adapt. Where the previous header placed emphasis on the communication element, i.e., what the coach says, the following explores the adaptiveness in the behaviour of the coach for them to work with different clients.

8.4.1 | Flexibility

The coaches suggest that the ability to be flexible is a strategy that they need to develop as a business coach if they are to work with different types of clients. The coaches refer to DISC, which is a behaviour profiling tool that the organisation is trained to use when working with clients.

COACH 1 discusses the advantages of flexibility and maintaining a neutral stance suggesting that this approach allows enhanced adaptability when working with different client personalities.

> "*Being considered and flexible allows me to bring different things to the table depending on the client's needs. I aim to remain neutral in the DISC profile, which aids in my adaptability when working with any type of client." (Coach 1)*

Further to having a neutral stance, COACH 14 highlights the ability to work with diverse personalities due to them developing a balanced personality profile.

"Due to my balanced DISC profile, I can get along with a diverse range of individuals, whether they are high 'D' or 'C' or any other type, which is invaluable in the coaching business where understanding and relating to various personalities is key." (Coach 14)

COACH 10 reflect on their experience with their coach/mentor and acknowledges the need for a structured coaching approach that adapts to their unique requirements.

"The structure of the coaching, I had to redesign so that they could help me the best way possible... he was prepared to come on that journey with me." (Coach 10)

In conclusion, flexibility emerges as a crucial strategy for business coaches who aim to effectively cater to a diverse client base. By adopting a neutral stance and utilising tools like the DISC profile, coaches enhance their adaptability and ability to engage with various client personalities. This strategy not only facilitates a deeper understanding of different individual needs but also supports the development of a coaching approach that can be customised to each unique client scenario. Such flexibility ensures that coaches can maintain relevance and efficacy across a broad spectrum of coaching situations, fostering more meaningful and productive client relationships.

8.4.2 | Encouraging Goal Setting and Instilling Self-Belief

The business coaches reported that an effective strategy for them is to encourage the client to take the correct actions that move them towards achieving their goals. Business coaches must adapt their coaching methods depending on the client's goals. For example, a client who wants to reduce their work time would need coaching differently from a client who has financial goals. The coaches report how they use the client's goals and adapt by steering the client's behaviour as a strategy to encourage them to take effective actions along the coaching process. The coaches similarly discussed how they develop the client's confidence and beliefs of them being able to accomplish their goals.

COACH 1 has adapted by learning the importance of setting clear goals and providing encouragement to the client. This allows the client to maintain ownership and control while steering them in the right direction.

"Consistently providing encouragement and setting clear goals are crucial. Offering tips and tricks without dictating changes allowed the clients to maintain control while still steering them in the right direction." (Coach 1)

COACH 5 speaks about the significance of setting specific goals with clear plans as a strategy to help the client understand their necessary actions and the outcomes of taking those actions.

"Setting a specific goal with a date and then creating a detailed action plan helped the clients move from abstract desires to concrete plans, with a clear roadmap to follow for achieving their objectives." (Coach 5)

COACH 15 encourages clients to envision their future as a strategy. This fosters a growth-oriented mindset within their clients toward growth and expansion.

"Encouraging clients to envision their future or ideal scenarios prompted them to think big and beyond their current limitations, thereby fostering a mindset oriented towards growth and expansion." (Coach 15)

COACH 12 discusses the role of expressing belief in clients' capabilities has been a strategy that the coach has had to adopt. This encourages the clients to become inspired and embrace their abilities (self-efficacy), which further, encourages them to take new actions towards their goals.

"Inspiring clients to believe in their own capabilities was a major contribution. By expressing a strong belief in the clients' potential, they were more likely to embrace their own abilities and act upon them." (Coach 12)

COACH 8 highlights the importance of encouraging goals as it maintains focus on impactful tasks. Quite often, clients can get distracted. The coach has adopted the strategy of not allowing the coach to lose track of their focus if they are to achieve the results they want.

"Constantly bringing the clients back to focus on what's important, avoiding distractions, and maintaining present focus were strategies used to keep clients on track with their most impactful tasks." (Coach 8)

COACH 6 speaks on the significance of keeping clients focused on long-term objectives as clients naturally tend to get side-tracked, what they refer to as focus on their ‘North Star’.

> *"I have a natural focus and an appetite for chasing dreams. By keeping the clients aligned with their 'North Star,' I help them stay on track towards their long-term goals, not getting side-tracked by day-to-day distractions." (Coach 6)*

Along the theme of focus and action, COACH 14 describes a psychological approach that they have adopted to encouraging clients to stay focused by asking about the deeper purpose of their businesses.

> *"Challenging clients by asking about the purpose of their business encourages them to think beyond surface-level objectives and consider the emotional and personal aspects of why their business exists and what it means to them." (Coach 14)*

COACH 6 describes how their objective-based personality allows them to not only keep the client focused, but how this objective focus inspires the client.

> *"By gravitating more towards the North Star and chasing dreams, my focus is naturally on the big picture. I am adept at keeping clients on track towards their 90-day plans and larger goals." (Coach 6)*

COACH 13 concurs with this comment and suggests further that their approach to focus on financial numbers in the business allows the client greater persuasion and openness to new ideas.

> *"I work hard on inspiring my clients. If we have a financial goal, I talk about it consistently to ensure its front and centre in the client's mind. Gentle persuasion and good positioning of ideas are my strengths." (Coach 13)*

In conclusion, business coaches emphasise the importance of goal setting and instilling self-efficacy as pivotal strategies in guiding clients towards achieving their objectives. By tailoring their approach based on individual client goals, whether they pertain to reducing work hours or financial aspirations, coaches adapt their methods to steer behaviours effectively. Emphasising clear goal-setting, coaches encourage clients to take ownership of their paths while providing the necessary support to keep them aligned with their ambitions. Through setting specific, actionable plans and encouraging clients to envision their future,

coaches foster a growth-oriented mindset that inspires clients to expand beyond their perceived limitations. Additionally, coaches focus on boosting clients' self-confidence believing strongly in their potential, which motivates clients to embrace and act on their capabilities. This dual focus on strategic goal orientation and psychological empowerment serves as a key strategy to maintain client focus on impactful tasks, ensuring that day-to-day distractions do not derail their progress towards long-term success. These elements discussed in this strategy are highly related to the concept of PsyCap and 'Instilling Hope' that are key principles of Study 2.

8.4.3 | Acknowledging Success

As an extension to the space and self-reflection communication strategy that coaches have adopted, clients reflecting on their successes is a strategy that coaches reveal has helped them become effective coaches. Clients run at different paces and have different needs as they move along their entrepreneur rollercoaster of up and down emotions. The business coaches report that they have had to adapt their coaching strategies to ensure the client recognises their wins more often because if they don't, then they do not acknowledge the results from the coaching or their efforts and the clients question their confidence to achieve goals if they are always chasing goals and not achieving.

COACH 4 emphasises the need to allow clients to discuss and acknowledge their achievements as business owners do not often receive acknowledgement for their work.

> *"Allowing clients to discuss their actions and reinforcing the value of their successes is important. Business owners and leaders often don't receive acknowledgement for their well-done work, so celebrating those successes can be quite affirming." (Coach 4)*

Both COACH 8 and COACH 10, and three other coaches, report that clients overlooking success in pursuing the next challenge is a problem they see within clients. The coaches have learnt this from the experience of coaching a plethora of clients over their years of being business coaches and in turn, have had to adapt their coaching methods to become effective coaches.

COACH 8 talks about the importance of clients recognising their successes and their connection to performance outcomes otherwise, depending on the client's personality, the client will continue to the next challenge.

> *"Encouraging clients to take a moment and recognise their achievements helped them build on positive outcomes rather than prematurely looking for the next challenge." (Coach 8)*

COACH 10 reported that by celebrating milestones, it helps the client to cement the achievements and make them memorable.

> *"Helping clients to stop and realise their successes, encouraging them to celebrate milestones, can cement those achievements and make them more memorable." (Coach 10)*

To conclude, acknowledging successes forms a crucial part of effective coaching strategies, as it helps clients reflect on and appreciate their progress and achievements which is important for reinforcing their self-efficacy, and belief that they can (and have) achieve goals. Business coaches recognise that entrepreneurs often overlook their own successes as they continually seek the next challenge. The findings found that by adapting their coaching strategies, coaches ensure that clients regularly recognise and celebrate their wins, which is essential for maintaining motivation and a sense of accomplishment. Celebrating these milestones not only affirms the client's efforts but also enhances their connection to positive performance outcomes, making their achievements more tangible and memorable. This approach helps in building a supportive coaching environment where successes are highlighted as part of the coaching journey, therefore, reinforcing the value of the coaching process itself.

8.4.4 | Demonstrating Empathy

The communication header of direct communication highlighted the danger of the coach being too empathetic. However, other coaches report how they must adapt to clients by practising empathy. The following explores how the coaches adapt their behaviour—not just communication—towards the client and keep the balance between becoming a friend and staying the coach.

COACH 6 describes the deliberate practice of compassion in coaching as it does not come naturally to them, but they need to have adaptable characteristics to work with the client.

> *"Compassion, I'm not as compassionate as I like to be... My strength is that what I do in that area now is very deliberate." (Coach 6)*

COACH 12 also spoke on the significance of empathetic and trustworthy coaching as a way for the coach to adapt to who they need to be for the client on their coaching journey.

> *"Empathy... that always helps that I'm matching and becoming the person that I think they need me to be." (Coach 12)*

COACH 5 emphasises that their ability to build rapport and trust is vital, and their personality gives them an advantage because it allows them to create strong connections and foster a community.

> *"I excel at building rapport and trust with clients, fostering a real community where everyone cares about each other. This strong human connection is a vital component of successful coaching relationships." (Coach 5)*

COACH 10 continues on the topic of trustworthiness by explaining how they gain trust. They mention how having a friendly and caring personality allows their clients to feel happy and safe, which in turn then enhances client confidence in working with a coach.

> *"Being friendly and caring allows my clients to feel happy and safe, which I find essential in bringing out the best in them and consequently allows them to feel confident working with me." (Coach 10)*

Coaches report on the dangers of too much empathy and about clients becoming friends. They emphasise that the clients are there for results, and if the client becomes too close to friends, then it removes accountability. Less accountability may lead to fewer results, which may lead to client dropout.

COACH 10 further discusses transitioning from an accountable coach to a to an unconditional friend.

"Learning to become an unconditional friend has been key when I was just their friend." (Coach 10)

They report an example of how "*agreeing that it's okay not to have done your homework*" (Coach 10) became a point that they realised that they needed to change the relationship, or the client would not get results from coaching.

Additionally, a strategy COACH 15 discusses is the benefits of showing vulnerability and humility in coaching sessions, as vulnerability, coupled with humour, encourages a warm and engaging environment.

"Being humble and demonstrating vulnerability as a coach is beneficial. I don't claim to always know everything, which helps clients relate to me … Adding humour to sessions, where appropriate, also aids in creating a warm and engaging environment."(Coach 15)

Coaches also shared their experiences of empathy from being coached by their mentors.

COACH 2 emphasises the importance of empathetic mentorship and shared values. When asked, "What do they like best about their coach?" COACH 2 responded:

"The fact that they care." (Coach 2)

The coach continues by saying that humour and a significant emphasis that shared values are important characteristics that they like about their coach.

"He cares and humour. Shared values and yeah, shared values and again, within that, you know, huge abundance." (Coach 2)

Another response that stood out in the interviews is reported by COACH 6. They report that a coaching approach that prioritises client understanding over coach self-interest is a unique characteristic that they like about their coach.

"He reads me very well. He's more concerned about me than he is himself." (Coach 6)

In conclusion, demonstrating empathy is a nuanced and vital aspect of effective coaching, balancing the need to connect with clients personally while maintaining professional boundaries. Coaches emphasise the importance of adapting their behaviour to foster trust and rapport, crucial for building strong coaching relationships. However, they also caution against excessive empathy, which can blur the lines between coach and friend, potentially undermining accountability and results. Techniques like expressing genuine concern, showing vulnerability, and using humour are employed to create a warm, engaging atmosphere that supports client and coach connectivity. These findings also found that coaches also value empathetic mentorship from their own coaches, highlighting the importance of shared values and a client-focused approach. This balance of empathy and professionalism is important as it enables coaches to effectively guide their clients towards achieving their goals while maintaining the necessary authority and objectivity in the coaching relationship.

8.4.5 | Instilling Positivity and Calmness

Coaches interviewed discussed how they have adapted to remain in a consistent, positive mindset. The business coaches use this as a strategy to not only stay optimistic and resilient for themselves but to also instil optimism and resilience (see the positive side of situations) into their clients to help them stay positive on their coaching journey. The coaches also report how maintaining calm also has a contagious effect on the clients.

COACH 2 emphasises the role of continuous positive thinking in coaching.

> *"Constant positive thinking helps. And I think congruency... by doing that, I think that's helpful." (Coach 2)*

When probing deeper into why it is helpful, the coach reported that their positivity and congruency set the standard for what is expected in coaching and what it takes for the client to be successful. Cultivating a positive mindset increases a client's self-efficacy and optimism about following through and taking the right actions that will allow them to achieve their goals. For example, COACH 7 highlights how their innate positivity empowers clients.

> *"My natural positivity helps as well because then they feel like they can conquer the world." (Coach 7)*

COACH 2 shares how maintaining a positive and fun coaching atmosphere contributes towards productivity and accountability.

> *"My coaching interactions are always positive, solution-focused, and above the line. We have fun, and this lighter side of things doesn't detract from getting the work done."*

'Above the line' is a business coaching term used in the organisation where being above the line encourages the client to take ownership and accountability, as opposed to blame, excuse, and denial.

COACH 7 further talk about the benefits of a naturally positive personality, saying:

> *"Being a naturally positive person helps in coaching, as positivity is infectious … When I smile, my clients smile, and this approach helps them see the positive side of their situations, which is beneficial in coaching." (Coach 7)*

Often coaching interventions can become heated. COACH 4 emphasises the benefits of calmness in diffusing tense situations.

> *"I'm quite calm. So, I think that helps it diffuse any drama out of a situation." (Coach 4)*

COACH 8 and COACH 10 report that their calm personalities act as an adjuvant, allowing them to deploy a strategy that negates clients' stress and encourages clients to open up more about the real underlying issues that they may be facing.

> *"My calmer demeanour helps in creating a tranquil environment. If a client comes in stressed, I try to remain calm, which often helps them relax and open up more during our sessions … Being quiet and calm allows me to be a good listener, which is beneficial in coaching. It also helps to maintain calmness in the clients, which is crucial for a productive session." (Coach 8)*

> *“My calm nature ensures that clients feel comfortable and open, making our coaching sessions productive and enabling clients to tackle their issues effectively." (Coach 10)*

Similarly, COACH 4 highlights the importance of calmness and humour, which are strategies that help them as a coach as they draw people to them, allowing the client to open up more.

> *“My calmness and humour are traits that draw people to me for coaching. It helps break up difficult situations and enables a person-to-person connection that is crucial for effective coaching." (Coach 4)*

COACH 3 discuss the value of having a consistent and level-headed personality is an adjuvant for effective coaching as it gives them the ability to shift the client from an emotional state towards having an objective view of the situation.

> *"Clients appreciate my consistency and level-headedness. I strive to maintain a consistently objective view, which is extremely beneficial when clients are in an emotional state." (Coach 3)*

The findings show that maintaining a consistently positive and calm demeanour is a pivotal strategy employed by business coaches to enhance their coaching effectiveness. Coaches emphasise the contagious nature of positivity and calmness, noting how these strategies not only bolster their resilience but also instil a sense of optimism and resilience in their clients—this is an important finding for this project as ‘affect’ is a measure I utilise in Study 2. Through this approach, coaches say that it helps clients adopt a solution-focused mindset, crucial for navigating challenges and fostering self-efficacy. By promoting an environment characterised by positivity, fun, and calm, coaches encourage clients to take ownership of their situations and maintain productivity and accountability. Furthermore, the calm nature of coaches serves as a crucial tool in diffusing tension and facilitating open, honest dialogue, enabling clients to tackle underlying issues more effectively. The combination of these attributes suggests that it not only enhances the coaching sessions but also empowers clients to see the positive aspects of their circumstances, thereby promoting a more resilient and proactive approach to their personal and professional challenges. This in turn is important to the coach because if the client achieves more, then they stay for longer, and also serves the drivers of the coaches who reported that a purpose for them as coaches is to make a difference to others’ lives.

8.5 | Chapter 8 Strategies Conclusion

This chapter on strategies for business coaches has emphasised the necessity for continuous adaptation and evolution in their practice, highlighting the importance of staying updated with both business and coaching techniques to effectively cater to diverse client needs to keep the client in a positive state on the rollercoaster of the entrepreneur journey. Coaches engage in constant learning through literature, community interactions, and direct feedback from clients, integrating these insights through reflective practices to refine their coaching strategies. The strategic use of communication, particularly through 'pure coaching' that employs Socratic questioning, helps foster client self-discovery and ownership of solutions, enhancing self-efficacy. Moreover, coaches must balance assertiveness with empathy, adapting their communication and behavioural approaches to adapt with the unique personalities and requirements of their clients if they are to keep the client remaining resilient and optimistic towards pursuing their goals. This intricate blend of knowledge, adaptability, and interpersonal skills is crucial for successfully managing and transforming client relationships in business coaching so that both coach and client can cope and persist towards their versions of success—which, from the drivers chapter, could be both financial and purpose drivers towards success.

CHAPTER 9 | STUDY 1 DISCUSSION

The previous chapters each concluded with a short discussion on the drivers, barriers, enablers, and strategies that underpin how business coaches cope and persist in boundaryless careers. This chapter discusses the key findings of Study 1 and integrates them with relevant elements from the literature review. By integrating the study results with relevant literature, this discussion deepens the understanding of the physical and psychological factors that influence success in the dynamic and evolving field of business coaching, and in the broader context of boundaryless careers. Note, this is the Study 1 discussion, the overarching project discussion and conclusion (i.e., both Study 1 and Study 2) is discussed in the final chapters of this DBA.

I begin this chapter by developing a visual table (table 4) that provides all the findings of Study 1. This table can be used as a tool by business coaches to raise awareness of the 4 areas of how business coaches cope and persist, which includes strategies and enablers to help them succeed in their careers. For example, to answer the question of how a business coach copes and persists, well there are 4 areas, Drivers, Barriers, Enablers, and Strategies; these 4 areas all have specific themes within them and even more specific information about what the coach should be aware of or do to cope and persist.

Table 4: How business coaches cope and persist in a boundaryless careers

Drivers	Financial Imperatives	—>	Importance of financial stability for livelihood.
			Transition from corporate income to coaching.
			Financial security's impact on family well-being.
	Desire for Flexibility	—>	Flexibility as a driver for autonomy and work-life balance.
			Avoiding the constraints of corporate careers.
			Achieving flexibility through results-driven work.
			Flexibility enabling family and personal goal alignment.
	Desire for Personal Growth	—>	Commitment to lifelong learning and facing challenges.
			New experiences and overcoming fear as motivators.
			Passion for applying and implementing knowledge.
	Meaningful Work	Meaningful work compared to previous jobs	Lack of fulfilment in past roles.
			Coaching as a source of purpose and achievement.
			Reflection and alignment with personal values.
		Desire to Influence the Growth of Others	The personal transformative experiences within coaching.
			Coaching as a means to help others grow and succeed.
			Impact on clients' businesses and personal lives.

		Desire to Positively Impact Their Community	Broader societal and economic contributions.
			Ripple effects on families and employees.
			Coaching as a tool for giving back.
Barriers	Psychological Barriers	The Threat of Client Departure	Income dependency and apprehension over losing clients.
			Struggles with being tough versus maintaining likability.
			Pressure to achieve client goals and fear of failure.
		Self-Doubt	Fear of failing to deliver client results.
			Anxiety about adding value and facing client rejection.
			Negative self-talk and perceived inadequacy as barriers.
			Impact of perceived peer hierarchy on confidence.
			Fears of ineffectiveness and failure to communicate insights.
		Tightrope Between Friend and Coach	Tension between building rapport and maintaining assertiveness.
			Likability as a constraint on coaching effectiveness.
			Friendship bonds hindering tough coaching conversations.
	Difficult Clients	Know-It-All Clients	Challenges with close-minded, cynical clients resistant to change.
			'Been there, done that' attitudes and avoidance mechanisms.
			Clients dismissing advice and resisting vulnerability.
			High 'D' (Direct) personalities and combative approaches to coaching.
			Viewing challenging clients as opportunities for growth.
		Not Taking Responsibility as Role of Client	Lack of follow-through and accountability as barriers.
			Excuses and resistance to action affecting progress.
			Strained rapport due to client inaction.
			Importance of coach adaptability in addressing client challenges.
			Stressful business situations influencing client behaviour.
	External Barriers	—>	Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on coaching delivery.
			Transitioning to virtual coaching environments.
			Technological challenges and maintaining client engagement.
	Support (Where the coach needs help)	Being Forceful	Non-forceful personalities as a barrier to directive coaching.
			Struggles with assertiveness and confrontation.
			Balancing assertiveness with expectations from clients.
		Accountability	Importance of follow-through accountability from their coach.
			Desire for stronger measures to ensure action and progress.
			Negative impact of leniency in holding them accountable.
		Compassion	Deliberate efforts to show compassion when it doesn't come naturally.
			Balancing logical and emotional coaching methods.
			Objective vs. understanding methods.
			Tailoring support to client needs.
		Virtual vs. In-Person Dynamics	Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on coaching delivery.
			Challenges in transitioning from in-person to virtual coaching:
			–Loss of unique energy in group sessions.

			–Difficulty in maintaining personal connections.
			Technological barriers to effective virtual coaching:
			–Internet instability and technological failures.
			–Difficulty in maintaining personal connections.
			Benefits and drawbacks of virtual coaching:
			–Reduced travel time vs. lack of non-verbal cues and "Zoom fatigue."
			–Mixed perspectives on virtual platforms as a long-term solution.
Enablers	Having a Supportive Work Community	—>	Importance of peer networks and like-minded colleagues.
			Emotional and logistical support from family and clients.
			Cultural fit and shared inspiration within coaching organisations.
			Franchise structure as a balance between support and independence.
	Physical Environment	Role of physical environment in enhancing creativity and well-being.	Outdoor activities as enablers for problem-solving and continuous learning.
			Aesthetic and motivational workspaces fostering grounding and structure.
			Aesthetic and motivational workspaces fostering grounding and structure.
			Positive effects of organised, visually stimulating settings on thought processes.
	Ideal Clients	Openness to New Learning.	Proactive clients engaging in self-education and new ideas.
			Rapid learners who apply knowledge and demonstrate sustained motivation.
			Clients' coachability and openness as drivers of better outcomes.
		Shared Values and Traits	Alignment of values and traits
			Shared humour, interests, and honesty enhancing rapport and dynamics.
			Values-driven interactions fostering more impactful coaching experiences.
		Clear Goals and Belief Goals Can Be Achieved	Importance of clients' clarity and alignment of goals.
			Self-efficacy and belief in surpassing goals.
			High-performing traits like punctuality, reliability, and action orientation.
		Commitment to Coaching Transformation.	Clients' full buy-in to the coaching process.
			Self-motivated clients keeping coaches engaged and inspired.
			Practical application of learning as a marker of commitment.
			Past successes as indicators of fruitful coaching relationships.
Strategies	Learning	Learning from Literature and Community	Using books, audio resources, and communities to stay ahead.
			Benefits of open discussions and applying new concepts in practice.
			Open-learning attitudes as a precursor to professional development.
		Learning Through Reflection	Reflecting on coaching sessions as a tool for growth.
			Journaling and post-session analysis to refine coaching methods.
			Peer discussions to share insights and adapt strategies.
		Learning from Clients	Identifying patterns and themes in client scenarios.
			Feedback from clients and peers as a learning tool.
			Leveraging client interactions for ongoing skill development.
	Communication	Pure Coaching and Questioning	Socratic questioning to foster client self-discovery.
			Moving from directive communication to client-centred questioning.

			Importance of reflective and open-ended questions.
		Active Listening and Reflection	Creating space for clients to think and communicate.
			Using active listening to encourage deeper client reflection.
			Applying insights gained from mentors to coaching practices.
		Directiveness and Challenge	Developing confidence in assertive coaching.
			Balancing direct communication with empathy and support.
			Challenges of adopting confrontational styles for non-directive personalities.
	Adapting	Encouraging Goal Setting and -	Tailoring strategies to individual client goals.
		Instilling Self-Belief	Instilling self-efficacy through clear goal-setting and encouragement.
			Maintaining focus and steering clients towards impactful actions.
		Acknowledging Success	Helping clients recognise and celebrate achievements.
			Importance of reflecting on successes to reinforce self-efficacy.
			Strategies to ensure clients appreciate their progress.
		Demonstrating Empathy	Balancing empathy with professional boundaries.
			Building rapport and trust through compassionate coaching.
			Avoiding excessive empathy to maintain accountability and results.
	Tailoring Strategies to Client Needs	Quality Over Speed	Focusing on quality outcomes over rapid results.
			Adjusting pacing to match client readiness and goals.
			Importance of reflecting on successes before moving to new challenges.
		Solution-Oriented Caution	Avoiding premature solutions to encourage client self-efficacy.
			Holding back direct advice to allow clients to discover answers.
			Empowering clients to commit to their own decisions.
		Maintaining Positivity and Calmness	Promoting optimism and calm to enhance coaching effectiveness.
			Positive and calm demeanour as a tool to instil resilience in clients.
			Strategies to maintain productivity and accountability through positivity.
		Instilling Positivity and Calmness	Using positivity to foster a solution-focused mindset.
			Creating calm environments to reduce client stress and encourage openness.
			Balancing positivity with objective views for better client outcomes.

9.1 | Interpretation and Discussion of Key Findings

9.1.1 | Drivers Discussion

Understanding the drivers of business coaches helps shed light on why business coaches choose to persist, even during challenging times. The findings reveal that business coaches

are motivated by personal growth, financial stability, work-life balance, and the pursuit of meaningful work. The literature review also highlighted these elements. Financial stability remains a critical driver, echoing traditional career success metrics while also supporting Sullivan and Baruch's (2009) notion of the coexistence of physical and psychological mobility that was discussed in the literature review. Both Sullivan and Arthur (2006) and Briscoe et al. (2006) emphasised the importance of psychological mobility, where career success is increasingly defined by intrinsic motivations such as self-fulfilment and autonomy. Study 1 found that coaches view financial security not just as a personal necessity but as a means to support family well-being, illustrating how boundaryless careers blend professional and personal imperatives.

The results found that work-life balance emerges as a key motivator, aligning with Inkson et al.'s (2012) discussion of boundaryless careers offering flexibility to match life circumstances. However, the coaches highlight that achieving this balance requires deliberate effort, suggesting that flexibility is both a benefit and a challenge in such careers.

A notable contribution of this study is the emphasis on meaningful work. Coaches consistently described their desire to positively impact clients and communities, transcending individual success to pursue broader societal benefits. This altruistic dimension adds depth to boundaryless career literature by delivering a deeper understanding of psychological mobility, highlighting a unique alignment of personal values with professional aspirations that are not extensively addressed in the literature review.

The coaches also found that the transition from corporate roles to coaching underscores the appeal of boundaryless careers for individuals seeking autonomy and purpose. This transition demonstrates how the coaching boundaryless career aligns with personal values and cultural fit. This assists with addressing Pringle and Mallon's (2003) concerns about the suitability of boundaryless careers for all individuals, thus contributing to boundaryless career knowledge.

9.1.2 | Barriers Discussion

The business coaches in their boundaryless careers, although have no corporate boundaries, still highlighted that they faced daily challenges. Study 1 revealed that business coaches face significant barriers, including fears of client departure, income instability, and

self-doubt. The literature review highlighted (Tams & Arthur, 2010) the role of agency in managing uncertainties in boundaryless careers. Coaches' apprehension about losing clients reflects the precarious nature of freelance coaching, where income is closely tied to client acquisition and retention. This income for the coach had a direct effect on their personal/household income. Losing a client for the coach could have a significant impact on their personal/household income, thus applying pressure and anxiety for the coach as loss of income would severely influence their household finances. Job insecurity (and the feelings of apprehension from job insecurity) due to loss of income and loss of clients, was a major fear and barrier for the coach that also influenced how they work with the client and carry out their job.

A key tension identified in Study 1 is the balance between being directive and maintaining rapport. While directive coaching is necessary to achieve client goals, it risks straining the relationship if not handled delicately. This challenge underscores the relational complexity of coaching, where professional boundaries and interpersonal dynamics must coexist harmoniously. The coaches' job role is to challenge and support their clients in order to "coach" them towards new behaviours and new results. Fear of losing a client, therefore, can also influence the coaches' ability to carry out their job. If the coach pushes too hard, they might lose the client, if they do not push hard, the client may not get the behaviour change required to achieve results. Thus, the coach may lose the client.

Losing the client also was said to have a post effect on the coach too where it would lead the coach to experience a negative spiral of emotions such as self-doubt, low self-efficacy, and low confidence in their abilities to coach to the results they desire.

Self-doubt emerged as a recurring theme, with coaches questioning their ability to meet client expectations. This mirrors the dual-edged nature of impostor syndrome, where self-perception drives professional improvement but can also hinder confidence. This struggle highlights the emotional labour inherent in coaching and aligns with Eby et al.'s (2003) exploration of identity challenges in fluid career paths.

9.1.3 | Enablers Discussion

The term 'enablers' emerged from Study 1, which embraces the responses that the business coaches revealed in their interviews. The coaches spoke about the support that enabled

them to cope and persist as coaches. They highlighted several enablers that support coaches' ability to cope and persist, including supportive communities, conducive environments, and client characteristics.

The business coaches revealed that peer networks, family support, and structured work environments are pivotal for their success as coaches. This aligns with Eby, Butts, and Lockwood's (2003) knowing-whom competencies, which emphasise the importance of social capital in boundaryless careers. Coaches also cited the value of structured environments for maintaining discipline and resilience, blending autonomy with routine. This is congruent with research that found that support networks provide emotional backing and opportunities for professional development (Cohen et al.'s, 2004).

The role of physical environments in fostering creativity and grounding mental processes introduces a novel dimension that the coaches discussed. Access to nature and well-designed workspaces supports cognitive and emotional well-being, reinforcing Barley's (1989) emphasis on the interplay between context and individual agency. This highlights a coping mechanism to how the coaches improve their well-being in their career.

Client characteristics emerged as another critical enabler. According to the business coaches, traits like openness to learning, shared values, and goal clarity facilitate effective coaching relationships. These findings extend the literature by highlighting the importance of value alignment in coach-client compatibility that the coaches highlight are important factors that enable them to carry out their job effectively. The coaches highlight that by teaching the client from the start 'the game' as such that they play as coach and player is a strategy that can be deployed to ensure this client coach relationship remains positive and results focused, enabling the coach to effectively carry out their job.

9.1.4 | Strategies Discussion

The business coaches discussed strategies that they implement in order to adapt to challenges they face and how they pursue towards higher levels of objective and subjective success as a business coach. They highlighted that continuous learning, adaptability, and reflective practice are central strategies employed by business coaches. These findings support Arthur et al.'s (2005) theory on self-directed development and reflective practice, emphasising the iterative nature of professional growth.

Coaches' reliance on Socratic questioning to facilitate client self-discovery introduces a nuanced perspective on coaching methodologies. The experienced longer term coaches referred to their coaching style that they had adapted as 'pure coaching' and 'true coaching'. They spoke of how they had tried various approaches of communication and behaviours, yet the client finding the answer from within themselves gave them (the client) higher levels of commitment to their goals and self-efficacy to achieve them. This non-directive approach aligns with McKenna and Davis's (2009) emphasis on empowering clients while adding depth to our understanding of how relational dynamics evolve in coaching.

Aligning with Wiginton and Cartwright's (2020) findings on effective coaching interactions, balancing empathy with assertiveness is a critical relational strategy, reflecting the dual demands of technical expertise and emotional intelligence. This balance ensures that coaches can challenge clients constructively while maintaining trust and rapport. The development of advanced skills, such as pattern recognition and refined questioning techniques, underscores the cognitive complexity of coaching. These findings develop on and illustrate how coaches refine interpersonal skills through continuous learning and direct client feedback that was referenced in the literature review (Van Maanen & Barley, 1984).

Coaches also emphasised the importance of tailoring methods to individual client needs, highlighting the dynamic and client-centred nature of the profession. Strategies such as encouraging client ownership, focusing on long-term goals, and fostering resilience add practical insights into how coaches adapt their behaviour to diverse challenges.

9.2 | Study 1 Preliminary Practical Implications

The following informs of the implications that Study 1 reveals. Implications are discussed in the final chapter as the synthesis of both Study 1 and Study 2 implications contribute towards greater implications for how coaches cope and persist within boundaryless careers. The implications from Study 1 are important to review at this point of the project as they shape Study 2 literature review and methodology.

The findings from Study 1 provide practical implications and valuable insights for improving business coaching practices, strengthening support systems, and advancing the understanding of boundaryless careers. These findings can inform strategies for individual

coaches, organisations, and industry leaders to address challenges and enhance the sustainability of coaching as a profession, to help coaches better support their clients, and help coaches become successful in their careers.

One critical implication is the need for tailored professional development programs. Coaches (and their organisations that provide a supportive environment for the coach) should prioritise continuous learning opportunities that emphasise strategies such as Socratic questioning, reflective practice, positioning the role of the coach-client relationship and how they win at the start, and pattern recognition. These approaches help coaches refine interpersonal skills, adapt to client diversity, and foster self-directed professional growth. By addressing the cognitive and relational complexities of coaching, such programs ensure that coaches are better equipped to meet the dynamic demands of their clients, thus helping the coach to cope and persist towards higher level of success.

Strengthening coping mechanisms is another significant area of focus that was revealed in Study 1. Peer networks, professional communities, and structured work environments play a pivotal role in mitigating self-doubt and emotional labour, which was shown to have a large influence on the coaches' emotions (affect) and Job Insecurity. Perhaps facilitating access to mentorship programs, networking opportunities, and supportive communities can enhance emotional resilience among coaches. Furthermore, physical environments that foster creativity and mental well-being—such as workspaces with natural elements—can be promoted to boost productivity and emotional balance.

The study also highlights barriers to boundaryless careers, such as client dropout, income instability, and self-doubt. Perhaps a method to address these issues involves exploring alternative income models, such as subscription-based services or diversified revenue streams, which can reduce anxiety around client loss. Professional support, including supervision or training in managing impostor syndrome, can further strengthen coaches' confidence and emotional resilience. These measures help to alleviate the personal and professional pressures inherent in boundaryless careers.

Structured support systems are essential for individuals transitioning into boundaryless careers. Transition programs that focus on skill adaptation, autonomy, and alignment with personal values can facilitate smoother entry into coaching. Additionally, tools to assess cultural fit for boundaryless careers can help potential coaches determine if this career model suits their goals and capabilities, reducing the likelihood of misalignment.

Affective pathways and well-being outcomes are explored deeper in Study 2 as a result of these above findings and implication suggestions.

Coaching practices themselves can also benefit from insights derived from the study. For instance, implementing better client screening and onboarding processes ensures alignment in values, openness to learning, and clarity of goals, improving the effectiveness of coaching engagements. Additionally, coaches can be trained to balance empathy and assertiveness, a relational strategy that ensures clients are constructively challenged while maintaining trust and rapport.

The study underscores the importance of meaningful work as a motivator for business coaches. A suggestion is that organisations can emphasise the altruistic dimensions of coaching in their marketing materials and training programs, attracting individuals who value purpose alongside professional success. By aligning personal values with career goals, coaches could achieve greater satisfaction and impact in their roles.

Motivational pathways are discussed in Study 2 to factor in these findings and implications.

Behaviour approaches should also be taught to the coaches as the organisation/community evolves to adapt to physical influences in the market, such as COVID-19 and financial crises, and psychological challenges, such as working with different client traits. For example, coaching methodologies should also evolve to meet the needs of individual clients. Coaches can adopt non-directive approaches that empower clients through self-discovery, fostering commitment and efficacy. Tailoring coaching strategies to client needs, focusing on long-term goals, and encouraging ownership and resilience are additional methods that can enhance the client-coach relationship and improve outcomes.

Due to the above findings and implication suggestions, behavioural pathways—such as the coach's approach to focus the client on long-term goals—are developed into Study 2 to explore deeper.

Finally, from both an empirical and theoretical perspective, these findings contribute to the broader understanding of boundaryless careers, offering insights for academics, policymakers, and organisations. By addressing the unique challenges and opportunities in such careers, stakeholders can better support freelancers and independent professionals across various industries. Collectively, these practical implications provide actionable strategies for advancing not just the coaching profession but all boundaryless career

individuals and improving career sustainability in dynamic and evolving work environments. The findings, from a non-boundaryless career perspective, also allow for firms that utilise internal coaching methods, i.e., managers as coaches, to implement these findings to improve the effectiveness of their organisation's coaching abilities and enhance their human capital and company performance. Thus, contributing to the overall coaching literature and practice.

9.3 | Limitations and Future Research

The study went as intended. The 15 business coaches that were approached were successfully interviewed to gain qualitative data on how they cope and persist. The findings provided insight as there was no right or wrong answer, which aligns with the purpose of qualitative research.

Despite fears of time being valuable and the coaches being resistant to opening up to discuss their true thoughts about their boundaryless careers, the coaches were fully committed to the interview and provided deeper insight than initially expected.

The study has several potential limitations that may have influenced the findings. One key limitation is related to the sample size and representation. The sample was 15 and predominantly was drawn from one coaching organisation, thus, the findings may not fully represent the diverse experiences of business coaches globally. However, this does allow for the isolation of other variables, such as the coaching style and approach, so this approach does add value too. For example, if participants didn't share similar backgrounds or career trajectories, the study may not have adequately explored the varied perspectives within the boundaryless career model. Future research could explore how different business coaching organisations cope and persist.

Another valuable area of inquiry is the investigation of coping mechanisms in diverse coaching contexts, not just business coaches. Research could explore how these mechanisms vary across industries, such as corporate coaching, personal development, and health, or within different cultural settings. This approach could uncover unique strategies and enablers relevant to specific contexts, providing a broader understanding of resilience in the profession.

The study's temporal focus presents another limitation. Providing a snapshot of coaches' experiences at a particular point in time may overlook how drivers, barriers, and strategies evolve over the course of their careers or in response to external changes. Without longitudinal data, the study cannot capture the dynamic nature of boundaryless careers or how business coaches adapt over time. However, where a longitudinal approach where the business coaches were interviewed over a longer period could have been beneficial to the study as coaches' state can change from day to day due to the challenges they may be facing during that period of time they were interviewed. This could have given a better 'average' of how they truly felt. However, the semi-structured interview was designed to warm the coach to a place of safety and free thinking. The coaches, let their guard down after a few questions and provided valuable insight. Nevertheless, future research could utilise a longitudinal study to explore the effects of how coaches cope and persist over a longer period.

Another limitation is the context-specific nature of the research. By focusing exclusively on business coaches, the study may not account for the unique challenges and strategies faced by other professionals in boundaryless careers. Furthermore, if the participants came from a specific cultural or economic background, the findings might not fully reflect how these factors influence boundaryless careers in different regions or industries. Future studies could explore the influence of cultural and economic background in boundaryless careers.

The role of emotional factors in coaching success also warrants further exploration. It was highlighted in the study how coaches emotionally react and change behaviour. The emphasis on emotions was not explored in this study as it would have required deeper questioning of these emotional factors and veered away from the project's aim. It was not the aim of the semi-structured interview but could have been of value if it was positioned across all interviews as business coaches did highlight affective elements often. Future research could examine the psychological impacts of emotional labour, including how self-doubt and impostor syndrome influence coaches' performance and relationships with clients. Investigating interventions that mitigate these effects could enhance the emotional well-being and effectiveness of business coaches.

Finally, there is subjectivity in the interpretation of key constructs. Concepts such as "meaningful work," "self-doubt," and "work-life balance" may have been understood differently by participants, leading to variability in their responses. Acknowledging these limitations offers an opportunity for future research to refine methodologies, incorporate

larger and more diverse samples, adopt longitudinal designs, and integrate quantitative measures to complement qualitative insights.

9.4 | Conclusion

This chapter illustrates the complex interplay of drivers, barriers, enablers, and strategies that support business coaches in coping and persisting within boundaryless careers. By integrating existing literature with the study's findings, it provides a richer understanding of the drivers, barriers, and adaptive mechanisms such as the strategies they deploy and what enables them to succeed that define this profession. Coaches demonstrate high levels of personal agency and self-efficacy, relying on intrinsic motivators such as growth, flexibility, and meaningful work to persist in uncertain and dynamic career environments. Their resilience is further bolstered by relational and social capital, as support networks—both professional and personal—play a crucial role in overcoming barriers and sustaining persistence, emphasising the importance of relational resources in boundaryless careers. Emotional resilience is equally vital, with strategies like maintaining positivity, managing psychological challenges, and fostering adaptability enabling coaches to navigate the complexities of their careers effectively. Alignment with personal values and purpose enhances satisfaction and longevity, as coaches find fulfilment and drive in work that resonates with their core beliefs and aspirations. The study contributes new insights, including the altruistic dimensions of career success, the role of environmental factors, and the evolving relational strategies employed by coaches, offering valuable implications for supporting individuals in navigating boundaryless careers and areas for future research. The findings from this research shape Study 2 to create a theoretical model that incorporates specific measures that help explain how business coaches cope and persist in boundaryless careers.

9.5 | Theoretical Development and Transition to Study 2

The themes that emerged from Study 1 emphasised the importance of psychological resources in maintaining a boundaryless coaching career. Participants described sustaining self-belief amidst uncertainty, maintaining optimistic views of future work, recovering from setbacks, and staying goal-oriented amid fluctuating demand. These themes closely align with the constructs of Psychological Capital as defined by Luthans et al. (2007) — efficacy,

optimism, resilience, and hope.

Building on Bandura's (1997) Social Cognitive Theory and Snyder's (2002) concept of hope, Study 2 therefore examines a model where these resources serve as key mechanisms for coping and persistence. In doing so, it extends the qualitative insights into a quantitative framework that explores how psychological resources contribute to sustained objective and subjective career success within boundaryless work.

CHAPTER 10 | STUDY 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Study 2 aims to examine the impact of Psychological Capital (PsyCap) on work-related performance variables critical for business coach objective and subjective success and to explore the underlying mechanisms that explain this relationship.

Building on Study 1, which identified the centrality of psychological resources in coaches' ability to cope and persist, this chapter develops a theoretical explanation for those findings. Study 1 showed that coaches sustain performance through agency, optimism, and resilience—qualities consistent with the PsyCap dimensions of hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism (Luthans et al., 2007). The transition to Study 2, therefore, provides an opportunity to test empirically whether these resources operate as measurable constructs that explain variations in performance and well-being. In this way, the qualitative results inform the quantitative model and hypotheses that follow.

Study 1 revealed that coaches exhibit strong personal agency and self-efficacy, drawing on intrinsic motivators such as growth, flexibility, and meaningful work to remain resilient in uncertain and dynamic career landscapes. Their ability to persist is further strengthened by relational and social capital, with both professional and personal support networks playing a vital role in overcoming challenges and sustaining progress, underscoring the value of relational resources in boundaryless careers. Emotional resilience emerged as a key factor, with strategies such as maintaining positivity, addressing psychological hurdles, and embracing adaptability helping coaches navigate career complexities effectively. Based on these qualitative findings, different pathways—motivational, emotional, and behavioural—emerged as potential explanations for why coaches stay driven and pursue strategies to overcome barriers. These pathways are explored in this literature review to determine how the principles identified in Study 1 manifest in measurable aspects of coach performance and wellbeing.

While Study 1 demonstrated that coaches' personalities and characteristics influence how they cope and persist, understanding mhow these factors translate into measurable objective and subjective success remains unexplored. Unlike stable trait constructs, PsyCap captures psychological resources that are *state-like* and developable, representing a dynamic capacity for positive functioning and a unique contribution to boundaryless career and business coaching research.

Where Study 1 drew upon Agency Theory to understand how and why coaches cope and persist in boundaryless careers, Study 2 centres on Psychological Resource Theory (PRT; Hobfoll, 2002), which posits that "resource caravans"—clusters of accumulated resources—provide a stable foundation to cope with challenges and persist over time. This resource base acts as a buffer against potential losses and supports recovery from setbacks. Within this framework, PsyCap applies PRT principles by emphasising the development of confidence, resilience, and optimism to better objective and subjective success. By focusing on PsyCap, Study 2 investigates how these psychological resources explain business coaches' capacity to cope and persist, and examines the motivational, affective, and behavioural mechanisms through which PsyCap operates.

This chapter therefore presents the study rationale, reviews the literature on PsyCap and its mechanisms, and examines its relevance to challenges identified in Study 1—including financial performance, client acquisition and retention, job security, and life satisfaction—before concluding with hypothesis development.

10.1 | Study Rationale

Study 1 identified the specific drivers that propel business coaches toward success, the barriers they must overcome, and the enablers and strategies they employ to achieve sustained performance. Further examination of these findings revealed a unifying, transient psychological variable, PsyCap, underlying the capacity to cope and persevere a positive psychological state characterised by hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism that can be developed to enhance work performance and satisfaction (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007).

Study 2 therefore extends Study 1 by quantitatively testing the role of PsyCap in predicting both objective (financial income, client retention, client acquisition) and subjective (job insecurity, life satisfaction) outcomes critical for business coaches. It further examines three potential mediating pathways—motivational (job engagement), affective (positive affect), and behavioural (instilling hope)—thereby offering both theoretical and practical contributions to understanding business-coach success within boundaryless career, and equally, which variables do not contribute, thereby shaping future studies.

It is therefore expected that higher levels of PsyCap will be associated with greater engagement, positive affect, and ultimately higher objective and subjective career success among business coaches.

This chapter reviews the current literature on PsyCap and develop a theoretical model proposing these pathways.

10.2 | Review of Psychological Capital

The following provides a comprehensive overview of PsyCap, elucidating its role as a pivotal construct within the field of positive organisational behaviour (POB) and how it adds value to this project in helping to quantify how coaches cope and persist towards higher levels of objective and subjective success. I outline the individual attributes that comprise the PsyCap core construct—hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism—and the mechanisms through which it operates. Additionally, I discuss PsyCap's current applications and identify the benefits of utilising PsyCap and the gaps in existing research, thus laying the groundwork for how PsyCap assists in helping scholars understand the mechanisms that drive performance in boundaryless careers, and in the context of this DBA, business coaches.

10.2.1| Definition and Distinction

PsyCap, a composite construct of hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism, has become a focal point in POB research due to its unique human development aspect and state-like nature. Distinct from traditional psychology, which focuses on the negative attributes of human health, Positive Psychology researchers explore what is good in people and what makes them more productive (Luthans et al., 2004).

In an organisational context, business researchers have given PsyCap particular attention as it is focused on who the person is becoming and goes beyond traditional economic capital (what you have), human capital (what you know) and social capital (who knows you) (Luthans et al., 2004). PsyCap does not encompass the 'who you are' in terms of

personality traits but the ‘who you are becoming’, reflecting its influence on daily actions and goal-oriented choices that lead the individual towards their version of success (Luthans et al., 2007).

Where the focus of most human resource studies may explore human capital (consisting of employee education, skill, and experience), PsyCap adds unique value as it explores the motivating underpinning factors of human psychology that within PsyCap consists of the four constructs (i.e., hope, efficacy, resilience, and realistic optimism) working as one core-construct (Luthans, et al., 2007). Each facet includes both unique and common cognitive and motivational processes that enable performance that when combined are expected to complement each other and allow for broader and potentially more impactful work performance (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017).

Empirical evidence has demonstrated PsyCap's predictive capacity for various attitudes and behaviours in employees—that went beyond their demographics, core self-evaluation, personality traits, and person-organisation and person-job fit—finding that PsyCap may be a stronger predictor of future performance in individuals than other means of human resource profiling (Avey, Luthans & Youssef, 2010).

Unlike static traits, PsyCap and its components are malleable and open to development. This positions them closer to the state (i.e., moods and emotions) end of the continuum, as opposed to hardwired pure positive traits (for example, intelligence or hereditary characteristics) or stable trait-like constructs (such as conscientiousness, extraversion, and core self-evaluations; Avey, Luthans & Youssef, 2010). PsyCap researchers underline PsyCap’s distinctiveness as ‘one’s positive appraisal of circumstances and probability for success based on motivated effort and perseverance’ (Luthans et al., 2007). PsyCap adds a unique contribution to positive organisational scholarship as it is considered ‘state-like’. Where a state reflects how an individual feels from point to point about their environment (Xanthopoulou, et al., 2009), a state-like construct—although still momentary like a state—is stable over a longer moment in time, therefore malleable and open to development (Sihag & Sarikwal, 2014). Thus, PsyCap is considered a malleable, open-to-development variable that influences one state, and a motivating mechanism in explaining an individual’s attitudes, behaviours, and performance (Avey et al., 2011).

10.2.2| Psychological Capital as a Core Construct

PsyCap encompasses the four capacities of self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience, all of which significantly contribute to better workplace performance (Luthans et al., 2004). Avey, Luthans & Youssef (2010) show that the combination of these four constructs allows PsyCap to inherit higher-level motivational properties than each construct alone. Consequently, individuals with higher PsyCap levels exhibit more optimism, a belief in creating their success, and greater resilience to setbacks compared to those with lower PsyCap levels. These positive psychological resources synergistically interact, establishing PsyCap as a multi-dimensional construct (Law et al., 1998). PsyCap is comprehensively defined as:

> *"an individual's positive psychological state of development characterised by: (1) having confidence (efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to attain success"* (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007, p. 3).

Hope involves a consistent goal orientation and planning pathways to succeed (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007). Snyder et al. (1991) describe hope as "a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (1) agency (goal-oriented energy) and (2) pathways (planning to meet goals)." The PsyCap Questionnaire (PCQ) utilises Snyder et al.'s (1996) measure to assess hope.

Self-efficacy, or self-confidence, refers to an individual's ability to undertake and exert effort to successfully execute challenging duties (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007). Drawing from Bandura's (1997) work, efficacy is defined as "one's conviction (or confidence) about his or her abilities to mobilise the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to successfully execute a specific task within a given context" (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998, p. 66). The PCQ uses Parker's (1998) measure to assess self-efficacy.

Resilience is the capacity to persist and recover from difficulties (Luthans et al., 2004). It is defined as "the capacity to rebound or bounce back from adversity, conflict, failure, or even

positive events, progress, and increased responsibility" (Luthans, 2002, p. 702). The PCQ uses Wagnild & Young's (1993) measure to assess resilience.

Optimism pertains to a positive style of explaining good and bad events in one's life, particularly regarding how individuals interpret these events, both past and future (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007). Derived from Seligman's (1998) work, optimism is described as an explanatory/attribution style that interprets negative events as external, temporary, and situation-specific and positive events as personal, permanent, and pervasive. The PCQ uses Wagnild & Young's (1993) measure to assess optimism. Optimism is often most strongly associated with overall positive psychology among the four capacities (Luthans et al., 2004).

From an "open to development" perspective, PsyCap can be developed through interventions, such as the Psychological Capital Intervention (PCI; Luthans et al., 2006). These interventions promote positive thinking patterns by challenging and replacing deep-seated assumptions and beliefs, potentially leading to long-term changes in brain plasticity (Peterson et al., 2008). The PCI breaks down the development of the four PsyCap facets:

> **Hope**: Developed through visualising goals and creating possible routes to achieve them, even in the face of adversity, and implementing obstacle planning to overcome challenges.
>
> **Realistic Optimism:** Built through enhancing efficacy and confidence and developing positive expectancy.
>
> **Efficacy and Confidence:** Fostered through experiencing success, modelling others, persuasion, and arousal, such as mentorship.
>
> **Resilience:** Strengthened by building assets, avoiding risks, and understanding how to influence the process effectively (Luthans et al., 2006).

Researchers have explored the mechanisms of the above and theorised why PsyCap as a core construct is effective within organisational settings. The cognitive-affective processing system theoretical framework (Hannah & Luthans, 2008) provides insight into the mechanisms of PsyCap. This model suggests that PsyCap arises from dynamic processes that activate adaptive cognitive categories, goals, values, and self-regulatory plans, distinguishing it from the more global nature of traits. For example, where somebody could

come across as having confident characteristics (generalised efficacy, that is trait-like) that are exhibited over time and across situations, others may lack the confidence. However, self-efficacy (that is state-like) is more domain-specific and can be developed for a specific set of tasks (e.g., a job) through mastery experiences, modelling, social persuasion, and physiological and psychological arousal (Bandura, 1997).

As a result, the developmental components from PsyCap create one's positive expectancies, trigger the creation of goals, and motivate one's self-regulatory mechanisms, thus increasing the chance of perseverance and success in a given situation (Avey, Luthans & Youssef, 2010).

10.3 | Underpinning Theories and Consideration

The effects of PsyCap can be explained from different theoretical perspectives. The following explores the theories that underpin PsyCap that are also relevant to this study. I begin by identifying key theories that are mentioned within the PsyCap literature and conclude with—whilst all theories provide essential information as to why PsyCap is effective—why psychological resource theory in particular, assists with shedding light on why PsyCap is key in understanding business coaches' ability to increase their overall performance results, and satisfaction.

I conclude with a discussion of the key theories that best fit Study 2 and why. The theories are also used again further in the hypotheses discussion to explain various pathways in the study model.

10.3.1| Psychological Resource Theory (PRT) and PsyCap

Psychological Resource Theory (PRT) provides a framework for understanding how individuals manage, conserve, and invest psychological resources—such as attention, energy, motivation, and resilience—to cope with challenges and maintain well-being (Hobfoll, 2002). In Study 2, PRT offers a valuable perspective on how business coaches sustain high performance and well-being in boundaryless careers.

While Agency Theory (utilised in Study 1) examines perceived control over career outcomes, findings from Study 1 suggest that not all coaches feel fully in control. While this made an interesting topic for qualitative discussion, it highlights a potential variability in agency across the Study 2 sample that is not particularly the focus of Study 2. PRT, however, accounts for both those with and without a strong sense of agency, making it a more inclusive framework for examining how PsyCap supports performance and well-being outcomes irrespective of perceived control.

This aligns with Luthans et al. (2007) and Avey et al. (2011), who argue that PsyCap—comprised of hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism—functions most effectively as an integrated core construct rather than isolated constructs. Aligned with PRT, PsyCap's additive predictive validity enhances its ability to forecast performance and well-being beyond its individual elements (Luthans et al., 2007). Avey, Luthans, and Youssef (2010) further demonstrate that the synergy between these components fosters higher motivation, persistence, and adaptability, again aligning with the project question of how coaches cope and persist towards a higher level of success. Thus, while other theories contribute to understanding PsyCap's effects, PRT provides the most comprehensive explanation of how PsyCap functions as a dynamic, self-reinforcing system that supports performance and well-being outcomes in boundaryless careers.

As the model for Study 2 explores the pathways between PsyCap and the dependent variables of performance and well-being, I also include other noteworthy theories to assist in the underpinning of each individual pathway. The following discusses the theories, along with why they are/are not the best fit for the entire model, but could add value to the pathways.

10.3.2| Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and PsyCap

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT; Bandura, 1997) provides another perspective on PsyCap underpinning theories by emphasising the role of self-efficacy in motivation, perseverance, and resilience and is mentioned within the PsyCap literature. Luthans et al. (2010) identify SCT as a relevant framework for understanding how PsyCap operates, particularly in relation to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed.

SCT is important in this study for PsyCap and potential pathways (motivational) within the model because self-efficacy is a central component of PsyCap, influencing a coach's ability to sustain motivation and persist through challenges. However, while SCT explains how beliefs about personal control shape behaviour, it does not fully account for the broader interplay between PsyCap's components. Since PsyCap encompasses not only self-efficacy but also resilience, hope, and optimism, SCT alone may not fully explain how these factors interact to enhance performance and well-being.

Therefore, while SCT provides a key pathway for understanding how PsyCap operates through self-efficacy and motivation, PRT better captures the full range of psychological resource interactions that influence long-term success in coaching careers.

10.3.3| Broaden-and-Build Theory (BBT) and PsyCap

Broaden-and-Build Theory (BBT; Fredrickson's, 2004) offers another valuable perspective on PsyCap by explaining how positive emotions expand cognitive and behavioural responses, leading to the accumulation of personal resources over time (Pradhan, Jena, & Bhattacharya, 2016). Research suggests that positive emotions enhance cognitive flexibility, coping abilities, and resilience, all of which contribute to PsyCap (Garland et al., 2010; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005).

In the coaching context, positive emotions broaden an individual's perspective, facilitating creative problem-solving and proactive engagement in career challenges. Over time, this process contributes to greater psychological resilience, which aligns with the long-term benefits of PsyCap. Study 1 results also showed examples of the downward spirals of emotions when coaches discussed the effects client dropout had on them, such as feelings of self-doubt, lack of confidence, low self-efficacy, that in turn affected their job.

However, while BBT may explain an affective pathway how positive emotions support resilience, it does not fully address the interaction between all PsyCap components or how resources are strategically conserved and replenished over time. While BBT provides a key emotion pathway for understanding PsyCap's role in positive core-affect, PRT offers a more encompassing model by incorporating both emotional and cognitive resource mechanisms.

10.3.4| Theory Discussion

Each of the discussed theories—SCT, BBT, and PRT—contribute to explaining the pathways that connect PsyCap with performance and well-being outcomes that are discussed later in this chapter. Thus, rather than viewing these theories in isolation, they are best understood as complementary explanations of how PsyCap influences coaches' ability to cope, persist, and thrive in boundaryless careers.

Why PRT Is The Best Fit For Study 2

PRT is particularly well-suited as an underpinning theory for Study 2 as it provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how PsyCap supports performance and well-being in boundaryless careers. First, it captures the protective and restorative functions of PsyCap, recognising that coaches must replenish psychological resources to sustain high performance, particularly in careers that lack structural stability. Second, PRT accounts for long-term resource accumulation by explaining how resilience develops over time, supporting not only immediate coping mechanisms but also sustained career success. Third, it integrates the key insights of SCT and BBT, uniting these perspectives within a single resource-based framework that explains how PsyCap's components interact dynamically.

This perspective aligns with findings from Luthans et al. (2007) and Avey et al. (2011), who suggest that PsyCap's predictive validity increases when treated as a core construct rather than as separate psychological traits.

PRT also helps explain the motivational properties of PsyCap, particularly how it enables coaches to counteract negative psychological states and maintain proactive behaviour (Avey, Luthans, & Youssef, 2010). Optimism and confidence play a crucial role in helping individuals persist through challenges and take control of their career success (Seligman, 1998; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Luthans et al. (2007) describe this as the positive appraisal of circumstances and the probability of success based on motivated effort and perseverance.

By framing PsyCap as a collective resource system, PRT clarifies how psychological strengths interact to enhance performance and well-being. This reinforces its suitability as

the guiding framework for Study 2, allowing for a deeper exploration of how coaches leverage their psychological resources to sustain long-term success in their careers. In all, by conceptualising PsyCap as an interconnected system of psychological resources, PRT offers a robust model for understanding how coaches could sustain motivation, positive emotional resources, and behaviours that lead to higher levels of performance and overall well-being outcomes.

10.4 | Psychological Capital Antecedents

The following examines the key individual and organisational factors that predict PsyCap in the workplace and explores more general frameworks that have been used to explore PsyCap. While exploring the antecedents of PsyCap is beyond the remit of this dissertation, in the interest of a comprehensive understanding of this pivotal construct, it is useful to next provide a summary of the literature examining the factors influencing PsyCap.

Predictors of PsyCap can be grouped into individual-level antecedents and organisational-level antecedents. Individual-level factors include personal traits, life experiences, and demographic characteristics, which shape an individual's capacity to develop PsyCap (Youssef & Luthans, 2012; Avey, Luthans & Youssef, 2010). These intrinsic characteristics contribute to an employee's PsyCap and, by extension, may influence the PsyCap of individuals, whose resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy are shaped by their personal and professional experiences.

Organisational-level antecedents encompass leadership, job characteristics, strategy, structure, and culture, all of which play a role in fostering or constraining PsyCap development. Leadership abilities have been identified as an active predictor, with the interaction between leader and subordinate significantly influencing PsyCap (Avey, 2014; Wu & Nguyen, 2019). Further studies suggest that broader organisational elements, such as workplace culture and structural support, contribute to PsyCap by shaping an environment that promotes confidence, motivation, and resilience (Youssef & Luthans, 2012). These factors highlight the importance of both individual and organisational influences in the development of PsyCap.

An explanation for how PsyCap in organisations can be found in leadership literature where a Contagion Effect demonstrates how a leader's PsyCap can significantly influence the

PsyCap of their followers (Story et al., 2013). This effect was found to be mediated by factors like the frequency of interaction and the quality of the relationship.

10.5 | Psychological Capital Outcomes

Exploring the multifaceted impact of PsyCap in organisational settings reveals that the PsyCap construct is beneficial for enhancing various aspects of workplace dynamics.

Prior studies have found a relationship between PsyCap, work attitudes, behaviour, and performance. These include work performance, employee engagement, job satisfaction, work commitment, well-being, job involvement, organisational commitment, Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB), stress, turnover intentions, cynicism for change, deviance, and work-family conflict (Avey et al., 2011; Bukhari & Kamal, 2017; Chi et al., 2018; Gooty et al., 2009; Larson & Luthans, 2006; Luthans et al., 2008; Pradhan et al., 2016 Wu & Nguyen, 2019).

Findings of a meta-analysis of 51 independent samples (representing a total of N = 12,567 employees), showed a significant positive relationship between PsyCap and desirable employee outcomes (job satisfaction, organisational commitment, psychological well-being), desirable employee behaviours (citizenship), and multiple measures of performance (self, supervisor evaluations, and objective; Avey et al., 2011).

The following delves into the research findings on PsyCap, highlighting its significant influence on performance, behavioural outcomes, motivational factors, and the overall health and well-being of employees. A detailed overview of how PsyCap manifests in these domains, underlining its critical role in personal and organisational development is discussed.

10.5.1| Performance

Substantial research has focused on performance as a key outcome of PsyCap. Avey et al. (2011) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis involving 24 different samples and found a significant relationship between employees' PsyCap and their performance. This

relationship encompasses a range of performance types, including creative tasks, sales, referrals, quality and quantity of manufacturing, and supervisor-rated performance. PsyCap, therefore, emerges as a critical factor in enhancing individual performance across various domains.

At the organisational level, PsyCap's impact is equally significant. PsyCap has been found to positively influence innovativeness and firm performance (McKenny et al., 2013; Memili et al., 2014), where empirical evidence demonstrates the effectiveness of PsyCap interventions in improving managerial performance, leading to substantial organisational benefits (Luthans et al., 2006). Further research has found empirical evidence that positions PsyCap as a strategic asset that contributes to creating a competitive advantage at both individual and organisational levels (Luthans & Youssef, 2004; Luthans, Avolio et al., 2007; Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007).

From an ROI (return on investment) perspective, PsyCap has shown a positive financial return. Examples include how PsyCap influences innovativeness and firm performance (McKenny et al., 2013; Memili et al., 2014). PsyCap has also provided development opportunities and performance measures on who their team are becoming for human resource departments, allowing the firms to maximise their human performance and return on salaries (Youssef & Luthans, 2012). For example, a cross-sectional study (Luthans et al., 2006) showed feedback of the Psychological Capital Intervention (PCI) increasing PsyCap of managers from a range of organisations by 3 per cent, versus a control group that received a non-related training intervention that showed no increase in their PsyCap. In the same study, the intervention was similarly carried out in a high-tech firm that resulted in a 270 per cent return on investment ($20,000 investment, $73,919 return).

Further evidence of financial return through positive interventions has also been witnessed in small, medium and some of the largest organisations, spanning from manufacturing, hospitality, franchises, banking, insurance, healthcare, telecommunications, shipping, military, police, sports, oil and gas, education, government, NGOs, and non-profits (Avey, Avolio, Luthans, 2011).

Other than financial gain, the impact of positive emotions can also reduce stress which has been said to cost companies $200 billion a year in increased absenteeism, ‘tardiness’, and loss of talented workers (Peterson et al., 2008).

The above demonstrates PsyCap's direct effect on performance outcomes. The research on PsyCap's direct influence on performance is well researched, so it is therefore not a hypothesis to test within this DBA; however competitive mediators that may influence via an indirect effect are explored. Potential hypotheses related to business coach performance are formed later under the 'Hypothesis Development' heading and are tested within Study 2.

10.5.2| Behavioural Outcomes

PsyCap significantly impacts various workplace behaviour outcomes. Higher levels of PsyCap are associated with increased organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) and a decrease in Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB; Avey, Luthans & Yousef, 2010). This demonstrates that PsyCap not only enhances individual performance but also fosters positive workplace behaviours, contributing to a constructive organisational culture.

The concept of 'PsyCap profiling' (Dawkins et al., 2013)—assessing an individual's or group's levels of self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience to identify strengths and areas for improvement, aiming to enhance performance and well-being—through the PCQ offers a nuanced understanding of how different PsyCap configurations relate to varied outcomes. This approach potentially guides human resource strategies in maximising the positive impact of PsyCap on organisational behaviour. Additionally, higher PsyCap levels have been found to correlate with more supportive attitudes towards change and flexibility in adapting to new processes, further illustrating the broad behavioural implications of PsyCap in organisational settings (Zahra & Masood, 2015).

Research has shown that a leader's PsyCap influences not only their followers' PsyCap but also their behaviour and overall work outcomes (Luthans et al., 2007). When leaders demonstrate hope, efficacy, optimism, and resilience in addressing key organisational challenges, they positively shape their followers' PsyCap, fostering high-performance behaviours. Leaders need to be aware of their influential role, as their treatment of subordinates directly impacts workplace mood, motivation, and performance (Wu & Nguyen, 2019). By embodying and reinforcing PsyCap, leaders can create a positive work environment that enhances both individual and organisational success.

Avey et al. (2011) found a significant negative relationship between PsyCap and undesirable individual attitudes (cynicism, turnover intentions, job stress, and anxiety) and undesirable

employee behaviours. An explanation for this may be because employees low in PsyCap have been said to experience lower levels of positive emotions and, in turn, are more likely to experience cynical attitudes and deviant behaviours that would be indicative of resistance to change and detract from positive organisational changes; where individuals with high PsyCap would interpret the same event in a positive manner (Avey, Wernsing, Luthans, 2008).

10.5.3| Motivational Outcomes

PsyCap plays a pivotal role in enhancing employee motivation. Ferraro et al. (2018) highlighted the intrinsic motivational aspects of PsyCap, indicating its significant influence on work motivation. Similarly, research has found that PsyCap contributes towards one's desire to seek out personal growth initiatives and opportunities in their careers (Meyers et al., 2015). This intrinsic motivation is crucial for fostering a self-driven workforce committed to achieving organisational goals.

Furthermore, the positive relationship between PsyCap and employee engagement is evident. Research indicates that PsyCap, through mediators such as positive emotions and workplace resources, significantly boosts employee engagement (Sihag & Sarikwal (2014). Luthans & Youssef-Morgan (2017) further reinforce this by demonstrating that the higher-order construct of PsyCap has a stronger predictive power for job satisfaction and affective organisational commitment than PsyCap's components. Bandura (2008) suggests that unless people believe they can produce desired effects from their actions, they have little incentive to act or to continue in the face of difficulties. This desire to act intentionally comes from their reservoir of PsyCap, which in turn serves as the foundation for their motivation to attain goals and succeed.

The existing literature suggests that PsyCap not only directly impacts motivation but also influences performance and engagement through various mediators—such as Job Engagement—that serve as a pathway to key organisational outcomes. Each of these mediating factors, including motivational, behavioural, and affective elements, will be explored in the following sections to clarify how PsyCap operates through multiple channels to enhance employee performance and well-being outcomes.

10.5.4| Well-Being Outcomes

At an individual level, PsyCap is described as a positive psychological state that significantly influences various aspects of an employee's work life and well-being. PsyCap affects organisational commitment, coping mechanisms, and overall success in achieving goals (Avey et al., 2011; Luthans et al., 2007). This positive psychological state is closely linked to health and well-being outcomes, as it contributes to improved job satisfaction, reduced job stress, and enhanced psychological well-being—topics that are relevant to both studies on how business coaches cope and persist.

In addition to the above positive outcomes, PsyCap also negatively correlates with undesirable employee attitudes like cynicism, turnover intentions, job stress, and anxiety (Avey et al., 2011). This suggests that a higher level of PsyCap can mitigate negative emotions and behaviours in the workplace, contributing to an overall healthier work environment. Bandura (2008) also emphasises the role of belief in one's capabilities, as fostered by PsyCap, in motivating individuals to act and persevere in the face of challenges, further highlighting the connection between PsyCap and individual well-being.

In summary, extensive research on PsyCap underscores its multifaceted impact across performance, behavioural, motivational, and health and well-being outcomes. PsyCap not only enhances performance metrics and fosters positive workplace behaviours but also boosts intrinsic motivation and job engagement and contributes significantly to psychological well-being. These diverse impacts highlight the importance of developing and nurturing PsyCap within organisational settings for individual and organisational development. The literature indicates that PsyCap, through its positive impact on emotions, behaviours, and motivation, can significantly contribute to general performance and overall life satisfaction.

However, although PsyCap has been shown to influence performance and life satisfaction, the mechanisms through which this occurs remain unclear. This is of both theoretical importance, as it can contribute to a more thorough theoretical understanding of the relationships between PsyCap and performance and life outcomes, as well as practical relevance, as it enables a contextualised knowledge of how PsyCap can be determinant in explaining the performance and life satisfactions business coaches, a growing but under-researched professional group. In what follows, the lines of reasoning identified in the literature review are further developed, conducing to this study’s hypotheses and conceptual model.

10.6 | Conceptual Framework

The literature review thus far has outlined PsyCap's mechanisms, underpinning theories, antecedents, and outcomes. I now focus on utilising these elements to develop a conceptual framework grounded on psychological resource theory (PRT) to explain how PsyCap may contribute towards business coaches' capacity to cope and persist.

I begin by providing an overview of what are critical outcome variables for a business coach. I then highlight the three potential pathways that may explain why PsyCap influences the outcome variables, i.e., coach performance and satisfaction with life. I then present the conceptual model and the potential mediators that are grounded in PRT and previous research discussed in this literature review. The rationale for each mediator is then explained under the 'Hypotheses Development' section that follows.

10.6.1| Overview of Coach Outcomes

Based on the research discussed in this literature review surrounding PsyCap and its outcomes and feasibility concerns, this study focuses on: Coach Certification (that is a less intrusive way of measuring a coach's financial performance), the Number of Clients the coach has at the time of the survey, and Average Client Retention (an indicator of how well the coach retains their client, i.e., client not dropping out). From a psychological perspective, I also measure Job Insecurity and Satisfaction with Life. These outcomes derive from the literature review and are also topics that the business coaches revealed from the qualitative data gathered in Study 1.

The following provides an overview of the direct effects of PsyCap on the coach outcomes. Understanding the mechanisms by which PsyCap influences these outcome variables is the focus of Study 2, and these pathways are explored deeper in the hypotheses development.

Overview of PsyCap and Direct Effect on Performance Outcomes for Coaches

The literature supports that PsyCap has a positive influence on individual performance, particularly in areas like client acquisition, retention, and revenue generation, which are all critical aspects of a business coach role.

A meta-analysis by Avey et al. (2011) shows that PsyCap is instrumental in enhancing individual performance across different domains, including creative tasks, sales, referrals, and quality and quantity. Additionally, studies demonstrate the positive influence of PsyCap on firm performance and innovativeness, linking individual PsyCap to broader organisational success (McKenny et al., 2013; Memili et al., 2014).

This literature review reveals that PsyCap has been shown to significantly impact organisational performance outcomes and, therefore, will influence the coach's performance, including client acquisition, retention, and revenue generation. According to a meta-analysis by Avey et al. (2011), PsyCap positively affects various performance types across different domains, suggesting its vital role in enhancing individual performance, which can be linked directly to business outcomes like client interaction and financial success. Studies also indicate that PsyCap contributes to organisational success and innovativeness, demonstrating its broader impact (McKenny et al., 2013; Memili et al., 2014). Furthermore, the literature posits that PsyCap's components—hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism—interact synergistically, enhancing motivational properties and improving performance predictability (Luthans et al., 2007; Avey et al., 2011).

This synergy is crucial in business coaching, where coaches need to maintain high levels of motivation and resilience, facilitating effective client relationships and achieving coaching objectives. Moreover, the concept of 'conveyed PsyCap' illustrates how coaches' psychological attributes, perceived by clients, can significantly influence client trust and retention, enhancing the coach's ability to build strong, sustainable relationships (Story et al., 2017; Petersen and Youssef-Morgan, 2018). Thus, harnessing and projecting positive PsyCap attributes effectively attracts and retains clients, reinforcing the coach's authenticity and credibility in the competitive coaching market (Jensen & Luthans, 2006; Anglin et al., 2018).

Overview of PsyCap and Direct Effect on Wellbeing Outcomes for Coaches

PsyCap is shown to positively impact psychological outcomes and mitigate job insecurity, a significant concern for business coaches who are facing client dropouts.

Research indicates that higher PsyCap levels are associated with increased Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) and decreased Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB), contributing to reducing job insecurity (Avey, Luthans & Yousef, 2010). Additionally, 'PsyCap profiling' suggests that different configurations of PsyCap can reduce job insecurity (Dawkins et al., 2013). PsyCap fosters a positive psychological state, improving job satisfaction, reducing job stress, and enhancing well-being (Avey et al., 2011; Luthans et al., 2007), which may influence job insecurity. It also correlates with supportive attitudes towards change and adaptability, which are crucial for reducing job insecurity (Zahra & Masood, 2015). Higher PsyCap levels are linked to reduced cynicism, turnover intentions, job stress, and anxiety, further decreasing job insecurity (Avey et al., 2011). These positive psychological states enhance performance, making employees valuable assets and decreasing their job insecurity (Wright & McMahan, 1992; Barney, 1991; Becker & Huselid, 2006). In successful businesses, high performance leads to stability, morale, and engagement, creating a positive cycle of job security (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002; Huseild & Becker, 2000). Thus, PsyCap is crucial in reducing job insecurity, making it a valuable asset for business coaches.

PsyCap fosters a positive psychological state that leads to improved job satisfaction, reduced job stress, and enhanced psychological well-being (Avey et al., 2011; Luthans et al., 2007). As previously highlighted from a behaviour perspective, higher levels of PsyCap are associated with increased OCB and decreased CWB, contributing to a more satisfying and fulfilling work life, which indirectly boosts life satisfaction (Avey, Luthans & Yousef, 2010). From a career progression perspective, PsyCap enhances employee motivation, fostering a desire for personal growth and career opportunities, which increases job engagement and satisfaction, thereby influencing overall life satisfaction (Ferraro et al., 2018; Meyers et al., 2015). PsyCap is also seen as a strategic asset that enhances individual performance and contributes to organisational success, further linking it to higher levels of life satisfaction (Luthans & Youssef, 2004; Luthans, Avolio et al., 2007; Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007).

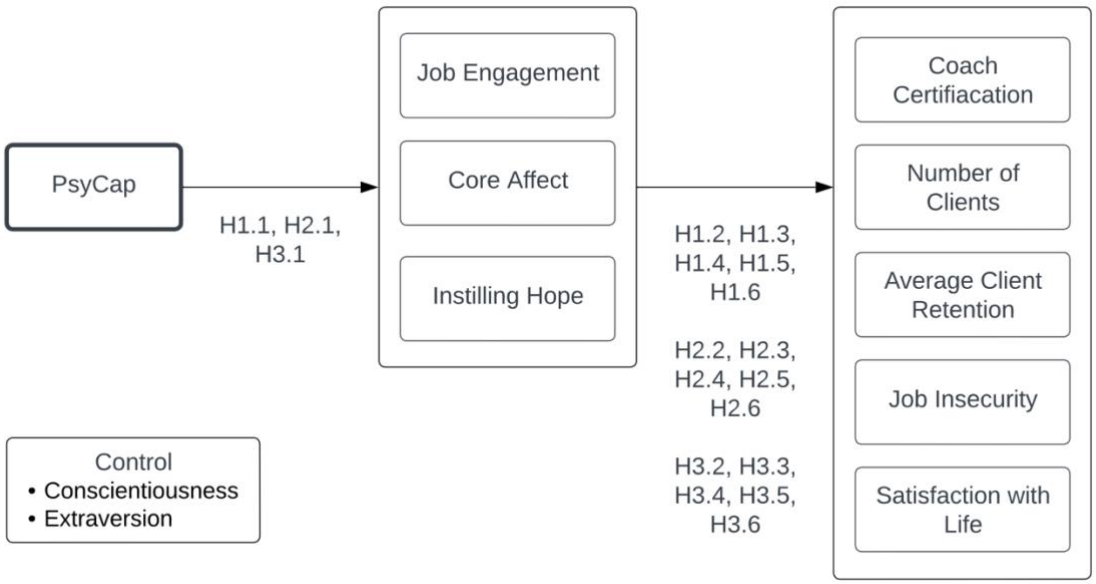
Moreover, PsyCap influences organisational commitment, coping mechanisms, and goal achievement success, fostering a healthier work environment through an affective pathway by reducing negative attitudes such as cynicism, turnover intentions, and anxiety (Avey et al., 2011). The belief in personal capabilities, enhanced by PsyCap, is crucial for motivation and persistence in challenging situations, further underlining its role in individual well-being

and life satisfaction (Bandura, 2008). High-performance states and the pursuit of achieving personal goals, linked to PsyCap, enhance self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment, positively contributing to life satisfaction (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985).

10.6.2| Conceptual Model

The following outlines the conceptual model developed in Study 2 I further highlight the three associated pathways and the mediators tested in Study 2, which are next developed in detail.

Table 5: Study 2 conceptual framework



Model Underpinning Theory and Rationale

In Study 2, 'higher levels of success' are operationalised using both objective and subjective outcome indicators to reflect the multidimensional nature of achievement in boundaryless careers (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 2004; Ng, Eby, Sorensen & Feldman, 2005). Objective success captures quantifiable markers of professional accomplishment, including Coach Certification (an indicator of revenue but not an invasive approach to asking "how much do you earn?"), Number of Clients, and Client Retention. Subjective success

encompasses internal evaluations of well-being and stability, represented here by Satisfaction with Life and Job Insecurity. This dual operationalisation aligns with the broader conceptualisation presented in Study 1, recognising that boundaryless professionals measure progress not only through financial or client metrics but also through personal fulfilment, autonomy, and perceived career stability. By examining both perspectives concurrently, this study provides a balanced assessment of success outcomes relevant to business coaches operating in dynamic, self-directed careers.

As discussed in the previous header on key theories, Psychological Resource Theory (PRT) offers an underpinning theory to understanding PsyCap, focusing on how coaches use their psychological capacities to persist and excel; the topic of this project is how coaches cope and persist. PRT theory introduces the concept of 'resource caravans', clusters of psychological resources that collectively enhance individual and group resilience, aiding in sustaining resource pools and promoting recovery from losses (Hobfoll, 2002).

This idea supports the multifaceted nature of PsyCap and underscores its effectiveness in fostering motivation, perseverance, and success in challenging endeavours (Bandura, 1997; Seligman, 1998; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998; Avey et al., 2010). PRT's integration of these psychological resources into a cohesive model highlights their synergistic effects, enhancing understanding of PsyCap's impact on human behaviour, motivation, and affective pathways that influence performance, potential, and well-being, and providing insight into the enduring capabilities of business coaches.

In essence, the principles of PRT crucially underpin the coach outcomes variables of PsyCap, life satisfaction, job insecurity, and performance outcomes due to its agentic and intrinsic motivational properties. Three potential pathways become prevalent of how PsyCap may influence coach performance outcomes. These pathways and their underpinning theories—other than PRT—are summarised in the following and further detailed in the hypotheses development.

Model Pathways

PsyCap is proposed in this model to influence performance through three interconnected pathways: motivational, affective, and behavioural. These pathways help explain how PsyCap enhances job engagement, core affect, and instilling hope, ultimately shaping

performance and well-being outcomes. By understanding these mechanisms, the study aims to provide support for the proposed model for how PsyCap operates in professional contexts such as business coaching.

Motivational Pathway – Job Engagement

One key mechanism is the motivational pathway, where PsyCap influences job engagement, driving individuals to invest greater effort and commitment in their roles (Ferraro et al., 2018; Meyers et al., 2015).

The motivational pathway is theoretically grounded in Bandura's (1997) concept of self-efficacy and Luthans et al.'s (2007) PsyCap framework. When individuals possess strong efficacy beliefs and goal-directed hope, they are more likely to set challenging objectives, persist in the face of setbacks, and channel effort towards meaningful work. Within boundaryless careers, these resources motivate coaches to maintain persistence, acquire clients, and sustain engagement despite uncertainty. Thus, PsyCap enhances performance indirectly by fostering engagement—the motivational mechanism through which internal belief and purpose translate into tangible work outcomes.

Job engagement is proposed as a mediator in this relationship. Prior evidence links PsyCap to increased job engagement (Sihag & Sarikwal, 2014; Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017).

Affective Pathway – Positive Affect

In addition to motivation, an affective pathway highlights the role of emotions in mediating the PsyCap–performance relationship.

This pathway is supported by Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden-and-Build theory, which posits that positive emotions expand cognitive flexibility and build enduring psychological resources. PsyCap cultivates optimism and resilience, generating positive affect that enables individuals to cope effectively and think creatively. For business coaches, this involves maintaining emotional composure and adaptive thinking when faced with client demands or market volatility. Through this affective mechanism, PsyCap enhances well-

being and performance by broadening thought–action repertoires and building durable psychological strength.

Empirically, PsyCap fosters positive emotional states that influence job satisfaction, resilience, and the ability to manage client relationships effectively (Avey et al., 2011; Luthans et al., 2007). Core Affect—the fundamental neurophysiological state of emotion—operates along dimensions of activation and pleasure (Russell, 2003), shaping how individuals experience and respond to their work environment and, in turn, influencing performance and well-being outcomes.

Behavioural Pathway – Instilling Hope

A behavioural pathway explores how PsyCap facilitates positive workplace behaviours, particularly through Instilling Hope as a mediator.

This pathway draws upon Snyder's (2002) theory of Hope, which defines Hope as the combination of agency (the motivation to act) and pathways (the perceived ability to identify routes to goals). Individuals with high PsyCap exhibit these hope-related behaviours—they seek solutions, sustain momentum, and model optimism for others. In the context of business coaching, this manifests through instilling hope in clients, encouraging their persistence and goal-achievement.

Such hopeful behaviour aligns with the behavioural expression of PsyCap, acting as a catalyst for personal and relational success. It also aligns with findings that PsyCap fosters organisational citizenship behaviours and reduces counterproductive work behaviours (Avey, Luthans & Youssef, 2010). In coaching, this may extend beyond self-performance to improved client acquisition and retention, as hopeful coaches foster stronger professional relationships and long-term engagement.

Integration

Together, these three theoretically grounded pathways—motivational, affective, and behavioural—offer a multifaceted explanation of how PsyCap drives performance and wellbeing. They mirror the motivational, emotional, and behavioural patterns identified

qualitatively in Study 1, now examined quantitatively within the PsyCap framework. By integrating these perspectives, the study seeks to quantify and deepen understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying PsyCap's influence, particularly in the business-coaching profession.

10.7 | Hypotheses Development

The following discusses the rationale for each pathway by exploring the notions of relevant theories for each pathway and supporting literature. Hypotheses are formed that correspond to the conceptual model described above.

10.7.1| Motivational Pathway: The Mediation Role of Job Engagement

Psychological Capital and Coach Outcomes

The motivational pathway draws from Social Cognitive Theory (SCT; Bandura, 1997) and Psychological Resource Theory (PRT; Hobfoll, 2002) to assist in explaining the relationship between PsyCap and coach performance and coach wellbeing outcomes. In the following headers, these theories are discussed on how they contribute to each outcome via a motivational pathway, along with empirical research that supports why they influence the outcome.

Psychological Capital and Job Engagement

The effect of PsyCap on Job Engagement is accounted for by both SCT and PRT. PsyCap is posited to positively influence Job Engagement by providing individuals with a reservoir of psychological resources that boost their motivation and commitment to work. PsyCap, encompassing self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism, equips individuals to approach their roles with greater confidence and sustained motivation, even in challenging environments.

Theoretically, SCT provides a basis for understanding how PsyCap influences Job Engagement. SCT emphasises the role of self-efficacy—an individual's belief in their ability to succeed—as a pivotal factor in fostering motivation and perseverance (Bandura, 1997). Since self-efficacy is a key component of PsyCap, individuals who score high in this trait are likely to show increased perseverance and determination in their work, both of which are integral to Job Engagement.

Moreover, PRT builds on this argument by highlighting the concept of "resource caravans," or groups of resources that work collectively to help individuals cope with adversity and remain engaged (Hobfoll, 2002). PsyCap, as a collection of psychological strengths, serves as a resource caravan that maintains individuals' motivation over time, fostering a sustained commitment to their roles.

Empirical evidence supports this theoretical link. Studies by Sihag & Sarikwal (2014) and Luthans & Youssef-Morgan (2017) indicate that individuals with higher PsyCap are more likely to be engaged in their work due to their enhanced positive psychological states. These findings reinforce the notion that PsyCap acts as a psychological asset that directly enhances Job Engagement.

Both theoretical perspectives and empirical findings converge to suggest that PsyCap has a positive effect on Job Engagement. It empowers individuals with a strong foundation of psychological resources that encourage resilience, motivation, and sustained commitment. Therefore, forming hypothesis 1.1.

Hypothesis 1.1: There is a positive effect of Psychological Capital on Job Engagement

The Mediating Role of Job Engagement Between Psychological Capital and Coach Certification

Engagement is proposed to serve as a mediator in the relationship between PsyCap and the achievement of Coach Certification, acting as a channel through which PsyCap fosters performance outcomes that are essential for certification success. This can be accounted for by SCT. By increasing Job Engagement, PsyCap enhances individuals' motivation, commitment, and proactivity—key factors that influence coaches' ability to achieve certification and drive revenue growth.

Theoretically, SCT provides insight into how PsyCap, particularly self-efficacy, impacts Job Engagement. Self-efficacy—the belief in one's capability to achieve specific goals—boosts motivation and resilience, which are essential to engagement and persistence in demanding roles (Bandura, 1997). Coaches with high self-efficacy may be more likely to engage deeply in their work, facing challenges with a positive outlook and the confidence necessary to excel in their roles. This heightened Job Engagement, driven by PsyCap, positions them to perform more effectively and achieve critical milestones.

Empirical research supports this theoretical framework where studies indicate that PsyCap fosters positive emotions and motivation, which are fundamental to Job Engagement and, in turn, performance (Sihag & Sarikwal, 2014; Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Furthermore, engaged individuals tend to exhibit greater dedication, proactivity, and effectiveness in their work (Hogreve et al., 2017; Keh & Xie, 2009), attributes that are instrumental in achieving better results for their business and maintaining higher revenue streams.

Both theoretical reasoning and empirical evidence suggest that Job Engagement acts as a mediator between PsyCap and performance. A hypothesis is now formed suggesting that by nurturing Job Engagement, PsyCap indirectly enhances the likelihood of achieving certification, as engaged coaches are more motivated, effective, and proactive in their pursuit of performance goals.

Hypothesis 1.2: Job Engagement mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Coach Certification

The Mediating Role of Job Engagement Between Psychological Capital and Client Acquisition

Client Acquisition and the mediating role of Job Engagement can be accounted for by SCT and PRT. PsyCap is posited to indirectly influence the number of clients a business coach can attract and retain through its effect on Job Engagement. PsyCap fosters motivation, resilience, and optimism, leading to higher Job Engagement, which subsequently enhances coaches' abilities to provide outstanding service that drives client satisfaction, loyalty, and referrals.

SCT offers a foundational perspective on how PsyCap promotes Job Engagement because, as previously highlighted, self-efficacy—a core element of PsyCap—heightens motivation and perseverance (Bandura, 1997). This in turn may equip coaches with the confidence and dedication needed to deliver exceptional service. Coaches with high levels of Job Engagement may be more likely to demonstrate superior performance, consistently meeting or exceeding client expectations, which strengthens client satisfaction and retention rates.

Empirical research suggests that engaged employees are associated with higher customer satisfaction, increased referrals, and a greater propensity to seek new business opportunities (Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Inkpen & Tsang, 2005). Job Engagement behaviours foster a strong reputation for the individual and create a cycle of client growth, as satisfied clients are more likely to return and refer others. Additionally, from an organisational level, companies with engaged employees have been shown to often develop a positive public image, attracting even more clients (Keh & Xie, 2009), thus, the coach acting as an individual brand may also convey this positive image by displaying their willingness to engage more in the elements of their job.

Features of PRT further support this argument by highlighting how "resource caravans" of psychological assets, such as those encapsulated by PsyCap, help individuals maintain long-term motivation and engagement (Hobfoll, 2002). PsyCap thus serves as a valuable resource that fuels Job Engagement, creating a sustained drive that may positively impact client acquisition.

Theoretically and empirically, research supports that Job Engagement mediates the relationship between PsyCap and client acquisition. By fostering Job Engagement, PsyCap indirectly enhances client attraction and retention, as engaged coaches are more motivated to deliver exceptional service, which may lead to customer loyalty, positive referrals, and an expanding client base.

Hypothesis 1.3: Job Engagement mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Number of Clients

Job Engagement as a Mediator Between Psychological Capital and Client Retention

SCT and PRT—the two theoretical foundations of Job Engagement—support the behavioural pathway that explain why Job Engagement may mediate the relationship between PsyCap and Client retention. PsyCap promotes a positive psychological state that enhances Job Engagement, which in turn fosters behaviours essential to client satisfaction and long-term retention. In turn these job engagement behaviours then shape how the coach acts in front of their clients. The behaviours include, as outlined in PRT, driving motivation and perseverance (Bandura, 1997), along with resilience and optimism from PysCap, these helps individuals stay committed to keeping and serving the clients as this is the foundation of their business and success. PRT also highlights how "resource caravans," or clusters of resources, sustain motivation over time, suggesting that PsyCap acts as a valuable resource pool that helps employees maintain engagement (Hobfoll, 2002).

Empirical research reinforces this theoretical link between Job Engagement and performance outcomes. Avey et al. (2011) found that individuals with high PsyCap are more resilient and motivated, which bolsters their engagement levels. Additionally, engaged employees are more likely to deliver high-quality service, leading to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty (Hogreve et al., 2017). Markos & Sridevi (2010) further emphasise that engaged employees display proactive behaviours, which positively impact client interactions and overall business performance, thus, may enhance client retention.

The combined theoretical and empirical evidence indicates that Job Engagement mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and client retention. A hypothesis is formed that through Job Engagement, PsyCap enables individuals to build strong client relationships and consistently deliver quality service, which are critical for achieving high client satisfaction and retention rates.

Hypothesis 1.4: Job Engagement mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Average Client Retention

The Mediating Role of Job Engagement in Reducing Job Insecurity Through Psychological Capital

The effect of PsyCap on Job Insecurity and the mediating role of Job Engagement is accounted for by SCT and PRT. PsyCap is hypothesised to reduce Job Insecurity through its positive impact on Job Engagement, which fosters psychological resources that enhance resilience, optimism, and adaptability—qualities that contribute to a greater sense of job security. PsyCap, by increasing Job Engagement, helps coaches cultivate valuable workplace behaviours, which in turn mitigates their feelings of insecurity within their career.

The theoretical foundation for this relationship is again supported by SCT, which posits that self-efficacy and resilience—core components of PsyCap—enhance motivation, bounce back, and performance, helping individuals manage workplace demands and reduce stress (Bandura, 1997). This increased resilience and optimism contribute to higher job satisfaction and decreased job stress, which are essential in reducing Job Insecurity (Avey et al., 2011; Luthans et al., 2007). PRT further reinforces this rationale by explaining how "resource caravans" of psychological assets—like resilience and optimism—enable employees to adapt and recover from setbacks (Hobfoll, 2002), which may enhance their perceived stability and reduce Job Insecurity.

Empirical evidence provides further support for this argument. For example, higher levels of PsyCap are associated with increased Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) and reduced Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB), both of which contribute to a stable and supportive work environment (Avey, Luthans, & Youssef, 2010). Additionally, individuals with high PsyCap exhibit reduced cynicism, turnover intentions, job stress, and anxiety, all of which are factors that lower job insecurity (Avey et al., 2011). PsyCap also fosters adaptability and supportive attitudes toward change, contributing to reduced Job Insecurity (Zahra & Masood, 2015). Engaged employees bring value to their organisations, as engagement fosters stability and morale (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002). Engaged individuals are thus perceived as valuable assets to others, including clients, helping to secure their roles and decrease Job Insecurity.

Furthermore, in successful businesses, high performance often leads to a cycle of stability and engagement that reinforces job security over time (Huselid & Becker, 2000; Wright & McMahan, 1992; Barney, 1991; Becker & Huselid, 2006). When employees exhibit high engagement, they are more productive and proactive, leading to improved client interactions

and overall business performance (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Thus, engaged employees contribute positively to their organisation's reputation and client relationships, further solidifying their sense of security. As a result, it can be hypothesised that Job Engagement serves as the pathway through which PsyCap indirectly mitigates job insecurity.

Hypothesis 1.5: Job Engagement mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Job Insecurity

Job Engagement as a Mediator Between Psychological Capital and Life Satisfaction

PsyCap fosters positive psychological states, motivation, and resilience, which enhance Job Engagement, ultimately contributing to greater satisfaction with life. SCT supports this relationship by emphasising the role of self-efficacy in fostering personal growth, resilience, and the belief in one's ability to succeed (Bandura, 1997). In turn this may play a significant role in fulfilling one's potential and contributing to overall coach Life Satisfaction.

Empirically, Sihag & Sarikwal (2014) demonstrate that high levels of PsyCap are associated with greater Job Engagement, as individuals with enhanced motivation and positive psychological states are more committed to their work. Furthermore, engaged employees experience a greater sense of fulfilment in their professional lives (Avey et al., 2011), which may positively affect their overall satisfaction with life as a coach.

By fostering positive psychological states and resilience (SCT) and by experiencing a greater send of fulfilment from being engaged in their roles, PsyCap increases Job Engagement, which, in turn, enhances life satisfaction as individuals find purpose and fulfilment in both their work and personal lives.

Hypothesis 1.6: Job Engagement mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Satisfaction with Life

These hypotheses collectively emphasise the role of Job Engagement as a critical mediator in the relationship between PsyCap and various performance and well-being outcomes, grounded in SCT and PRT frameworks.

10.7.2| Affective Pathway: The Mediation Role of Core Affect

An alternative path for the effect of PsyCap is via emotions. Specifically, it is proposed that core Affect influences the relationship between PsyCap and coach performance and wellbeing outcomes. The PsyCap literature review highlighted that PRT and Broaden and Build Theory (BBT) are both key theories that explain the effects of PsyCap on various job-related outcomes. These theories are utilised to help explain how PsyCap may influence the outcomes for a business coach via an affective pathway, focusing on Core Affect as a mediator.

Psychological Capital as a Positive Influence on Core Affect

PsyCap is posited to positively influence Core Affect, which encompasses dimensions of activation, such as energy or arousal, and pleasure-displeasure, such as happiness or distress, reflecting an individual's overall emotional state (Russell, 2003). By enhancing positive psychological states (i.e., the state-like element of PsyCap), PsyCap may contribute to elevated Core Affect, improving both activation and pleasure dimensions, that influences the affective pathway between PsyCap and performance and well-being outcomes.

PRT, that underpins PsyCap, offers a strong theoretical foundation for understanding the relationship between PsyCap and Core Affect. PRT posits that psychological resources like hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism are essential for sustaining positive emotional states and buffering against negative emotions, thereby promoting a positive influence on Core Affect (Hobfoll, 2002). Each component of PsyCap contributes uniquely to a positive affective state: resilience aids in maintaining high energy and engagement despite challenges, while optimism fosters a positive outlook, reducing feelings of distress. As a cohesive set of psychological resources, PsyCap may enable individuals to sustain elevated activation and pleasure dimensions of Core Affect, supporting their overall emotional well-being.

The BBT complements this perspective by explaining how positive emotions broaden an individual's awareness and enable the development of lasting personal resources (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005). As PsyCap fosters positive emotions like optimism and hope, it broadens the scope of Core Affect, thereby reinforcing emotional well-being.

Although PRT provides the primary framework for understanding this relationship, BBT supports the idea that positive emotions induced by PsyCap can further expand and strengthen Core Affect due to its upward spiral of positive emotions.

PRT, supported by BBT, suggests that PsyCap positively influences Core Affect. By cultivating positive emotions and psychological resilience, PsyCap strengthens Core Affect's dimensions of activation and pleasure, resulting in a heightened and stable affective state that supports overall emotional well-being.

Hypothesis 2.1: There is a positive effect of Psychological Capital on Core Affect

Core Affect as a Mediator Between Psychological Capital and Coach Certification

The relationship between Psychological Capital (PsyCap) and Coach Certification (revenue) can be explained to be mediated by Core Affect as it is an individual's emotional experience that includes dimensions of activation (e.g., energy) and pleasure-displeasure (e.g., happiness or distress). By fostering positive affective states, PsyCap may contribute to improved affective resources that support coaches in achieving higher revenue and performance.

Core Affect is a key factor in shaping employee attitudes, with implications for enhancing job satisfaction and productivity. This affective dimension plays a crucial role in facilitating positive work perspectives that contribute to professional success (Fisher, 2000).

PRT posits that psychological resources like hope, resilience, and optimism, cultivated through PsyCap, contribute to a stable, positive emotional state, or Core Affect, which helps individuals sustain high levels of energy, positivity, and engagement (Hobfoll, 2002). For coaches, this stable affective state may enhance essential performance outcomes, such as sustained engagement, cognitive flexibility, and resilience, all of which are critical for achieving and maintaining high certification standards and revenue growth. BBT supports this perspective by explaining how positive emotions broaden an individual's awareness and promote exploratory thoughts and actions, which in turn lead to the development of long-term personal resources (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005; Garland et al., 2010). Coaches with high PsyCap are likely to experience elevated Core Affect, characterised by heightened

energy and positivity, which may enhance the affective pathway between how PsyCap influence performance outcomes. This broadened awareness improves problem-solving abilities, adaptive thinking, and prosocial behaviours—all of which are integral to PsyCap's effect on performance outcomes (Jäger & Rüsseler, 2016).

Empirical research reinforces Core Affect's role as a mediator in the PsyCap-coach certification relationship. For instance, studied found that positive emotional states enhance cognitive processing and resilience, expanding an individual's behavioural repertoire (Pradhan, Jena, and Bhattacharya (2016). Coaches in a positive affective state may be better able to engage in adaptive thinking, allowing them to effectively attract, retain, and satisfy clients—all of which contribute to certification success and revenue growth. Core Affect thus serves as a mechanism through which PsyCap's psychological resources translate into improved performance outcomes.

Both PRT and BBT support the view that Core Affect mediates the relationship between PsyCap and coach certification (their financial performance). By cultivating stable, positive emotional states and broadening coaches' cognitive flexibility, PsyCap may enhance Core Affect, which in turn leads to critical performance outcomes such as better business results and revenue growth.

Hypothesis 2.2: Core Affect mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Coach Certification

Core Affect as a Mediator Between Psychological Capital and Number of Clients

According to PRT, Core Affect is a candidate to mediate the relationship between PsyCap and client acquisition in coaching because PsyCap cultivates a stable and positive emotional state which, via Core Affect, equips coaches to effectively handle client acquisition and retention challenges (Hobfoll, 2002). This positive Core Affect may promote a coach's proactive and engaging thoughts and positive emotions towards enhancing client relationships, supporting affective elements (i.e., positive energy elements towards client acquisition tasks) essential for attracting and retaining clients.

Core Affect serves as an emotional resource that enhances interpersonal effectiveness, allowing coaches to build stronger client relationships and engage in more positive feelings towards activities that expand their client base. Although research connecting Core Affect directly to coaching outcomes is limited, insights from leadership literature suggest that Core Affect can amplify interpersonal influence. For instance, Story et al. (2017) found that "conveyed" PsyCap—PsyCap perceived by others rather than self-attributed—enhances leader effectiveness through the mediator of team positive energising. This positive energising effect, which refers to the optimistic and motivating energy conveyed by leaders, boosts team motivation, engagement, and goal achievement (Marks, 1977; Quinn & Dutton, 2005; Owens et al., 2016). Similarly, coaches with high PsyCap may convey a positive feeling to their potential clients, strengthening the coach-client relationship and creating a "contagion effect" that facilitates client acquisition.

BBT supports this view by suggesting that positive emotions broaden an individual's cognitive repertoire, encouraging exploratory and proactive client-seeking thoughts and emotions that move the coach towards wanting to positively engage with more customers (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005). In coaching, positive affective states fostered by PsyCap can enable coaches to remain energised and experience positive emotions, making them more effective in client acquisition and retention activities. As positive emotions expand awareness and flexibility, coaches are better equipped to experience broadened thoughts in how they approach client opportunities and deepen new client relationships.

SCT also supports this relationship which posits that high-quality relationships are built on social persuasion, support, and affective arousal, which are foundational to developing PsyCap (Bandura, 1997). Findings by Story et al. (2013)—researchers in conveyed PsyCap—demonstrates a "trickle-down" effect, where leaders with high PsyCap can positively influence their followers. In the context of coaching, this trickle-down effect may explain how PsyCap strengthens the coach-client relationship, thus leading to more clients.

PRT, BBT and SCT together suggest that Core Affect mediates the relationship between PsyCap and client acquisition. By sustaining positive affective states, PsyCap enables coaches to build strong client relationships by positively cultivating positive emotions that can influence their desire to seek new customer opportunities and convey positive affect to the potential client via an affective contagion effect.

Hypothesis 2.3: Core Affect mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Number of Clients

Core Affect as a Mediator Between Psychological Capital and Client Retention

Similarly to the previous header, the PsyCap and Client Retention may be explained via the same principles—where positive affective states foster the development and maintenance of strong client relationships, critical for long-term retention.

PRT again provides a robust framework for this relationship, positing that PsyCap—through its components of resilience, hope, optimism, and self-efficacy—nurtures a stable and positive emotional state, or Core Affect, that equips coaches to manage client interactions effectively, even in challenging situations (Hobfoll, 2002). This enhanced Core Affect, marked by high energy and positivity, may encourage coaches to engage proactively and authentically with clients, fostering a positive emotional experience and reinforcing retention.

Core Affect serves as a valuable emotional resource that supports coaches in building strong interpersonal connections with clients, enhancing their ability to convey positive energy and enthusiasm essential for sustaining client engagement. As previously highlighted, Story et al. (2017) found that "conveyed" PsyCap, or PsyCap perceived by others, boosts leader effectiveness through positive energising, whereby leaders' optimism and motivation create a contagious effect that elevates team engagement and goal achievement (Marks, 1977; Quinn & Dutton, 2005; Owens et al., 2016). Similarly, coaches with high PsyCap may convey a positive Core Affect to their clients, fostering a contagious optimism that strengthens the coach-client relationship and contributes to retention.

BBT supports this view by explaining that positive emotions broaden an individual's cognitive and behavioural repertoire, enhancing resilience and adaptability (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005). For coaches, a positive Core Affect—sustained by PsyCap—expands their capacity for flexible, client-cantered responses and proactive problem-solving, all of which contribute to client satisfaction and long-term retention. This broadened awareness enables coaches to respond to clients' needs more creatively and effectively, helping to solidify meaningful client relationships.

Together, PRT and BBT indicate that Core Affect mediates the relationship between PsyCap and client retention by sustaining positive emotional engagement and enhancing a coach's ability to build lasting client connections. By fostering resilience, adaptability, and positive

affective states, PsyCap strengthens Core Affect, which in turn supports coaches in cultivating positive feelings towards clients and their retention, ultimately contributing to a stable and expanding client base.

Hypothesis 2.4: Core Affect mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Average Client Retention

Core Affect as a Mediator Between Psychological Capital and Job Insecurity

The relationship between PsyCap and job insecurity can be explained by the affective pathway, and measured by Core Affect, which plays a central role in shaping individuals' emotional resilience and reducing negative emotions, such as fear and anxiety, that contribute to Job Insecurity.

PRT provides a strong theoretical foundation for this relationship, positing that the psychological resources cultivated by PsyCap—such as resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy—promote a stable and positive Core Affect that buffers against workplace stressors and instils a greater sense of security (Hobfoll, 2002). Through Core Affect, PsyCap enables individuals to manage and alleviate insecurities, enhancing their sense of job stability and emotional well-being (Avey et al., 2011). Core Affect serves as an ongoing assessment of one's emotional state, influencing other psychological processes and perceptions (Russell, 2003). A positive Core Affect, nurtured by the resources within PsyCap, encourages an optimistic outlook and strengthens cognitive processes, leading individuals to interpret their experiences more positively. Although dated, research by Schwarz & Clore (1983) supports this, highlighting that positive Core Affect results in more favourable memories, perceptions, and expectations, which contribute to a heightened sense of control and security in one's role.

BBT complements this perspective by suggesting that positive emotions broaden an individual's cognitive repertoire, allowing them to develop adaptive coping strategies that reduce Job Insecurity (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005). This broadened cognitive perspective, supported by a positive Core Affect, equips individuals to navigate workplace challenges with resilience, further reinforcing their sense of stability.

PRT and BBT suggest that Core Affect mediates the relationship between PsyCap and Job Insecurity. However, PRT emphasises the role of PsyCap in sustaining positive emotional resources that buffer against stressors associated with Job Insecurity, fostering a sense of stability and confidence in one's role.

Hypothesis 2.5: Core Affect mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Job Insecurity

Core Affect as a Mediator Between Psychological Capital and Life Satisfaction

The relationship between PsyCap and overall Life Satisfaction can be explained via the mediating role of Core Affect, with positive emotional states significantly enhancing an individual's sense of well-being and life fulfilment. PRT provides a robust foundation for understanding this relationship, suggesting that the psychological resources fostered by PsyCap—such as resilience, hope, and optimism—promote a stable and positive Core Affect, which serves as an emotional buffer against stress and adversity, ultimately enhancing life satisfaction (Hobfoll, 2002). By nurturing positive Core Affect, PsyCap enables individuals to experience greater emotional resilience and stability, which are crucial for maintaining a fulfilling and satisfying life.

Core Affect, via high levels of pleasure and activation, may shape Life Satisfaction by enhancing an individual's overall emotional experience and capacity to engage with life in meaningful ways (Russell, 2003). Through the resources developed within PsyCap, individuals are better equipped to handle life's challenges, leading to a sustained sense of well-being and long-term satisfaction.

BBT complements this perspective by suggesting that positive emotions broaden individuals' cognitive and behavioural repertoires, fostering the development of psychological resources that contribute to well-being (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005). According to BBT, positive affect encourages engagement in meaningful activities and cultivates resilience, both of which are supportive of long-term life satisfaction (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005). However, PRT more strongly emphasises how the resources derived from PsyCap provide a stable affective foundation that buffers against life's stressors, thus offering a sustained pathway to satisfaction.

PRT and BBT suggest that Core Affect mediates the relationship between PsyCap and life satisfaction. However, PRT underscores the importance of positive psychological resources sustained by Core Affect, which may empower individuals to navigate life's complexities with resilience and confidence, fostering a fulfilling and satisfying life experience. This affective pathway highlights the central role of Core Affect in linking PsyCap to well-being and life satisfaction outcomes.

Hypothesis 2.6: Core Affect mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Satisfaction with Life

The hypotheses detailed explain how PsyCap may influence performance and wellbeing outcomes through an affective pathway.

10.7.3| Behavioural Pathway: The Mediation Role of Instilling Hope

The literature review demonstrated that PsyCap has a positive influence on various organisational and individual performance related outcomes. The following explores a third possible pathway, focusing on the behaviour displayed by the coach, particularly Instilling Hope. PRT and Hope Theory explain this behaviour pathway, because (i) PRT underpins PsyCap, and (ii) Hope is a key element within PsyCap that contains goal setting and pathfinding elements. Study 1 found that coaches encourage clients to work towards goals and support them through setbacks. By Instilling Hope as a behaviour, coaches utilise their own PsyCap to encourage others to pursue their goals and stay resilient, thus leading to better performance outcomes.

Psychological Capital as a Positive Influence on Instilling Hope

Hope, a core component of PsyCap, involves two key elements: agency (the motivation to pursue goals) and pathways (the capacity to identify ways to achieve these goals; Snyder, 2002). Together, these elements enable individuals to maintain motivation, resilience, and optimism as they change one's behaviour to work toward meaningful objectives. According to Hope Theory, individuals with high levels of hope tend to experience better life outcomes because they are more likely to set challenging goals, remain motivated, and persist in the face of obstacles (Snyder, 2002). PsyCap, by fostering hope as well as self-efficacy,

resilience, and optimism, strengthens an individual's psychological resources, creating a foundation for setting and achieving meaningful goals, and how to path find even in difficult situations. This comprehensive resource framework is essential for instilling hope in others, as individuals with high PsyCap are more likely to have a trickle-down effect to their followers, thus increasing their hope (Story et al., 2017).

PRT further supports this relationship by suggesting that constructs such as hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism are interconnected, working collectively to enhance overall psychological capacity and adaptability (Luthans et al., 2007; Avey et al., 2011). High PsyCap thus fosters a state of psychological strength that allows individuals to not only pursue their goals with determination but also inspire and instil hope in others by modelling resilience and optimism.

Both Hope Theory and PRT suggest that PsyCap positively influences the ability to instil hope. By fostering agency, pathways, and resilience, PsyCap enhances individuals' capacity to model and inspire hope in others.

Hypothesis 3.1: There is a positive effect of Psychological Capital on Instilling Hope

Instilling Hope as a Mediator Between Psychological Capital and Coach Certification

The relationship between PsyCap and Coach Certification (revenue performance) can be explained through the mediator of Instilling Hope. Coaches who foster a hopeful and positive outlook in their clients can enhance clients' motivation, resilience, and engagement, supporting goal attainment and ultimately leading to improved performance outcomes, including higher revenue.

PsyCap within leadership research highlight that leaders who instil hope create a work environment that encourages positive thinking, goal setting, and resilience, which contribute to better organisational performance and employee satisfaction (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). This hopeful perspective, particularly valuable during times of change or uncertainty, builds a resilient culture that supports individuals in navigating challenges and pursuing goals with commitment (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007). The same principles may apply to coaches, who, by instilling hope in their clients, foster a similar positive environment where

clients are motivated to achieve ambitious goals and pursue personal and professional growth.

Theoretical perspectives support this behavioural pathway. Hope Theory suggests that individuals with higher hope set more ambitious goals, identify multiple strategies to reach them, and maintain motivation even in challenging circumstances, leading to superior outcomes (Snyder, 2002). Through PsyCap, coaches can model these hope instilling behaviours, inspiring their clients to adopt a similar mindset, thus enhancing client performance and satisfaction. PRT and SCT further reinforce this hypothesis by emphasising that positive emotional support and recognition are crucial in promoting hope and resilience, which are essential for performance outcomes (Luthans et al., 2007; Avey et al., 2011).

A hypothesis is formed that posits that clients who experience high levels of hope and positive reinforcement are more likely to achieve their goals and stay engaged with their coaches, leading to increased client acquisition and retention. The hopeful environment that PsyCap-enabled coaches create fosters client motivation, resilience, and satisfaction, contributing to ongoing engagement and certification success. In conclusion, Hope Theory, PRT, and SCT collectively suggest that Instilling Hope mediates the relationship between PsyCap and Coach Certification. By promoting goal-directed behaviour, resilience, and a positive mindset, coaches with high PsyCap instil hope in their clients, enhancing motivation, goal attainment, and ultimately, coaching revenue.

Hypothesis 3.2: Instilling Hope mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Coach Certification

Instilling Hope as a Mediator Between Psychological Capital and Client Acquisition

The relationship between PsyCap and the number of clients a coach can acquire can be explained through a behavioural pathway mediated by Instilling Hope. PsyCap fosters hope within coaches, enabling them to convey a hopeful and motivating outlook to their clients, which positively influences clients' motivation, resilience, and commitment. This hopeful mindset not only energises others to achieve their goals but also encourages the potential customers to want to achieve their goals, contributing to increased client acquisition.

SCT emphasises the role of self-efficacy—one's belief in their ability to achieve goals—as a crucial factor in driving motivation and behaviour (Bandura, 1997). Coaches with high PsyCap, particularly high levels of hope, are more likely to model confidence and optimism, inspiring their clients to adopt a similar outlook. This conveyed hope (and PsyCap) is shown in leaders and mentors who instil hope in their teams or clients tend to foster environments where individuals feel motivated to take on challenges and persevere (Story et al., 2017), this encourages not only the individual but others—in this case clients—to engage in proactive behaviours, increasing their chances of achieving their goals and ultimately reflecting positively on the coach-client relationship.

This positive influence is particularly relevant in coaching, where a hopeful outlook can inspire clients to take constructive action toward their goals, leading to better performance and satisfaction. Clients who feel hopeful and supported may be more likely to remain engaged, succeed, and refer others, thereby expanding the coach's client base. By fostering hope and inspiring clients, coaches with high PsyCap encourage proactive behaviours and resilience in clients, resulting in stronger coach-client relationships and an increase in the number of clients.

Hypothesis 3.3: Instilling Hope mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Number of Clients

Instilling Hope as a Mediator Between Psychological Capital and Client Retention

Coaches with high PsyCap can foster a hopeful outlook in their clients, which enhances clients' motivation, resilience, and commitment to their goals. This hopeful environment, in turn, causes the client to remain hopeful of goals and the necessity to find and stay resilient, which contributes to long-term retention.

Hope Theory supports this relationship by highlighting that individuals with high levels of hope are better equipped to set and pursue meaningful goals, maintaining motivation even in the face of challenges (Snyder, 2002). Coaches who instil hope help their clients may stay engaged and resilient throughout their journey, creating a supportive environment where clients feel empowered and motivated to achieve their goals. This shared journey reinforces the client's connection to the coach, increasing the likelihood of sustained engagement and retention.

PRT further supports this behavioural pathway, as it emphasises that the combination of psychological resources, including hope, fosters resilience and improved performance (Hobfoll, 2002; Luthans et al., 2007; Avey et al., 2011). Coaches with high PsyCap may be better able to instil these psychological resources in their clients, creating a stable foundation for long-term satisfaction and client retention.

Hope Theory and PRT form a hypothesis that Instilling Hope mediates the relationship between PsyCap and client retention. By fostering hope and resilience, coaches with high PsyCap enhance client motivation and commitment, ultimately supporting long-term client relationships and higher retention rates.

Hypothesis 3.4: Instilling Hope mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Average Client Retention

Instilling Hope as a Mediator Between Psychological Capital and Job Insecurity

The relationship between PsyCap and Job Insecurity can be explained through a behaviour pathway and mediated by Instilling Hope. Coaches who are high in PsyCap are better equipped to foster a hopeful outlook in themselves and others, which may play a crucial role in reducing feelings of Job Insecurity.

Hope Theory provides a foundation for understanding how instilling hope can mitigate job insecurity. Employees with high levels of hope tend to set realistic and ambitious goals, believe in their ability to achieve them, and remain motivated in the face of challenges (Snyder, 2000). This positive future orientation fosters a supportive environment where creativity and problem-solving can thrive, enabling employees to navigate uncertainty with confidence. Moreover, hopeful employees are better at adapting to change, a key skill in dynamic organisational settings (Gallagher & Lopez, 2009). For coaches, instilling hope in their clients influences coach and client behaviour, which builds a stable and motivating relationship that reinforces Job Security because the coach feels secure that the client may retain longer and not depart.

The underpinning PsyCap theory of PRT further supports this relationship by emphasising that the components of PsyCap, such as hope, work synergistically to bolster resilience and coping mechanisms (Hobfoll, 2002; Luthans et al., 2007).

By instilling hope, coaches with high PsyCap can foster a sense of security in their clients, equipping them with the psychological resources needed to handle challenges and maintain confidence in their roles. This process not only reduces the coaches' own feelings of Job Insecurity but also builds a foundation of trust and stability that supports ongoing professional growth. Both Hope Theory and PRT suggest that Instilling Hope mediates the relationship between PsyCap and job insecurity. By promoting resilience, adaptability, and a positive outlook, coaches with high PsyCap can reduce Job Insecurity, creating a work environment that fosters confidence and security.

Hypothesis 3.5: Instilling Hope mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Job Insecurity

Instilling Hope as a Mediator Between Psychological Capital and Life Satisfaction

The relationship between PsyCap and overall Life Satisfaction can be explained through the lens of Hope Theory and the behaviour pathway—mediated by the process of Instilling Hope. PsyCap fosters hope within individuals, which positively impacts their ability to set and change behaviour towards achieving meaningful goals, and ultimately experience a greater sense of fulfilment and life satisfaction.

Hope Theory provides a foundation for understanding how hope contributes to life satisfaction by positing that individuals with high levels of hope are more likely to set ambitious goals, identify multiple strategies for achieving them, and stay motivated despite obstacles (Snyder, 2002). This hopeful outlook and proactive approach to goal setting foster a sense of purpose and well-being, which are integral to life satisfaction.

In a coaching context, coaches who instil hope in their clients not only help clients adopt a goal-oriented perspective but may also reinforce their own sense of hope and motivation. By supporting their clients in pursuing meaningful achievements, coaches experience a renewed hope and optimism toward the organisations and individuals they work with, ultimately enhancing their own life satisfaction.

PRT further supports this relationship by emphasising the synergistic effects of PsyCap components—hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism—that collectively enhance

psychological capacity and may drive behaviour (Hobfoll, 2002; Luthans et al., 2007; Avey et al., 2011). While each component uniquely contributes to well-being, their combined effect provides a stronger predictor of performance and satisfaction than any individual component alone. As coaches instil hope and a resilient mindset in their clients, they also reinforce these qualities in themselves, experiencing life satisfaction as an outcome of their change in goal-orientated behaviour and the progress achieved.

Studies show that PsyCap, through its positive emotional components, promotes well-being and mitigates negative emotions, fostering an overall sense of life satisfaction (Luthans et al., 2007; Avey et al., 2011). This behavioural pathway, wherein PsyCap may enhance life satisfaction through the mediation of hope, highlights how the process of instilling hope in others can reciprocally bolster the coach's own sense of fulfilment and well-being. Hope Theory and PRT suggest that the act of Instilling Hope mediates the relationship between PsyCap and life satisfaction. By fostering goal-oriented behaviours, resilience, and a positive outlook, coaches with high PsyCap not only contribute to their clients' life satisfaction but also experience enhanced life satisfaction for themselves as a consequence of the hope, fulfilment, and purpose derived from their work.

Hypothesis 3.6: Instilling Hope mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Satisfaction with Life

The detailed hypotheses explain how PsyCap may influence performance and well-being outcomes through a behavioural pathway by measuring Instilling Hope as a mediating variable.

10.8 | Hypothesis Summary

I have presented three possible mechanisms via which PsyCap might influence key business coach work and life outcomes: a Motivational Pathway, Affective Pathway, and Behavioural Pathway, each of which offers a unique lens on how PsyCap impacts coach performance and well-being outcomes.

Motivational Pathway: Job Engagement as a Mediator

First, I explored the Motivational Pathway, where Job Engagement mediates the relationship between PsyCap and key coaching outcomes. Supported by Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and Psychological Resource Theory (PRT), PsyCap is posited to increase Job Engagement by fostering self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism. This enhanced engagement is hypothesised to influence critical outcomes: Hypothesis 1.1 posits that PsyCap positively affects Job Engagement, while Hypothesis 1.2 through Hypothesis 1.6 propose that Job Engagement mediates PsyCap's effect on Coach Certification, client acquisition, client retention, job security, and life satisfaction. This pathway highlights the role of Job Engagement in sustaining motivation, resilience, and commitment, which together drive both professional and personal fulfilment through the motivational pathway and the mediator of Job Engagement.

Affective Pathway: Core Affect as a Mediator

The Affective Pathway hypothesises that Core Affect mediates the relationship between PsyCap and coaching outcomes, particularly in terms of emotional well-being and interpersonal engagement. Grounded primarily in PRT and supported by Broaden and Build Theory (BBT), this pathway posits that PsyCap promotes positive Core Affect by enhancing resilience, hope, and optimism. Positive Core Affect subsequently enables coaches to achieve better client satisfaction and retention, increased client acquisition, reduced job insecurity, and enhanced life satisfaction. Hypothesis 2.1 proposes that PsyCap positively impacts Core Affect, while Hypothesis 2.2 through Hypothesis 2.6 outline Core Affect as a mediator of PsyCap's influence on Coach Certification, client acquisition, client retention, job insecurity, and life satisfaction, emphasising Core Affect's central role in fostering positive, resilient emotional states, and how they can convey to the client—conducive to professional success and well-being.

Behavioural Pathway: Instilling Hope as a Mediator

Lastly, I presented the Behavioural Pathway, in which Instilling Hope mediates the relationship between PsyCap and coaching outcomes. Drawing on Hope Theory and PRT, this pathway posits that PsyCap fosters hope by building goal-oriented motivation and resilience. Coaches who instil hope are not only better positioned to achieve higher revenue and client acquisition but also experience positive effects on client retention, job security, and life satisfaction. Hypothesis 3.1asserts that PsyCap positively influences Instilling Hope,

while Hypotheses 3.2 through 3.6 posit that Instilling Hope mediates PsyCap's impact on coach certification, client acquisition, client retention, job insecurity, and life satisfaction, showing how hope-driven behaviours contribute to both professional performance and personal fulfilment.

CHAPTER 11 | STUDY TWO METHODOLOGY

Following a deductive approach, Study 2 tests a conceptual model linking coaches' psychological capital to performance outcomes using a survey involving 85 business coaches. The objective of Study 2 is to quantitively examine the effects of PsyCap on performance outcomes and test the potential mediating mechanisms responsible for this relationship.

11.1 | Sample

Two hundred UK business coaches were invited to partake to allow a variety in the business coach sample; 85 UK business coaches agreed to participate, resulting in a response rate of 42.5%. The UK business coaches were selected because they were members of the same coaching organisation that had all been trained in the same business coaching methodology. I (the researcher) too was a member of this same coaching organisation so I had access to the coaches to survey them, where they would not be easily accessible by outside researchers. Two hundred were selected as this was approximately the amount of coaches in the organisation—in the UK—at the time.

The participants of Study 2 were business coaches in the UK who were either franchise owners (referred to in the coaching organisation as senior partners or partners) or employed business coaches (EBC). The definitions for these were discussed in Study 1.

Table 6: Study Two sample demographics

	Count	Average
Number of Coaches Approached	200	
Number of Coaches Completed Survey	85	
Gender	Male: 70 | Female: 15	
Location	United Kingdom	
Position	Senior Partner: 29 | Partner: 45 | EBC*: 13	
Tenure as a Business Coach	1 – 30 Years	4.8
Tenure at Coaching Organisation	1-8 Years	4.1
Businesses Coached Total	1 - 16	9.3
Businesses Coaching Currently	1 -11	6.2
Average Client Retention Rate	0 – 5 Years	12-18 Months (Mode)
Coach Certification	NA – Million Cert.	Gold Cert. (Mode)
Highest Academic Education	Level 1-7	Level 5 (Mode)

∗ Employed Business Coach

11.2 | Justification of Methodological Approach

Survey research has several benefits that can enhance a researcher's potential to deliver a rigours research project. For example, survey strategies are structured and, therefore, have concrete frameworks, satisfying a more positivist approach, in turn, this allows the collection of standardised data, allowing easy comparison (Lee & Lings, 2008).

Saunders et al. (2016) suggest that survey research is also considered authoritative, easy to explain, and simple to understand, thus fitting for the researcher's positivist epistemology and approach to research. It is useful to find out how a population thinks or behaves to a particular issue, thus allowing relationships and models between variables to be formed. Finally, it allows greater control over the research process and can be cost-saving when collecting data on a large population (Saunders et al., 2016).

Survey research is often associated with a deductive approach and is most used in business and management research to answer the questions ‘what’, ‘who’, ‘where’, ‘how much’ and ‘how many’; thus, it tends to be used for exploratory and descriptive research (Saunders et al., 2016; Bryman & Bell, 2015). Survey research is unique as it delivers a cross-sectional design to collect data in a moment in time—either quantitative or quantifiable—in connection with two or more variables.

There are weaknesses in survey research that should also be considered. The time it takes to analyse the data, time delays and dependency on respondents to reply can halt the research; when the data returns, it may not contain as much depth as other research strategies thus not delivering the data needed (Saunders et al., 2016). To counter these weaknesses and limitations, and harness the strengths, it is important that the survey is structured in a way that gets the best results that is aligned with the research question, for example, considering if the methods require an interactive or non-interactive approach, and how and when each question is asked to take the subject along a journey to get the most accurate/non-biased outcome (Lee & Lings, 2008).

11.3 | Research Design and Sample Characteristics

I began the research by obtaining permission from the business coaching UK franchisor to survey all the business coaches in the UK. Email and Whatsapp phone numbers were made available via the database that every coach in the organisation has access to and via Whatsapp groups where the business coaches network. Permission was approved to use this data to contact business coaches.

Next, I approached 200 business coaches via email and Whatsapp invitation. At first only nine responses were received via these methods. Given the low response rate, I decided to pursue a different contact approach by contacting each potential participant via a phone call. Permission to use the phone number—that was already available from the Whatsapp—method for calling was granted by the UK franchisor. The outcome of the phone calls led to 42.5% conversion rate equating to eighty-five (N=85) survey responses—a significant increase in response rate.

The study was conducted with a systematic approach to ensure consistency and engagement throughout the process. Coaches were introduced to the study through an

initial briefing via telephone, during which they were informed that this would be an overt study. Upon their agreement to participate, each business coach received a unique link to an online survey hosted on Qualtrics.com, which they were subsequently asked to complete. The survey collected information relevant to each coach's professional background while ensuring anonymity by excluding identifiable data (e.g., name, location) to uphold ethical standards.

To address instances of non-completion, a structured reminder protocol was implemented. Coaches who initially agreed to participate but had not completed the survey within a specified timeframe were contacted through a series of follow-up phone calls, generally between three and five reminders. These follow-ups occurred over approximately eight months and were conducted with respect to the participants' schedules. Most coaches responded courteously, acknowledging their intent to complete the survey despite delays due to professional obligations.

The study design was cross-sectional, chosen to accommodate the scope of surveying a substantial number of UK-based business coaches while recognising its inherent limitations. As observed by Van De Ven (2007), research involving engaged scholarship with highly sought-after professionals, such as business coaches, is challenged by time constraints and client demands. Although a longitudinal approach may have been beneficial for capturing the evolution of state-like constructs over time, it was not feasible due to these scheduling constraints.

Despite the limitations of a cross-sectional design, this study successfully addresses the primary research question—examining how coaches cope and persist in their roles—and evaluates potential mediators between PsyCap and performance outcomes. To mitigate common limitations associated with cross-sectional research, specific measures were taken. Following the recommendations of Avey, Luthans, and Youssef (2010), the study controlled for stable, trait-like personality characteristics, enhancing the precision of assessing PsyCap's contribution to workplace outcomes by distinguishing it from more stable dispositional traits. The control variables results are presented in the results chapter after the hypotheses were tested and presented.

11.4 | Survey Design & Measures

The following outlines the structure of the survey and the measures included in the Coach Survey. Table 7 includes all the items used in the survey.

Psychological Capital was measured using the psychological capital questionnaire (PCQ, Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007, p. 237). The survey stated "*Below are statements that describe how you may think about yourself. Taking into account the last six months, use the following scales to indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement*". This measure utilised a 1-5 Likert scale (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree).

Core Affect was measured using the Core Affect measures suggested by Warr, Bindl, Parker, Inceoglu (2014). The survey stated, "*During your interaction with your clients (e.g., meetings), over the last six months, approximately how often do you feel the following way?"* This measure utilised a 7-point Likert scale (0-never, 1- a little of the time, 2- some of the time, 3-about half the time, 4- much of the time, 5- a lot of the time, 6- always). To keep the integrity of the suggested measures, negative elements of Core Affect were also measured and were reversed for the data analysis.

Instilling Hope was measured using Snyder (2000) hope scale. The survey stated, "*Over the last six months, when meeting with clients to what extent are these objectives central to your interaction?*" This measure utilised a 5-point Likert scale on a scale from 0 (never) to 6 (always/every day).

Job Engagement was measured using Schaufeli, Salanova, Romá, Bakke (2002) job engagement scale. The survey stated *"The following 17 statements are about how you feel at work. Please read each statement caref*ully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job. Consider only the last six months." Respondents rate these items on a scale from 0 (never) to 6 (always/every day).

To measure objective performance outcomes, the survey asked the coaches for their level of coach certification (i.e., the band that they have reached and sustained in terms of monthly client revenue), average client retention (months), number of clients.

The survey also asked the clients two psychological outcome measures on their Job Insecurity and Satisfaction with Life.

Job Insecurity was measured using Elst, Witte & Cuyper (2014) scale. The survey stated "*The following statements explore your feelings about client retention and security.*

Considering the last six month, please indicate the level to which you disagree/agree with the following." This measure utilised a 5-point Likert scale (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree).

Satisfaction with Life was measured using Diener, Emmons, Larsen, Griffin (1985) scale. The survey stated, "*Considering how you see your life focusing particularly over the last 6 months, to what extent do you agree with the following statements."* This measure utilised a 5-point Likert scale (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree).

The control measures, Conscientiousness and Extraversion, were measured using the two elements of the 5 Big Five Personality Traits (OCEAN, John, Donahue, Kentle, 1991). The survey stated, *"Here are a number of characteristics that may or may not apply to you. Please indicate next to each statement to the extent to which you agree or disagree each statement reflects how you see yourself. I generally see myself as someone who…"* This measure utilised a 5-point Likert scale (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree). I provide an explanation of the two control variable constructs in the following header.

Table 7: Study 2 survey design and measures

CODE	Question Topic	Survey Question	Reference
AGE	Coach Age	How old are you?	
SEX	Coach Sex	Which sex are you?	
CP	Coach Position	What position do you hold in the coaching firm?	
CQ	Coach Ac Qualification	What is the highest level of academic qualification you have received?	
CWP	Coach work percent	What percentage of your work time do you dedicate to your business coaching firm? (i.e. if you have another job/business then it could be 50% coaching)	
CNE	Coach No Employees	How many employees are there in your business?	
TEN	Coach Coaching Years	How many years have you been a coach — both in and outside of [The Coaching Organisation]?	
TENA	Coach Years in Current	How many years have you been a coach in [The Coaching Organisation]?	
NBC	Coach No Bus Coached	How many businesses have you coached in total during your time in [The Coaching Organisation]?	
NBCC	Coach No Bus Current	How many businesses do you currently coach in [The Coaching Organisation]?	
CLEV	Coach Certification	What is your coach certification that you hold from your time in [The Coaching Organisation]? (Coach Level of Certification e.g., Bronze, Silver, Gold etc)	
CCR	Coach Client Retention	Approximately, what is your average client retention in months for you personally as a coach? (Total number of months of all clients, divided by the number of clients)	

		Below are statements that describe how you may think about yourself. Taking into account the last six months, use the following scales to indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.	Luthans, Avolio, Avey, Norman, S. M. (2007)
PSC1	Coach PsyCap _1	I feel confident analysing a long-term problem to find a solution.	
PSC2	Coach PsyCap _2	I feel confident in representing my work area when meeting with others.	
PSC3	Coach PsyCap _3	I feel confident contributing to discussions about the company's strategy.	
PSC4	Coach PsyCap _4	I feel confident helping to set targets/goals in my work area.	
PSC5	Coach PsyCap _5	I feel confident contacting people outside the company (e.g., suppliers, customers) to discuss problems.	
PSC6	Coach PsyCap _6	I feel confident presenting information to a group of colleagues.	
PSC7	Coach PsyCap _7	If I should find myself in a jam at work, I could think of many ways to get out of it.	
PSC8	Coach PsyCap _8	I am energetically pursuing my work goals.	
PSC9	Coach PsyCap _9	There are lots of ways around any problem.	
PSC10	Coach PsyCap _10	I see myself as being pretty successful at work.	
PSC11	Coach PsyCap _11	I can think of many ways to reach my current work goals.	
PSC12	Coach PsyCap _12	I am meeting the work goals that I have set for myself.	
PSC13R	Coach PsyCap _13	When I have a setback at work, I have trouble recovering from it, moving on.	
PSC14	Coach PsyCap _14	I usually manage difficulties one way or another at work.	
PSC15	Coach PsyCap _15	I can be "on my own," so to speak, at work if I have to.	
PSC16	Coach PsyCap _16	I usually take stressful things at work in stride.	
PSC17	Coach PsyCap _17	I can get through difficult times at work because I've experienced difficulty before.	
PSC18	Coach PsyCap _18	I feel I can handle many things at a time at this job.	
PSC19	Coach PsyCap _19	When things are uncertain for me at work, I usually expect the best.	
PSC20R	Coach PsyCap _20	If something can go wrong for me work-wise, it will.	
PSC21	Coach PsyCap _21	I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job.	
PSC22	Coach PsyCap _22	I'm optimistic about what will happen to me in the future as it pertains to work.	
PSC23R	Coach PsyCap _23	In this job, things never work out the way I want them to.	
PSC24	Coach PsyCap _24	I approach this job as if "every cloud has a silver lining."	
		During your interaction with your clients (e.g., meetings), over the last six months, approximately how often do you feel the following way?	Warr, Bindl, Parker, Inceoglu (2014)
CA1R	Coach Core Affect_1	Anxious	
CA2R	Coach Core Affect_2	Nervous	
CA3R	Coach Core Affect_3	Tense	
CA4R	Coach Core Affect_4	Worried	
CA5	Coach Core Affect_5	Enthusiastic	
CA6	Coach Core Affect_6	Excited	
CA7	Coach Core Affect_7	Inspired	
CA8	Coach Core Affect_8	Joyful	
CA9R	Coach Core Affect_9	Dejected	
CA10R	Coach Core Affect_10	Depressed	

CA11R	Coach Core Affect_11	Despondent	
CA12R	Coach Core Affect_12	Hopeless	
CA13	Coach Core Affect_13	Ease	
CA14	Coach Core Affect_14	Calm	
CA15	Coach Core Affect_15	Laid back	
CA16	Coach Core Affect_16	Relaxed	
		Over the last six months, when meeting with clients to what extent are these objectives central to your interaction?	Snyder (2000)
IH1	Coach Instilling Hop_1	Help them see that there are many ways around any problems that they might be facing.	
IH2	Coach Instilling Hop_2	Ensure they feel that if they were in a jam they could find ways of getting out of it.	
IH3	Coach Instilling Hop_3	Help them think of many ways to reach their goals.	
		The following 17 statements are about how you feel at work. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job. Consider only the last six months.	Schaufeli, Salanova, Romá, Bakke (2002)
JE1	Coach Job Engagement_1	At my work, I feel bursting with energy.	
JE2	Coach Job Engagement_2	I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.	
JE3	Coach Job Engagement_3	Time flies when I'm working.	
JE4	Coach Job Engagement_4	At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.	
JE5	Coach Job Engagement_5	I am enthusiastic about my job.	
JE6	Coach Job Engagement_6	When I am working, I forget everything else around me.	
JE7	Coach Job Engagement_7	My job inspires me.	
JE8	Coach Job Engagement_8	When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	
JE9	Coach Job Engagement_9	I feel happy when I am working intensely.	
JE10	Coach Job Engagement_10	I am proud of the work that I do.	
JE11	Coach Job Engagement_11	I am immersed in my work.	
JE12	Coach Job Engagement_12	I can continue working for very long periods at a time	
JE13	Coach Job Engagement_13	To me, my job is challenging.	
JE14	Coach Job Engagement_14	I get carried away when I'm working.	
JE15	Coach Job Engagement_15	At my job, I am very resilient, mentally.	
JE16	Coach Job Engagement_16	It is difficult to detach myself from my job.	
JE17	Coach Job Engagement_17	At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well.	
		The following statements explore your feelings about client retention and security. Considering the last six month, please indicate the level to which you disagree/agree with the following.	Elst, Witte & Cuyper (2014)
JI1	Coach Job Insecutiry_1	Chances are I will soon lose some of my clients	
JI2R	Coach Job Insecutiry_2	I am sure I can keep most of my clients	
JI3	Coach Job Insecutiry_3	I feel insecure about being able to keep some of my clients	
JI4	Coach Job Insecutiry_4	I think I might lose some of my clients in the near future	

		Considering how you see your life focusing particularly over the last 6 months, to what extent do you agree with the following statements.	Diener, Emmons, Larsen, Griffin (1985)
SL1	Coach Sat Life_1	In most ways life is close to my ideal	
SL2	Coach Sat Life_2	The conditions of my life are excellent	
Sl3	Coach Sat Life_3	I'm satisfied with my life	
SL4	Coach Sat Life_4	So far I've gotten the important things I want in life	
SL5	Coach Sat Life_5	If I could live my life over I would change almost nothing	
		Here are a number of characteristics that may or may not apply to you. Please indicate next to each statement to the extent to which you agree or disagree each statement reflects how you see yourself . I generally see myself as someone who…	John, Donahue, Kentle (1991)
BFE1	Coach Big 5_1	Is talkative	
BFC3	Coach Big 5_3	Does a thorough job	
BFE6R	Coach Big 5_6	Is reserved	
BFC8R	Coach Big 5_8	Can be somewhat careless	
BFE11	Coach Big 5_11	Is full of energy	
BFC13	Coach Big 5_13	Is a reliable worker	
BFE16	Coach Big 5_16	Generates a lot of enthusiasm	
BFC18R	Coach Big 5_18	Tends to be disorganised	
BFE21R	Coach Big 5_21	Tends to be quiet	
BFC23R	Coach Big 5_23	Tends to be lazy	
BFE26	Coach Big 5_26	Has an assertive personality	
BFC28	Coach Big 5_28	Perseveres until the task is finished	
BFE31R	Coach Big 5_31	Is sometimes shy, inhibited	
BFC33	Coach Big 5_33	Does things efficiently	
BFE36	Coach Big 5_36	Is outgoing, sociable	
BFC38	Coach Big 5_38	Makes plans and follows through with them	
BFC43R	Coach Big 5_43	Is easily distracted	

Demographic details of the coach like their age, sex, number of team members, percentage of their working life they spend coaching were also asked to collect data that could be used in the results analysis to examine variables that may influence coach performance. These were not utilised in the results however as the responses held no weight in assisting with answering the research question.

11.5 | Control Variables

PsyCap researchers (Avey, Luthans & Youssef, 2010) suggest that given the state-like developable nature of PsyCap the value-added contribution of PsyCap to workplace

outcomes can be better understood and assessed when controlling for dispositional, stable trait-like characteristics. They suggest that the personality traits are widely recognised positive traits that have been shown to have significant impact on performance (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1991; Judge & Bono, 2001; Avey, Luthans & Youssef, 2010). They follow by suggesting that recognition of traits should be accounted for when attempting to study the added value of PsyCap, especially given the similarities between them. Rigour and reliability can be increased by testing trait-like constructs to witness if state-like factors are having an impact on performance outcomes.

For this study in examining the effects of the competitive mediators that influence PsyCap and performance outcomes, two of 'The Big-Five' Conscientiousness and Extraversion are used as control measures as these two are the most applicable to stable trait-like constructs and suggested as control measures by Avey, Luthans & Youssef (2010). Conscientiousness and Extraversion are particularly compelling for demonstrating links to performance due to their direct influence on behaviours that are critical to job success. Numerous meta-analyses have demonstrated the robust link between conscientiousness and job performance. For example, Barrick and Mount (1991) found conscientiousness to be a valid predictor of performance across different job families. While conscientiousness predicts performance in a wide range of roles, extraversion has shown particular relevance in jobs that require high levels of social interaction, such as sales, management, and teaching (Hurtz & Donovan, 2000).

The control variables are tested and presented after the hypothesis testing in the results chapter.

11.6 | Reliability and Validity

The results chapter highlights within its tables the coefficient alpha for all outputs. Cronbach's Alpha is a crucial statistic for assessing the reliability of scales and tests ensuring high internal consistency that in turn improve the reliability and, indirectly, the validity of the tested model, leading to more accurate and trustworthy measurements of psychological constructs and variables (Field, 2013).

Reliability ensures that test items measure the same construct, with high alpha values indicating strong internal consistency. It also involves improving the scale by identifying and removing poorly correlated items. Validity, while distinct, is supported by reliability. Content validity is indicated when a reliable instrument appropriately samples the construct's domain. Construct validity relies on reliable measurements, as high reliability is necessary for validity. Predictive validity is enhanced by reliable measurements, improving outcome predictions. Although a scale can be reliable without being valid, it cannot be valid without being reliable (Field, 2013).

11.7 | Ethical Considerations

Study 2 followed the ethical guidelines outlined by the Aston University Ethics Board. The research was only carried out following participant consent. The data in this research was 'primary research' obtained from stakeholders, i.e., business coaches, business coaching firm owners (partners and senior partners), and coaches (coaches employed by the franchisor).

As highlighted in Study 1, with stakeholders involved it is important to consider the implications that carrying out such research could have on the participant (Lee and Lings, 2008), for example, the research must not position the coach in a negative light to the organisation or to potential or existing customers. The research design has taken into consideration ethical practices that will protect the participant's privacy and interests.

I enquired with the Aston University Ethics Department about the outline of the methodology. The following points were raised, and actions were taken to follow the following ethical guidelines. The competence of the coach must not be highlighted in any form that may lead to the coaching organisation their ability. To counter this, all coaches (and participants alike) are given the *option* to participate, it is voluntary. I also ensure that the confidentiality of the participants is in place. No data is presented that will allow any participant to be identified—e.g., name, business, or location as coaches may have territories that could identify them. The participant(s) must be aware that data is being collected. The participant was informed prior to the research—in the introduction email/phone call and survey emails—that data is being collected and how it will be used by the researcher. They were also informed that privacy measures are in place to protect their identity, however, if they choose to drop out then this option is there for them to do so, but not after data has been processed. The

participant must consent—following the completion of the survey—that they are happy for the data to be used for research. GDPR and confirmed consent will be obtained by all participants. To protect the 'naturalistic' approach of this Study 1, the overarching purpose (how a business coach copes and persists) will not be revealed to the interviewees completing the interviews until the research is complete. A report of the findings will be made available following the completion of the DBA if the participant chooses to request it.

CHAPTER 12 | STUDY TWO ANALYTICAL APPROACH AND RESULTS

The following chapter presents the results of Study 2. It begins by discussing the approach used to analyse the data followed by a correlation table and regression analyses that test the mediation effects of the competitive mediators.

12.1 | Analytical Approach

As outlined in the methodology, questionnaire data was collected using the Qualtrics online platform. Once gathered, the data was imported into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for further analysis. This included conducting correlation testing and regression analysis to examine the mediating effects of competitive mediators along each pathway. The correlation table was generated in SPSS using its built-in correlation function to provide a clear representation of the strength and direction of relationships between variable pairs.

Correlation and regression analyses were employed as critical tools to evaluate relationships between variables in the study. The correlation table specifically illustrates the strength and direction of relationships between pairs of variables, offering insights into potential associations within the data.

Regression analysis is essential for investigating the relationships between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables by quantifying their strength and direction. In Study 2, regression analysis was used to determine the significance of each independent variable's impact on the dependent variable, helping to identify variables with meaningful influence. This technique serves as a robust mechanism for hypothesis testing, enabling verification of theoretical assumptions regarding variable relationships. The use of regression analysis ensures the rigor and reliability necessary to substantiate the findings in Study 2, as recommended by Cohen et al. (2002) in their foundational work on regression methods.

The results of both correlation and regression analyses are presented and discussed in subsequent sections.

Control variables are analysed following hypothesis testing to verify the state-like vs trait effects of PsyCap on the outcome variables.

12.2 | Correlation Table

Correlations give an overview and show the strength and direction of relationships between pairs of variables. This helps in identifying which variables are related to each other and is used as a proxy to if there will be a mediation effect or not. The correlation between study variables is presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Study 2 data analysis, correlations table

		PsyCap	Job Engagement	Core Affect	Instilling Hope	Certification	Current Clients	Client Retention	Job Insecurity	Satisfaction with Life	Conscientiousness	Extraversion
PsyCap	Pearson Correlation	1										
	Sig. (2-tailed)											
	N	85										
Job Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.489**	1									
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001										
	N	85	85									
Core Affect	Pearson Correlation	.396**	.386**	1								
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001									
	N	85	85	85								
Instilling Hope	Pearson Correlation	.230*	.299**	.437**	1							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.035	.005	<.001								
	N	85	85	85	85							
Certification	Pearson Correlation	.417**	.247*	.129	–.119	1						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.033	.271	.309							
	N	75	75	75	75	75						
Current Clients	Pearson Correlation	.318**	.324**	.118	.015	.628**	1					

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.003	.284	.889	<.001						
	N	85	85	85	85	75	85					
Client Retention	Pearson Correlation	.351**	.128	.132	–.012	.638**	.405**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.243	.229	.910	≤.001	<.001					
	N	85	85	85	85	75	85	85				
Job Insecurity	Pearson Correlation	–.424**	–.257*	–.330**	–.200	–.186	–.071	–.285**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.018	.002	.0670	.110	.519	.008				
	N	85	85	85	85	75	85	85	85			
Satisfaction with Life	Pearson Correlation	.380**	.244*	.050	–.087	.341**	.239*	.332**	–.219*	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.025	.652	.428	0.003	.027	.002	.044			
	N	85	85	85	85	75	85	85	85	85		
Conscientiousness	Pearson Correlation	.463**	.184	.334**	.220*	0.163	.153	.037	–.367**	.136	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.094	.002	.0430	0.161	.162	.736	<.001	.213		
	N	85	85	85	85	75	85	85	85	85	85	
Extraversion	Pearson Correlation	.235*	.309**	.385**	.0740	.234*	.149	.107	–.268*	.316**	.260*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.030	.004	<.001	.499	0.043	.174	.328	.013	.003	.016	
	N	85	85	85	85	75	85	85	85	85	85	85

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

12.3 | Regression Analyses

The following regression analyses present the results that quantify the strength of the relationships between PsyCap, the outcome variables, and the competitive mediators. This serves as a robust tool for hypotheses testing while ensuring the scientific rigour and reliability.

Mediators increase the intricacy of relationships by offering explanations of how variables influence each other, potentially fostering the creation of new theoretical models (MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007).

The Process Macro (Hayes, 2018) was utilised for each regression analysis. Process Macro provides a comprehensive set of coefficients and test statistics to elucidate various effects in

statistical models. The tool calculates direct, indirect, and total effects, as well as total and partial effect sizes, as well as standardised regression coefficients, standard errors, and other statistics, including t and p values and R^2 (Abu-Bader & Jones, 2021).

Direct Effect—This assesses whether there is a direct relationship between the independent and dependent variables, independent of any third variable.

Indirect Effect—This part of the analysis tests the null hypothesis that the indirect relationship between the independent (X) and dependent (Y) variables is zero.

Total Effect—This encompasses the overall impact of the entire model, including both the indirect effect (a*b) and the direct effect (c). It represents the combined influence of all pathways in the model.

To examine the mediation effects, I employed Model 4 of the Process Macro. I test all three mediators simultaneously—Job Engagement, Core Affect, and Instilling Hope—which is possible using Model 4.

In mediation models without moderated paths, PROCESS calculates the direct and indirect effects of X on Y by default, using linear models to estimate these effects. In Model 4, where mediators are continuous and the outcome is also continuous, the total effect of X on Y equals the sum of its direct and indirect effects. PROCESS provides this total effect along with a significance test, presenting a model of Y excluding the proposed mediators (Hayes, 2009).

Often, to test mediation effects, a Sobel test may be used. The Sobel test assumes a specific shape of the sampling distribution of the indirect effect, which is often unrealistic. Therefore, for inference regarding indirect effects, bootstrap confidence intervals are preferred over the traditional Sobel test (Preacher & Hayes, 2004, 2008; Hayes, 2009).

A bootstrapping method using 5000 bootstrap samples was performed using SPSS Process Macro 4 to examine if Job Engagement, Core Affect, and Instilling Hope mediated the relationship between PsyCap and the outcome(s).

The following sections present the tests of the proposed hypotheses for each of the potential mediating variables.

12.3.1| Testing Competitive Mediators Between PsyCap and Coach Certification

To examine the mediation effects of PsyCap and Coach Certification, I employed Model 4 of the Process Macro. The results are as follows:

Table 9: Mediation Analysis of Testing Competitive Mediators Between PsyCap and Coach Certification

Variable / Effect	b	SE	t	p	95% Confidence Interval	
PsyCap --> Coach Certification	1.6424	0.5144	3.1930	0.0021	0.6165	2.6683
PsyCap --> Job Engagement	0.8510	0.0168	5.0753	0.0000	0.5168	1.1851
PsyCap --> Core Affect	0.3612	0.1038	3.4788	0.0009	0.1543	0.5862
PsyCap --> Instilling Hope	0.3814	0.1998	1.9089	0.0602	-0.0168	0.7796
PsyCap --> Job Engagement --> Coach Certification	0.2576	0.3135	0.8217	0.4140	-0.3676	0.8829
PsyCap --> Core Affect --> Coach Certification	0.2333	0.5351	0.4360	0.6642	-0.8340	1.3005
PsyCap --> Instilling Hope --> Coach Certification	-0.6181	0.2786	-2.2181	0.0298	-1.1738	-0.0623
Effects						
Direct	1.6424	0.5144	3.1930	0.0021	0.6165	2.6683
Indirect Job Engagement*	0.2192	0.2302			-0.2072	0.7101
Indirect Core Affect*	0.0843	0.2213			-0.3334	0.5777
Indirect Instilling Hope*	-0.2357	0.1711			-0.7224	-0.0053
Total	0.0678	0.2720			-0.4987	0.6074

Based on 5000 bootstrap samples

The direct effect of Psychological Capital on Coach Certification is first outlined. The results showed that Psychological Capital did have a direct effect on Coach Certification (b=1.6424, p<0.0021). Although this was not hypothesised, does provide support for the nature of Psychological Capital and the effects it has on performance outcomes.

In Hypothesis 1.1 it was predicted that there is a positive effect of Psychological Capital on Job Engagement. Psychological Capital did predict Job Engagement, supporting Hypothesis 1.1, suggesting that there is a positive effect of Psychological Capital on Job Engagement ($b = 0.8510$, $p < 0.0000$).

In Hypothesis 1.2 it was predicted that Job Engagement mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Coach Certification. Job Engagement did not have a significant effect on Coach Certification, thus not supporting Hypothesis 1.2. The indirect effect of X on Y through Job Engagement was not significant as the confidence intervals did contain 0. These results suggest that Psychological Capital can lead to an increase in Job Engagement, however, this has no significant influence on Coach Certification. *Hypothesis 1.2: Job Engagement mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Coach Certification* was not supported.

In Hypothesis 2.1 it was predicted that there is a positive effect of Psychological Capital on Core Affect. Psychological Capital did predict Core Affect, supporting Hypothesis 2.1, suggesting that there is a positive effect of Psychological Capital on Core Affect ($b = 0.3612$, $p < 0.0009$).

In Hypothesis 2.2 it was predicted that Core Affect mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Coach Certification. Core Affect did not have a significant effect on Coach Certification, thus not supporting Hypothesis 2.2. The indirect effect of X on Y through Core Affect was not significant as the confidence intervals did contain 0. These results suggest whilst Psychological Capital can lead to an increase in Core Affect, however this has no significant influence on Coach Certification. *Hypothesis 2.2: Core Affect mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Coach Certification* was therefore not supported.

In Hypothesis 3.1 it was predicted that there is a positive effect of Psychological Capital on Instilling Hope. Psychological Capital did predict a marginal effect on Instilling Hope, supporting Hypothesis 3.1, suggesting that there is a positive effect of Psychological Capital on Instilling Hope ($b = 0.3814$, $p < 0.0602$).

In Hypothesis 3.2 it was predicted that Instilling Hope mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Coach Certification. Instilling Hope did have an effect on Coach Certification however, in contrast with the hypothesis, the effect was negative ($b = -0.6181$, $p <0.0298$). The indirect effect of X on Y through Instilling Hope was significant as the

confidence intervals did not contain 0 (b = -0.2357, 95% CI -0.7224, -0.0053). These results suggest that Psychological Capital has a negative effect on Coach Certification through Instilling Hope. These findings support a mediation effect of *Hypothesis 3.2: Instilling Hope mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Coach Certification*; however, it is a negative effect. This is discussed further in the discussion.

12.3.2| Testing Competitive Mediators Between PsyCap and Number of Clients

In the following I apply the same Model 4 analysis with parallel mediators now testing the effects of PsyCap on Number of Clients (Table 10). The results are as follows:

Table 10: Mediation Analysis of Testing Competitive Mediators Between PsyCap and Number of Clients

Variable / Effect	b	SE	t	p	95% Confidence Interval	
PsyCap --> Number of Current Clients	0.9918	0.5336	1.8588	0.0667	-0.0701	2.0536
PsyCap --> Job Engagement	0.7787	0.1523	5.1133	0.0000	0.4758	1.0816
PsyCap --> Core Affect	0.3764	0.0959	3.9255	0.0002	0.1857	0.567
PsyCap --> Instilling Hope	0.3958	0.1842	2.1482	0.0346	0.0293	0.7622
PsyCap --> Job Engagement --> Number of Current Clients	0.6924	0.3372	2.0533	0.0433	0.0213	1.3636
PsyCap --> Core Affect --> Number of Current Clients	-0.1171	0.5669	-0.2066	0.8369	-1.2452	1.0110
PsyCap --> Instilling Hope --> Number of Current Clients	-0.2561	0.2936	-0.8723	0.3857	-0.8405	0.3282
Effects						
Direct	0.9918	0.5336	1.8588	0.0667	-0.0701	2.0536
Indirect Job Engagement*	0.5392	0.2365			0.1414	1.0900
Indirect Core Affect*	-0.0441	0.2159			-0.4712	0.3860
Indirect Instilling Hope*	-0.1014	0.1234			-0.4853	0.0522
Total	0.3938	0.2981			-0.0909	1.0992

Based on 5000 bootstrap samples

The direct effect of Psychological Capital on Number of Current Clients is initially outlined. The results showed that Psychological Capital did have a marginal direct effect on Coach Certification (b=0.9918, p<0.0667).

In *Hypothesis 1.3* it was predicted that Job Engagement mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Number of Clients.

The results showed that Psychological Capital predicted Job Engagement (b = 0.7787, p < 0.0000). Job Engagement did have a significant direct effect on Number of Clients (b = 0.6924, p <0.433). The indirect effect of X on Y through Job Engagement was significant as the confidence intervals did not contain 0 (b = 0.5392, 95% CI 0.1414, 1.0900). These results suggest that Psychological Capital can lead to an increase in Job Engagement, and this has a positive influence on Number of Clients. *Hypothesis 1.3: Job Engagement mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Number of Clients*.

In *Hypothesis 2.3* it was predicted that Core Affect mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Number of Clients. The results showed that Psychological Capital predicted Core Affect (b = 0.3764, p < 0.0002). However, Core Affect did not have a significant effect on Number of Clients. The indirect effect of X on Y through Core Affect was not significant as the confidence intervals did contain 0. These results suggest that Psychological Capital can lead to an increase in Core Affect, however this has no significant influence on Number of Clients. *Hypothesis 2.3: Core Affect mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Number of Clients* was not supported.

In *Hypothesis 3.3* it was predicted that Instilling Hope mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Number of Clients. The results showed that Psychological Capital did have a significant direct effect on Instilling Hope (b = 0.3958, p < 0.0346). In turn, Instilling Hope did not have a significant effect on Number of Clients. The indirect effect of X on Y through Instilling Hope was not significant as the confidence interval did contain 0. These results suggest that Psychological Capital has significant effect on Instilling Hope, yet this has little to no significant effect on Number of Clients. *Hypothesis 3.3: Instilling Hope mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Number of Clients* was not supported.

12.3.3| Testing Competitive Mediators Between PsyCap and Client Retention

In the following I apply the same Model 4 with parallel mediators now testing the effects of PsyCap on Client Retention (Table 11). The results are as follows:

Table 11: Mediation Analysis of Testing Competitive Mediators Between PsyCap and Client Retention

Variable / Effect	b	SE	t	p	95% Confidence Interval	
PsyCap --> Client Retention	1.7285	0.5637	3.0663	0.0030	0.6067	2.8504
PsyCap --> Job Engagement	0.7787	0.1523	5.1133	0.0000	0.4758	1.0816
PsyCap --> Core Affect	0.3764	0.0959	3.9255	0.0002	0.1857	0.5670
PsyCap --> Instilling Hope	0.3958	0.1842	2.1482	0.0346	0.0293	0.7622
PsyCap --> Job Engagement --> Client Retention	-0.1233	0.3563	-0.3462	0.7301	-0.8324	0.5857
PsyCap --> Core Affect --> Client Retention	0.2170	0.5989	0.3624	0.7180	-0.9748	1.4089
PsyCap --> Instilling Hope --> Client Retention	-0.2814	0.3102	-0.9070	0.3672	-0.8987	0.3360
Effects						
Direct	1.7285	0.5637	3.0663	0.0030	0.6067	2.8504
Indirect Job Engagement*	-0.0960	0.3450			-0.8337	0.5277
Indirect Core Affect*	0.0817	0.2961			-0.4532	0.7123
Indirect Instilling Hope*	-0.1113	0.1404			-0.4887	0.1005
Total	-0.1257	0.4124			-1.0355	0.5286

Based on 5000 bootstrap samples

Although not hypothesised, the direct effect of Psychological Capital on Client Retention is initially outlined. The results showed that Psychological Capital did have a significant direct effect on Client Retention (b=1.7285, p<0.0030).

In *Hypothesis 1.4* it was predicted that Job Engagement mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Client Retention. The results showed that Psychological Capital did have a direct significant effect on Job Engagement (b = 0.7787, p < 0.0000). However, Job Engagement did not have a significant effect on Client Retention. The indirect effect of

X on Y through Job Engagement was not significant as the confidence interval did contain 0. These results suggest that Psychological Capital can lead to an increase in Job Engagement, but this has no significant influence on Client Retention. *Hypothesis 1.4: Job Engagement mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Client Retention* was not supported.

In *Hypothesis 2.4* it was predicted that Core Affect mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Client Retention. The results showed that Psychological Capital did have a significant direct effect Core Affect ($b = 0.3764$, $p < 0.0002$). Core Affect however did not have a significant effect on Core Affect. The indirect effect of X on Y through Core Affect was not significant as the confidence interval did contain 0. These results suggest that Psychological Capital can lead to an increase in Core Affect, but this has no significant influence on Client Retention. *Hypothesis 2.4: Core Affect mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Average Client Retention* was not supported.

In *Hypothesis 3.4* it was predicted that Instilling Hope mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Client Retention. The results showed that Psychological Capital did have an effect on Instilling Hope ($b = 0.3958$, $p < 0.0346$). However, Instilling Hope did not have a significant effect on Client Retention. The indirect effect of X on Y through Instilling Hope was not significant as the confidence interval did contain 0. These results suggest that Psychological Capital can lead to an increase in Instilling Hope, but this has no significant influence on Client Retention. *Hypothesis 3.4: Instilling Hope mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Average Client Retention* was not supported.

12.3.4| Testing Competitive Mediators Between PsyCap and Job Insecurity

In the following I apply the same Model 4 with parallel mediators now testing the effects of PsyCap on Job Insecurity (Table 12). The results are as follows:

Table 12: Mediation Analysis of Testing Competitive Mediators Between PsyCap and Job Insecurity

Variable / Effect	b	SE	t	p	95% Confidence Interval	
PsyCap --> Job Insecurity	-0.8166	0.2829	-2.8868	0.0050	-1.3796	-0.2537

PsyCap --> Job Engagement	0.7787	0.1523	5.1133	0.0000	0.4758	1.0816
PsyCap --> Core Affect	0.3764	0.0959	3.9255	0.0002	0.1857	0.5670
PsyCap --> Instilling Hope	0.3958	0.1842	2.1482	0.0346	0.0293	0.7622
PsyCap --> Job Engagement --> Job Insecurity	-0.0170	0.1788	-0.0953	0.9243	-0.3728	0.3388
PsyCap --> Core Affect --> Job Insecurity	-0.4361	0.3005	-1.4510	0.1507	-1.0342	0.1620
PsyCap --> Instilling Hope --> Job Insecurity	-0.0598	0.1557	-0.3840	0.7020	-0.3696	0.2500
Effects						
Direct	-0.8166	0.2829	-2.8868	0.0050	-1.3796	-0.2537
Indirect Job Engagement*	-0.0133	0.1907			-0.3743	0.3885
Indirect Core Affect*	-0.1641	0.1486			-0.5984	0.0423
Indirect Instilling Hope*	-0.0237	0.0661			-0.2010	0.0827
Total	-0.2010	0.2207			-0.6502	0.2332

Based on 5000 bootstrap samples

Although not hypothesised, result show that Psychological Capital did have a significant direct negative effect on Job Insecurity (b = -0.8166, p < 0.0050).

In *Hypothesis 1.5* it was predicted that Job Engagement mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Job Insecurity. The results showed that Psychological Capital has a significant direct effect on Job Engagement (b = 0.7787, p < 0.0000). Job Engagement however did not have a significant effect on Job Insecurity. The indirect effect of X on Y through Job Engagement was not significant as the confidence interval did contain 0. These results suggest that Psychological Capital can lead to an increase in Job Engagement, but this has no significant influence on Job Insecurity. *Hypothesis 1.5: Job Engagement mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Job Insecurity* was not supported.

In *Hypothesis 2.5* it was predicted that Core Affect mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Job Insecurity. The results showed that Psychological Capital has a significant effect on Core Affect (b = 0.3764, p < 0.0002). However, Core Affect did not have a significant effect on Job Insecurity. The indirect effect of X on Y through Core Affect was not significant as the confidence interval did contain 0. These results suggest that Psychological Capital can lead to an increase in Core Affect, but this has no significant

influence on Job Insecurity. Hypothesis *2.5: Core Affect mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Job Insecurity* was not supported.

In *Hypothesis 3.5* it was predicted that Instilling Hope mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Job Insecurity. The results showed that Psychological Capital has a significant effect on Instilling Hope (b = 0.3958, p < 0.0346). Instilling Hope did not have a significant effect on Job Insecurity. The indirect effect of X on Y through Instilling Hope was not significant as the confidence interval did contain 0. These results suggest that Psychological Capital can lead to an increase in Instilling Hope, but this has no significant influence on Job Insecurity. *Hypothesis 3.5: Instilling Hope mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Job Insecurity* was not supported.

12.3.5| Testing Competitive Mediators Between PsyCap and Satisfaction with Life

In the following I apply the same Model 4 with parallel mediators now testing the effects of PsyCap on Satisfaction with Life (Table 13). The results are as follows:

Table 13: Mediation Analysis of Testing Competitive Mediators Between PsyCap and Satisfaction with Life

Variable / Effect	b	SE	t	p	95% Confidence Interval	
PsyCap --> Satisfaction with Life	0.8799	0.2734	3.2185	0.0019	0.3359	1.4240
PsyCap --> Job Engagement	0.7787	0.1523	5.1133	0.0000	0.4758	1.0816
PsyCap --> Core Affect	0.3764	0.0959	3.9255	0.0002	0.1857	0.5670
PsyCap --> Instilling Hope	0.3958	0.1842	2.1482	0.0346	0.0293	0.7622
PsyCap --> Job Engagement --> Satisfaction with Life	0.2019	0.1728	1.1685	0.2461	-0.1420	0.5458
PsyCap --> Core Affect --> Satisfaction with Life	-0.1828	0.2905	-0.6293	0.5310	-0.7608	0.3953
PsyCap --> Instilling Hope --> Satisfaction with Life	-0.2447	0.1505	-1.6262	0.1078	-0.5441	0.0547
Effects						

Direct	0.8799	0.2734	3.2185	0.0019	0.3359	1.4240
Indirect Job Engagement*	0.1572	0.1524			-0.1047	0.4943
Indirect Core Affect*	-0.0688	0.1271			-0.3847	0.1482
Indirect Instilling Hope*	-0.0968	0.0710			-0.3125	-0.0015
Total	-0.0084	0.1858			-0.3211	0.4127

Based on 5000 bootstrap samples

Although not hypothesised, Psychological Capital (b = -0.8799, p < 0.0019) did have a significant direct effect on Satisfaction with Life.

In *Hypothesis 1.6* it was predicted that Job Engagement mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Satisfaction with Life. The results showed that Psychological Capital has a significant direct effect on Job Engagement (b = 0.7787, p < 0.0000). Job Engagement did not have a significant effect on Satisfaction with Life. The indirect effect of X on Y through Job Engagement was not significant as the confidence interval did contain 0. These results suggest that Psychological Capital can lead to an increase in Job Engagement, but this has no significant influence on Satisfaction with Life. *Hypothesis 1.6: Job Engagement mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Satisfaction with Life* was not supported.

In *Hypothesis 2.6* it was predicted that Core Affect mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Satisfaction with Life. The results showed that Psychological Capital has a significant direct effect on Core Affect (b = 0.3764, p < 0.0002). In turn, Core Affect did not have a significant effect on Satisfaction with Life. The indirect effect of X on Y through Core Affect was not significant as the confidence interval did contain 0. These results suggest that Psychological Capital can lead to an increase in Core Affect, but this has no significant influence on Satisfaction with Life. *Hypothesis 2.6: Core Affect mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Satisfaction with Life* was not supported.

In *Hypothesis 3.6* it was predicted that Instilling Hope mediates the relationship between Psychological Capital and Satisfaction with Life. The results showed that Psychological Capital has a significant direct effect on Instilling Hope (b = 0.3958, p < 0.0346). Instilling Hope did not have a significant effect on Satisfaction with Life. The indirect effect of X on Y through Instilling Hope was significant as the confidence interval did contain 0 (b = -0.0968, 95% CI -0.3125, -0.0015). These results suggest that Psychological Capital can lead to an increase in Instilling Hope, that in turn does influence Satisfaction with Life, however it is a negative effect. *Hypothesis 3.6: Instilling Hope mediates the relationship between*

Psychological Capital and Satisfaction with Life was supported, however, it has a negative effect. This is later discussed.

12.3.6 | Effects of PsyCap on Number of Clients via Job Engagement Controlling for Conscientiousness and Extraversion

Given that effects of PsyCap might be confounded with that of Conscientiousness and Extraversion, I further tested the significant mediation models accounting for those variables. This means that the mediating effects of Job Engagement between PsyCap and Number of Clients were modelled again, but controlling for the effects of extraversion and conscientiousness.

A mediation analysis was conducted using Model 4 of PROCESS Macro for SPSS to control for Extraversion (C1) and Conscientiousness (C2).

Table 14: Effects of PsyCap on Number of Clients via Job Engagement Controlling for Conscientiousness and Extraversion

Variable / Effect	b	SE	t	p	95% Confidence Interval	
PsyCap --> Number of Current Clients	0.9164	0.5867	1.5621	0.1223	-0.2515	2.0844
Extraversion --> Number of Current Clients	0.0885	0.2785	0.3180	0.7514	-0.4659	0.643
Conscientiousness --> Number of Current Clients	0.1265	0.4144	0.3052	0.761	-0.6986	0.9516
PsyCap --> Job Engagement	0.7685	0.1699	4.5224	0	0.4304	1.1066
Extraversion --> Job Engagement	0.1906	0.0845	2.2551	0.0268	0.0224	0.3589
Conscientiousness --> Job Engagement	-0.1217	0.1329	-0.9156	0.3636	-0.3861	0.1427
Effects						
Direct	0.9164	0.5867	1.5621	0.1223	-0.2515	2.0844
Indirect Job Engagement*	0.5259	0.2595			0.1187	1.1529
Total	0.4032	0.2913			-0.0496	1.1368

Based on 5000 bootstrap samples

The results showed that Psychological Capital predicted Job Engagement and were significant (b = -0.7685, p < 0.0000) even accounting for the effects Extraversion and Conscientiousness. The effects of Extraversion and Conscientiousness were not significant.

The indirect effects of X on Y through Job Engagement (b = -0.5259, 95%) was significant as the confidence intervals did not contain 0 (CI 0.1187, 1.1529). Psychological Capital did not have a significant direct effect on Number of Clients with the controls in the model.

These results suggest that PsyCap still demonstrates a significant effect on Number of Clients vs Job Engagement even accounting for personality variables, thus explaining additional variance to that accounted by personality traits.

12.4 | Summary of Findings

Study 2 uncovered some intriguing relationships between PsyCap and several important outcomes. Notably, PsyCap directly influenced Coach Certification (b = 1.6424, p = 0.0021), suggesting that individuals with higher levels of PsyCap are more likely to achieve higher coach certification—which, in the context of this study, means, higher revenue. It also had a marginally significant positive effect on the Number of Clients (b = 0.9918, p = 0.0667), hinting at a potential role in client acquisition. PsyCap significantly impacted Client Retention (b = 1.7285, p = 0.0030), indicating that greater PsyCap supports long-term client relationships. Additionally, higher PsyCap was linked to reduced Job Insecurity (b = -0.8166, p = 0.0050) and significantly boosted Satisfaction with Life (b = 0.8799, p = 0.0019), emphasising its value in fostering personal well-being.

The study also explored how Job Engagement, Core Affect, and Instilling Hope might mediate the relationship between PsyCap and these outcomes. PsyCap had a robust positive effect on Job Engagement (b = 0.7787, p < 0.0001), and Job Engagement mediated the connection between PsyCap and the Number of Clients (indirect effect b = 0.5392, 95% CI 0.1414, 1.0900). However, Job Engagement did not play a mediating role in other outcomes, such as Coach Certification, Client Retention, Job Insecurity, or Satisfaction with Life.

Core Affect, while significantly affected by PsyCap (b = 0.3764, p = 0.0002), did not act as a mediator for any of the outcomes. On the other hand, Instilling Hope, which was also

significantly influenced by PsyCap (b = 0.3958, p = 0.0346), revealed some unexpected results. It had a negative mediating effect on Coach Certification (indirect effect b = -0.2357, 95% CI -0.7224, -0.0053) and on Satisfaction with Life (indirect effect b = -0.0968, 95% CI -0.3125, -0.0015).

To conclude, PsyCap had significant direct effects on critical outcomes like Coach Certification, Client Retention, Job Insecurity, and Satisfaction with Life. While Job Engagement served as a mediator between PsyCap and the Number of Clients, Instilling Hope had an unexpected negative mediating influence on certification and life satisfaction. Core Affect, despite its strong connection with PsyCap and emotions/affect being discussed in Study 1 results, did not mediate any of the outcomes. These findings set the stage for a deeper discussion that I cover in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 13 | STUDY 2 DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the mediating effects of Job Engagement, Core Affect, and Instilling Hope on the relationships between PsyCap and several outcome variables: Coach Certification, Number of Clients, Client Retention, Job Insecurity, and Satisfaction with Life. The study provided insights into the direct and indirect effects of PsyCap on these variables.

The results revealed several significant direct effects of PsyCap and, revealing both supported and unsupported mediation hypotheses. The discussion of these findings is organised according to the outcome variables examined and a brief explanation, from reviewing the literature/theories and my reflection as an engaged scholar, are explained within each.

13.1 | Interpretation on Findings

13.1.1 | PsyCap and Coach Certification

PsyCap had a significant direct effect on Coach Certification, indicating that higher levels of PsyCap directly enhance the likelihood of obtaining Coach Certification. This aligns with the theory of PsyCap, which posits that individuals with higher PsyCap are more likely to achieve their goals due to their enhanced resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007). This finding suggests that PsyCap, as a set of positive psychological resources, equips individuals with the mental fortitude and motivation necessary to pursue and achieve certification goals.

Job Engagement

PsyCap positively predicted Job Engagement. However, Job Engagement did not significantly mediate the relationship between PsyCap and coach revenue, measured in the study as Coach Certification. This suggests that while PsyCap increases Job Engagement, this increase does not translate into higher revenue for the coach. Hence, Job Engagement alone may not be sufficient to act as a driver or overcome the barriers that are needed to increase the coach's revenue/certification.

Core Affect

Similarly, PsyCap positively predicted Core Affect, but Core Affect did not mediate the relationship. Core Affect might not directly influence the acquisition of the coach's revenue perhaps depends more on cognitive and practical competencies. The broaden-and-build theory suggests that positive emotions broaden an individual's thought-action repertoire, which could include one's problem-solving ability and creativity. However, obtaining higher revenue might require targeted, sustained cognitive effort and practical skill acquisition that is not necessarily facilitated by positive affect alone.

Instilling Hope

Contrary to expectations, Instilling Hope showed a negative mediation effect on Coach Certification. This unexpected result could be explained by overconfidence or unrealistic optimism, where individuals might rely too much on hope without engaging in necessary preparatory activities or skill development. Hope theory suggests that while hope involves goal-directed thinking and planning, excessive or misplaced hope could lead to underestimating the effort required, resulting in lower actual achievement of certification goals.

13.1.2 | PsyCap and Number of Clients

The direct effect of PsyCap on the Number of Clients was marginally significant, indicating a potential positive influence of PsyCap on client acquisition. This finding is consistent with the theory that PsyCap enhances personal and professional effectiveness. This result demonstrates that higher PsyCap could increase a coach's ability to attract clients perhaps by fostering a positive outlook, resilience in the face of setbacks, and confidence in their coaching abilities, possibly conveying PsyCap and making them more appealing to potential clients.

Job Engagement

PsyCap positively predicted Job Engagement, and Job Engagement significantly mediated the relationship between PsyCap and Number of Clients. This finding aligns with SCT. An explanation for this may be because engaged coaches are more likely to put in the extra effort, build stronger relationships with clients, and deliver higher-quality services, thereby attracting more clients.

Core Affect

Although PsyCap positively predicted Core Affect, Core Affect did not mediate the. This might indicate that while positive affective states are beneficial, they are not sufficient on their own to increase the number of clients without the accompanying job engagement. The broaden-and-build theory supports this by suggesting that while positive affect can enhance resource building and coping, specific behaviours linked to job engagement are necessary to translate these positive states into tangible outcomes like client acquisition.

Instilling Hope

PsyCap significantly predicted Instilling Hope, but Instilling Hope did not mediate the relationship. This suggests that hope, while important, may not directly translate into practical actions that increase client numbers. Hope theory posits that hope involves both goal-oriented determination (agency) and planning (pathways). However, without concrete actions and strategies, encouragement of goals and pathfinding might not be enough to achieve practical outcomes such as increasing the client base.

13.1.3 | PsyCap and Client Retention

PsyCap had a significant direct effect on Client Retention, highlighting its importance in maintaining client relationships. This is consistent with the concept that individuals with high PsyCap are better equipped to manage relationships due to their resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy, which are crucial for sustaining long-term client interactions.

Job Engagement

Despite PsyCap's positive impact on Job Engagement, Job Engagement did not mediate the relationship between PsyCap and Client Retention. This might be due to the complexity of client retention, which could depend on various other factors such as service quality, client satisfaction, whether the client is doing the work and getting results, and relationship management skills.

Core Affect

PsyCap positively predicted Core Affect, but Core Affect did not mediate the relationship. This suggests that positive emotions alone are insufficient to ensure client retention without specific actions and strategies aimed at maintaining client relationships. The broaden-and-build theory suggests that positive emotions can lead to broader thought-action repertoires

and resource building, but these resources must be applied effectively to retain clients. Therefore, Core Affect alone is not a predictor of client retention.

Instilling Hope

Although PsyCap significantly predicted Instilling Hope, Instilling Hope did not mediate the relationship. Similar to the findings on the number of clients, hope might need to be accompanied by concrete strategies and efforts to influence client retention effectively. Hope theory indicates that while hope involves goal-directed thinking, it could be argued that actual client retention requires systematic follow-through and practical strategies to overcome everyday business challenges for clients in the now so that they get the results for clients and so that they recognise the value of staying with the coach.

13.1.4 | PsyCap and Job Insecurity

PsyCap had a significant direct negative effect on Job Insecurity indicating that higher PsyCap reduces job insecurity. This aligns with PsyCap theory, which posits that individuals with high PsyCap possess greater resilience and optimism, which can buffer against feelings of job insecurity (Luthans et al., 2007). Study 1 revealed that for business coaches, job insecurity could be as a result of the loss of clients or the apprehension of losing a client as this can drastically decrease their personal income. This direct effect underscores the protective role of PsyCap in providing psychological resources that mitigate the stress and anxiety associated with job insecurity.

Job Engagement

Despite PsyCap's positive impact on Job Engagement, Job Engagement did not mediate the relationship between PsyCap and Job Insecurity. This might suggest that while engaged employees feel more secure, other factors, such as organisational support and job stability, play a more significant role in reducing job insecurity. This highlights the importance of specific job resources and organisational factors that directly influence job security perceptions.

Core Affect

PsyCap positively predicted Core Affect, but Core Affect did not mediate the relationship. Positive emotions may help in feeling less insecure, but tangible job characteristics and external circumstances might be more critical. The PRT theory suggests that while

psychological resources can lead to greater resilience and resourcefulness, perhaps specific organisational policies and job characteristics are crucial for actual job security.

Instilling Hope

PsyCap significantly predicted Instilling Hope, but Instilling Hope did not mediate the relationship. Hope alone might not be enough to counter job insecurity without other supportive factors and stability in the workplace. Hope theory posits that hope involves agency and pathways thinking, but perhaps these must be grounded in realistic assessments and supported by external factors to effectively reduce job insecurity.

13.1.5 | PsyCap and Satisfaction with Life

PsyCap had a significant direct effect on Satisfaction with Life underscoring its importance in enhancing overall life satisfaction for the coaches. This finding is consistent with the theoretical framework of PsyCap and PRT, which suggests that higher PsyCap equips individuals with a positive outlook and coping mechanisms that contribute to greater life satisfaction.

Job Engagement

PsyCap positively predicted Job Engagement, but Job Engagement did not mediate the satisfaction with life relationship. This suggests that while engagement in work is important, it might not directly influence life satisfaction, which is influenced by broader life domains. This highlights that positive work engagement alone may not be sufficient to enhance life satisfaction without considering other aspects of life such as non-work related factors, like personal relationships and leisure activities.

Core Affect

PsyCap positively predicted Core Affect, but Core Affect did not mediate the satisfaction with life relationship. Positive affect might contribute to life satisfaction, but it is likely not the sole determinant. The broaden-and-build theory suggests that while positive emotions can build resources that enhance life satisfaction, other factors such as personal achievements and social support also play significant roles.

Instilling Hope

PsyCap significantly predicted Instilling Hope, and Instilling Hope had an unexpected negative mediation effect on Satisfaction with Life. This counterintuitive finding could indicate that excessive hope might lead to dissatisfaction if expectations are not met, reflecting a potential downside of high optimism without pragmatic assessment. Hope theory posits that while hope is generally positive, unrealistic expectations or hope that is not grounded in reality could lead to greater disappointment, frustrations of results not coming to fruition despite hard work, and reduced satisfaction with life.

Overall, the study underscores the significance of PsyCap's direct effects on Coach Certification, Client Retention, Job Insecurity, and Satisfaction with Life, highlighting PsyCap's essential role in fostering personal and professional outcomes. Job Engagement emerged as a positive mediator for client acquisition, while Instilling Hope demonstrated counterintuitive negative effects on both certification and life satisfaction, potentially due to unrealistic optimism. Core Affect, despite its positive association with PsyCap, did not mediate outcomes, indicating that while positive emotions support PsyCap, they require task-specific actions and competencies to produce meaningful results.

These findings can be interpreted through the three theoretical pathways that underpinned the Study 2 model. The motivational pathway (via Job Engagement) appears to be the most functional route through which PsyCap influences business-coach outcomes. This supports Bandura's (1997) concept of self-efficacy and Luthans et al.'s (2007) proposition that confident, hopeful individuals sustain effort toward goal attainment. In practice, coaches high in efficacy and hope are more likely to persist in sales and service activities that drive client acquisition—the clearest behavioural expression of persistence found in Study 1. The affective pathway, grounded in Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory, received only partial support, suggesting that positive emotions may help broaden perspective but are insufficient without task-specific engagement. Finally, the behavioural pathway represented by Instilling Hope (after Snyder, 2002) produced unexpected or weak mediation effects, perhaps because hope alone, when not coupled with realistic strategies, can manifest as overconfidence or unrealistic expectations. Collectively, these interpretations indicate that PsyCap's influence on success is multifaceted but uneven—its motivational mechanisms dominate, while affective and behavioural influences appear context-dependent.

13.2 | Discussion on Key Findings

13.2.1 | PsyCap's Role on Performance and Wellbeing

The results indicate that PsyCap plays a crucial role in enhancing certain workplace outcomes and personal well-being metrics. Notably, PsyCap's direct effects were significant across most outcome variables, demonstrating its broad impact on performance, job security, and satisfaction with life. These findings support the literature on how PsyCap influences work-based outcomes, which in turn has positive effects on not just individuals but, on a larger scale, organisational outcomes.

Where this study makes a unique contribution is by testing the effects of PsyCap within the context of boundaryless careers and business coaches. PsyCap demonstrates significant effects on both performance/financial outcomes and well-being outcomes and controlling for personality traits.

One key element to discuss is the lack of power due to the sample size. Looking at the correlation table, it can be seen that Core Affect is positively related with most outcomes (around .120-.140), this would have been significant with a larger sample. The same is witnessed for Job Engagement. Instilling hope, however, seems to have a more negative pattern, which is discussed in the following headers. What should then be concluded is that PsyCap does have an effect on these variables, which traditionally have been associated with performance, however, possibly due to power limitations, the effects of these variables were not significant in the present study, thus not supporting mediation effects.

The overall pattern of results therefore substantiates the theoretical assumption that PsyCap operates primarily through motivational rather than affective or behavioural pathways. This aligns with PRT (Hobfoll, 2002) which posits that resource caravans reinforce core motivational energy that buffers against loss and sustains action. The weaker effects of Core Affect and Instilling Hope imply that emotional and behavioural expressions of PsyCap may depend on situational cues—client responsiveness, workload, or perceived control—variables that were qualitatively described by coaches in Study 1 when discussing how external volatility affects their optimism and persistence.

The notable exception is Job Engagement, which mediates the effects of PsyCap on Number of Clients, thus lending some support to the motivational pathway, and this

independently of Extraversion and Conscientiousness. On the other hand, the finding that that PsyCap has a significant effect on all outcome variables (even accounting for the effects of Job Engagement/Core Affect/Instilling Hope) speaks for the importance of this variable, reiterating the conclusions of Study 1.

13.2.2 | The Role of Job Engagement

Job Engagement emerged as a significant mediator only in the relationship between PsyCap and the Number of Clients. This finding suggests that while PsyCap effectively boosts Job Engagement, which in turn can increase the number of clients, this mediation effect does not extend to other outcome variables examined in this study. According to the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001), positive psychological states like those fostered by high PsyCap can enhance engagement, which then leads to better performance outcomes such as client acquisition. However, for other outcomes such as certification (revenue) and retention, additional specific resources and factors might be necessary to see a significant mediation effect. This raises the question of why Job Engagement influences a number of clients and not others.

A reason for Job Engagement only having a significant effect on number of clients is that acquiring more clients is that the coach can be more motivated to engage in more specific job activities that acquire clients, such as increasing their marketing output, learning new sales and marketing skills, or organise their time to carry out more sales activities. This motivation and change in behaviour are for the coach to control and take ownership of. For instance, the coach can choose to do more sales and marketing activities. However, the 'how long a client stays around for' (client retention) and how much they are able to pay (revenue/coach certification) is less controlled by the coach, and more by the client. The findings also suggest that the coaches' level of Job Engagement does not influence whether the client chooses to stay on board the coaching program or with the coach, and how much they pay.

Confidence to Charge More

An assumption may be that if the coach decides to take on high-ticket clients, then the coach certification (revenue) would be higher. However, the coach must have the confidence and

self-efficacy to obtain and charge clients a higher amount. Acquiring lower-ticket clients may be easier for the coach, thus influencing the number of clients. This however does not equate to significantly higher revenue.

These findings may suggest that the coaches have more clients because they are more motivated in their jobs and take on more Job Engagement sales activities, but being more engaged does not control how well they can sell high-ticket coaching programs.

Outsourcing Sales and Marketing

Another assumption may be around 'who' is doing the marketing activities. What has not been recognised in the study is that the coaches may hire and/or outsource their sales and marketing activities. Study 1 interviews reveal that business coaches can come from backgrounds such as accounting, education, and management; this does not mean that they have sales and marketing experience. The role of Job Engagement may lead to a behaviour where the coach is motivated to invest money into sales and marketing activities, as opposed to carrying out the activities themselves. Business coaches do hire marketers and outsource marketing activities. This may equate to more customers. However, how much the coach can charge and how they influence the client to stay for longer may be more difficult for the coach when they must step into the sales position (i.e., to close higher-ticket sales) and the client retention seat. It would make sense that if the coach did not charge a high amount, then they would have more clients as there would be less resistance to becoming a client, however this would influence the coach's revenue, and the client may not see the value of remaining a client if they do not value the transaction (i.e., commit to and pay for a higher ticket and longer programs). Nevertheless, the motivation and decision to invest personal/company financial resources to engage with hiring for or outsourcing marketing is still a result of Job Engagement.

13.2.3 | Core Affect and Instilling Hope

Core Affect and Instilling Hope did not mediate the relationships between PsyCap and most of the outcome variables. Interestingly, Instilling Hope had unexpected negative mediation effects on Coach Certification and Satisfaction with Life. These findings highlight potential

complexities and unintended consequences in the interplay between PsyCap and specific affective states.

A reason for this is that psychological resource theory suggests that whilst positive psychological resources like hope are generally beneficial, an assumption could be made that they might lead to negative outcomes if they create unrealistic expectations or overconfidence. This could emphasise the importance of a balanced approach where positive psychological resources are coupled with realistic assessments and practical strategies.

This reflective interpretation reinforces that PsyCap's sub-dimensions are not uniformly effective; understanding which mechanisms truly translate into performance and well-being—and equally which do not—is critical for refining future theoretical models and for designing more targeted developmental interventions for coaches.yes

13.2.4 | Study 2 Preliminary Implications

These findings reinforce the multidimensional understanding of "higher levels of success" established in Chapter 1. PsyCap demonstrated significant effects on both objective indicators—such as client acquisition and retention—and subjective indicators—such as life satisfaction and perceived job security. This dual influence supports the theoretical proposition that success in boundaryless careers encompasses both tangible achievements and internal evaluations of fulfilment and stability (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 2004; Ng, Eby, Sorensen & Feldman, 2005). The behavioural pathway through Job Engagement appears most strongly aligned with objective success outcomes, whereas the direct effects of PsyCap on Life Satisfaction and Job Insecurity highlight its role in fostering subjective success. Integrating these findings therefore demonstrates that the psychological resources underpinning PsyCap contribute to both dimensions of achievement, linking motivation, behaviour, and emotional resilience to the real-world markers of performance and well-being observed in this study.

The following highlights a short outline of the implications that Study 2 alone reveals. Implications are discussed in the final chapter as the synthesis of implications from Study 1 contributes towards greater implications for how coaches cope and persist within boundaryless careers.

The findings suggest that interventions aimed at enhancing PsyCap could be particularly effective in directly improving outcomes such as Coach Certification (an indicator of revenue performance), Client Retention, reducing Job Insecurity, and increasing Satisfaction with Life. However, the pathways through which PsyCap affects these outcomes require careful consideration, as the expected positive mediations via Job Engagement, Core Affect, and Instilling Hope were not consistently supported. Organisations might focus on developing PsyCap directly through training programs that enhance self-efficacy, optimism, resilience, and hope, such as group training sessions or one-to-one interventions. Additionally, integrating these psychological resources with practical skills training and realistic goal-setting could maximise their effectiveness.

The performance outcomes integrate with financial performance for the individual, and therefore their business/organisation, thus demonstrating return on investment (ROI) on PsyCap. This is a useful implication to understand as organisations that invest in PsyCap training and implementation into their firms will achieve an ROI.

From a motivational pathway perspective, the integration of the above with interventions that enhance Job Engagement would also benefit organisations. Study 2 demonstrates that roles such as sales and marketing particularly where client acquisition is a key performance outcome of the role. Study 1 implications highlighted implications of this too. Practical implications of how Study 1 findings integrate with these suggestions are covered in the final chapters.

The study's findings suggest important considerations for understanding the relationship between PsyCap, performance-related variables, and their potential mediation effects. Despite observed positive trends in Core Affect and Job Engagement, the lack of statistical significance due to the limited sample size highlights the need for caution when interpreting the results. This limitation underscores the necessity of larger sample sizes in future research to enhance statistical power and validate these relationships—this is covered in the following heading.

Integrating insights from both studies

The implications emerging from Study 2 build directly on the qualitative foundations of Study

1. The first study revealed that coaches' capacity to *"stay positive when everything feels uncertain"* and their belief that *"there's always another way to get there"* (Coach 4, Study 1), for example, demonstrated how they persisted. These patterns of agency, optimism, and adaptive problem-solving align closely with the constructs of PsyCap—particularly self-efficacy, optimism, and hope—which Study 2 subsequently confirmed as measurable drivers of coach outcomes. The significant role of the motivational pathway (Job Engagement) validates the behavioural energy described by participants as *"keeping the momentum going even when clients drop off"* (Coach 7), for example. Meanwhile, the weaker or negative mediation effects observed for Core Affect and Instilling Hope quantitatively mirror the ambivalence expressed in Study 1, where some coaches warned that it would be a challenge, i.e., *"too much hope without action just burns time"* (Coach 3).

Theoretically, this integration strengthens PRT (Hobfoll, 2002) by demonstrating that resource caravans—combinations of hope, efficacy, optimism, and resilience—operate most powerfully through motivational activation, not emotion alone. Practically, it identifies PsyCap as a strategic asset for business-coach performance: coaches who translate hope into structured action are more likely to achieve measurable success in client acquisition and business stability, echoing both the lived experiences of Study 1 and the statistical patterns of Study 2.

13.3 | Limitations and Future Research

Despite the studies strengths, there are also a number of limitations to consider, and which can inform future research.

To begin, the sample size was a limitation as it could only be due to the size of the available coaches within the organisation and those that were willing to participate—despite months of phone calls to encourage the coaches to participate. Although the sample size was somewhat limited, the convergence of various stakeholders on key issues adds reliability and confidence in the study's findings (Van De Ven, 2007; Lee & Lings, 2008). The unique access to business coaches, who were all trained in the same processes in marketing, sales, and operations for their coach training, further enhanced the validity and rigour of the research, isolating variables such as how the coach was trained to carry out coaching and grow their business. In summary, the cross-sectional design, combined with trait control measures was implemented in Study 2 to ensure the study's validity and reliability, despite

the limitations. Future research could benefit from longitudinal studies to explore PsyCap in greater depth; this however came with its constraints to this study too.

Although longitudinal studies are recommended for examining the 'state-like' effects of Psychological Capital (PsyCap) over time, this was impractical due to the participants' time constraints. Nonetheless, Avey, Luthans, and Youssef (2010) suggest that the contribution of PsyCap to workplace outcomes can be effectively assessed by controlling for stable, trait-like characteristics, which have a known impact on performance. Therefore, even without a longitudinal design, the study maintains rigour by incorporating trait control measures to examine the impact of state-like factors on performance outcomes.

Reflecting on sample size and time limitations Bryman and Bell's (2015) five considerations regarding study limitations, they emphasise the importance of a large sample size to enhance precision, reduce sampling error, and account for non-responses and heterogeneity. However, the sample size must also be feasible, considering time, cost, and accessibility. Unlike the more time-consuming and costly interview approach in Study 1, the survey method used in Study 2 is more efficient, allowing for a larger and more diverse participant pool. This approach not only strengthens the study's validity through a mixed-method design but also addresses practical constraints by adopting a cross-sectional study due to the time limitations of the busy, high-value business coaches involved.

In regard to possible areas for future research, the positive correlations of Core Affect and Job Engagement with performance-related outcomes suggest that PsyCap may play a role in driving these variables, which are traditionally associated with enhanced workplace performance. However, the inability to detect significant effects implies that the observed relationships might not be robust under the current study conditions. Similarly, the unexpected negative patterns observed for Instilling Hope warrant further investigation to understand their implications and underlying mechanisms.

Although mediation effects were not supported, the study reinforces the potential importance of PsyCap as a foundational construct influencing variables critical to performance. Future research with larger and more representative samples is essential to confirm these findings, explore mediation pathways, and clarify the role of PsyCap in fostering positive workplace outcomes. This work also highlights the need for careful consideration of sample size and power analysis in study design to ensure reliable and generalisable results.

Although there are limitations to this study, the study reveals potential future research opportunities. The sample size was relatively small, which may limit the generalisability of the findings and the pattern of significant results—however, the sample was niched into the field of business coaches within a single organisation which did allow for deeper exploration (Study 1) within a sample that had undergone the same training and follow the same coaching processes. Future research should explore these relationships in larger and more diverse samples.

Additionally, the unexpected negative mediation effects of Instilling Hope warrant further investigation to understand the underlying mechanisms.

Future studies could also examine other potential mediators or moderators that might explain the effects of PsyCap on different outcomes, such as what was highlighted in Study 1 as barriers, enablers and strategies like client personalities, client PsyCap, and leadership influence within the organisation. It would also be beneficial to explore how contextual factors such as organisational culture and support systems influence the effectiveness of PsyCap, exploring the antecedents that were touched on in Study 2 literature review. Applying boundary conditions such as the specific industries coaches work in or the size of companies the coaches work for may also shed light on how working with different clients may influence the performance and well-being outcomes in the model.

13.4 | Conclusion

This study reinforces the importance of PsyCap as a framework for understanding how business coaches sustain performance and well-being within boundaryless careers to achieve objective and subjective success. The findings provide empirical support for PRT and PsyCap confirming that combinations of hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism function as protective psychological resources that enable persistence in uncertain work contexts.

The model proposed three potential pathways—motivational, affective, and behavioural—through which these paths might influence objective and subjective success. However, it remained unclear whether these mechanisms operate simultaneously or independently, and whether one pathway would exert stronger effects than the others. Study 2 therefore tested

each pathway to determine which mechanism—or combination of mechanisms—most strongly links PsyCap to performance and wellbeing outcomes.

Results showed that the motivational pathway, represented by Job Engagement, emerged as the most significant mediator between PsyCap and coach success, supporting Bandura's (1997) concept of self-efficacy and the agentic dimension of PsyCap (Luthans et al., 2007). The affective and behavioural pathways, associated with Fredrickson's (2001) and Snyder's (2002) theories, displayed weaker or inconsistent mediation, suggesting that emotion and hope-based processes may depend more heavily on situational and relational contexts. This partial support across pathways confirms that PsyCap's influence on success is multifaceted but uneven, with some mechanisms proving stronger than others.

While PsyCap enhanced Job Engagement, Core Affect, and Instilling Hope, only Job Engagement significantly mediated the relationship between PsyCap and Number of Clients. Nevertheless, the consistent direct effects of PsyCap on outcomes such as Coach Certification, Client Retention, Job Insecurity, and Satisfaction with Life highlight its role as a dynamic psychological resource that influences performance and well-being outcomes.

Overall, Study 2 demonstrates that not all hypothesised mechanisms of PsyCap operate equally; rather, its motivational dimension plays a primary role, while affective and behavioural influences may contribute contextually. These findings extend Study 1's qualitative insights by confirming that the psychological characteristics identified earlier translate into measurable, though differentiated, mechanisms of coping and persistence. Recognising which pathways are effective—and equally, which are less influential—is essential for guiding deeper research into the underlying processes of PsyCap and for refining future interventions in business-coaching practice. The study therefore provides a theoretically grounded understanding of PsyCap's operation within business coaching and lays the foundation for future research.

The following chapter integrates these findings from Study 2 with Study 1 to develop an overall discussion and conclusion.

CHAPTER 14: PROJECT DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

14.1 | Overarching Discussion

The culmination of this research, comprised of Study 1 and Study 2, yields a comprehensive exploration of how business coaches navigate boundaryless careers and how they cope and persist amid the daily professional and economic challenges they face as the scale their careers to achieve objective and subjective success. This chapter revisits the aim and main objectives of the research and explains how both studies combine to address the overarching research question.

The aim of this thesis was to explore how business coaches cope with and persist in the challenges of boundaryless careers, specifically investigating the psychological and behavioural mechanisms that enable them to maintain resilience, persist through adversity, and achieve success, both objectively and subjectively. This aim was achieved through a mixed-methods approach that provided qualitative depth and quantitative testing, together informing both theory and professional practice.

Study 1 addressed the research question by first reviewing the literature on boundaryless careers and business coaching. The review exposed limitations in existing research—particularly that boundaryless-career theory emphasises structural mobility but gives less attention to the psychological resources that sustain professionals over time. The qualitative phase explored these issues through semi-structured interviews, producing four key themes: drivers, barriers, enablers, and strategies. These revealed not only the intrinsic and extrinsic influences that shape how business coaches manage their careers, but also the agentic and self-regulatory behaviours that allow them to remain effective. In doing so, Study 1 extended boundaryless-career and coaching literatures by showing how coaches exercise agency and align their work with personal and social values.

The interviews also revealed that both physical and psychological resources play crucial roles in enabling coaches to cope and persist. For instance, strategies and barriers such as client acquisition and retention were central challenges, influencing financial performance and perceived job security. Driver and enablers included personal characteristics—particularly resilience, efficacy, and optimism—that allowed coaches to create pathways to success despite setbacks. These findings pointed directly to Psychological Capital

(PsyCap), with its four sub-constructs of hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism, as a suitable theoretical lens for further investigation. Consequently, the outcome variables for the quantitative model in Study 2 were chosen to reflect these practical concerns: financial performance, client retention and acquisition, job insecurity, and life satisfaction.

From a quantitative perspective, Study 2 expanded on these insights by developing and testing a predictive model that examined the effect of PsyCap on these work and life related outcomes. Drawing on Psychological Resource Theory (Hobfoll, 2002), the study proposed three possible pathways—motivational (Job Engagement), affective (Positive Affect), and behavioural (Instilling Hope)—through which PsyCap might operate. Because prior literature offered no consensus on whether such mechanisms act simultaneously or independently, this phase sought to determine which pathway—or combination—best explains how PsyCap influences objective and subjective success for the business coach within a boundaryless career.

The results confirmed that PsyCap exerts a positive effect on performance and wellbeing outcomes, yet only Job Engagement significantly mediated the relationship between PsyCap and Number of Clients. This suggests that PsyCap's motivational dimension plays a primary role, while affective and behavioural influences may depend on other factors, such as situational or relational factors. Understanding which mechanisms are effective—and equally, which are less influential—provides a basis for deeper research into PsyCap's operation in boundaryless careers and for refining future interventions in coaching practice. The following section now synthesises these findings in relation to the research objectives, demonstrating how this project contributes to theoretical, empirical, and professional understandings of coping and persistence in boundaryless careers.

14.2 | Key Findings Discussion

The discussion that follows includes shorthand tags identifying the origin of insights that inform the discussion: Study 1 qualitative findings (identified as S1), Study 2 quantitative findings (S2), integration of both studies (S1 + S2), and instances where Study 1 directly informed Study 2's design or hypotheses (S1 → S2).

The findings from this research provide a detailed understanding of the psychological, behavioural, and environmental factors that enable business coaches to persist and thrive in

boundaryless careers. By integrating qualitative insights from Study 1 with quantitative validations from Study 2, this discussion highlights the interplay of motivations, challenges, and psychological resources (constructs of PsyCap), offering a framework for coping and persistence.

14.2.1 | How Business Coaches Cope and Persist

Study 1 uncovered the nuanced dynamics of boundaryless careers, identifying drivers, barriers, enablers, and strategies the coaches deploy that contribute to their persistence in achieving their goals (S1). These findings directly align with the professional objectives of uncovering coping mechanisms and developing evidence-based models to support business coaches (S1 → S2).

Drivers emerged as a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, with participants consistently emphasising personal growth, flexibility, and meaningful work as central to their career satisfaction (S1). Financial stability, while foundational, was not the sole driver. Coaches highlighted the importance of aligning their professional roles with personal values.

> *e.g. "I transitioned from the corporate world to coaching because I wanted to do something that truly matters—not just for my clients but for myself too."* (Coach 2)

The concept of meaningful work was particularly significant, serving as a buffer against career uncertainty. Coaches found that helping clients achieve transformational outcomes gave their work a sense of purpose beyond financial achievements.

> *e.g. "When a client tells me I've changed their life, it's a feeling no paycheck can replicate."* (Coach 15)

This outcome shaped Study 2 (S1 → S2) as it highlighted that the reason individuals seek boundaryless careers is not just because they need a job to pay the bills but for reasons beyond money. Thus, Life Satisfaction was used as a measure within Study 2 as this may be a better variable to test whether the pathways influenced this driver instead of a financial performance driver.

Although the results in Study 2 did not display a relationship through any of the mediation pathways, PsyCap did demonstrate a direct effect (S2).

A reason for this may be because of PsyCap's state-like influence on positive states and emotions; however, the affective pathway (Core Affect) did not demonstrate this. A longitudinal study may have demonstrated a more significant result as perhaps Life Satisfaction could be situational to how the coach is feeling at the time, but a more average score over a period of time could have yielded a stronger result (S1 + S2).

Barriers such as income instability and client loss were persistent sources of stress, compounding the emotional labour of coaching (S1). This was a significant finding as it allowed an example of "cope and persist" to be explored in the research, particularly how psychological resources may influence this physical (losing clients) and psychological barrier (fear of losing a client and therefore their income, i.e., Job Insecurity). Many participants highlighted the challenge posed by this dilemma and its impact on maintaining self-confidence in the face of career uncertainty.

> *e.g. "Self-doubt creeps in when you lose a client. You start questioning whether you're good enough."* (Coach 1)

This directly aligns with Study 2's finding that higher PsyCap reduced Job Insecurity (S1 + S2). This was further exacerbated by *impostor syndrome*, described as a recurring internal struggle. Coaches had to balance assertiveness and rapport, particularly when navigating difficult client dynamics. If a coach does not push the client to behave differently, the client could depart as they will not see a change or result; however, if the coach does push the client, the client might not like it and leave too.

> *e.g. "Striking the right balance is tricky—you need to be firm enough to guide the client but approachable enough to maintain trust."* (Coach 8)

This internal battle was mirrored by Study 2 findings where behavioural activation (Job Engagement) mediated PsyCap's influence on number of clients (S1 + S2). This suggests that greater engagement converts internal psychological strength into observable actions, such as proactive marketing and client outreach, activities that may onboard more clients (S1 + S2).

Enablers played a critical role in offsetting these barriers, with supportive networks, conducive work environments, and ideal client relationships acting as key facilitators of persistence (S1). Many participants emphasised the value of peer communities for emotional support and professional growth.

> *e.g. "My network of fellow coaches has been my lifeline. They understand the ups and downs of this career like no one else."* (Coach 12)

Physical environments also emerged as enablers, particularly when they fostered creativity and focus. These contextual enablers link closely with PsyCap's resource-caravan concept, suggesting that social and environmental resources bolster psychological ones (S1 + S2).

> *e.g. "When I take a walk in nature, my mind clears, and I can tackle challenges with fresh perspective."* (Coach 5)

To navigate challenges, coaches relied on a range of strategies. Reflective practice, continuous learning, and adaptive communication were frequently mentioned as critical tools (S1). Reflection, in particular, was transformative, allowing coaches to refine their approaches.

> *e.g. "I journal after every session. It helps me track what worked, what didn't, and how I can improve."* (Coach 1)

These strategies underscore the dynamic, self-directed nature of boundaryless careers, where resilience and adaptability are essential for long-term success. They also provided a foundational insight that led to PsyCap being chosen as a key construct in Study 2 to help develop a quantitative study and model for the project (S1 → S2).

14.2.2 | PsyCap's Role in Coping and Persistence

Study 2 reinforced the importance of PsyCap in enabling business coaches to cope and persist (S2 + S1). PsyCap's dimensions—hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy—provided a critical psychological foundation for overcoming challenges and sustaining professional success that were addressed in Study 1 (S1 + S2).

Direct Effects

PsyCap had significant positive effects on key outcomes like client retention, job security, and life satisfaction (S2). Synthesising this with the findings from Study 1, coaches that signalled PsyCap—optimism, resilience, and pathfinding—were better equipped to reframe setbacks constructively (S1 + S2).

> *e.g. "When I hit a rough patch, I remind myself that it's part of the process. Challenges are temporary, and I can always find a way forward."* (Coach 5)

Study 1 also demonstrated the notion of conveyed PsyCap highlighted by Story et al. (2017) in the PsyCap literature. This ability to maintain a positive outlook was closely linked to enhanced client relationships and professional outcomes (S1 + S2).

> *e.g. "Clients respond to your energy. When you project confidence and positivity, they feel it too."* (Coach 6)

However, the affective pathway of PsyCap and the outcomes being mediated by Core Affect did not demonstrate any significant relationship (S2). This may still be true for influencing the client–coach relationship; however, the measures of coach certification, number of clients, and client retention may not have captured this adequately (S1 + S2). Future research could explore client-reported affect or satisfaction to better test this pathway.

PsyCap also played a protective role in reducing job insecurity and enhancing life satisfaction (S2). Coaches with higher PsyCap reported greater emotional stability and a stronger sense of purpose:

> *e.g. "Knowing that I have the resilience to handle whatever comes my way gives me peace of mind."* (Coach 5)

Mediating Pathways

Study 2 demonstrated that the only mediating pathway was a behavioural one between PsyCap and the number of clients through Job Engagement (S2). Cross-referencing this to

Study 1, engaged coaches were more resourceful and their clients were drawn to this (S1 + S2).

> *e.g. "When I'm fully engaged in my work, I'm more creative and resourceful. It shows, and clients are drawn to that energy."* (Coach 6)

Coaches emphasised the importance of combining psychological resources with actionable activities:

> *e.g. "It's not enough to believe in yourself—you have to back it up with consistent effort and quality service."* (Coach 9)

This finding clarifies that Job Engagement translates PsyCap into behavioural energy, supporting motivational activation as the core operative pathway (S1 + S2).

However, the findings also revealed unexpected nuances. For instance, while Instilling Hope was positively related to PsyCap, it occasionally had negative effects on Life Satisfaction (S2).

> *e.g. "Sometimes, I set the bar too high—for myself and my clients—and when things don't work out, it's hard not to feel deflated."* (Coach 8)

These insights underscore the importance of balancing optimism with realism in leveraging PsyCap effectively (S1 + S2). The synthesis of Study 1 and Study 2 thus adds valuable insight into how coaches cope and persist by recognising that resilience must be paired with realistic goal-setting and adaptive strategies.

PsyCap and Performance and Well-Being Model

The findings of Study 1 and Study 2 highlight the interconnectedness of performance and well-being outcomes in boundaryless careers, offering a holistic perspective on how business coaches persist and succeed.

PsyCap significantly enhanced performance outcomes like number of clients and retention suggesting that by fostering hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy assists with performance, particularly from a sales and marketing perspective, and coach ability to keep

clients—which in turn equates to higher financial turnover (coach certification). The predictive model developed in Study 2 bridges performance and well-being outcomes, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding how business coaches navigate boundaryless careers. By integrating psychological resources with contextual enablers and actionable strategies, this model provides a roadmap for coping, persistence, and success.

Ultimately, these findings equip business coaches and organisations with an evidence-based tool to optimise PsyCap and achieve professional and personal goals, addressing the professional objectives outlined in this research.

14.3 | Project Objectives Review

14.3.1 | Theoretical Objectives

The research objectives offered to contribute to theory by conducting action research with business coaches to explore the challenges they face and the strategies they employ to navigate and persist in boundaryless careers (S1). Through inductive research, it uncovered not only deeper insight that drivers, barriers, enablers in their environment, and the specific strategies they deploy play key roles in how boundaryless careers cope and persist, but also that developing on psychological resources such as the core construct of PsyCap can improve performance and well-being, thus offering a significant theoretical contribution to boundaryless career and business coaching literature (S1 + S2).

Parallel to developing boundaryless career theory, the project also contributes to PsyCap theory by validating its role in a professional, self-employed context not widely studied before (S2).

The project aimed to advance understanding of how professionals cope and persist in boundaryless careers through PsyCap by exploring its influence within the business coaching context (S1 → S2) and investigating its impact on key performance outcomes such as client acquisition, retention, and revenue (S2). It found that PsyCap significantly influenced all variables—Job Engagement, Core Affect, Instilling Hope, revenue, Client Acquisition, Client Retention, job security, and Life Satisfaction (S2). It also examined the mechanisms mediating the relationship between PsyCap and performance, offering insights

into the pathways that drive success in boundaryless career environments, finding Job Engagement to be a mediator between PsyCap and how long a coach retains clients (S1 + S2).

Whilst the other mediation effects were not witnessed, increasing the power of the study could begin to demonstrate more significant results, thus still contributing to theoretical development (S2).

Finally, the research aspired to develop a predictive model that measures PsyCap and its mediators, enabling the prediction of performance outcomes for boundaryless individuals (S1 + S2). The model from Study 2—which was formed from the findings of Study 1 that guided the literature review of Study 2—enhances theoretical and practical tools for future studies on both PsyCap and boundaryless careers (S1 → S2).

14.3.2 | Professional Objectives

As this project is a DBA, its intention is to contribute not only theoretically but also to practice (S1 + S2).

The professional objectives of this research focus on equipping business coaches and boundaryless career professionals with practical tools and insights to enhance their resilience and performance (S1 + S2). A key aim was to identify the factors faced (drivers, barriers, enablers, strategies) in boundaryless careers and develop an evidence-based model to support coping and persistence (S1 → S2). This includes creating a framework to help coaches understand their behaviours, emotions, and PsyCap arising from their experiences, serving as a reference for effective coping strategies (S1 + S2).

Additionally, the research sought to generate practical actionable insights in business coaching for navigating challenges, improving client acquisition, retention, and overall success (S1 + S2). By promoting the role of PsyCap as a developmental tool, the study highlights its potential to foster resilience in adverse conditions and elevate its awareness within the business-coaching domain (S1 + S2). Ultimately, the findings provide an evidence-based approach demonstrating the positive impact of PsyCap development on performance outcomes, emphasising its value in achieving professional goals (S2).

The findings of this research provide substantial empirical and practical contributions, addressing the professional objectives and offering actionable insights for business coaches navigating boundaryless careers, such as the drivers that contribute towards success, barriers they must overcome, enablers in their environment they must lean on, strategies they can deploy, and the psychological resources—such as PsyCap—that they can harness and develop to path find towards their goals and stay resilient despite of setbacks.

Empirically, Study 1 delivers rich qualitative insights into the lived experiences of business coaches, filling gaps in understanding the psychological mechanisms that enable coping and persistence by forming the 4 themes to which business coaches cope and persist. Study 2 quantitatively validates the role of PsyCap in predicting success, emphasising its critical influence on performance and well-being outcomes.

Practically, the research offers an actionable framework for coping and persistence, equipping business coaches with evidence-based strategies to navigate challenges and enhance their professional success. It provides practical implications and PsyCap as a to develop key psychological resource components, such as resilience and self-efficacy, enabling coaches to manage adversity effectively. Additionally, the findings present organisational recommendations for supporting coaching professionals, improving client outcomes, and enhancing Return on Development (ROD), demonstrating the practical applicability of PsyCap development within the coaching industry. This, in turn, empirically contributes to the PsyCap literature as it provides further evidence that PsyCap development within organisations delivers financial performance, thus demonstrating Return on Investment (ROI).

14.3.3 | Objectives Summary

To summarise, this research set out with ambitious yet interconnected objectives, aiming to bridge theoretical exploration with practical application. By integrating qualitative insights and quantitative data, the thesis not only addresses its overarching aim but also makes significant contributions to boundaryless careers and PsyCap theories. Through the exploration of challenges and persistence mechanisms, Study 1 illuminated the psychological and physical hurdles faced by business coaches, along with the strategies they employ to navigate these barriers. Study 2 provided valuable insights into PsyCap's influence on performance and well-being, uncovering the influence PsyCap and a pathway

through which it drives success in boundaryless careers. Finally, the integration of these findings culminated in the development of a predictive model that not only explains but also forecasts key outcomes for boundaryless career professionals. These contributions develop theory and lay a foundation for future research whilst also offering practical tools to support business coaches and other individuals navigating boundaryless careers, thus the objectives for this DBA project were met.

14.4 | Contributions and Impact

This research delivers significant theoretical, empirical, and practical contributions. It addresses its objectives comprehensively while offering new insights into boundaryless careers and PsyCap literature. By integrating qualitative and quantitative findings, the study provides a robust framework for understanding how business coaches navigate challenges, persist, and achieve success in boundaryless careers.

14.4.1 | Theoretical Contributions

The research advances Boundaryless Career Theory by exploring the unique barriers, enablers, and strategies employed by business coaches, highlighting the role of agency and resilience in navigating career uncertainties (S1). It contributes to PsyCap Theory by examining how PsyCap impacts business coaching outcomes, with mediating pathways identified across motivational, affective, and behavioural dimensions, including job engagement and instilling hope, although only finding one pathway to show a significant relationship (S2).

A further contribution is made to Career Agency Theory, extending the understanding of how business coaches proactively shape their careers through self-directed strategies, reflective practices, and the cultivation of PsyCap components like resilience and optimism (S1 + S2). By integrating psychological resource development (PsyCap) with agentic adaptability, the research offers a hybrid theoretical framework that extends both traditions and clarifies how agency interacts with resource conservation (S1 + S2).

The development of a theoretical model offers a predictive framework for studying PsyCap's influence on subjective and objective success metrics, such as number of clients, retention, revenue, job insecurity, and life satisfaction (S2).

Additionally, the research provides a methodological contribution by combining qualitative insights with quantitative measures to explore the interplay between psychological resources and career outcomes—both performance and well-being (S1 + S2). This mixed-method approach not only validates theoretical constructs but also introduces innovative ways to assess and apply PsyCap in a boundaryless career context.

14.4.2 | Empirical Contributions

Empirically, the research deepens understanding of how PsyCap supports both performance and well-being in boundaryless careers (S2). Study 1 provides detailed qualitative insights into the barriers, enablers, and strategies that shape business coaches' experiences, emphasising the psychological and environmental factors that help one cope and persist (S1). These findings bridge gaps in understanding the lived experiences of boundaryless career professionals.

Study 2 quantitatively validates PsyCap's significant impact on both subjective (e.g., life satisfaction) and objective (e.g., client retention) success metrics. The study highlights mediating pathways—motivational, affective, and behavioural—that link PsyCap to professional outcomes, such as the role of job engagement in client acquisition (S2). By comparing the qualitative narratives of coping and persistence with these quantitative findings, the research empirically demonstrates that PsyCap functions as both a psychological buffer and a performance driver (S1 + S2).

By measuring the relationship between PsyCap and success metrics, the research establishes empirical foundations for studying the interplay between psychological resources and career outcomes.

Together, these contributions underscore the importance of PsyCap as a critical resource for managing the complexities of boundaryless careers, providing robust empirical evidence for its role in enhancing both performance and well-being (S1 + S2).

14.4.3 | Practical Contributions

The research offers actionable insights and tools to support business coaches and, from a broader perspective, those in boundaryless careers in overcoming challenges and achieving sustained success. The model for coping and persistence that utilises PsyCap equips coaches with evidence-based strategies tailored to their unique career dynamics (S1 + S2).

However, this model only displayed one pathway yet demonstrated the significant influence PsyCap plays on performance and well-being outcomes, as well as Job Engagement, Core Affect, and Instilling Hope (S2). These strategies include cultivating PsyCap components such as resilience, self-efficacy, and optimism, which empower coaches to navigate adversity effectively (S1 + S2).

Recommendations for coaching firms emphasise the importance of addressing key challenges, such as reducing client dropout rates and improving retention through interventions that strengthen coach–client relationships (S1 + S2). The study demonstrates the value of Return on Development (ROD) through PsyCap investments, offering a business case for integrating PsyCap-based training programs into professional development initiatives (S2). Implications are discussed further in this chapter.

The findings also provide tools and strategies for boundaryless career professionals, including reflective practices, adaptive communication techniques, and self-directed learning (S1). These insights form the foundation for evidence-based training programs that enhance both coach performance and client outcomes (S1 + S2).

Finally, by emphasising PsyCap as a measurable performance lever, the research bridges personal development and business outcomes—highlighting Return on Investment (ROI) as well as Return on Development (ROD)—a vital message for both independent coaches and coaching organisations (S1 + S2).

In summary, the study not only advances theoretical and empirical understanding but also bridges these insights into practical applications, providing valuable contributions to business coaches, coaching organisations, and boundaryless career professionals.

14.5 | Triangulation

Triangulation plays a critical role in enhancing the reliability and validity of this study by integrating multiple perspectives and methodologies. As highlighted in Study 1, the engagement of key stakeholders and the adoption of an engaged scholarship perspective facilitate triangulation. When diverse stakeholders converge on the same dimension of a problem, it not only strengthens the reliability of the findings but also instils confidence that the problem domain has been accurately represented (Van De Ven, 2007; Lee & Lings, 2008).

Furthermore, the integration of Studies 1 and 2 creates methodological triangulation by combining qualitative exploration with quantitative validation, reinforcing the robustness of the overall conclusions.

Building on this, Study 2 expands the scope by surveying a larger and more diverse sample of business coaches, including firm owners, employee coaches, and general managers. The involvement of these varied perspectives adds depth and breadth to the study, further reinforcing the triangulation process. Further, the researcher's established position within the business coaching community enabled access to these participants, contributing uniquely to the study by offering insights that might otherwise have been inaccessible.

Moreover, the research design addresses concerns regarding the validity of the theoretical model, particularly in how PsyCap influences boundaryless career individuals'—in this case, the coach—ability to cope and persist. To this end, the study employs both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

The qualitative aspect, involving subjective feedback on the questionnaire, allows for a nuanced understanding of participant perspectives. Meanwhile, the quantitative approach, which includes control measures such as testing for personality traits, ensures that PsyCap is isolated and its relationship to the outcome variable is accurately assessed.

Previous literature has emphasised the importance of incorporating control variables to maintain the integrity of PsyCap research (Avey et al., 2011; Dawkins et al., 2013). This project extends that rigour to the context of boundaryless careers.

This comprehensive approach to triangulation not only verifies the reliability and validity of the findings but also ensures a robust representation of the complex interactions within the organisational psychology research domain.

14.6 | Overarching Implications

This research holds significant practical and theoretical implications for the field of business coaching and for professionals navigating boundaryless careers. By synthesising findings from both qualitative (Study 1) and quantitative (Study 2) studies, actionable strategies emerge to enhance coaching practices, strengthen support systems, and improve the sustainability of coaching as a profession.

The practical recommendations that follow are informed by both the qualitative insights from Study 1 and the quantitative outcomes of Study 2, ensuring ecological validity and empirical reinforcement of each implication.

Scholars such as Schute and Steyn (2015) recommend investigating coaching outcomes in terms of leader development, client engagement, and performance. Kilburg (2000), Hagen (2012), and Crompton et al. (2012) emphasise refining coaching models and methodologies and evaluating coaching's impact on desired outcomes. Therefore, one of the objectives is the creation of a coping and persistence theoretical model, offering evidence-based strategies for resilience in the face of challenges within boundaryless careers (Avey et al., 2010; Avey et al., 2008). This model aims to guide coaches in navigating the complexities of such careers, contributing to not just the client's success but the coach's overall success.

This implication directly builds on the *drivers, barriers, strategies* and *enablers* themes identified in Study 1, which revealed that reflective practice, continuous learning, and resilience underpin persistence. These qualitative findings informed the inclusion of PsyCap as the independent construct in Study 2, connecting mindset to measurable outcomes.

The creation of the theoretical model witnessed in Study 2 allows the boundaryless individual to raise self-awareness and manage behaviour, helping boundaryless career individuals better understand their emotions, behaviours, and PsyCap stemming from their experiences as they navigate their careers (Story et al., 2017; Friend et al., 2016). This

model is set to facilitate coping strategies and improve self-awareness and behaviour management for professionals in boundaryless careers.

The quantitative validation of this model confirms that psychological resources (hope, efficacy, resilience, optimism) translate into positive effects on job engagement and performance, demonstrating the integration of psychological and practical dimensions; with additional wellbeing benefits (S2).

This research not only develops a theoretical model—aiding coaches in coping and persisting within boundaryless careers (Avey et al., 2010; Avey et al., 2008)—but furthermore, it examines the influence of PsyCap on coach-client relationships, offering insights that can lead to more positive interactions, improved engagement, and client retention (Story et al., 2017; Friend et al., 2016). By addressing contemporary challenges like client dropout and economic uncertainties, the research equips coaches to navigate these complex scenarios (Kost et al., 2020).

Integration across both studies therefore provides dual insight: Study 1 explains the lived experiences and relational factors that underpin persistence, while Study 2 quantifies how PsyCap operationalises the emerging factors into a model for objective and subjective success (S1 + S2).

The following implications benefit not only individual coaches but also organisations and industry leaders, contributing to a broader understanding of how industries scope and persist in boundaryless career contexts.

Enhancing Coaching Practices

Findings from both studies highlight the importance of tailored professional development programs. Continuous learning opportunities emphasising strategies such as those mentioned in Study 1 findings under the theme of ‘Strategies’ like Socratic questioning, reflective practice, and pattern recognition equip coaches with the tools to refine interpersonal skills, adapt to client diversity, and foster self-directed professional growth—which are important to boundaryless career individuals. Strengthening such capacities not only enhances the individual’s ability to navigate dynamic client demands but also supports their coping and persistence in achieving professional success.

Study 1 participants described behaviours such as ‘reframing setbacks as feedback’ (Coach 2) and maintaining peer networks for confidence; these illustrate resilience and optimism in practice (S1). Study 2 supports this by showing that Job Engagement mediates PsyCap’s influence on client acquisition, confirming that psychological resources convert into coach performance (S2).

Study 1 findings also emphasise the role of peer networks, mentorship programs, and supportive communities in mitigating self-doubt and managing emotional labour. By creating physical and social environments that promote creativity and well-being—such as workspaces with natural elements or structured networking events—coaches can boost emotional resilience and productivity allowing them to cope and persist further. Study 2 further underscores the role of psychological resources, notably PsyCap, in enhancing coach outcomes, including certification rates, client retention, and overall satisfaction.

Training programs targeting PsyCap dimensions such as self-efficacy, optimism, resilience, and hope not only allow the coach to achieve performance and well-being outcomes but also offer a measurable return on investment for individuals and organisations alike—a challenge that was highlighted and discussed in the literature review as an area for future research. Tailored CPD that combines PsyCap mindset development with business-skills training (client management, marketing, goal-setting) could bridge this gap and turn psychological resources into sustained behavioural outcomes (S1 + S2).

An implication from this research is that coaches/boundaryless career individuals—and if they are a part of a larger organisation then they too—is that they plan to strengthen their Strategies by participating in learning opportunities and supportive environments amongst other boundaryless career individuals.

Addressing Barriers in Boundaryless Careers

A key implication of Study 1 is the importance of addressing barriers inherent in boundaryless careers, such as income instability and self-doubt. A suggestion could be that verified revenue models, including subscription-based services and alternate income streams or investing coaching income in investments that pay recurring dividends, can reduce anxiety around client loss as they provide a more stable income.

Study 1 findings showed that coaches who lacked perceived stability often experienced heightened job insecurity and emotional strain. Study 2 quantitatively confirms that PsyCap reduces perceived job insecurity, demonstrating that psychological resilience buffers against financial volatility..

Additionally, tools to manage impostor syndrome and structured supervision programs can bolster coaches' confidence and emotional resilience. Study 2 complements this by demonstrating how targeted PsyCap interventions can directly improve financial performance, reduce job insecurity, and enhance overall life satisfaction—demonstrating an ROI for PsyCap that organisations offering training should consider as part of their curriculum.

An integration (S1 + S2) is possible for implications. By linking internal psychological resource development (PsyCap) to external structural supports (income models and supervision), this research shows how multi-layered interventions can address both mental and economic aspects of coping and persistence.

Transition programs designed for individuals entering boundaryless careers also play a critical role. By focusing on skill adaptation, autonomy, and alignment with personal values, these programs facilitate smoother transitions and reduce the risk of misalignment between individual goals and career demands. Screening tools that assess cultural fit for boundaryless work environments can further support career sustainability.

Strengthening Coach-Client Relationships

Both studies underscore the need for improved client screening and onboarding processes to ensure alignment in values, openness to learning, and clarity of goals.

Study 1 revealed that client misalignment and value conflict were frequent causes of stress, while Study 2 demonstrated that Job Engagement— he only significant positive mediator— influences client acquisition. Together, these findings suggest that aligning expectations and maintaining engagement is a core driver of success in coach-client relationships.

The research provides insight, equipping business coaches and individuals in boundaryless careers with strategies to overcome obstacles and enhance client acquisition, retention, and overall success (Kost et al., 2020). Additionally, the study underscores the significance of

PsyCap as a tool for fostering resilience in business professionals navigating uncertain economic environments (Avey et al., 2010).

Study 1 highlights how balanced coaching strategies, integrating empathy and assertiveness, can foster trust and rapport while constructively challenging clients. Study 2 findings extend this by showing how interventions enhancing Job Engagement and Core Affect—though not statistically significant in all pathways—hold promise for improving relational and performance outcomes in client-coach engagements. Tailoring coaching strategies to individual client needs and long-term goals, and focusing on empowerment and resilience, enhances outcomes for both clients and coaches—all of which are elements of PsyCap and its underpinning theories.

Implications for Organisations

Organisations employing business coaches or serving boundaryless professionals must invest in structured support systems and PsyCap development programs. Study 2 reveals the potential ROI on such investments, particularly in roles where client acquisition and retention are key performance indicators. Integrating PsyCap with practical skills training and realistic goal-setting enhances its effectiveness, benefiting not only the coach but also their organisation. Moreover, aligning organisational training with the altruistic dimensions of coaching can attract purpose-driven individuals, further strengthening the profession.

An integrated implication (S1 + S2) is that organisations can combine findings from Study 1 on social support and psychological safety with Study 2's quantitative evidence of PsyCap's impact to design programs that nurture both emotional resilience and performance capacity.

Implications Summary

The practical insights gained from engaged scholarship and stakeholder involvement offer unique perspectives for coaches, helping them tackle challenges specific to boundaryless careers and contributing to their professional growth and success (Van De Ven, 2007). This research provides a comprehensive implication for understanding how business coaches cope and persist in boundaryless careers. By addressing contemporary challenges such as client dropout, economic uncertainty (i.e. physical barriers), and emotional labour (psychological barriers), the coaches and the organisations they are a part of can equip

coaches with actionable strategies to thrive in dynamic environments through interventions, such as PsyCap interventions, and providing an environment—such as access to a broader network of like-minded individuals—will support and provide strategies for the coach to cope and persist.

The integration of PsyCap theory with coaching practice not only enhances individual and organisational outcomes but also underscores the broader relevance of these insights for freelancers and independent professionals across industries whilst contributing to ROI. Collectively, the findings contribute to the advancement of coaching as a sustainable and impactful profession. These implications not only empower business coaches with actionable strategies but also underscore the practical relevance and application of PsyCap within the coaching field and how all professionals within boundaryless careers cope and persist.

Overall, the integration (S1 + S2) confirms that practical coping strategies and measurable psychological resources operate synergistically. Understanding this dual mechanism helps both scholars and practitioners design interventions that simultaneously build mindset and method—ensuring sustainable success in boundaryless careers.

14.7 | Overarching Limitations and Future Research Directions

14.7.1 | Overarching Limitations

This DBA project provides valuable insights into how business coaches cope and persist within boundaryless careers, however, several limitations inherent in the methodologies of Study 1 and Study 2 must be acknowledged to provide context for the findings and inform any future research directions. In the following I address these limitations and opportunities for future research.

Methodological Limitations

The primary limitation across both studies was participant accessibility. Although from an engaged scholarship perspective I had a unique opportunity to access business coaches

that would be limited to both researchers and permission was granted by the UK master franchise to approach all business coaches within the organisation, individual participation was voluntary, resulting in a time-intensive process of motivating coaches to engage with the research. This limitation also impacted sample size, particularly in Study 2, where statistical significance was constrained. Future research could benefit from opening participation to a broader population of business coaches beyond a single organisation, allowing for greater diversity and generalisability of findings. However, a benefit to this particular research was that restricting this research to one organisation ensured consistency by controlling for variables such as coaching style and training systems, which added value to the study.

Study 1, while successful in recruiting 15 business coaches and obtaining rich qualitative data, faced representational limitations. The sample, drawn from a single coaching organisation, may not reflect the experiences of business coaches globally and account for the variation in coach background, such as cultural differences. This context-specific focus limited the exploration of diverse coaching practices across industries, cultural settings, and economic environments. Future studies should expand the scope to include different coaching organisations and industries, such as executive coaching, personal development trainers, and perhaps even health coaching—which are in boundaryless careers—to uncover unique strategies relevant to diverse contexts within boundaryless careers.

The cross-sectional design of Study 2 was another limitation, particularly given the state-like nature of PsyCap, which is susceptible to momentary fluctuations (Avey, Luthans & Youssef, 2010). Longitudinal studies would allow for the examination of PsyCap variations over time, capturing dynamic changes in state-like constructs and their relationship to performance outcomes. Although the cross-sectional design was necessitated by practical constraints, incorporating trait-control measures ensured the study-maintained rigour despite these limitations; however, longitudinal research may shed more light on the topic of how individuals cope and persist and the role of PsyCap.

This methodological limitation also links to the integration between studies (S1 + S2); the rich qualitative narratives from Study 1 suggested that resilience, optimism, and agency fluctuate with situational pressure. Therefore, future longitudinal work could test whether these state-like elements of PsyCap change in response to client gain or loss over time (S1 → S2).

Conceptual and Contextual Limitations

Study 1 revealed the importance of emotional factors, such as self-doubt and impostor syndrome, in influencing coaching outcomes. However, the semi-structured interviews did not delve deeply into these affective dimensions, as this was beyond the scope of the research. Future studies could explore the psychological impacts of the topics that emerged, such as emotional labour, including interventions that mitigate these effects to enhance the well-being and effectiveness of business coaches.

Additionally, the temporal focus of Study 1 provided only a snapshot of coaches' experiences at a particular point in time. A longitudinal design could reveal how drivers, barriers, and strategies evolve throughout a coach's career or in response to external changes, such as economic crises or technological advancements. This approach would better capture the dynamic nature of boundaryless careers.

Study 2 highlighted the need for larger and more representative samples to validate pathways between PsyCap and performance outcomes. While positive trends were observed, statistical significance was limited by the small sample size. Bryman and Bell's (2015) emphasis on the importance of sufficient sample sizes to reduce sampling error and enhance precision underscores this limitation. Future research should employ a larger, possibly more diverse sample to strengthen generalisability and statistical reliability.

Another conceptual limitation is that only three mediating pathways were tested in Study 2 (motivational, affective, behavioural), yet Study 1 dentified that there could be additional potential mechanisms such as reflective practice, self-regulation, and environmental support (S1 → S2), however the research had to focus on core pathways that emerged amongst the 15 coaches and limit these paths so that the research did not get too broad. Future models could incorporate other variables to build a more comprehensive picture of coping and persistence.

14.7.2 | Opportunities for Future Research

The research provides several areas for future research that emerge from the limitations identified in this study:

Broader Populations and Contexts

Future studies could explore coping mechanisms and resilience strategies among coaches across different organisations, industries, and cultural settings. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how boundaryless professionals navigate their careers globally.

Longitudinal Designs

Investigating PsyCap, coping mechanisms, and emotional labour over time would provide deeper insights into their evolving impacts on performance, well-being, and career sustainability.

Exploration of Affective Factors

The role of emotions in coaching success warrants further investigation. For example, how psychological barriers such as self-doubt, impostor syndrome, and emotional labour influence coach-client relationships and career outcomes could be valuable areas of inquiry.

Mediators and Moderators

The unexpected negative patterns observed for Instilling Hope and the lack of mediation effects suggest the need to explore additional mediating or moderating variables. Contextual factors, such as organisational culture and support systems, could be critical in understanding PsyCap's impact.

Future research could also integrate contextual enablers identified in Study 1—such as supportive peer networks and physical work environments—with PsyCap development programs examined in Study 2, testing multi-level interventions that address both environmental and psychological determinants of success.

Client Dropout

Study 1 identified client dropout as a significant barrier for individuals that are responsible for acquiring and retaining clients for their success, but ethical and practical constraints, like interviewing the client(s) prevented deeper exploration. Future research could examine client dropout dynamics, their relationship to PsyCap, and strategies to mitigate dropout rates.

Diverse Career Models

Expanding research to include other boundaryless professionals beyond business coaches would uncover broader applications for PsyCap and resilience strategies in dynamic work environments.

A cross-professional comparison (e.g., consultants, freelancers, healthcare practitioners) could test whether the PsyCap–performance relationship observed here generalises across sectors, offering both theoretical breadth and applied relevance.

In summary, while this research faced limitations related to sample size, temporal focus, and context specificity, it also highlights significant opportunities for future inquiry. Addressing these limitations through expanded populations, longitudinal designs, and deeper exploration of affective and contextual factors will contribute to a richer understanding of boundaryless careers. By refining methodologies and incorporating diverse perspectives, future studies can build on the foundation of this DBA research to advance the fields of business coaching, PsyCap research, and boundaryless career sustainability in evolving work environments.

Collectively, these future directions continue the logic from Study 1 to Study 2, reinforcing the iterative nature of discovery from qualitative insight to quantitative testing and onward to future empirical refinement.

14.8 | Overarching Conclusion

This DBA project's mixed method of qualitative exploration with quantitative measurement brings to the surface insights into the lives of boundaryless career individuals—the business

coaches—and how they cope in the face of adversity and how/why they persist towards their success. The findings underscore the pivotal role of PsyCap in the coping strategies, persistence, and success of these individuals. Study 1's deep dive into cope and persist reveals the 4 themes of cope and persist and the profound influence of different strategies and support that help the boundaryless career individual to be successful in their job, highlighting the importance of guidance in shaping careers within the coaching domain. Study 2 validates PsyCap literature and one mediating mechanism of Job Engagement towards the success of the coach. By demonstrating the undeniable link between PsyCap and business coaches' ability to cope and persist, PsyCap can be linked to achieving measurable performance and well-being outcomes, negating barriers that were revealed in Study 1, such as client departure apprehension, that get in the way of physical and psychological—performance and well-being—outcomes. The aspiration for positive change, flexible lifestyles, and meaningful impacts resonates with the concept of boundaryless careers, emphasising personal growth, financial stability, and making a difference. These intrinsic drivers form a foundation for understanding business coaches' perseverance and dedication and are observed in measures from Study 2 of job security, job engagement, and life satisfaction and how a state-like construct such as PsyCap positively influences these outcomes.

This overarching conclusion therefore demonstrates clear integration between studies: Study 1 provided the exploratory foundation identifying psychological and environmental enablers of persistence, while Study 2 confirmed the predictive power of PsyCap within that framework.

In conclusion, the synthesis of these two studies offers a profound understanding of how business coaches navigate boundaryless careers. Utilising PsyCap as a central theme, this research not only uncovers the drivers and barriers shaping their journey but also establishes a clear link between PsyCap and professional success with Job Engagement displaying a mediating pathway. As boundaryless career research continues to evolve and more individuals seek out boundaryless careers, this research serves as a guiding light for practitioners, educators, and policymakers, presenting a roadmap to enhance well-being, resilience, and achievement within these dynamic and transformative career paths.

This conclusion also reiterates the theoretical and practical alignment achieved across both studies: the qualitative insight into human agency (S1) and the quantitative validation of PsyCap's motivational pathway (S2) collectively establish a multi-level understanding of coping and persistence.

Through the lens of business coaching, this study contributes not only to the field of boundaryless careers and coaching but also to the broader realm of career development and psychological capital research.

Future applied research can now build on this synthesis by developing structured PsyCap-training interventions for boundaryless professionals and evaluating their longitudinal effects, ensuring that the progression from exploration to application continues beyond this DBA project.

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APPENDICES